

NOTES FOR  
THE BIG AHA

BY RUDY RUCKER

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*Notes for The Big Aha*

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## Preface

I started writing *Notes for the Big Aha* on July 15, 2011, and I ended these notes and the first draft of the novel on September 3, 2013. A two-year run. *The Big Aha* was book #37 and novel #21 for me.

My practice is to construct a notes document in parallel with each of my novels (and I don't count the notes as separate books). My practical and theoretical ideas about this process are explained in my manual, *A Writer's Toolkit*, available for free at [www.rudyruicker.com/writing](http://www.rudyruicker.com/writing).

Probably the most interesting section of these *Notes for The Big Aha* is the "Writing Journal," so I've placed that first. As well as documenting the gestation of *The Big Aha*, the journal describes my transition into self-publishing via Transreal Books.

I'm publishing the *Notes for The Big Aha* in several forms: hardback, paperback, commercial ebook, webpage, and downloadable PDF file. Read it like you were reading over my shoulder. In order to keep the *Notes* casual and to make the book design slightly easier, my layout uses a "ragged right" or non-justified format.

The underlined phrases in the text represent hyperlinks to external webpages and to locations within the *Notes*. Of course the hyperlinks don't work in the print version—but if you're curious about a link, you can find a live version of it in the online versions of these *Notes*, which you can find, along with more information about *The Big Aha*, on my site for the book:

[www.rudyruicker.com/thebigaha](http://www.rudyruicker.com/thebigaha)

I hope that you find these *Notes* useful or in some way encouraging for your own creative work—and that they'll enhance your appreciation of *The Big Aha* itself.

—Rudy Rucker, December 12, 2013.

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# Writing Journal

## July 15, 2011. Sales Figures

By way of trying to get some ideas about what novel I should write next, I compiled my sales numbers from my recent royalty statements. And I double-checked the Tor Books numbers on July 12, 2011, with my editor's assistant. The sales numbers combine hardback, paperback and a trickle of ebook sales.

In recent years, the top-selling novels overall are *Realware*, *Spaceland*, *Freeware*, *Frek and the Elixir*, *Mathematicians in Love*.

The novels' sales figures are dwarfed by those of *The Fourth Dimension*. That book is out of print, and I've recently reverted the rights. As a side project, I'll want to republish *The 4th D* as an ebook or get Dover to republish it. And *Infinity and the Mind* sold something on the order of 300,000 if you include the Birkhäuser edition and, especially, the Bantam New Age paperback.

Turning back to the novel front, I might try and revisit a mode that's had some success. I can't quite see doing another *Ware* in the sense of a sequel. But I could do a robots-run-wild novel, I suppose.

If I write a *Frek* sequel, I wonder if it should have a 4D element like *Spaceland*—and call it *Frek 4D!* Or *Frek and Renata in the Fourth Dimension*? Nah, the *Frek* world has enough stuff in it already, it could be overkill to drag 4D into it. But it's not clear if there's a demand for a *Frek* sequel.

Maybe another book along the lines of *Spaceland*. What was it about *Spaceland* that appealed to people? Possibly the contemporary Silicon Valley setting—but *Mathematicians in Love* had that, too, to some extent, as did *The Hacker* And *The Ants*, although I don't have sales

numbers on *Hacker*. Or possibly it was the 4D theme. Or the drawings in the text. Or the casual style.

Another book in the *Spaceland* world might not be a literal sequel, but rather another Silicon Valley novel. Suppose I think in general terms about a fourth Silicon Valley novel. The four would be 1: *Hacker*, 2: *Spaceland*, 3: *Mathematicians*, and 4: *The Big Aha*. But I might I put it further into the future than the others if I want to use biotech and hylotech.

### **August 15, 2011. Rudderless**

I'm at loose ends now with the novel gone. I've been doing maintenance work on my deck and front steps.

I have some vague plans to do a 2nd edition of my nonfiction 4D book, which is coming up on 30 years old and is now out of print from Houghton Mifflin.

I've been looking at the sales figures for my recent novel, and I have the idea that I might do a sequel to *Spaceland*, as it sold well. *Spaceland* was in fact one of the easiest of my books to write—I wrote it in a couple of months, like falling off a log. Maybe the books that are easy to write sell better.

\*\*\*

I emailed some thoughts about sales to my old writer pal Marc Laidlaw and he answered: “Your attempt to evaluate your career in terms of copies sold and from that to figure out what to do next I find inherently depressing—it's the way we are all reduced to judging our self worth in this industry, I guess. I hope you get a good recharge from travelling to see your kids; I wouldn't make any big plans till after that.”

\*\*\*

Marc is right. I need to wait for a recharge. I'm lost just now, rudderless, without a compass, waiting for the Muse.

I'd like to think that sequels are in principle a good idea. Seems like they'd help the sales of the earlier books too. I'm reading *Spaceland* and enjoying it. But maybe it's been too long a time since the original publication of *Spaceland* to be

doing a sequel. I got away with doing long-delayed sequels in the *Ware* series, but that's not the norm.

Really what I'm waiting for is a maniacal obsession on some topic that it takes to get me back in the rowboat to row across the Pacific for the umpteenth time.

Times like this I worry that I've already written everything that I want to.

### **August 16, 2011. Banging the Wall**

So now I'm kind of beating against the wall, looking for a way back into the Land O' Muse. Looking for a cranny or a flaw where I can poke my finger through.

I wanted to reread *Frek* again, but I haven't gotten around to it. I think I feel tired at the thought of cranking back up on the whole saga again. And maybe I don't really feel like writing in a twelve-year-old's voice.

I did reread *Spaceland*, and I liked it quite a bit. Possibly I could do a sequel.

But I guess I'd rather do something fresh. I'm just thinking about sequels as I'm worried I can't sell another book to Tor otherwise. But maybe Tor doesn't matter that much.

It might be nice to write about a painter. Or an artist in a new medium—although, come to think about it, I did write about metanovelists in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*. And alla-crafting in *Realware* and kenny-crafting in *Frek*. So in other words I've done this. But maybe have a painter with a magic brush—and his pix change the world.

The Burroughs fantasy of being able to say just the right word at the right time and it changes things.

Rather than doing a literal sequel to *Spaceland*, I could do a thematic sequel—that is, a book set in the Silicon Valley of today or tomorrow, involving some far-out new tech. A fourth Silicon Valley novel, following on *The Hacker and the Ants*, *Spaceland*, and *Mathematicians in Love*.

I worry that I'm a bit too removed from the current computer-hacking scene for this. But this scene is all around

me and I can readily fantasize about it. And my character doesn't have to be a software engineer.

Another issue is that I keep thinking I'm tired of writing about youngish characters. Well, the POV could be a jaded manager, or a burnt-out programmer—not so young. Or I could run along the span of some guy's life and start out young and end up middle-aged. A fifty-year-old would be about as old as I could get away with, or maybe even hitting the forties is enough.

What did Jerzy Rugby do for a living in *Hacker*? He was a programmer. Joe Cube in *Spaceland* was a middle manager. The new character could be doing something even less technical, like personnel? Or an artist at a game company. Writing game stories like Marc Laidlaw does.

I sometimes think I'd like to write about an even older character—as I originally wanted to with *Jim and the Flims*—a character who's about sixty or seventy. What could happen to an old person? They see a UFO. They hear voices. They ache in the morning, and they have health crises where they have to go to the hospital. They have grandchildren. They reminisce wistfully. They come to terms with the inevitability of death. Yawn.

Where would I like to go? What do I want to *do*? I wouldn't mind getting back inside the Hollow Earth. But—as with all these sequel ideas, I feel bored at the thought of repeating the old scenes and setups. I really would prefer something fresh.

Living under the ocean. Yawn.

The world of dreams intrigues me, but I think it's hard to write about dreams in an interesting way. What if there were this elaborate kind of dream city. Yawn.

Maybe my new novel could involve the control of dreams. I touched on that in the story I wrote with Bruce, "Good Night Moon." Search engine links to every object in the world, for sure. I kind of did that in *Postsingular*. An infinity chip—like in "Frek and the Aktuals."

Coming back to the universe of the *Ware* books, I—oh, I can't see going in there again. It was wonderful, but it's

done. But maybe my new novel could be about robotics? Perhaps a bit along the lines of the never-written *Hardware* prequel, that is, the Book #0 of the *Ware* series. I had some of that in *The Hacker and the Ants*, though. I mean, that's what the guys job was, I now recall. Designing robots, like his companion 'bot Studly. Nah. Robots are stale.

Not getting the flash as yet. As always between novels, I have the fear that I'm finally running out of ideas.

But, in a way, I hardly had any ideas for *Turing & Burroughs* novel. That was really quite a character-driven book. I had the biocomputation, and the skugs, and the V-bomb, but they were to some extent a sideshow. The big things in Turing were the famous characters and doing a historical-setting Beat novel.

What if I didn't worry about having any ideas, and wrote about some interesting characters again. What characters would I pick?

A sixty year old man paints pictures in his back yard and plays with his grandchildren. He sees a UFO and befriends some aliens that only he can see. And then he dies.

That's about all I've got today.

## **August 19, 2011. My Prospects at Tor**

We're in Wyoming, visiting our daughter Isabel. I started reading *Frek and the Elixir* once again, and I'm enjoying it. I've turned away for a time from plans for a *Spaceland*-like book, and now I'm back to revising and expanding my Ideas for a *Frek and the Elixir* sequel.

Last night I think I dreamed that I had an entirely different book idea, but I don't remember what it was. One snag is whether Tor would in fact buy another novel of any kind from me. I could ask Dave Hartwell at Tor about it, although I'm almost scared to. He's kind of discouraging these days. The bankruptcy of the Borders bookstore chain has the publishers spooked. They don't really want to think about another book from me until *Nested Scrolls* comes out and sinks, floats, or flies.

In the near term, I have a feeling I'll end up selling *Turing & Burroughs* to another publisher besides Tor—perhaps to Night Shade, or conceivably to some more mainstream house that my new agent John Silbersack finds. But maybe staying with Night Shade makes sense. Or not. Maybe yet another publisher.

Last time I talked to Hartwell, he was darkly speculating that Night Shade might have trouble staying in business. I thought he was just being pessimistic, but in fact Night Shade still hasn't paid me the balance of my *Jim and the Flims* advance, which was due in June.

What I'm getting at is if that things could work out so that I don't really offer another novel to Tor until this one that I'm trying to start now.

"Rome weren't burnt in a day!" as the head Pharaoh hoodlum cheerfully says to the young-writer character in *American Graffiti*.

### **October 14, 2011. Quantum Tantra.**

I visited Nick Herbert last month and we talked about his notion of *quantum tantra* again. He said that everything is alive and that, even you can't attain telepathy with objects, you can develop relationships with them. He says that you'll decide which object to relate to on the basis of affinity—just as you do when selecting friends. Nick suggests that the first things you'd want to be in touch with would be the organs of your body.

It was 2002 when Nick first started talking about quantum tantra to me, and I read the details in his brilliant essay, "Holistic Physics: An Introduction to Quantum Tantra," which, as I mention elsewhere in these notes, is [online](#). I used his ideas a bit in *Frek and the Elixir* and mentioned it in my non-fiction book, *The Lifebox, the Seashell and the Soul*.

\*\*\*

Nick points out that the brain is, like any physical object, a quantum system. And he feels that quantum mechanics accounts for our consciousness. Quantum minds can evolve

in two modes, Smooth and Chunky, as I discuss in my section My Mind Is A Quantum Computation.

It's unpleasant when someone substitutes interrogation for the natural flow of conversation—and throws you through a series of chunky collapses. And it's still more unpleasant when the grilling is for some mercenary cause. You have every reason to discard or ignore the surveys with which institutions pester you.

Nick remarks that the smooth mode is closer to how our inner mental experience feels. He says that it will require a new physics and a new psychology to specify the details of the correspondence between mental phenomena and quantum states.

\*\*\*

You should be able to couple your smooth mental state to the state of another person (or even to the state of another object), and thus attain a unique relationship that Nick terms “rapprochement.”

A caveat here is that, for quantum theoretic reasons, the link between the two systems isn't of a kind that can leave memory traces, otherwise the link is functioning as an observation that collapses the quantum states of the systems, achieving faster-than-light communication. Nick speaks of a non-collapsing connection as an *oblivious link*.

Nick chuckles over the fact that cannabis reduces one's short-term memory to the point where, indeed, a stoned conversation could, at least figuratively, be thought of as an oblivious link.

If you don't remember anything about your rapprochement with someone or something, can it be said to have affected you at all? Oh yes. Your wave state will indeed have changed from the interaction, and when you later go and “observe” your mental state (e.g. by asking yourself questions about what you believe), you will obtain a different probability spectrum of outputs than you would have before the rapprochement.

\*\*\*

Nick is a hylozoist—that is, he believes, as I do, that objects are alive and conscious. He proposes that both smooth and chunky consciousness can be found in every physical system. Thinking at a higher level, he remarks that synchronicity might be evidence that we're all parts of some higher being. The higher mind's ideas filter down into remote oblivious links.

## October 17, 2011. Still Groping

I'm totally lost, with no idea of what novel or even short story to write next. It's starting to get to me. I'd like to have something cool to look forward to. A reason to get out of bed in the morning. If past patterns recur, what'll happen is that the pain of not writing will become so unbearable that I'll finally manage to start writing some kind of new novel.

\*\*\*

I'm not yet ready to jump back into a novel—not only am I a bit fried, but also my market is a bit saturated. The best would be to write two or three or four stories over the next six to eight months. And don't worry too much homing in on the next novel. But—ray of hope—some of the stories might serve as chapters of eventual novels.

Reminder to self: I need *two* separate things for a story—first of all, the SF idea or gimmick and, second of all, an underlying issue that the gimmick solves. I usually take the transreal approach, that is, given an SF trope, I work to make the idea into a fresh and true metaphor for some immediate real-life concern of mine. Or, equally well, I can use an imagined real-life concern of my main character.

\*\*\*

While waiting for the muse, I've been passing my time by working on my *Journals* and on converting some of my material into ebooks.

I don't feel like doing a heavy revision of *The Fourth Dimension* anymore—I'm thinking it'll be enough work to turn it into an ebook.

\*\*\*



Perhaps the quantum tantra idea could be the basis of a fourth Silicon Valley novel that I'm groping for, a book for, as I've said, the same niche as *Spaceland*, *The Hacker and the Ants*, and *Mathematicians in Love*.

What are some computer breakthroughs that people long for these days? Candidates: self-tagging augmented reality, true 3D interface, true keyboard-free interface using voice or, better, uvvy-style teep. I did the tagging thing with orphids in *Postsingular*. And even teep is kind of boring. A "development of commercial telepathy" story would be old hat.

We'd need a big diversion in the story, a kink, a new development. Hylozoism is a fairly obvious move here, but I've already used this one in *Hylozoic* of course. Talking to the dead might be useful, although I used this to some extent in *Jim and the Flims*. Getting in touch with an alien world right next door in a parallel brane is an attractive move—this plays a part in *Postsingular*, *Hylozoic*, and *Mathematicians in Love*. Perhaps some people turn into ants? Can we make that interesting?

Today I don't see going back into the *Spaceland* world, but I don't write it off completely. If I *were* going to write another Silicon Valley novel, a redo of the 4D stuff could be a more interesting gimmick than the quantum tantra line. If anything, we could get quantum tantra teep as a side-effect of 4D. But, nah, I don't want to do 4D again just now.

I'm liking a flow where quantum-computation leads to the Big Aha and that leads to wacky matter which leads to some area of our local spacetime becoming a new domain with an unfamiliar space + time dimensional signature.

Just as an out-of-left-field start, I'm thinking I should work my ideas for "The Raven's Heart" into an opening sequence for my new novel, which I'm calling *The Big Aha*. More texture in my novel if I work in a little of that weird, medieval-feeling, fairy-tale stuff.

## October 19, 2011. Dave Hartwell. Silicon Valley Novel?

I talked to Dave Hartwell on the phone just now.

He said he could look at *Turing & Burroughs* now, but would rather wait till December in terms of his own schedule.

I asked him straight up, “What should I write next?” I think he was pleased that I asked.

He says he’s not interested in a sequel to *Frek*. He feels it’s been too long since the first volume came out, although, admittedly, sometimes a second volume can disinter a first. He was a little confused about *Frek* and he had the impression that the Nightshade *Jim and the Flims* was already a sequel to *Frek*. I guess he doesn’t really remember *Frek*.

Dave was a little surprised and amused at my idea for a *Life of Bosch*, but he grudgingly said this could be interesting as well. A historical novel with a touch of fantasy.

And he wasn’t all that interested in a return to *Spaceland*. His sense was that it’s better to be writing standalone novels, not sequels

He thought the best would be that I write another book like *Mathematicians in Love*. I remember that he really liked this book when I wrote it, I think it’s been his favorite book by me. It was especially *the attitude and style* of this book that Hartwell liked. I better reread it so I can better guess at what he means.

So I’m thinking we’d be talking about a near-future book set in Silicon Valley/SF Bay Area, with romance, suspense, SF, and a rebellious, countercultural first-person male narrator in his twenties or thirties. So...I’ll go for my fourth Silicon Valley novel. It’s one of my recognized niches. Only maybe this one isn’t so near-future as the others.

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Dave urged me to publicize *Nested Scrolls*. He suggests that I try and line up something like a virtual book tour,

getting people in different parts of the country, or even overseas, to do online interviews with me, probably for posting on their blogs. Or get guest blogger gigs. Put unpublished pictures in my blog post. Write a blog post for Tor. *Blah blah blah*.

\*\*\*

To my surprise, when I mentioned my plans for ebooks, Dave said Tor would be happy to distribute some or all of the ebooks that I'm thinking of self-publishing. Not in print, just in ebook. And now, *duh*, I realize that Tor, or any other forward-looking publisher, would want to be getting heavily into the ebook scene. I'm a Tor author, so of course they'd want my ebooks. The ebooks might get more visibility and respect if distributed by Tor than by me.

The catch is that Tor would only give me 25% of the suggested retail price on an ebook, although in time they supposedly *might* move to 33%. On my own, I might typically get something more like 66% of the retail price from Kindle or Smashwords. A two-way split of the money instead of a three-way split, with Tor the third.

Dave claims that Tor, as a big company, is better at holding the line on the prices you want to charge for your ebooks. But fuck that. I think I can publish my ebooks this myself. Take a bigger cut and sell them cheaper.

I have a head-full of ideas for possible ebooks.

## **October 25, 2011. Dystopia? Phil Dick's Example**

I just reread Phil Dick's *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep* for the first time in maybe thirty or thirty-five years.

As always I was blown away by the subtle humor and liveliness of Phil's broken up and interleaved dialog. The harshness of the androids is great. And the clipped coldness with which people just say what's on their minds.

For my whole career, I've been inspired by the quality of Phil's dialog, and it's invigorating to go back and read some of it again. I forget how really direct it is.

As always I'm exasperated by his characters' listlessness and depression, and disturbed by the small and fixable little

plot-glitch holes. Didn't anyone ever edit Phil's manuscripts?

I'm awed by Phil's flights of philosophical fancy and humbled by his heartfelt concern with such lofty themes as the nature of empathy and humanity.

And it's so cool how he flips out of the logical SF mode and goes into a religious vision thing with his Mercer/Christ character. And always with his reversals on what is reality. The alternate police station replacing Deckard's police station, the broken electric cat that turns out to be real, the miraculous toad that turns out to be a machine.

Starting the book, I began thinking, "I have to write a book like this."

Would I want to write a dystopia novel? Dystopia gives you this stamp of high moral seriousness, right. I haven't done a dystopia since my very first novel, *Spacetime Donuts*. I'm always so perky and cheerful with my happy endings.

I bet dystopias are becoming fashionable again. Back in the Fifties and Sixties, dystopias were where it was at.

What if I do a dystopia with a somewhat broken-down character. Phil's characters aren't obviously *old*, but they're definitely middle-aged. And depressed. Depressed without even being drug addicts or alcoholics. It's an unnatural move for me even to *imagine* people like that. Maybe worth a shot.

But I don't start the book with my character already middle-aged and broken down—I start with my character young, with that Raven's Heart routine, and he grows older, and witnesses the future history, and then at some point, like by the fourth chapter, he's at that Phildickian shopkeeper state.

So it can still be that Silicon Valley novel, *The Big Aha*, with the quantum tantra and wacky matter things. But what if I throw in a dystopic thing for the backstory. Chip computers are long gone, and biotech devices have been the rule. But now the popularity of biotech devices is dying out as well.

My character evolves into a depressed manager at a biotech shop that's going down the tubes. He has all these chirpy semi-living devices that talk to him, and nobody wants them. The toymaker with the rejected toys.

What's replacing biotech? Hylozoic quantum systems. Call it *hylotech*. Anything at all is a computer all of a sudden. No more need for biotech. Organic life is passé.

### **November 1, 2011. On A Beach**

I start this entry alone on Limantour Beach in the Point Reyes National Seashore park, writing by hand in a little notebook, sitting on the sand, leaning against a log. Delicious solitude.

Regarding the time-travel angle, I'd been thinking of having an older character—maybe I could depict one guy at an earlier and later stage of his life, which would fit in with a time-travel motif. Time travel is an objective correlative for me compiling my *Journals 1990-2011* these days. The old Rudy is revising the life story of the younger Rudy. Editing it.

So we might suppose the older guy wants to undo some youthful indiscretion. Roll back the film and edit it. Perhaps he was roommate of a guy who later became a dictator version of someone like George Bush and this early Bush also stole the girl that this man wanted to marry. And then he never found true love. So he goes back in time and kills Bush in some odd way involving wacky matter. But then, of course the new timeline has an even bigger problem, so he goes back and, despite himself, ends up letting Bush thrive. But this third time he manages to hang onto the girl.

### **November 3, 2011. Kesey "Magic Trip," The Big Aha**

Last night we saw the Ken Kesey and Merry Pranksters movie, *Magic Trip*. The material was quite familiar to me from Tom Wolfe's *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* and from Kesey's *Garage Sale* anthology. Unsettling to see

some snippets of Neal Cassady doing motor-mouth speed rapping. “We’re 4D minds in 3D bodies in a 2D world.”

The whole cultural change thing being depicted is exciting—the flow from early Sixties with the Beats, to Tim Leary’s high-minded proselytizing, to the Pranksters’ street psychedelia, and thence to the mass fad for acid, including the birth of light shows and the Grateful Dead. I like the notion of the Dead noodling along for the trippers at the 1964-1965 acid tests.

I also liked the scenes where Kesey meets Kerouac and then meets Leary, and the meetings don’t click at *all*. The street surrealists meet the alkie sentimentalists and the mandarins.

And how about Kesey’s crazed “Beware of the Bear” rap in Yosemite—he says that *really* the phrase means “Be Aware of the Bear,” in the sense of being *aware* of a heavy force underlying quotidian reality. But the meddling, fearful straights have bowdlerized the message to speak of being *wary*.

Later in the film, apropos of his reduced role as a writer, Ken says—with touches of sadness, shyness, embarrassment, and acceptance: “Maybe I fried my marbles.”

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The other day my wife and I watched this movie *Limitless*, it’s about a guy who gets hold of a new drug which is a somewhat speedy smart drug that’s also a bit psychedelic. In a sad reflection of our year 2011, the drug helps the main character change from being a writer to being a big-time stock trader and then a candidate for the US Senate. Ugh. In the 1970s, it would have been the opposite. A big drug trip would have shown a stock trading politician the light—and he would have become a writer! To me, that makes sense!

In any case, this movie’s dispiriting plot is a suggestive straw in the wind regarding my plan for starting my novel with the discovery of a Big Aha process that gives vast mental powers to a few of my characters. Like maybe in my

novel, the power-elite assholes are initially monopolizing the Big Aha in secret. They're using it exclusively for business-and-politics purposes.

But my hero liberates the Big Aha. He gives the Big Aha to the people.

### **November 4, 2011. Big Aha, Wacky Matter, Time Fan**

I'm still thinking that I can transmute the historical birth of the psychedelic movement into a part of my SF novel. It could all happen again—something I've always longed for. But this time not via a drug, but via the Big Aha mind-alteration that's not exactly meditation, but rather something more literally physics-based—done via physics rather than any, like, Sufi mystic route.

I'd like to see need some laboratory physics breakthrough to make it interesting, dramatic, and Silicon Valley. This is the angle that Nick's always hoped for. Possibly, later on in the story, some visionary can see that the laboratory equipment isn't necessary, and that one really can reach the Big Aha on one's own—maybe it will be some kind of mystic meditator that gets to this point, maybe it's the gypsy-like woman who becomes our hero's lover.

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The wacky matter angle is that people who've achieved the Big Aha can make local changes that are physical objective correlatives of their outré mind state. Peoples' houses might change into big shoes or have rooms with ceilings one inch tall, or maybe look like Dogpatch scenes from Al Capp's *Li'l Abner*.

Also we might have variations on the Big Aha state with correspondingly different types of wacky matter.

The Big Aha and wacky matter movement hit with force of the psychedelic revolution—the excitement, the liberation, the public ignorance, the denunciations by miffed politicians (who were keeping the Big Aha as their personal bennie before), and the ensuing international fad.

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Note that in that historical period of LSD, the atomic bomb was on people's minds, also the recent assassination of JFK. A heavy time. So we could put some of that into *The Big Aha* as well.

A related angle is the supposed fact that the CIA were the ones who first started disseminating LSD to the American public—under the guise of scientific tests. So we might have a kicker where Big Aha is a government or big business invention of some kind.

I'd need to dream up a reason for our rulers to be promoting the Big Aha. It might be sheerly for economic motives by the businesses—Big Aha hylozoic-type smart appliances are cheaper and less fractious than biotech-driven devices.

Or it might also be that the government sees Big Aha and wacky matter as a weapon, and they were planning to have people act like suicide-bombers. But this thread backfires, for now there are suicide-bomber terrorists.

These are rebel Big Aha devotees who turn themselves into a hole in space at some inconvenient location. What is the issue for these terrorists? I'd want to avoid the tiresome trope of Islamic terrorists. Suppose the terrorists are more like the anti-globalism movement. Aiming for society to decohere into a smooth spectrum of mixed states, to escape the boring eigenvalue wave functions that emerge from collapses. Maybe they're supporting the old biotech approach.

So I might run with the Big Aha ~ Acid thing, and then I could bring in the terrorism thing.

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In the last third of the novel, I could work in my time-fan theme. It could make for a big ending.

We start with the realization that quantum tantra can lead to quantum branching and the multiverse. And now suppose that one wacky matter terrorist actually makes a hole that's unraveling all of space.

So now our hero goes back into the past to change the time-fan. And it's cool—but then the unraveling follows



him out into the next branch of the fan. So he goes into a yet another branch, and then another, forever surfing across new sheets of spacetime, never quite escaping the ineluctably expanding hole in space that has, we come to realize, spread out into the superspace where the parallel sheets of reality live.

### **December 19, 2011. I Want to Start.**

I'm about ready to start on this novel. Yesterday I woke up and felt somewhat depressed—like I had nothing to look forward to. Having a novel-in-progress gives me something to live for. Puts a spring in my step. A cackle in my throat. “*Buk, buk*, an egg!”

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I'm still pushing on some core questions: What exactly is the Big Aha mode of thought like? What's the mechanism? How does it feel? What does it *look* like? What *is* the Big Aha?

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I've written or recycled a somewhat random few pages that I'd thought might be a seed for the first chapter. And in these pages I'm talking about a woman engineer checking in at her high-tech company's central office and she notices a recumbent bicycle like my friend Eric Gullichsen at Autodesk used to have.

But a recumbent bicycle isn't nearly as strong enough first-scene wonder. I mean, come on! We want something startling. An eye-opener. If I *were* to use a bicycle I'd at least want to have two chains coming off the pedal sprockets, and the spot where the chains come out is a quantum-indeterminate blur.

But I can do much better than that.

Another problem with opening the book in a high-tech office is that I'd rather not be in such airless confines right at the start. I'd rather have my main character be more of an average person, more of an outsider.

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I like that idea I was mentioning earlier, of a Phildickian character called, say, Zad who's running, let's say, something almost like a pet store, only he's been selling some little wrigglers, maybe they're called mighty mice and smart peeps. What Zad does is the opposite of what's done by the guy in *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*. Zad sells living things that perform mechanical, computer-like actions for you, while the *Androids* guy was selling machines that mimic animals.

And Zad is facing a newly developed problem with the biotech gizmos, it's some kind of biological virus called, say, gene mange, and the mighty mice and the smart peeps act oddly. They're fail-modes are surreal and darkly amusing but sometimes the failures are so tragically inept as to endanger their users' lives. So Zad is going out of business. And his wife has left him.

Zad decides to kill himself. He wants to die at some spot that he's seen on TV, some awe-inspiring but unfamiliar natural location. Not something obvious like Golden Gate Bridge or Bridal Veil Falls. He saw this spot on a YouTube-like video by one Veena Vikram, a video of "Crag Cave," which is a dark stone opening that seemed to open into the very underworld.

And Zad sets out thither, with a mighty mouse and a smart peep as his companions. And en route he meets the creators of the Big Aha. Possibly theirs a connection between the Big Aha squidders and the gene mange that afflicts the bio devices.

## **December 29, 2011. Blogging About Big Aha**

So I feel like I'm picking up some momentum now. I have several plot elements in mind, and I can begin to imagine stringing them together.

This week I've been posting some of these *Big Aha Notes* on Charles Stross's popular blog, where I'm a guest—I'll be posting eight entries. Charlie says he gets about ten thousand unique visitors a day. I signed up to do

this as a way to promote the newly published US edition of my autobio, *Nested Scrolls*.

The other pay-off for posting some of my preliminary *Big Aha* outline material is that it gets me to polish the stuff. And it makes the project seem real.

I get this heady, reckless feeling of working without a net when I go and post my ideas for novels that I'm still only vaguely planning to write. It's like I'm flying in the face of the "don't leave your game in the locker-room" adage. But I find it energizing, and a few of the comments are actually useful.

It's not so much that the comments show me how to build further on my ideas, it's rather that they show me the objections that will occur. And then I know to add material to disarm the objections from the start. And in doing this I end up clarifying my ideas.

This said, it's a bit of an effort to escape being dispirited by ignorant gibes from trolls. Trolls get angry when I say I'm not using one or another of their pet ideas. Many of them, for instance, seem to believe in the many universes theory, which isn't a notion that I care to use, at least not in *The Big Aha*. And of course most trolls are transhumanists with a strong emotional investment in the idea of digital immortality. (Idea for a story about transhumanists "A Day No Trolls Would Die," taking off on the young adult classic about a farm boy and his beloved pigs.)

In doing these posts, I have to fight back my atavistic fear of people "stealing" my "ideas." But by now, I know that they can't, anymore than someone could record an as-yet-nonexistent Beatles song on the basis of some scribbled notes by John Lennon. And really there aren't any completely new ideas in SF, any more than there are new chords or new situations. It's all in how you arrange them and trick them out.

## **Dec 30, 2011 – Jan 7, 2012. Writing A First Outline**

As I begin my long ascent, I find a haiku by Issa (1763-1837):

Climb Mount Fuji,  
O snail,  
but slowly, slowly.

The other day I started figuring out some names for my characters. At this moment the names are Zad Plant, Lulu Szasz, and Carlo Solera.

Now I need to rough out an outline. Sounds easy, but it's hard to do. Like trying to stare at the sun. An invisible X-ray sun that's not there. A chore you keep avoiding.

For a little over a week I kept repeatedly editing an outline, printing it out, marking it up, inputting my changes, editing some more and printing it again—until by January 7, 2012, I had something that looked sort of reasonable, although it still lacks an ending and I still need to make the plot into a sly maze with multiple reveals.

And then I pasted this outline into my Unused Outlines section—and started changing it some more.

### **January 8-11, 2012. Biotech & Hylotech, No Limpware**

I'm trying not to overdo it in terms of special tech. I'm thinking I'll start with biotech. And the Big Aha can be a bridge to hylotech. By "hylotech," I mean the technology of controlling and tweaking the quantum computations that are native to physical objects.

I also want a Big Aha side-effect whereby a person can become invisible—perhaps you disincorporate or, putting it more technically, you demux (demultiplex) your quantum wave function into a physical and a ghostly form, and perhaps you can use hylotech to braincast this ghostly form into some natural phenomenon for purposes of short-term or even long-term storage. "Within this stone I live on."

But I *won't* go into the time-fan routine or into the infinite Higher Plane. I'll save those two for other possible stories or novels.

So I'm saying that I'd like *The Big Aha* to be near-future and somewhat realistic—to the extent that any of my books fits this desideratum. I'm talking about a futurist, nuts-and-bolts description of the coming of biotech and hylotech.

I've written about biotech and hylotech before. Both biotech and hylotech are in *Saucer Wisdom*; biotech is in *Frek*; and hylotech is in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*.

I see the Big Aha as a bridge between biotech and hylotech. And the on-ramp to this bridge will be when we start, in effect, tweaking the quantum computations of living organisms—these are the so-called nurbs that we're using as biotech devices. So the on-ramp is when we learn to tweak the QC inherent in some of our nurbs.

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If I have biotech and hylotech, then what about that *third* kind of non-traditional computation that I've written about? I'm referring to piezoplastic or limpware computers—such as the moldies and silly putters of *Freeware* and *Realware*. Not to mention the soft, back-of-the-neck uvvy communication devices that appear in so many of my tales. And the other piezoplastic devices described in *Saucer Wisdom*—such as the slug-feet for cars, and the smart blob chairs, and the sluggie replacements for silicon chips.

But, as I'm saying, for the sake of simplicity, I don't want to have any soft plastic computers in *The Big Aha*. No limpware engineering.

One specific issue comes to mind. I *would* like to have uvvies—the soft super-communication devices that live on the backs of people's necks. But I'd want to make them be biotech. And then we have the marketing issue that putting a biological parasite on your neck seems creepier than slapping on some soft plastic. Certainly you wouldn't want a biological uvvy to be twitchy and slimy and moving around all the time.

I think I'll work with two models of bio-uvvies. An older one, made by a company called Maunderwell, and a newer model, made by Slygro, the company where my hero's uncle works.

I see the Maunderwell uvvy as being a small beige shelf mushroom that grows onto your neck, it's rubbery but fairly stiff. It interfaces with you via fungal hyphae that it grows into your spinal cord and even up into your cerebellum. You usually leave it on all the time, otherwise the thing has to grow fresh hyphae into you.

And the Slygro uvvy will instead use an interface based on quantum fields. Quantum biotech! The heart of the thing is a field-sensitive platypus beak. It attaches itself to your neck with the non-slimy foot-pads of house flies, or maybe of geckos, which use lots of fine hairs I think. But—as the Slygro ads will stress—these microscopic hairs penetrate less than a tenth of a millimeter into the top layers of your skin. They don't tap into your spinal cord like the scary hyphae of the Maunderwell uvvy.

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And what about a living beanbag chair? Is that going to be a big lump of chicken muscle or something? Icky. Okay, how about having it be more like foam. A culture of bubbles. A colony of leathery spore thingies that hold onto each other with little hands. Or they're like burrs that seem smooth as suede, as their Velcro-like fastener hooks-and-eyes are so small.

And what about a big slug foot to replace the wheels of a car? Well, that can be slimy, that's okay, it's just a car. And, as in *Frek*, we can have wall displays that are made of squidskin, that's not a problem. And you can, in a few retrofitting-type cases, you can, if you must, replace a computer chip in some stiff old silicon age device with a hyperactive biological sluggie that has electrical input/outputs.

## **January 12-15, 2012. Want to Start, A Detailed World**

I've got a second version of the outline in fairly good shape now, enough for at least a third and maybe half of the book. I can't really expect to see much further into the outline at this point—it gets so hypothetical.

So that means it's time to write the first page of the novel itself...and to go one from there. Stage fright. The anxiety of the goalie at the penalty kick. The dread of the blank page. But it's also a joy, as when facing a blank canvas or a virgin field of new-fallen snow.

I'm in fact eager to start. My life's too empty without my imaginary friends.

But wait, hold on, there's three more things that I should take a quick look at first.

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(1) The first thing is that I'd like to thicken up my vision of the **characters** a bit more. Sketch out their back stories, personality quirks, and physical appearances. Okay, fine I'll work on it this week.

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(2) A second thing is that I need a world-threatening **menace**. Let's not do alien invasion this time, not even subbies from the subdimensions. And, *umm*, I already used the "false vacuum" hole-in-space number in *Spaceland*. So—?

Oh, I've got it, I'll do the domain flip. The spacetime signature of our local part of the cosmos flips from  $3+1$  to, say,  $2+2$  and then even to  $1+3$ , that is, to one-dimensional space and three-dimensional time. And then I can do a chapter in the fucked-up  $2+2$  and  $1+3$  worlds, which is something new that I'd really like. And then, thanks to Zad and Reepicheep and Loulou, we come back.

In this scenario we also need an evil villain who precipitates the flip for his own vile and insane purposes. I'm assuming that would be the CEO of Maunderwell, Inc. Or a stupid politico like George Bush—a guy who doesn't even realize what the flip will entail. He just thinks it'll do something like funnel more money to rich people. This would be a nice satirical touch.

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(3) The third thing is that I'd like to find something **unique** to make this book stand out in my mind. Something that makes me super-eager to write it. Some kind of

challenge. It'll be the book about...what? The book that had...what?

\* Maybe an orgy with Zad, Keira and Loulou? Well, I *did* have a three-way with two men and a woman in *Mathematicians in Love*. Paul, Bela and, was it Alma? Sure, maybe an orgy. How about a psychopathic murder? Well, I had one of those in *Mathematicians in Love*, and in *Jim and the Flims*. No reason that I can't have an orgy and a murder, they're crowd-pleasers, but still—I need to find something new.

\* My reflexive response in this situation is to reach for some additional SF gimmick.

Like maybe the power of flight—I did that before in *Master of Space and Time*—but it might be worth revisiting. I don't think I ever had the ability to levitate being distributed as a commercial *mass-market* kind of body upgrade. Others have done this, I remember a great mainstream literary story by a Russian guy about flight, and of course there's Tom Disch's *On Wings of Song*. So maybe I throw in levitation.

Or maybe the infinite Higher Plane. Zad might be on the trail of Carlo, perhaps looking for a different version of Earth where “everything works out.”

But I'm thinking I shouldn't just pile on more SF wonders like I always do. I mean, that's fun and all, but at some point the readers tire of that. They'd rather you stay in one place and flesh out what you've already got. I mean, I'm already talking about biotech and then the Big Aha leading to hylotech, wacky matter, and some cosmic disaster such as a spacetime-domain signature flip. That ought to be enough.

\* Another thought is that one of the “different” things about this book might be stylistic. I've been revising my Point of View and Tense section while writing this entry, working out some thoughts. Should I write *The Big Aha* in the present tense? The narrative voice can be in a mild Californian dialect, without going overboard and getting



parodistic or gauche—a voice something like the voice of Jim from *Jim and the Flims*.

But here again, I'm worried this is just a gimmick, perhaps obtrusive. I know very well how to write. Why not just write easily and conversationally and in the third person. One alteration is that I might use a rotating third-person viewpoint.

\* What I really need is some detailed futurism, a lot of plot, and rich, unforgettable characters. This is, in it's own way, somewhat of a change for me. Write a whole book like the first few chapters of *Frek and the Elixir*—before I sent Frek off across the galaxy. Just stay in the one world, looking at aspects of it and setting up a plot.

### **January 16, 2012. Page One.**

So on Jan 16, 2012, sitting in the Great Bear cafe, I managed to write a first draft of a first page for *The Big Aha*. I slap my brush onto the canvas.

I'd recently read the *Paris Review* interview with William Gibson, and Bill is like, "I don't write outlines. All I need for starting a book is a good first sentence." And naturally I began obscurely brooding over this. And then I turned it into a self-referential thing. Even though I'm sure others have used this twist, I think I'll go with it.

"What's your first sentence?"

And then I got into a scene with Uncle Carlo, my hero Zad, and Skungy the talking rat. I like the rat, I wanted to be writing about him first thing.

I'm still dithering on whether or not I can smoothly write the book in the present tense. Maybe not. Doing that feels like too much of a distraction. I just want to tell a story, to transcribe my waking dream.

As soon as started writing the book, I could see the outline will be totally changed. That's okay.

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Regarding my rat character, I'd initially thought of that mouse in the Narnia book, *Prince Caspian*, his name is Reepicheep. He's like a little musketeer with a rapier. At

first I was thinking I could get away with using that character and repurposing his name—have one of the characters *mention* that it’s being reused. (Oddly enough, I recently considered using a scene from *Prince Caspian* in trying to describe a possible edge of the world in *Jim and the Flims*—see my *Notes on Jim and the Flims*.)

But then I did a web search on Reepicheep, and I came across some YouTube clips of the live-action 2008 film, *The Chronicles of Narnia: Prince Caspian*, with these squeaky-clean *\*ugh\** British-accented child-actor s, and with a CG Reepicheep speaking in a light tenor, also very British. And that kind of ruined the name “Reepicheep” for me, it scumbles my fond memories of reading that book.

And, then, *duh*, I remembered my transreal principle that I should never base one of my characters on a character in a book or in a movie. So I don’t think of my talking rat as being Reepicheep, nor, for that matter, the cartoon character Ratatouille.

He’s Skungy.

## January 21, 2012. Breaking Out

So I’ve got about 1,500 words done now, and the outlines I wrote don’t seem very relevant. Like I’m breaking out of the scrum and getting into open field. Putting it differently, already I’m totally lost. Well, there are surely some things in the old outline that I can still use. But I can’t face revising the outline right now. I just want to write.

As I write I remember that I do possess a craft of weaving lines of dialog together, a craft of developing characters. It’s fun to be doing that, instead of worrying so much about what I’ll write. Get my characters on the page and let them talk. Trust them to be interesting.

I like the idea of a Zad Plant the Younger and an Older. My old Bruegel/Bosch obsession. I’d like Zad’s father (the Older), to be quite a good artist, a neo-Flemish painter. His paintings use the modern tech and they’re quite large. Also they’re animated, but without being poster-like. He paints

or designs some key frames and the system tweens it. Like you see the in-between images that separate the panels of a triptych. But the tweened images have a Photoshop-style filter to make the paint look like Zad the Elder's work. Perhaps we have smart paint.

I see something happening to Skungy, he goes kerflooeey, melts or something. Attacked by a nurb-virus perhaps. But I don't want to lose this fun character, so Slygro can do, like, a Restore so we get the Skunger back.

In *Hollow Earth* and *Frek*, it might be that I rushed onward too fast, when I could have delved more into the initial setup. So maybe I'll delve more into Zad's world that I usually would. A chapter on his car? A scene with Zad and his girlfriend Jane. Driving in his car.

I had this idea of people using biotweaked dinosaurs, flydinos, for transportation. But then maybe the dinos take over the book too much? Like that picture book, *Dinotopia*. Can I keep the dinos under control? Perhaps don't *call* them dinos. But I surely do like thinking about them. A woman lying on her stomach on the back of a giant rhamphorhyncus or pterodactyl. Huge leathery wings, so exciting. Great toothy, leathery beak. I'd have to find a way to make the dino material new. Note, by the way, that these dinos were only about six feet across at the most, so we'd have to giganticize them. I love the word, "rhamphorhyncus" because our daughter Georgia learned that word at school, maybe in the second grade, and like to say it and she could even spell it. Rham-pho-rhyn-cus!

Maybe the uvvy should be introduced as a new product, or I should go into its workings a bit more.

It might be cool if Zad becomes a spiritual leader who founds a religion. But it's more like Leary or Kesey popularizing LSD. Or Reich with orgone boxes.

### **January 23-26, 2012. Reset.**

Rereading what I wrote so far for the first chapter of my novel, I decide it's all wrong. I've written my character Zad is as a callow kid who lives with his parents, the jokes are

cutesy and somewhat lame, it feels like a young-adult novel. And I don't know where it's going.

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So I pasted all of that first draft into my Deleted Sections in these Notes and started over. I'm going to have a first-person narrator, still called Zad. He's not a kid, he's forty-something, abandoned by his wife, and he runs a nurb store—cf. the robot-pet store run by the hero of *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep*.

Skungy the talking rat is pushing his way into prominence, he's still on the first page in this new start. I claim his great AI comes from “quantum wetware,” a nice compact paper-it-over phrase.

The company making Skungy is local to Louisville, run by a high-school friend of Zad's, a genius. I see the company as wanting to make a whole line of rats, I was even going to call the company Squeaktastic, but I think I'll stick with Slygro, as ultimately they want to make something *more* than just rats. I think they'll want introduce the neck-sitting uvvy smartphone as I've described it many times before—without ever going into its advent.

I have a vision of a New York City with flying dinosaurs, and I want Zad to end up going there. It kind of has to be NYC because of the skyscrapers. And I can't see Zad trekking there from SF, I want him to be in more of a backwater, so I had the idea of starting out in Louisville.

Zad's friend Carlo can be like Greg G, and Zad's shop like Greg's old book-shop downtown in old Gloucester. I did write Greg-like characters before: Ace Weston in *The Secret of Life*, and of course Gibby in *Frek and the Elixir*, and a cameo as Joe Cube's uncle who dies of a stroke in *Spaceland*.

But also see Carlo as a bit like my old Sta-Hi character in the sense of not having a mental censor on what he says.

I see Zad as having a touch of my Louisville boyhood friend Niles S. That sardonic cynicism and gloom, mixed with excitability, ready enthusiasm, and dreamy

intelligence. Zad's a guy people admire and want to be near. A cool guy, like Willie F or Churchill D from high-school.

I'd been planning to make Carlo gay, but, no, I won't go there. This book might as well be very easy for me to write. And I don't think I should make Carlo be a *sincere* salesman and marketeer, it's more that he's temporarily fallen into this role. He's ironic about it. Carlo is smart, cunning, but not deeply and artistically intelligent like my hero Zad.

We'd also need a shadowy Gosper-like background genius like the nant-maker in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*. I can have him be a bit like Stephen W this time. But also like a rich guy from Louisville, and eccentric genius from an upper-class Louisville family. A guy like some of my big brother's landed gentry friends. Devil-may-care. He perversely insists on staying on the family estate in Skylight. A place like Angus McC's farm. He's a gentleman-scientist. He liked New York.

Loulou leads Zad from Louisville to NYC. She'll be an exotic charmer, I need some back-story on her. Hungarian, maybe. Or like Faustin B?

Zad's ex-wife? Like Ronna S? Pete McC? A Louisville party girl, maybe. There's always Diana V to fall back on.

I'll still need to work out a plot, but I'm beginning to think that it's hopeless to try and outline one again. Just get in there and let the fur fly. The outlining is just, truth be told, something I do to pass the time while waiting for the muse to arrive.

## **January 28-29, 2012. New Plot Ideas**

Going pretty good on the new first chapter, and writing a little on a third version of the outline now.

Suppose that Zad's shop is licensed as an art store. The Art of Living is the name. You don't need a full FGA (Federal Genomics Agency) license for limited editions of art nurbs. So Gaven Graber is using Zad as a channel for an informal beta release.

Maybe the rats will morph into the new neck-riding uvvy. At this point people are still wearing Maunderwell wrist-based squidskins.

The rats jump onto your neck and hang on and get into quantum synch with you? Too scary. The rat links with you from across the room via quantum entanglement. Zad notices, and then he's "bonded" to Skungy. The rat has installed himself, like a Bluetooth phone linking up with your car.

I see a picnic at that early-memory spot in Louisville, where we drove cars through pastures to be by a pond with cattails. Washtubs with ice and drinks.

Wife Jane Roller is wealthy, lives in a housetree by the river. Maybe they're not divorced, just separated. She wants Zad to find himself.

Zad got the shop from his parents. It was a gift-shop his parents ran, like William Burroughs's parents, or like the Vaughans with their dress shop in Lynchburg. And he turned it into an art gallery and it limps along, and then he sells some nurb pieces he makes, and designs a few. To pick up more money he starts selling fairly ordinary nurbs, with some decorations of his.

But, as I say, he has a loophole though the usual FGA approval system.

I'm almost done with Chapter 1: Skungy. I think I can start on Chapter 2: Jane. Jane's excited, Gaven Graber has invited her and Zad out to his farm for a picnic. It's June. The invite comes in while Gaven's still closing his deal with Zad via Carlo. Jane shows up at the Art of Living shop.

Suppose Chapter 2 is mostly a flashback of his life with Jane. And Chapter Three they go to an evening picnic at Gaven Graber's farm.

## **February 3, 2012. More About Nurbs**

I think I can work something of a history of nurbs into Chapter 2. Let's suppose that Jane's last name is Belknap, and that her father owns Belknap Feed in Louisville. Or

stick to Roller. And they make this food, nurb chow, that the nurbs need to live on. And the chow is largely based on tobacco. A new use for the now out-of-fashion plant.

At one point some renegade nurbs took over the Roller Nurb Chow warehouse and that's when the denurbalizer option was invented.

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The dream chair has no direct skin penetration. It's a web viewer, it doesn't in fact control your dreams. A hood pulls down over your head, like a hair-dryer dome, and you see the backgrounds. Little tentacles on the lip of the hood shoot accurate laser images onto your retina for the moving foreground images. The thing has bone conduction sound that goes in through your skull. It massages along your spine.

## **February 5, 2012. History of Jane.**

I'm getting going on Chapter 2: Jane. I'd like it to be a synoptic history of Zad's life, organized around his relationship with Jane, whom he already knew as a young boy. I can also work in the coming of the nurbs.

Just now I'm doing a scene about them seeing a cartoon on a squidskin screen. It's connected to two early memories of mine, recently unearthed. (1) A birthday party in a Louisville house, maybe in the Highlands district, big house, high ceilings, wood floors mostly bare, fancy heavy wood moldings around the doors. Echoing children's voices and patter of feet. The grown-ups have a projector and they show some cartoons on a sheet hanging in a doorway. Maybe we see "Apple Andy," a cartoon that terrifies me, with Andy's nightmare of a descent into hell. I found it on YouTube yesterday, how crude it looks now. (2) A school fair in an old stone building with various activities in various rooms. Maybe it's the Ballard school? They're showing a cartoon in there with a character diving undersea. A giant clam pinches him. When he opens the treasure chest, an octopus darts out, black blob with big eyes, I scream in terror and run from the room. I feel like later I

saw that some cartoon again and was more prepared for it. Maybe the “later” was even that same day.

Last night we saw Tintin 3D—what a difference from Apple Andy. I’d been imagining I could use a variation of my childhood cartoon memories for Zad’s memories from his party, but that party is in, like, 2020 or 2040. So you’d expect more of a VR kind of cartoon, or perhaps a Surreal cartoon. Maybe a dream cartoon, that is, maybe they have a way to tape people’s dreams.

And since it’s a squidskin, I think we should have a special effect where bits of it jump out and scuttle around the room. The marketers call it 4D cinema, though really it’s not 4D at all, but that’s a name they would use.

### **March 10, 2012. Second Chap, Epublising, Flurb**

I wrote Chapter 2, Zad’s memories of growing up with Jane and of the coming of the nurbs. A tasty bit at the end about a roadspider killing a colt on a Louisville horse farm. Revising now.

Coming up I want another flashback chapter and a chapter of Zad and Jane going out to a picnic at Gaven’s farm. Not sure which to do first. Maybe it’s more entertaining and suspenseful to alternate present/flashback/present/flashback rather than present/flashback/flashback/present. If I wait two whole chaps before going back to the present, the reader might forget about it.

In any case, I feel more like writing the present picnic chapter right now, and the flashback later, so I’ll write them in that order. I can always reorder them in the book later if that seems better after all. So now I need to think about what happens at the farm picnic.

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I haven’t been writing much for the last two or three weeks, I’ve been hung-up on making an ebook editions of my *Complete Stories* and *The Hollow Earth* and selling them via Kindle, NOOK, iBook, and as an EPUB file downloadable off my own site for Transreal Books!



[www.rudyruicker.com/transrealbooks](http://www.rudyruicker.com/transrealbooks)

This involved many steps: converting from Word to HTML to Epub, getting ISBN book codes, getting on the big three sites, and setting up an e-commerce system for my Transreal Books site. As usual with computers, this has been very fiddling and repetitive work, with a sense of blundering back and forth amid mud and thickets. In a frenzy. With sharp twigs scratching your face near your eyes. With nasty web denizens darting out to bite fifty-dollar chunks out of my butt.

Even so, before long I want to make yet another ebook before I forget how. Grooving the technique into my brain. It's just the first couple of times that are a full-bore nightmare. On the next outing I'll be able to develop a more streamlined work flow. And after that I hope to lay out a series of blog posts that comprise a widely a useful description of "Do-It-Yourself Ebooks." Gospel to the grateful throngs of less computeresque auto-eublisher wanna-bes.

So for the next eproject, I'm thinking about putting together my *Complete Essays* or, perhaps more accurately, *Selected Non-Fiction*, or maybe just *Essays*. Even easier than the *Complete Essays* task, I could switch my free PDF, *All the Interviews*, to being a low-cost ebook, maybe \$1.99, but that's not a real project.

On the near horizon are my science books, *The Fourth Dimension* and *Infinity and the Mind*. I got image scans and raw text files for these books from an idealistic San Francisco group called the Internet Archive, but there's going to be some effort in cleaning up the text.

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I've also been busy winnowing and editing story submissions for my webzine *Flurb*, issue #13. Tidily I ended up with 13 stories for #13, including one by me (it's Chapter 2 of *The Big Aha*). I'll do the layout later in March, but first we're going a week of vacation in NYC.

Sometimes *Flurb* feels like too much work and I want to close it down, but then I'll get an interesting story and a

responsive author who's willing to revise his or her work in the ways that I suggest. I'm getting much more proactive about the editing than before, at times I'm almost acting like a co-author. Putting the Rucker stamp on the tales. A real editor. Generally the authors are more than glad for my suggestions—they're grateful, even if at times they don't in fact do all of the changes.

Doing the editing on the other twelve stories, I had the agreeable sense that I know something about how to put together a story. Seems like the biggest continuing problem with the stories is the lack of a strong ending. In a literary or *New Yorker* story, it's okay to trail off at the end. But in the SF genre, readers pretty much expect a sky-rocket at the end. A twist, an aha, a reward.

Thinking back, the only one who's given me a really *hard time* about doing *Flurb* revisions is my peer John Shirley, in his story for issue #12. For #13, John sent me a ten-thousand-word story a week after I'd closed the window for submissions—and five thousand or at most seven thousand words is the max length I like to deal with. I was tired out when I got John's long story, and I couldn't face reading it and then having him argue when I asked for revisions, so I just said no right away. Maybe next issue I'll get something from him. Haven't heard back from John since the rejection. Maybe he's sulking. Well, I probably would too, if our positions were reversed. I mean to phone him and make nice, but haven't gotten around to it.

### **April 21, 2012. Lost the Thread, Transreal Books**

So now six weeks have gone by. We went to New York, which was great. I gave a reading there, we hit all the museums and stores, ate great meals. I met with my old Tor editor, David Hartwell, and with my new agent, John Silbersack.

Hartwell more or less told me that I'm through at Tor. The sales numbers. Squeezing out the mid-list authors. The death-spiral of setting the print-run of each new title to match the net sales of the previous title. The hoped-for

mainstream breakout of *Nested Scrolls* isn't happening. No hope for *Turing & Burroughs* at Tor, after all, it's about giant slugs and a homosexual love affair.

I had an autumnal feeling leaving the Tor offices—housed in the old Flatiron building on Madison Square. Pop showed me that building when I was a boy of 12, on my way to Germany for a year at boarding school. Who would have thought I'd end up publishing eight books at Tor.

The next day I had a nice lunch with Silbersack—whose deluxe office is right on the other side of Madison Square. Silbersack is a good guy, very cultured and knowledgeable. He thinks he has some hope of selling *Turing & Burroughs* to Amazon—they're getting into paper/ebook publishing now, they have deep pockets and are paying out some hefty advances. (This is distinct from Amazon's self-publishing channels, KDP for ebook, and CreateSpace for POD.)

My book's also been submitted to the mainstream house Outlook, to Hachette's Orbit line, and to Night Shade (by me), and maybe he's sending it to Angry Robot. I'm not optimistic about Orbit as they turned down *Jim and the Flims*, and the book's probably too SFnal for Outlook. Angry Robot is hot these days, but their books seem quite poorly produced. Night Shade did *Jim and the Flims*, and when I saw my editor Jeremy Lassen last month he said *Jim* had done okay, and that he'd think about *Turing Chronicles*, although I don't think he's read it yet.

Next week I'll phone Silbersack—it's always hard to get him on the phone, takes a couple of days, although he's friendly in person and insists that he's accessible. If he can't get something going at Amazon, I'll phone Jeremy and beg him to buy the book. I'm starting to have a blockage problem here—I sent Silbersack the final draft of *Turing & Burroughs* in July, 2011—that's nine months ago—and still not a peep.

It's hard to go all gung-ho on my new novel, what's it called? Oh, yeah, *The Big Aha*. I've lost the thread. Hard to get gung-ho when I can't sell the last novel, hell, I can't

even get the last novel *rejected*. It's like I'm a noob languishing in slush piles.

At this point, I can barely remember the story and the characters of *Big Aha*. I'll need to reread the outline and the first two chapters to get up steam again. But, as I say, I don't quite have the heart to do this until I get an offer for *Turing & Burroughs*.

Sometimes it starts to feel futile. So much scheming and fretting, only to sell a couple of thousand copies of each book. But the writing itself does amuse me.

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While the mute months drift past, I've been going ape with the epubliishing thing. I converted *Flurb* issue #13 into a free ebook. And I developed what I consider to be a more correct workflow while turning my *Collected Essays* into an ebook. I won't describe the process here, but I found it kind of satisfying to think it through. That old addictive blood-lust computer-hacking frenzy. My end result for the essays is a very clean HTML file that's wrapped up inside an EPUB package. I was revising the essays all the time, and I found a way to back-convert the HTML into a clean Word DOC.

My new ebooks are for sale on Amazon and on Barnes and Noble, and I set up an ecommerce site for Transreal Books, where I'm getting a few orders every day. *Boing Boing* blogged *Collected Essays*, which gave me a nice spike in sales. So far I've sold about 100 of *Hollow Earth*, 320 of *Complete Stories*, and 60 of the *Collected Essays* collection. The titles were epubliished, respectively, on Feb 17, Feb 20, and April 13 of 2012, so the essays might catch up.

Most of the sales are on Amazon, with B&N selling only about 25 books. I've sold about 75 off my Transreal Books page.

I'm selling the books at \$4.95 each, to make them kind of an impulse-item purchase. I might move the price up by a dollar pretty soon. I'm getting 70% royalty from Amazon, although there are various exceptions and surcharges to this,

so their royalty tends in practice to average more like 60%. And I get *all* the money from sales on my own site.

I've earned something close to \$2,000 dollars at this point, which isn't bad, at least by the beggarly standards I've grown accustomed to. If my ebooks keep selling, I could maybe match that in a year. So Transreal Books isn't completely futile vanity-publishing gig.

Quarters clink into the street-performer's hat. There's a feeling of liberation about it. I have my own publishing company! I'm ready for the future. I'm a flower pushing up from of the dirt and into the air. Let bookstores go bankrupt, let the old publishers crumble—I'm set for the next few years. Until the kaleidoscope turns and the whole thing changes again.

If I don't get an offer for *Turing & Burroughs* by June, maybe I'll get the fucking thing off my back by publishing it as an ebook? Still can't quite visualize that. If I did take that route, I'd get daughter Georgia to at least design a pro-looking cover. And at that point, I think I'd connect with Lightning Source for paper POD copies as well.

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One more twist. I've always worshipped this one particular Sixties novel, *Be Not Content*, by William J. Craddock. And now, thanks to my having posted a long blog post about the guy a few years back, I've connected with his widow, Teresa Craddock, who lives in Santa Cruz. I met up with her a couple of weeks ago, and she signed a contract giving Transreal Books the right to epubish *Be Not Content*. So my next project is to scan this book into a Word DOC and turn it into an EPUB. I'll be giving Teresa a good royalty, and I even gave her an advance check which, for some reason, she initially said she's not going to cash. But by now I bet she has cashed it.

### **May 11, 2012. "How To Make An Ebook."**

So now I've got *Be Not Content* ready to epubish. The scanning process went better than I'd expected—the physical scanning only took a couple of hours, and I got a

fairly decent Word file out of it, albeit with typos, missing line breaks, and weird font formats scattered throughout. The ensuing correcting, formatting, proofreading, and ebook conversion was a lot more work than I expected. If the scan process has a 1% error rate and the book's about 80,000 words, you're talking 800 errors. And I needed to make a number of editorial decisions about spelling and format. And write the intro and design the cover.

Anyway, it's done, and it looks great, although I'm still dicking around with the cover—I only managed to get the one photo of Billy from his widow Teresa. She was going to lend me more photos, but it never happened, partly because I only met with her twice, partly because she's a bit scattered.

I really got into Billy's head while proofing the book and writing the intro. And Teresa even gave me the phone number of the real-life model for the Preston character in the book, a guy called Andy Foster, now retired from a career as, of all things, a math professor at a college in Tallahassee, Florida. I would have loved to hang out with Preston back in the day.

The night after I proofed the harrowing final chapters of *Be Not Content*, I had an all-night dream where I was an acidhead or stoner and near the end I somehow got sober, or imagined longingly that I was sober, and in the dream I was so *glad* to be clean and I was hoping that my getting sober was true and not just a dream (within the dream). I woke up and I was like, *whoah*, I really am sober, and it's easy. Hallelujah.

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While doing all these ebook conversions I've been taking notes on the process so that I can do it again—these swarms of fiddling tiny gotcha computeresque factoids tend to have a very short half-life in my mind, they drop like flies, and if I don't write down what I've learned, I'm very nearly back to square one when I try and repeat the hack a few months or a year from now.

I made the notes into a series of four blog posts, and then decided—what the fuck—why not make it into a small ebook and sell it. *How To Make An Ebook*. Good name; in prosodic terms, it's made of three trochees. DAH-da times 3. I put it up the EPUB and MOBI files night, and I'll be giving them away for a week, and then switching to charging \$1.95. The plan is that the free introductory offer builds buzz. There really isn't a similar book just now, so it could catch on.

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Today is Friday, and I epublied *How To Make An Ebook* last night. I'm thinking I'll put up *Be Not Content* over the weekend, but not announce it until Monday morning, as there's more people on the web then.

And then I'll be done with ebooks for awhile. The next one will be my *Fourth Dimension*, maybe. But I've spent enough time in the byte-mines for the moment. I need to get back into my dreamy, creative novel-writing mode.

My obsessive blood-lust hacking frenzy of producing ebooks has been growing since February, and while working on this last pair of them at the same time I began getting heart palpitations. I had the same thing the time that Sylvia was out of town and I did nothing but program C++ and OpenGL for three weeks, porting my Pop game framework software to 3D, this was around 2002, ten years ago. I *hope* the palpitations are just from stress. Or maybe it's the new blood-pressure medicine.

At this point, I really can't face going to see a heart doctor again. Cutting off my caffeine consumption (from tea) pretty much eliminates the palpitations, but I do miss the brain joy, the caffeine molecules running down the corridors of my brain, flipping on every light-switch they pass.

In fact I'm drinking a pot of green tea right now, at the Borderlands Book Cafe on Valencia Street in San Francisco, feeling a pleasant white light in my head and a tremble in my chest. Sylvia drove up here to help at our twin granddaughters' pre-school for the day, and I rode

along with my bicycle in the trunk so I could cruise around the Mission district, which always interests me.

Borderlands, of course, is a familiar hang-out for me, it's the one place where I *always* do a reading when a new book comes out. It's like visiting another country, coming to the Mission. It's nice, and very good to get away from the ebook hacking.

## **May 18, 2012. Transreal Books Ramps Up**

I've just been ramping up on the POD this week. Turns out I can publish my own paperbacks as print-on-demand via Amazon CreateSpace at a *much* better price than via Lulu, like for half as much. So I can make POD numbers work, keeping the retail price at a reasonable level, like \$15, and getting about \$5 per sale via Amazon, and more like \$10 per sale via a "CreateSpace e-store" page that Amazon also lets you set up. If you tweak that page, you can make it look fairly legit. I'm just now putting out a paper version of Craddock's *Be Not Content* for \$15 a copy and selling it via both straight Amazon and via Amazon's CreateSpace.

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One thing I picked up from working on Craddock's *Be Not Content* was some fresh energy about the basic "Big Aha" idea I wanted to work with. The scenario of some young layabouts getting hold of a cosmic mind-expansion tool. But, as I say, I want to do it without the tool being a drug. And the tool should really *work*, in more concrete way than acid ever did. Obviously we're talking quantum mechanics, as I've remarked before in these notes. In particular, we're talking about Nick Herbert's notion of "Quantum Tantra," which is more or less a default notion for me by now.

## **May 24, 2012. Shadows from Hyperspace**

Isabel sent me a [link to a video](#) of the shadows of skateboarders. Their arms seem to grow or extrude from their chests, amoeba-style. I think of the 4D version, hyperskaters, and we see their shadows (as opposed to



cross-sections), and the shadows are ghostly hologram-like blobs somewhat like human in shape, only a sudden arm or tentacle can push out, and it turns out that our space has a nice 4D tilt to it, and the hyperskaters are riding down it. Their shadows are cast, not by our merely 3D Sun, but by a 4D SUN in hyperspace.

Normally our space is filled with the divine light of the SUN, and we don't know it. The SUN shines upon us even during our night. We see it as the immanence of things? Which would mean what? The all-is-One vibe of things, the connectedness, the vivacity, the realness, that's what's fueled by the beneficent 4D rays of the SUN. And the shadow of a hyperskater is a moving zone of desaturation or...what? Darkness isn't quite to the point.

I'm thinking of Flatland naturally. Kids are skating on Flatland. A Square and his pals could perhaps notice the wheels of the skateboard as shapes moving through their space, pell-mell, these wheel footprints could even move through houses. Or maybe, on the other hand, the wheels don't penetrate into Flatland. They roll over it. Maybe the Flatlanders wouldn't notice the wheels at all.

But the Flatlanders *could* notice the shadows. We could assume that the skater shadows, and the light of *our* Sun penetrate into Flatland. They wouldn't necessarily see our Sun in terms of light, though. The 2D light *they* see would be coming from a flat disk sun in their plane.

## June 21, 2012. Finishing my Journals Book

The Craddock *Be Not Content* book is all done—it's out on Amazon in ebook and POD editions. The project has been a huge pain in the ass. I won't go into the specifics—too petty. Suffice it to say that it feels a bit like a Dantean torment inflicted upon me in divine retribution for my many sins against my own publishers over the years. But the book looks good. I've done right by my man Billy C.

Still no final word from Amazon on *Turing & Burroughs*, and I'd been feeling hesitant about getting back into *The Big Aha*. So I decided to use my new window of

free time to finish off my *Journals 1990-2012* book. I'd printed out a draft as two Lulu book volumes, and I revised about one and a half of these volumes last fall, like, in October and November, 2011. Then got sick of doing that and got going on *The Big Aha*. And then I edited *Flurb* #13 in February, 2012.

Early in March, 2012, I got into making ebooks, starting with *Complete Stories* and *The Hollow Earth*, then making an ebook of *Flurb* #13, then my *Collected Essays* ebook, then a *Be Not Content* ebook, and then POD book versions of *Be Not Content* and *Collected Stories*. And that frenzy lasted until now, which is nearly the end of June. About four months pissed into a black hole. And I know I'm repeating myself here. I have no mind. I'm a business cog.

I *so much* want to write a novel again.

But first—just one last job, Louie, one more big one—the *Journals*. I finished proofing and revising the *Journals* over the last couple of weeks. As part of the process I combed through all my *Writing Notes*, intercalating the more diary-like entries into the *Journals*, particularly doing this for the years 2010-2012, during which period I hardly wrote in my personal journals at all. And where the remaining gaps seemed too big, I fabricated a few fresh entries in place, sometimes adapting them from my contemporaneous blog posts.

These days I'm more diligent with the blog than with the journals. It could be that I'm kind of done writing journals in the older sense of diaries. Whatever journal stuff I have ends up in the writing notes. So this has indeed been a good time to finish assembling my *Journals* into a book.

I did the final revisions this morning and I spent the rest of the day writing an Introduction. The *Journals* are done, a little over a half million words long. Well, not quite done, I'll still have to proof it one more time—I hope I can get some other people to do this.

This compendium is about the size of a book that I greatly admire, Andy Warhol and Pat Hackett's 1991 tome, *The Andy Warhol Diaries*. As I recall, I read Andy's diaries

straight through over about a year, getting into the flow of the various stories, really enjoying it, reading just a little every day. Like a breviary. A devotional classic.

I'd thought that Sylvia would insist on proofing my *Journals*, but now she's lost interest in doing that. As it is, I think I've edited out anything she might not like. And if or when she happens upon something she still doesn't approve of, it'll be easy enough to re-edit the book—that's a great virtue of ebook/POD publication. You just upload the new master files!

So I'm hoping to turn the *Journals* into a published ebook and a two-volume (probably) POD book this week or next. I have a slight delay here, as I'm waiting to get hold of an upgrade of the Adobe InDesign "typesetting" software that I use to lay out my POD books. I'd prefer publishing the ebook and POD versions on the same day. But it's just as well to let the project cool off for a couple of days. I can still clean up the format a bit more, while I'm waiting, and get the flap copy and the cover designs ready.

And—free at last?—just now I printed out the 11,535 words of *The Big Aha* that I wrote half a year ago. I'd like to focus on *Aha* again.

### **July 5, 2012. Hoping For A Restart**

So now, hallelujah, I actually did some work on *The Big Aha* over the last few days. It feels so good to be doing my thing again. Kneading the text, folding in plot levels, sculpting my characters, helping them talk. Writing is what I love—it's just the biz aspects that drive me crazy.

I'm done revising Chapter One—I opened up some more plot possibilities. I think we need a road trip where Zad Plant drives his slug-foot Lincoln Continental to Manhattan, accompanied by Skungy the rat and that mystery woman Loulou whom I already visualized back in February, 2012, in my painting *Loulou And Skungy*.

I'll have Zad try and get together with Jane, but Gaven Garber latches onto Jane instead. [In my usual uxorious fashion, I may have Zad get back together with wife Jane at

the book's very end.] Meanwhile, on the rebound from Jane, Zad has a brief fling with Reba, but then Carlo gets Reba back. Zad comes across Loulou, and she needs something from NYC, and they drive up there, Zad, Loulou and Skungy.



**FIGURE 1: LOULOU AND SKUNGY. 30" X 30", FEB, 2012.**

So now I'll revise Chapter 2, and revise my latest plot outline, and be back at the precipice, uneasily staring into the void of the as yet unwritten novel. And I hope soon to be actually writing new sections of the book.

Muse: *Jump, Rudy! You can fly!*

**August 22, 2012. Journals on Hold, Turing & Burroughs**

I postponed going live with my *Journals*, as it still seems to have numerous typos. I can't face rereading it just now,

and am trying to enlist a couple of fans to do this for me. In any case, it wouldn't make sense, commercially speaking, to publish the *Journals* this fall, as both my novel *Turing & Burroughs* and the paperback of my autobio *Nested Scrolls* are coming out—and I don't want to undercut them. I'll do the *Journals* in the spring, probably, or next fall. I guess I'm also having second thoughts about the level of personal revelation involved.

Meanwhile I'm definitely self-publishing *Turing & Burroughs*, and I've been doing some work on that. I had a fan proof it, then did a fairly extensive final (?) revision, and now I'm getting two or three fans and friends to proof it again.

Last year, Tor goofed and used the wrong manuscript file for the hardback edition of *Nested Scrolls*, didn't let me see page proofs, and then published their version loaded with typos, and I caught some flak for this in some reviews. I don't want that to happen with my Transreal Books editions.

I still have some setup work to do for *Turing & Burroughs* before going public. I need to get the POD in place at Lightning (for wholesale) as well as at Amazon CreateSpace (for retail), plus the ebook editions. Need to make a nice cover, maybe get my daughter Georgia to help. Try and get some blurbs, I'm already sending out some proof-edition PDF versions. Make a web page for the book. Maybe mail out some printed review copies to places like *Locus* and *PW*. Won't be done with all this till late September or early October.

### **August 24, 2012. Ideas for Chapter 3 and Beyond**

I see Gaven's picnic at that early-memory spot in Louisville, where we drove cars through pastures to be by a pond with cattails. Washtubs with ice and drinks. A wood fire for cooking hot-dogs. A whole bunch of Skungies. Some other entertaining and intriguing nurbs. A nice set of colorful Louisville guests.

I think it's May. Would be nice to include a thunderstorm.

Near the end of the evening, we'll get a little more into the new quantum wetware. Perhaps a foreshadowing of the Big Aha movement. Someone who works for Gaven is in some way misusing the QW to get high?

Zad tries to get back together with Jane at the picnic. But Gaven Garber latches onto Jane himself. Zad does an instant rebound from Jane, and gets Reba to leave the party with him, riding on her flydino, and Zad spends the night at Reba's.

In the morning, Carlo gets Reba back, or Reba gets going on yet another guy, a mystery man.

I have to set it up so there's a reason for Zad to meet Loulou. Zad meets her at a QW cult show? I'd been thinking of a roadtrip to NYC with Zad, Loulou and Skungy, but maybe I should resist that impulse, at least until I'm halfway through the book. It would be a nice change to stay in the scene where I start the book, and develop the characters and the human social intrigue—rather than, as is my wont, jumping into some kind of Monomythic “belly of the whale” and fluking out of town on a travel quest. Maybe the whale could be psychic (cf. the 60s acidheads), and Zad takes that trip without leaving Louisville. And, sure, maybe later they can do a Furthur kind of trip to NYC.

I wouldn't want to play the Kesey number in a Tom-Wolfe ain't-they-cool mode. The acidheads were out of it, and deluded as to the reality/meaning of what they were under-going. They interpreted a certain brain phenomenon in religious terms. And, when seeing stray old video of the acidheads, they don't seem very interesting. So have that lameness from the start with the wetheads or qwetties. Button: Are you qwet yet? Qwet=quantum wetware modified.

Funny that my character is an artist in Louisville. I have some hope of meeting up with a boyhood friend of mine, Churchill Davenport, who became an artist in Louisville. And the father/son art thing is mirrored in Andrew and

Jamie Wyeth—and Jamie was invited to the wedding I attended on Vinalhaven Island this week.

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Possible story arc:

I. Zad disappears into the Big Aha.

II. Zad has struggles over there.

III. Zad tames the Big Aha and comes back.

Well, that would just be the monomyth one more time.

Zad Plant descends to the underworld and returns bearing benisons and elixir. Maybe I'm tired of that routine. Maybe a different pattern. The love square, like a love triangle, but with two couples swapping partners. I used that to pretty good effect in *Spaceland*, which also, however, included the Monomyth quest-and-return pattern as well.

## **Aug 28 - Aug 31, 2012. Ideas for the Lobster Pot Story**

*Aug 28, 2012.* I was studying the lobster traps in Maine. They have two net-funnels leading into a back chamber where the bait is. A narrow slit in the bait chamber lets the smaller lobster wriggle back out after eating. So for a couple of years (?), a young lobster can hang out in the traps, eating and leaving. And then comes the day when a lobster has gotten large enough so that he or she can't get out. The trap is hauled up and they're sold to a diner.

Imagine this for humans, I've thought about this before. A bunch of restaurants with free food. You go through a one-way maze to get in, maybe there's drop-offs with the falls cushioned by trampolines. In the back chamber you get goodies. Then you worm out through a small hole. And one day you're stuck and you're taken captive by an alien harvester. Perhaps the trap is hauled up to a UFO via tractor beam. Or you're harvested in some other way.

The trappers sell you to some alien consumers who might eat your flesh. Or maybe they use you in some other way. Suck out your soul or your "wheenk" or your psychic energy, or maybe they put your brain in a jar.

Actually brains in jars is pretty stale. Like the brains are generating a VR for some aliens, it's not a VR of a human world but of an alien world. A twist on the *Matrix* theme.

Charles Stross had a story called, I think, "Lobsters" as part of his *Accelerando* series. I could call my story or chapter or novel something different, like "Lobsta Land" or "Wheenk" or "Brains in Jars."

As I mentioned, I may also use this concept as a kicker in *The Big Aha*. There would be a minatory correlation with the blown-mind acidheads. Go into the pleasure state too often and the aliens eat your mind. Not to get all after-school-special on it.

The dangerous aliens might not necessarily be doing this "soul eating" on purpose. Too corny to have them be bug-eyed-monsters in UFOs. Better if they're tachyonic, subdimensional, crooked-beetle, spirit-like beings emerging from an alternate view of reality. "Mighty Mites From Quantum Land."

Note that I've already written about these kinds of aliens as "subbies" in *Postsingular*, *Hylozoic*, and in "Elves of the Subdimensions" with Paul DiFi.

The subbies or the flame creatures relate to the quantum wetware thing of *The Big Aha*—how? You plug into the cosmic wave function and it's wiggly. And you can get stuck in this merged state, you're hearing the "voices of the gods," you're lost in the hylozoism, talking to all the objects around you.

I'd want there to be some definite specific combatable foe amid the mighty mites from quantum land, so that my hero could master them, or find a way to live in peace with them.

*Aug 31, 2012.* I would like to write the lobster trap story with Paul Di Filippo. I discussed it with him yesterday, and he seemed amenable, although he did want us to do what we can to make our tale commercially marketable. In the end, I might reuse some of these ideas in *The Big Aha* as well, although probably in a greatly altered form.



Paul says maybe the traps are malls? In a way I like this, as the symbolism is good. The malls entrap us.

But, thinking further, I like the idea of something smaller, more like a kiosk or at most a camper van on a street corner. Or a dive-bar. Something closer to an individual lobster trap. I see these things as simply beginning to appear, at first in out of the way places.

Looked at a pile of lobster traps on a dock in Gloucester I thought of Shinjuku hi-rise buildings in Tokyo with rows of nightclubs on every floor.

I saw a flock of sparrows fluttering in and out of the empty, drying lobster traps. The birds are souls of departed lobsters? Might use a scene of this as a closer for the story. The aliens have turned away from us and the lobster-trap-pile Shinjuku-type hotel stands empty and there's a flicker in the air as of the lost spirits flitting about.

Possible title: "Chix and Sheddars". Chix are small lobsters, line one-pounders, and the shedders have soft shells. Either type might be able to escape through the mail-slot-like exit slot from the feeding room of a trap.

The people will know about the danger of disporting themselves in the traps. There's a bit of warning when it's about to be emptied though. And the chix and shedders (whatever that means for humans) can still escape. And *anyone* has a slight chance of escaping. So people can kid themselves that it's okay.

Who are the characters? A man and a woman is always a good bet. Then you can work in romance as well. They could be living in some place like Gloucester, and the lobster analogy could be quite explicit. Most readers will not know about the escape-slot in a lobster trap, so we'd probably want to show them one. The characters could even be a lobsterman and his wife. The lobsterman I've met on this trip, several of them by now, seem to be young and relatively pleasant men, energetic and a bit jaded.

The "bars" appear, people start disappearing. It would be too short of a story to just quit at the reveal that these things are traps. We need an additional twist.

Maybe our hero gets eaten and we follow him into the unknown and back? But, naw, that's like writing a whole novel. We need a tighter twist. A gimmick.

Okay: Haul one of the "lobstermen" back through the "beanhole" into which people are disappearing. And the captive alien lobsterman reveals a secret trick for chasing away his fellow predators. And then our hero effects the save, although with a dramatic reversal or two, and with, yes, a glimpse into the supernal unknown. And in the end, he (or she) prevails and then we're done.

But with maybe one more lasting twist. Maybe our Earthly lobsters become much harder to catch—although that could be too broadly comedic.

### **August 28 - September 3, 2012. Gloucester Writers Center**

I visited the Writers Center in Gloucester, Mass, for a week. My wife Sylvia was along as well. We were lodged in the modest former home of the late Vincent Ferrini, a friend of Charles Olson's and a beloved Gloucester poet in his own right. His film-maker nephew Henry's Ferrini raised the funds to set up the Writers Center, and my old writer/bookman pal Greg Gibson is on the board.

I gave a lecture on "Transrealism and Beatnik SF" on Wednesday, Aug 29, 2012. We had a reception before my reading—which was held in our lodging. A small crowd, maybe fifteen people. The talk went fine, with good Q&A at the end. I wrote up some notes for the talk in advance, and the next day I posted a podcast of an audio recording I made during the talk. By posting the audio, I reach a few more listeners, like maybe fifty more.

With me living in the cottage at the Writers Center for the week, a few people asked me if I was doing some *writing* here. As if this stay might be a unique opportunity for me. But of course I write a lot at home—for me, writing is the norm, not the exception. And, as I had my wife along, we were treating it more as a vacation, going out to see Rocky Neck and the Gloucester harbor Dog Bar breakwater,

or visiting [horrible error] touristy Rockport, or kayaking, or riding on the “pinky” schooner *Ardelle* (called pinky because the stern is pinked or pinched into a pointed shape), or taking the train up to Boston for the day.

But I did worry that I was missing an opportunity to delve deep into my craft. In the past I’ve occasionally dreamed of such a “writers’ colony” opportunity. Walking around the waterfront or sitting in my cottage’s back yard in Gloucester, I managed to jot some ideas onto my folded-in-four pocket-scrap of paper. And then later I typed the scribbles into my writing journal. I also walked around taking pictures. The pictures are in some way journal notes as well, like Stieglitz “equivalents” of my mental states.

On the writing front, I typed up a sketch of my “Transrealism and Beatnik SF” talk in advance. And I did some work on my notes for my next novel, *The Big Aha*, although these days it’s slow going. Like what is this novel supposed to be *about*? Also in Gloucester I wrote up some ideas for a story about aliens trapping humans in things that work somewhat like lobster pots. I talked a bit about writing with Greg. And I visited with my writer friend Paul Di Filippo in Boston one day.

Great to see Paul. I talked about the lobster pot story with him. We were laughing about this *disgusting* phrase that was stuck in my mind, “bean-hole beans.” It’s in fact a kind of recipe or preparation method, but it sounds so nasty. I have this Tourette streak, where some days I just keep saying a phrase over and over. Bean-hole beans. Possibly this fits into the lobster story. People caught in a bar that’s really a trap and they’re forced down the bean-hole.

So, okay, I didn’t score any wild, ecstatic, six-pages-of-text-at-one-go sessions at the Writers Center. Ideally the text is fiction, but even notes are a rush, if that’s all I can get.

I definitely crave “the narcotic moment of creative bliss,” as the John Malkovich character puts it in the film, *Art School Confidential*. Soon come. Petition the Muse for long enough and she comes.

Being a visiting writer was a nice exercise, even if I felt a bit like a charlatan. That's part of the process, too—getting to the point where I feel like I've faking it all these years, and I'll never write again unless I bear down and do it *now*.

And now it's *now*. I flew out of Gloucester to visit my brother in Louisville, Kentucky, for a few days. I'm sitting on his country porch with my laptop. The afternoon rain is pouring onto the pastel green fields. I want thunder in the low, gray sky. I want the fierce cracks and lightning stutters in the night.

And meanwhile, telling all this to myself, my fingers are flying. So, yeah, I'm writing. Or starting to.

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In Gloucester, my old writing and drinking pal Greg was bickering with me around the issue that he still drinks and I'm now many years sober. We were taking digs at each other. Greg and I speak to each other with very little restraint. To some extent it's because we're a bit like brothers, but it's also because Greg is so inherently outspoken, especially when he's drunk. Goaded by Greg's verbal attacks, I responded in kind. This gets painful, like bitter quarrelling, and it made me unhappy and uptight.

I feel sorry for Greg these days. It's sad to see his face all muddled from drink, and to hear his litanies of alcoholic resentments. But he still has his family, and touches of sweetness, and occasional flashes of his old wit, and he just now managed to build an enormous gallery building across the street with a studio for son Brooks and a flower shop for daughter Celia. These days each time I see him, I feel it might be the last.

When I have too many days in a row with people drinking a lot around me, I start to feel like I'm going to explode. Lots of half-empty wine bottles in our room as well—left over from receptions. Psychic pressure. Trapped. I have no mouth and I must scream. I hope to make it to a twelve-step meeting soon. That will feel *so* good. A moment of safety, an island of calm.

So I did make it to a twelve-step meeting, and it helped. After the meeting I talked to a newcomer for about fifteen minutes, and I could feel the knots inside my chest going away. The barbed wire unwinding from around my heart.

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Gloucester phrase I saw on a poster for a fishing tournament: “WICKED PISSAH TUNA EDITION.”

The Gloucester artist Fitz Henry Lane was poisoned as a boy by eating some seeds of the “apple péru,” and lost the use of his legs.

Things I saw in the Institute of Contemporary Arts museum in Boston and want to look up. Tara Donovan’s large cube of pins. “Karaoke Wrong Number” by Rachel Perry Welty, awesome. Lavie Auguste Blanqui wrote an early treatise saying space and time are infinite.

### **September 3 - 6, 2012. In Kentucky**

*September 3, 2012.*

So like I said in the last entry, I’m in Skylight, Kentucky now, on the porch with my laptop, enjoying the lovely sight of rain. I’ll need to put rain into the *Big Aha*. And envy about the family possessions you didn’t inherit, maybe Zad’s father has issues like this with Zad’s uncle. And the two big holiday seasons: Derby and Christmas, with multiple parties a day.

My big brother Embry picked me up at the airport. He showed me a 1950s house in the Highlands section of town that he’s buying and moving to with an eye to fixing it up, and then he drove me out to the big farmhouse in Skylight that he built maybe ten years ago. He just sold that one.

It’s nice to see Embry and his family, and it’s good to be in Louisville to get into the frame of mind to set *The Big Aha* here. At first I was worrying that three nights here won’t be enough. And at the same time I was thinking, “What the hell am I doing in Louisville?” Three days is what I have. Louisville is so intense and familiar to me that it might be enough of a sensory fix for the novel.

Driving along, I saw a lot of familiar things. We drove by the Collegiate School where my first girlfriend Debby went, down Grinstead Drive where the two guys died in an accident the night after Jane Brown's party where they gave us all unlimited bottles of beer, by my sadly deceased boyhood chum (and later-on writer) Mike Dorris's house on 124 Stilz Avenue, by the ever-creepy Baptist Theological Seminary, by the Crescent Hill water tower that I once thought I saw moving (impossibly) up and down, along Zorn Avenue where the cops shot a boy in the head because he wouldn't pull over in 1962, down River Road where I went one night with my Chevalier friend Bob Coblin during the Ohio's annual overflow and we felt so uplifted to look out at the flooded land. The evocative names of the streets. Frankfort Avenue, Lexington Avenue, Brownsboro Road, Chenoweth Lane, Blankenbaker Lane. And, right there on a sign, the *RUDY LANE* I grew up on. 620 Rudy Lane. "My name is Rudy Rucker and I live on Rudy Lane." Downtown: the Heyburn Building, the Starks Building, the Pendennis Club.

The barges on the river, bigger than ever, much bigger. Trains of three and four or more barges being pushed along. What do they carry, and what might they carry in 2080? It's pretty much brute mass. Sand, rocks, coal, and some long tanks of gasoline or some such. And steel is very big. I happened to see an article in the paper that there's more barging on the Ohio as of 2012 than in any previous years. It's getting bigger and bigger. Perhaps due to the ever-increasing cost of fuel. So, yeah, barging can be big and maybe someone gets on a barge in my story, or a stranger hops off a barge. Maybe that's how Loulou comes to town.

I'm still worried about finding a story and devising some good special-effects for *The Big Aha*. I like for my novels to take me somewhere new, or at least on an interesting ride. I do look forward to working on the relationships of my characters. Although, having just spent a week bickering with my old pal Greg in Gloucester, I don't want to push that bickering thing between Zad and Carlo as hard as I'm

doing in my current version of Chapter One. It can be dull to have two guys insulting each other, kind of TV sitcom.

I have a few good SF hooks for the novel. The coming of the bioengineered nurbs. The quantum wetware teep leading to an ecstatic state akin to merging with the Big Pig. I see a problem with some beings who are a bit like the subbies or the silps of Hylozoic. They could be figure/ground kinds of creatures—they were always here, but we weren't noticing them. The proverbial darting shapes in the corners of one's visual field—I'm always talking about these darting floaters, and by now I can't remember if they ever made it into one of my stories. But I need something else, preferably something that I haven't written about before.

What do I want *The Big Aha* to be about at the subtextual level? Finding serenity. Being an artist. Resisting the brainwashing of mass culture (and of alien memes). We are epiphenomena upon the bosom of the quantum One. Foam on the surface of the sea.

One possible theme...*getting old*. How would I dramatize the aging thing? I could break the book into maybe three or four parts (little groups of chapters in each part) and have each part be, like, ten years later in Zad's life. So we have him at 35 (with a flashback to his boyhood and his twenties), then maybe 45 and even 65. I've done multiple p.o.v., but I don't think I've never done forward time jumps though a guy's life. That might be interesting. I'd be using something like the *Accelerando* pattern, but staying with one character.

*September 4, 2012.*

"Neat, neat, neat!" enthuses the Louisville contractor woman looking around Embry's old house with three or four subcontractors in tow. Kind of a hoarse voice, restrainedly strident, her name is Laura Poppink, she's excited with her plans for the house. Odd to hear her tell me her New Jersey type surname—to hear it coming from a very Louisville woman. Fully assimilated.

Nice to hear that Louisville accent. Has an element of "uptalk," that is, rising tones on the ends of sentences and

words. Her voice volume is dialed up a notch past what you'd find normal.

In the afternoon I hear another rich Louisville accent, a checker at the supermarket. "I don't know *whaah* 'ats showin' zeero." The manager of a horse farm, talking about an upcoming sale. "I hope they have deep pockets."

Embry's handyman, John, talked about hoeing tobacco on the Belknap farm in his youth. Embry said some of the farm workers have "meth mouth," meaning that they have black and missing teeth, supposedly resulting from excessive use of Embry amphetamines. Embry also mentioned a friend who wouldn't shake hands as his hand was sore, bitten by a copperhead. He was *snakebit*.

I went for a walk in the woods this morning. It's like a rain forest. The tall columns of the trees above the underbrush. I imagine the lumps of nurbs fastened to the crotches of the trees—this would be at the next time-jump down the line when the nurbs have gone as rogue as kudzu.

Everything damp, wet, covered with drops of water in the woods. Bird calls. Acorns. Splashes of early autumn yellow on the stink-trees (also known, I believe, as trees of heaven or ailanthus). A pair of dead leaves spirals down, they circle each other, a married couple falling to their graves.

The ground is muddy red clay, with the crumbling prints of horses' hooves. My shirt is soaked in sweat after a half hour's walk. My skin slick all over. Inside the air-conditioning of the house, I hang my shirt to dry and don a fresh one.

Later, when I get back to California, I realize that I got poison ivy and chiggers in the woods. Parasitism.

Embry and I stopped by Carmichael's Bookstore on Bardstown Road, one of two Carmichael's in Louisville. The manger was a woman named Kelly, niece of the founders. I introduced myself, she'd heard of me, she was friendly, they even had my chapbook *Surfing the Gnarl* in stock.

Sign: Fences by *Raatz*. Great family name.



*September 5, 2012.*

This morning Embry and I had lunch with my boyhood friend Churchill Davenport in his office. He's started the Kentucky School of the Arts here in Louisville, raising funds from local society people. He has the use of two buildings, 70 students, a couple of teachers, including his wife. He's a great bullshitter as always, an ingratiating con artist, a formidable outsider. Wonderful to see him. He seems a little worn and frantic. There's a touching quality to him. He says he's an accomplished painter, but for some reason is unable to show me a single image of his work, nor can I find any online.

As I mentioned before, it's synchronistic and fortuitous to be meeting Churchill, as I have my character Zad Plant being a Louisville artist in *The Big Aha*. This is going to help me with the book.

### **September 24, 2012. Aha Story, How Big Aha Feels**

I have this offer to write a story of length about 8,000 to 10,000 words for an anthology called *Hieroglyph*. And I thought I'd use something from *The Big Aha* in here. I already ran "Chapter 2: The Roadspider," in *Flurb* as a story. So maybe I can take "Chapter One: The Qwet Rat," and add on an as-yet-unwritten third chapter to get a long story. That chapter one is 4,800 words, so another chapter of the same length would be perfect.

The idea is that my first chapter isn't standalone, but I could wrap up the threads of that chapter and add a climax strong enough for a complete story.

I have the quantum wetware rat in chapter one. And in chapter three, I clarify that you can get infected by the quantum wetware rat, you can get "qwet". And one initial effect can be that it flattens you on your ass. It can put you into something like a coma. But if you're loofy enough you can wave with it. Maybe my character is zapped, but with the help of Loulou and Skungy, he keeps it together and totters off stage. And that might good enough for a story ending.

In the novel of course, I'll take it further. Then what, then what, then what? Possibly I can jump-cut to ten years later? Like do an *Accelerando* thing to describe a future history of growing biotech-mediated psi powers? Might be more fun to stay in one time.

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The telepathy effect is something I was pondering this past weekend, while attending the Phil Dick Fest conference at San Francisco State University. My ideas start with this peeve I have about consensus history—the Man's "history" is all about politicians, fat cats, nobles, and wars. But the consensus history is only *one* path through the superspace of human thought, one threaded traversal of the mindscape.

Each of us has our unique version of history. And so does a grain of sand or a bird or a table leg (the old hylozoic thing). And if you were sufficiently telepathic, thanks to quantum wetware, you'd get an awareness of all the life stories and the whole block of the mindscape.

And this effect will be the titular *big aha*—or at least part of it.

How will the big aha feel? As I say, you might, at least initially, be incapacitated, or you might find some way to deal. Of course the merging with all minds thing has been done. So I'd like to find a fresh angle. I'll list some of the possible effects on the visionary, all of which have however been used.

Oddball twist: the visionary becomes a *chimera* with body parts from other beings. Would be good to mix some of this in, it's good to have a funky, meaty objective correlative for the fanciful abstract mind state. Maybe Joey Moon undergoes this when he has a fit at Gaven's picnic. Would be a tasty scene.

A "roving I" montage where you flip through different points of view. Recently I read this as the "Transplant" sequence in Robert Sheckley's *Immortality Incorporated*, and I think I did something like this in *Frek and the Elixir*. So I'm not sure this can be made interesting. It's dull and stale if you just start cataloging a sequence of random

bizarre points of view. At the very least you'd want a metastory thread connecting the points of view.

A mystical *white light* blank-out—this is coma thing.

Slightly less incapacitating: an *omniscient* mind-lift to a god-like and synoptic Hilbert Space viewpoint. I did some of this with my “Big Pig” scenes in *Hylozoic*. This is however not all that interesting.

A *hive mind* synergy where you're working with the minds around you. People hate the idea of hive minds, of course. Un-American! Of course any society really *is* a hive mind.

So instead we talk about a *network* of hubs where each of us is reaching out and assimilating the other viewpoints while still holding our own.

I like the network image best. I was getting into this frame of mind sitting in a field up on St. Joseph Hill near dusk tonight. Imagining I was “in” the trees around me, in the rocks, in the deer wandering around (a small herd lives up there). Although I was reaching out into the other mind flows. I was still an integrative center. As if the other minds were webpages I was browsing on multiple screen, while I'm still being me in my Aeron chair.

Keep in mind that *any* scene involving exalted telepathic states can quickly founder on the reader's impatient question: “So what?” The whole interest of a character is that they embody a specific point of view. It's important to keep the individuality even if my character is teeping a lot of stuff around him.

## September 26, 2012. Getting Qwet

I don't want to keep my initial stipulation that they had to *kill* Joey Moon in order to program his personality into the brain of the qwet rat Skungy. That's the same old move as in *Software*—extracting a guy's mind from his brain in a lethal and destructive fashion.

It will be hipper and fresher if the rat was quantum networked with Joey in a very intimate teep hookup (possibly unpleasant for Joey). The link is totally invasive.

Like you're in a no-privacy connection with a company that might later send you push notifications that you can't filter out.

The qwet rat clones your mind, which might not be all *that* unpleasant although emotionally it's an invasion. And from then on, you have no inner secrets about your past. The qwet rat "knows where you live," and has a certain emotional power over you from then on.

As an additional twist, let's suppose that the transfer process involves infecting Joey with quantum wetware. A qwet rat has a certain amount of teep with *any* other mind. But for copying a person's full personality, it needs a high-bandwidth hookup (like DSL instead of the old dial-up modem). And this means that Joey himself has to *get qwet* (as I'll be putting it).

Once you're qwet, you're subject to undergoing that whole telepathy blast thing I was writing about in my note on September 24, 2012. But the big aha might not hit you right away. It be kind of latent for a bit.

So I'm seeing Joey Moon as a hillbilly type who works as a handyman on Gaven's farm. Joey has a hot wife Loulou—more about her in a moment.

One caveat—I think I'd rather not write in a heavy hillbilly accent for these two. The corny accent diminishes them, and is off-putting. Even though they would in fact talk that way. I did like the idea of Skungy being a New York sharpie. I guess he could be a Kentucky sharpie. Maybe Joey's a bit of a meth user. Dark-haired, a pool-hall hipster, a dangerous mofo.

Maybe it's Skungy's presence that puts Joey over the edge. He has a aha seizure while he's tending the fire at the picnic. Right before Joey's seizure, he's, like, looking around oddly, hearing the minds of Skungy and even of the other guests and the walking bluegill fish around the pond and the mosquito eaters and the AC frogs and the big old oak tree by the pond.

And I'll do something with Joey's wife Loulou. Loulou's helping to serve the food. Much of the food is of

course from a nurb horn of plenty, but they'll be grilling some of it. I see Loulou as a god-in-the-gutter kind of girl. Salt of the earth. She herself is quietly qwet, due to having had sex with her husband Joey—qwetness is, we'll learn, very contagious. She's had a big aha, too, but she's been handling it with the network move. She's not dumb or ignorant, just at a social disadvantage. "I thought it was just me," she says about her growing big aha experiences.

And the big aha hits Zad. And while he's going under, he hears the mind of Loulou, and she leads him out. And that can work as the end of the thing in terms of being a short story.

Who all is at the party? Figure 2 below shows a picture I drew of the crowd.

Carlo, Junko, Gaven, Jane, Zad, Reba, Joey and Loulou. The people thinking cube-shapes are getting the big aha. But Zad's gonna get it too.

Junko is Gaven's chief scientist. I could make her a cold and brittle Susan Calvin type, but that's dull. She's more of a fannish, slightly plump smart geek wearing somewhat uncool clothes. Carlo is onto her partly because she has a good salary.

Gaven wants to set Zad up with Reba so it's easier for him to take Jane. But Zad will end up, at least for most of the book, with Loulou. Maybe near the end he'll get back to Jane.

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A funky special effect. My character Carlo was bitten by Skungy the rat in chapter one. So now suppose that Carlo's finger swells up, really big, like a cartoon sore thumb. And then it splits open at the party, and a cute little quantum wetware rat crawls out. And the newborn qwet rat has already copied a personality from whom? From Carlo. And Carlo gets the big aha too.

Do this as part of the climax of chapter three. Maybe Carlo and Joey both seize up, and Zad feels himself seizing up too, but Loulou leads him out. She can't save Joey. But she'd *want* to save Joey, right? Wouldn't she be upset about

losing him? Well, maybe not. Maybe Joey wasn't very good to her. Abusive, neglectful.



### FIGURE 2: THE PICNIC AT GAVEN'S FARM

## September 29, 2012. Story with Paul Di Fi, “Yubba Vines”

[Meanwhile, here are some quick notes for the lobsterpot story I’ve been writing with Paul Di Filippo. I mentioned this before, on August 28-31, 2012.]

It was a mistake for me to spill so much of the reveal via Olala before, I’m dialing that way back. Olala went there with an actual reggae star, Majek Wobble, and they gorged and Wobble got taken. Maybe Olala went shedder and squeezed his way out? Or maybe I drop the shedder thing. I think Olala is an alien, actually.

The gunshots around the trucks are from next of kin of those taken.

Churchill is wearing Majek Wobble’s yubba vine.

When Bengt gets to the Lifter that afternoon, it’s a big party, an all-you-can-eat lobster feast. Only the lobsters are a little weird maybe. A “harvest special”. Bengt gorges and is stuck.

Cammy does see some people fleeing the Lifter. But Bengt not among them. Churchill is *not* aware that Cammy rode up on the truck. And Barb gets out of the truck too. So Cammy rides up unknown.

In the mothership they extract the yubba vines, send those back to Earth as rewards for their human helpers, but then they go ahead and make the humans into flank steak. The rendering room in the mothership is run by human quislings. The alien customers are glimpsed only faintly to start with, it’s that old thing of the unseen monster being the more scary, but I do suppose they are somewhat like Cthulhu cuttlefish for want of a better archetype. We’ll see one of them at the story’s end.

Cammy wants to mingle in with the workers, posing as one. But they detect her almost immediately. They go to lock her up in a cell to one side of the giant saucer’s single room. She sees them extracting yubba vines and butchering the humans.

An alien intervenes to make the “reality show” of these events interesting, and Cammy manages to escape with Bengt after his yubba vine is out, but before he's butchered. She'll have his vine and thus a knowledge or control over him perhaps.

Seen without the dazzle of illusion, the yubba vine necklace is like something if made by cannibal children from scraps found around their campfire. The loop's loose cord was bound around scraps of bone, stiff bits of dried flesh, tufts of hair, a toenail, and—was that a gall bladder?

“My pineal gland,” said Bengt, tapping the crown of his own head. “The yubba vine is a hidden organ network that we didn't know we had. You've got the circulatory system, the nervous system, the lymphatic notes and—the yubba vine. It's your personality's gerbil-wheel, the circle where your mind-spark rushes round and round.”

“I'll let you wear it, Bengt, don't worry.”

“My heart on my sleeve.”

We still need a kicker about Olala, I mean why is he in the story? And what was his seeming dysfunctional guidance app *really* for? It can't be a beacon as (a) Lifter doesn't know Cammy is coming and (b) Bengt has his earring for a beacon. It might be a tracker to be used by Olala's people? Or, better, it's kind of a video beacon tracking what the user is doing.

Possibly Olala is a federal agent or an intergalactic agent there to drive off the “fishers of men”. Or he's a rival human eater? Need something more surprising. I've got it, he's in with the people-eaters and he's producing a comic (to the aliens) show about the human meat trade. An alien reality show emcee. The aliens think it's funny that they're eating us, and they callously have a jokey TV show about the process. This'll be the final reveal. And, prefiguring this, earlier on, Olala is very teasing and provocative in his remarks to Bengt. Trying to get the most dramatic reaction.

[We've got 6,600 words, on the home stretch now. I integrated most of the remarks above, or sketched out the scenes, and maybe now Paul will finish it off.]



## September 30, 2012. Gaven's Party, Chapter 3

So I finally started writing on *The Big Aha* again. Chapter 3. I basically didn't write anything new on it since about March 1, 2012. So March through September went by with no new material—call it a seven month break and round that to 210 fallow days. (Although, yeah, I did do some revising off and on during this time.)

I've got everyone at Gaven's party and I'm 1,500 words into chapter 3. Joey Moon says he's hearing voices, and Carlo's finger is swollen. I need a build, a climax, and an exit, and I'd like to add 3,000 more words while doing this.

So here's what might come next.

Zad is eating, he's happy, he tells Gaven about his old cattail = hotdog-on-a-stick thought. "I can make that happen," said Gaven. "Right now?" "You have no idea how easily I can wetware engineer things at this point." He does it with something the call a geener. Zad wades out to get a cattail/hotdog.

Joey flips. He's drunk or sedated or something. He grabs Gaven's geener and points it at himself. The parts of his body begin changing. He's going chimera. He gets a fish body for one leg, a frog leg for the other. A rat tail in back. A tree trunk for his chest. His head stays the same, but with moth antennae and rat ears. His arms are hotdogs on sticks.

Carlo's finger busts open and a baby qwet rat comes out. It runs over and tries to bite Zad, but Skungy drives the little rat off. The little rat is a girl rat, and she's called Sissa. "Zad is mine," Skungy tells Sissa, "And you do what I say. You're my daughter." Skungy squeals triumphantly at Carlo. "See that, motherfucker? I can too make babies!"

Loulou grabs Zad and gets in his Lincoln, with Skungy and Sissa in tow.

"Take me away from here," pleads Loulou.

She begins kissing and rubbing on Zad, and they fuck in the car, parked down by the Ohio River.

Afterwards Zad is swept by a big aha telepathic revelation. “I’m all confused, I’m seeing everyone’s mind,” he tells Loulou.

“Oh get used to it,” says Loulou. “I’ve had that for a couple of days. I caught it from Joey. It’s the quantum wetware thing. It’s contagious. Joey had it, I caught it, you caught it. It’s like—telepathy is a sexually transmitted disease. But it can be good, Zad. We can find a way to make it good.”

### **October 4-6, 2012. Finished Chapter 3 + Hieroglyph Story**

I finished chapter 3 on October 3, 2012. It felt so good to be writing. I rushed the ending a little, I was eager to finish this step of the book, to move the narrative to the next stage.

Another reason (besides enthusiasm) that I rushed the ending of chapter 3 was that I was eager to sew chapters 1 and 3 together to make a story that I could send off to this original anthology called *Hieroglyph* and to get that commitment off my back. It felt important to try and get a story into that antho, as it might be a popular landmark, and I need to keep up my visibility on the SF scene.

In some ways quarrying out the story was a good thing, in that it got me going on the novel again, and it drove me to find a strong ending for chapter 3. On the other hand, sending out novel material as a story is a risk, in that I’m thereby exposed to a possible rejection of the story or to stupid-ass editorial suggestions—either of which could be discouraging or distracting at the start of this novel project. Well, we’ll see what happens, maybe the story submission will go smoothly. *Alea iacta est*. The die is cast.

I just now revised chapter 3 a little, and these revisions aren’t in the story version I sent off, but never mind, if they accept the story I can send a final version later. I know, from editing *Flurb*, that it’s annoying to an editor if an author repeatedly sends in fixes. One submission version, one final version—that’s enough.

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Right now Chapter 3 is 3,800 words. I'll thicken the chapter's ending later, add more words, get closer to 4,500, but I think it ends at a good moment—with Loulou fucking Zad and “infecting” him with the quantum wetware condition and with this condition's concomitant powers of telepathy and omnividence.

This condition could be what I'll be calling the “big aha” of the book's title—although there really has to be a *second* trapdoor, a higher lift, a bigger aha beyond this initial transformation. The bigger aha can involve talking to the flicker things (my long-sought seen-from-the-corners-of-one's-eye entities). And maybe I have my characters start a religion (cf. the Acid Religion of the Sixties).

If the secondary level is the *true* big aha, then the first level really ought to be called something else. Let's focus on the two terminology issues: The name for the coming of telepathy, also the issue of what to call the flicker things.

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### Terminology.

(1) The telepathy/omnividence thing isn't “the big aha.” It's...what? Magic eye. Crystal ball brain. Scrying. *Teep*—of course I've used teep very often in my other books, but I can't really keep that word out. It's such a good one. But I still need a word for the conversion itself.

Ah yes, getting *qwet*. Of course! I've already got the qwet word happening, and it's better not to be needlessly multiplying the made-up words.

Being a qwettie. Qwetster. Qwet-head.

(2) And the flicker things, what about them? Subbies (*Hylozoic*). Fnoor (*Hacker and the Ants*). Tweets (*Frek and the Elixir*). Smeel (*Spaceland*). But I don't want to bring in an old word with its baggage

Polygons. Wraiths. Darters. Aeroforms.

Jumby and jumbies. (Caribbean word for ghost, more often spelled jumbee or jumbie). I like this one, I remember my sister-in-law Noreen telling me about them in Grand Turk. And the zigzag boards on the ridges of houses called “jumby boards,” meant to keep spirits from alighting on

your house like pigeons. If we use this word, then there has to be a nod to the Caribbean origin, maybe via a Black character in Louisville. Maybe the guy is Joey's orderly in the clinic and Joey bites him.

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And now, sob, I have to figure out WTF happens in chapter four. And then and then and then...

I'm winging this book, with no real outline at all. The good effect is that my chapters are more casual and chatty—because I don't know where I'm going and am in no rush to finish whatever scene I'm on. I'm happy to let my characters natter on, vamp, chew the scenery, reminisce, eat up camera time. I let them talk and I write down what they say.

I remember years ago my friend Nick Kazan said this would happen to him when he was writing plays. "I get up in the morning, and I hear their voices talking in my head."

For me, the main thing I need for this novel's workflow is to have some material to work with, and some character development. Later I tweak the conversations to relate to whatever plot twist I think up.

The way to continue is to keep tidying up loose ends relating to the logical and social consequences of what's already happened. And throw a fresh monkey wrench or plot-lurch or *ker-sploosh* cherry-bomb into the pool of each chapter.

We'll be getting to the jumbies in awhile, but not yet. And they'll pose (or inform us of) some kind of threat or opportunity and then Zad and someone can save the day. Maybe before the jumbies we have the Church of the Fourth Dimension.

Uxorious fellow that I am, I'd like it if Zad goes back with his wife (Jane) near the end. Like in *Spaceland*. So this would mean that Loulou double-crosses Zad at some point, or she goes rogue, or she's taken away by aliens. Or she even dies. Loulou's problematic husband Joey Moon will play a role in Loulou's turnaround—it might involve

Loulou trying to save Joey, not out of love so much as out of empathy and pity.

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I see Joey escaping from his confinement in the clinic. How does Joey escape? Three options.

*Shapeshifting.* If you're qwet, you might be able to program your own wetware as if you had a geener—you become in effect a shapeshifter. So Joey could have turned into a long worm and crawled out through the drains. One problem with this is that I just now did shapeshifting in *Turing & Burroughs*. We will have some occasional shapeshifting via the geener, but let's leave it at that.

*Quantum Teleportation.* You dissolve into rays, as it were. You merge into the cosmic wave function and re-emerge somewhere else. A quantum tunneling effect. This is teleportation. I used this method in the *Postsingular* duology, although there we didn't have so much emphasis on the cosmic merge, it was more about getting into a mixture of two states, "here" and "there," and then collapsing to there.

*Hyperjump.* If you're qwet you can see the ubiquitous jumbies, and you can talk with them. And the jumbies can "lift you over" 3D obstacles, moving you through hyperspace. Walking through walls. I used this method in *Spaceland*.

The third option might be the most fun. Jumbyland is hyperspace. I by no means exhausted that rich vein with *Spaceland*.

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Looking ahead a bit, thinking of scenes.

\* That platypus scene at some point. My favorite part of this old scene sketch is the boss named Mr. Puffer, who's become a platypus who imprudently charges the cops and brings on a napalm drop.

\* Zad or someone else transfers his or her personality into a qwet clone.

\* Joey Moon, the furthest out of them all, will be the bridge to the big aha of jumbyland.

## October 7, 2012. Planning Chapter 4

At the start of chapter 4, we a long flashback of Zad learning about Loulou during their long night together have Zad and Loulou waking up in Zad's back-of-the-store quarters. Carlo and Reba are there to see them. The two of them are qwet as well.

Carlo is qwet from having that qwet rat Sissa growing inside him. I'll add some indication of this to the chapter on the picnic. Zad would not have been very keenly aware of it, although Loulou and Joey would have known.

Junko, being a scientist, sensed something was amiss with Carlo and wouldn't sleep with him. So Carlo spent the night with Reba and infected her with qwetness.

We have a nucleus of three qwetties: Loulou, Zad, and Carlo. And they're spreading qwetness. Possibly there's some organized attempt to confine or repress them. The FDGP, Federal Department of Genomic Purity? But if I start that routine, it turns into a chase story, and I just did a chase story in *Turing & Burroughs*. FDGP is a cloud on the horizon, mentioned by Gaven, but he doesn't want to go public. Or suppose he does go public.

Either way, we have the spread of qwetness and teep all through chapter 4, it can just be about that. *Explosive* growth.

Don't immediately jump to something new. Work out the growth of the qwet movement, and the effects of telepathy in some detail.

Is there some way to undo qwetness? To *cure* it? In *Frek and the Elixir*, I talked about intensive questioning serving to collapse your quantum state, to bring you down, to force you out of a mixed state, to "decohere" you.

But I'd rather think of a different approach this time. Maybe you undo qwetness by focusing on your particular, individualized past. Like in a self-esteem or discover-your-roots workshop. Me, me, me. You study your physical possessions, brooding over them. The technique is akin to

my method of “twinking” authors by immersing myself in their work. You snap back.

No, something physical is better. More SFictional Junko and Gaven event something that changes you from being qwet back to being a default, standard, normal entity. It’s a gene comber. Like a strobe flash that freezes you in place. I want to call the process renormalization, but I used that word in *Frek* to mean something else. Standardize. Flashfreeze. Lock down. Downsample. Collapse.

Near the end of chapter 4 we get this news: Joey Moon has escaped from his cell at the private clinic. Disappeared, even though he was strapped down. At some point Joey appears to Zad, Loulou, Carlo and Reba. Like Jesus appearing to the apostles. Like Tim Leary out of jail. Maybe Joey has the black orderly from the clinic with him, his St. Peter as it were. He converted the orderly by biting him. Or maybe, by using the jumbies, he beamed the conversion into the guy. The guy is the one who’s calling the flicker creatures “jumbies.”

Joey urges them to raise the level of their qwetness cult to that of a religion.

At a low, practical level, there’s an analogy here to L. Ron Hubbard promoting his “method” of Dianetics to the “religion” of Scientology. If qwet is the method, what’s the religion?

At first Zad views the switch as a cynical tax-dodge and law-dodging move. To avoid forcible collapse of your qwetness down to an eigenstate. But then he sees the jumbies, and he realizes that the religious aspect of their movement is real.

Practices of the movement/religion. Sacred dancing like Cheryl from Carmel mentioned when I taught the “Wetware and Stoneware” class with Terence McKenna at Esalen. She was driving up to the River Inn for the music. Also think of the dancing scene at the San Jose Zero1 Biennial this September, where each dancer has earphones, and they’re dancing in a virtual soundscape, this is perfect for the qwet teepers.



**FIGURE 3: THE CAST FOR CHAPTER 4**

### **Terminology.**

I need a name for the religion. I was thinking of my old phrase, Xiantific Mysticism. Can I get a one-word name? Xiantifix. You have the Xian=Christian thing, a hint of the



tranquillizer Xanax, and touches of Scientology and Christian Science.

But why not just call the religion Qwet like the method? Keeps things simpler. Usage would be like the way we use the word Islam.



**FIGURE 4: SKETCH FOR *LOUISVILLE ARTIST***

### **October 8, 2012. “The Louisville Artist” Painting**

I made a painting of the pair at the bottom corner of the illo in my October 7, 2012, Figure 3: The Cast for Chapter 4. These two people were in fact supposed to be Junko and Gaven, but I think now they ought to be Junko and Joey. Or, come to think of it, maybe they’re Loulou and Zad.

Re. this painting, by the way, I think I want to put a white vision-dot in the middle of the artist’s eye that looks now like a sightless black eye.



**FIGURE 5: *LOUISVILLE ARTIST*. 24" x 20" OCT, 2012.**

### **October 9-21, 2012. Huh?**

I had major surgery on October 9, 2012; I had my right hip joint replaced. I had a little bit of momentum that kept me moving on the book, like a chicken with his head cut off, and I wrote up some ideas about the Qwet religion over the days to come, and did a little tweaking on a To Do list for chapters 3 and 4.

I've been kind of unfocused, thanks to the pain, and to the pain meds I'm taking off and on, wanting to set them aside, but then driven back to them by fresh spikes of leg-ache. Well it's only been 11 days. This recovery feels harder than the one from my left hip replacement. Memory tends to erase the days of pain and boredom, I guess. The meds don't get me high, instead they flatten me out. How would you get addicted to opiates? What aspect of it would draw you in? Something to do. Peace of mind. Emptiness. Lots of naps.

Early afternoon today, October 20, 2012, my hip was bad and I took a pain pill. I was lying on a concrete picnic table in the park, waiting for Sylvia to get back from a trip to the fabric store, I was looking up at the oak tree branches twisting high overhead. I was like an undersea creature looking up at the drifting kelp hundreds of feet overhead. Calm, slow.

I felt comfortable with all the people around, the families, the balloons. Me a handicapped old man, grateful to be out of my house and in the world. Cut-off, wistful at my impotence, longing to reach out and be one of the herd. “I used to have a family.” But no sense of urgency, no sense of having to do something or to accomplish something. Comfortable in the absence of pain. Okay with just lying on the table. Bland and dull.

Would be so nice to get back into my novel again. And back into life.

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I’m proud of my ebook, paperback, and CC editions of my *Turing & Burroughs* novel. I even got the paperback into Lightning Source distribution so that bookstores can buy it. But it feels like the book’s flatlining. I’ve sold about 60 ebooks and 30 paperbacks, and I’ve had maybe 300 people look at the free versions. Several days have gone by without another purchase.

Should I really bother to keep writing?

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I got off the meds on Oct 21, and I’m feeling more like my old self. Smart again. Able to *do*. This morning I launched a fresh campaign to build up the readership for *Turing & Burroughs*.

And, re. me wondering if my writing matters, on Oct 21 I got a really lovely email in the evening:

“I’m Fabrizio, a rather mediocre engineer from a third-world fucked-up country. I may be mediocre as engineer, but I do have this love for maths and physics deep rooted in my heart. A couple of minutes ago I finished reading your

decade old book *Spaceland*. I feel happy, energetic and full of joy. As little times in my life. Thank you!"

So touching. Thank you, solitary Fabrizio.

### **October 31, 2012. Looking Ahead.**

So I rewrote all the teep and telepathy passages, and added in a sequence for the start of Chapter 4 about Zad and Loulou's night of teep together in Zad's bed behind his store. I even posted an "Oblivious Teep" draft of some of Chapter 4—my teep rap keeps getting better. What this means is that I'm convincing myself that my model of teep is "true." I need to be believing in my own routine.

But now I'm kind of stuck again in terms of story. I should draw out Chapter 4 a bit, have Zad and Loulou walking around Louisville maybe. Possibly visiting Joey Moon in the clinic eventually, but not yet. At some point in Chapter 4 or Five they connect with Carlo and Reba, who both have teep now as well. Reba's going to want to productize it, and they'll work this out with Gaven.

Looking ahead, I'll need something beyond the spread of teep. That's just a set-up really. I've got ideas for four chapters, sure, but that's only a quarter of the book, which will run at least sixteen chapters long. So what are my coming attractions? There's three I've been talking about off and on. Each of these could potentially use up another fourth of the book.

(1) The arrival of teep. (Almost done.)

(2) The psychedelic revolution scenario. Big underground spread of teep, and it's outlawed and becomes a hip thing. People discover the Big Aha.

(3) Scuttlers behind the baseboards of reality. Do my corners-of-the-eyes routine about being Qwetland darters, or jumbies—creatures that live out in the analog mindspace. Perhaps their time axis is perpendicular to ours.

(4) A journey to a higher reality. Land of Dreams. Land of Archetypes. Kingdom of the Big Aha. A threat, and a resolution.

So I should just vamp though most of the present Chapter 4. Make teep real. At the end of Chapter 4 we have a jolt: Joey's escaped from his clinic. And have the teep ban and fad hit partway into Chapter 5. And bring on the Big Aha in Chapter 6. We can have Gaven Garber get killed by some unknown person or force to set a mystery in play. At some point it comes out that Loulou is spying on Gaven's secrets for FoMoCo.

Fine, but what do I "vamp" about right now? Have Zad go and get that vat of slime-mold off Jane's apartment's porch. He can check by phone, and learn that Jane spent the night at Gaven's. Fine. He hires a couple of golem nurbs from Gurky Movers next door. Gurky is an interesting guy, a little like my old mathematical-logic friend Craig Smorynski, who I saw a lot of when we lived off that research grant Heidelberg.

Zad and Loulou get into a conversation about Joey's paintings. I need some cool high-concept notion about what they are, better to figure it out now and prefigure it.

Need to develop Loulou's personality. What are her hopes and dreams? I'll go back and revise her character sketch.

## **November 1, 2012. Joey Moon's Magic Mirror Pictures.**

Joey Moon says he's an artist. He wanted Zad to show his work in his Live Art gallery, but Joey wouldn't tell Zad what his work looks like. So at this point, I need to decide what it *does* look like, so I can be prefiguring it, and so I can set it up for a role in the story.

It seems like Joey was an artist before he started working on Gaven Garber's farm, so the gimmick can't be a direct lift from Gaven's tech. But I think it ought to be nurb-related. Simple idea: a squidskin that mirrors the viewer's face. With some processing tweaks on the face, akin to the Apple Photo Booth app.

Call it a magic mirror.

And I need more, something to kick it up a level. The face's expression kind of hypnotizes you, in the way that your mirror-image can fascinate you (especially if you're a teenager or a vain adult). And you start reacting to the face, and you get into a loop that drives you towards some extreme emotional state.

The extreme state varies according to the viewer's emotional make-up. The magic mirror simply feels around interactively for the biggest reaction on your part.

Some viewers fully freak out—raging in anger, weeping hysterically, frantically apologizing, roaring in rage, getting lost in grimaces. Their faces get so distorted that they look like Francis Bacon paintings. And the magic mirror freezes on a little blither-loop that peak intensity image. Later, if you want, you store that clip into memory and reset the magic mirror and collect another image. Or maybe not—maybe Joey freezes all images of himself or of those around him (like Loulou) and those are the finished works he sells, so that it's not something like a toy.

I saw something a *little* like this at the San Jose ZeroOne festival in fall, 2012, it was a video image of your face that showed your face decaying like a corpse, and with flies, and with fungi growing on it.

Joey doesn't want to show his magic mirror works to anyone until they go on sale, as the idea could be relatively easy to pirate.

Re. the software in the magic mirror, we can suppose that Joey has some nurb-hacking abilities. It's fairly non-technical, in that you don't use a formal computer language. It's a matter of learning to talk to nurbs in a certain way—later I can have some dialog where Joey talks in this fashion, it can be a little like how the Unipuskers speak in *Frek and the Elixir*, that is, with every sentence an imperative.

Later the magic mirror can help people tell if they're possessed by jumbies, it can play a key role in the plot.

After writing up this idea, I happened to be reading a horror story, "The Hungry House" by Robert Block in *The*

*Weird*, an antho edited by Ann and Jeff VanderMeer. And this tale reminded me that of course haunted mirrors are a very popular horror trope. So it could be that, down the line, Joey's magic mirrors are revealing the otherwise invisible jumbies aliens.

### **November 7, 2012. Final Tweaks On Chapter 4.**

I did a painting of Zad and Lou having teep all night. In the painting I was thinking of the rats as jumbies I was talking about, even though I didn't really put the jumbies into the text.



**FIGURE 6: NIGHT OF TELEPATHY. 40" x 30" NOV 5, 2012.**

I'm almost done with "Chapter 4: Oblivious Teep." It's been fun, I'm having my narrator bump into all these different people and interact with them. Taking my time, a little like in a Raymond Chandler detective story. Roaming around encountering weirdos.

I still need a punchy end for the chapter. Reba and Carlo show up, wanting to go public with the qwet teep. Or, no, they're already doing it. And that's the jolt.

In Chapter 5 [to be called “Scene of the Crime”], Joey Moon escapes, and Gaven is found dead.

I’d like to eliminate the geener tool I had Gaven use in Chapter 3. It parallels (a) a qwet nurb’s ability to (I think) self-tweak its wetware and change its shape, as well as (b) a qwet teeper’s ability to tweak the wetware of a qwet nurb, cf. Loulou’s ability to change the shape of a qwet earring.

Ruinously confusing to have two or three distinct causes for a similar effect. And teep and self-tweaking is enough of a wonder, adding the geener just muddles it. The geener is a good idea, mind you, but it belongs in another story.

I could have Joey be tweaking himself via qwet teep, and he doesn’t use the geener. I could have Gaven’s trick with the cat-tails involve making them qwet so that Gaven can mentally tweak them. So change the geener-tool to a qwetter.

By the way, it wasn’t yet obvious at the picnic that Gaven is qwet, at least not in my first draft. But I think it would be good if more people than I’d initially realized are qwet. Junko is qwet, for instance. But even though she’s been having sex with Carlo, she hasn’t made him qwet. She’s a little cautious.

Re. the qwet condition, I think it’ll soon be like the 60s when you’d be learning that all these straight-seeming people had in fact dropped acid at some point in their lives. Almost everyone you knew turned out to be “experienced.” We’ll get to that point in the chapters to come.

## **November 13, 2012. Plans for Chapter 5 and Beyond.**

I need ideas not only for Chapter 5, but for the upcoming four-chapter Part II of the novel. Generally I want Part II to be about the exponential spread of qwet teep, accompanied by shamus intrigue à la Raymond Chandler, by foreshadowings of the jumbies, and by a fad for a qwet teep Big Aha experience akin to the Sixties psychedelic visions of the White Light.



I was going to give Chapter 5 the title, “The Naked City,” but I might save that title for Chapter 6 when qwet teep really kicks in. Chapter 5 is more transitional, and more of an intrigue.



### FIGURE 7: CAST OF CHARACTERS FOR CHAPTER 5

Top to bottom, left to right, we have Joey escaping from the clinic, Jane in her housetree, Craig Gurky with his mover robots Gustav & Bonk, Loulou having stolen Jane's curio from Zad, Junko Shimano in front of Jane Roller's Glenview manor, the seemingly dead Gaven Graber, Zad Plant's shop with Zad & Skungy & Reba Ranchtree & Carlo Solera, the guard Artie in bed with his wife, Ned White the jeweler, and Bob Hardly of United Mutations.

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*In the notes below I'll outline what might happen to all my characters in the time-frame of Chapter 5.*

*On November 23, 2012, having written a lot of Chapter 5, I regrouped this listing to separate out what will be used later, in Chapter 6, or still later than that.*

*On November 28, 2012, I note there I already used a lot of these ideas and still plan to use more of them, but things are morphing and warping as I proceed, so the plans are growing less and less quite accurate. But I won't bother retroactively altering the plans, other than that regrouping that I already did on the 23rd.*

### **Use For Chapter 5**

**Jane** shows up at Zad's. "Where's my curio?" she asks. And this is where we realize that Loulou took it. And Jane wants that curio back, dammit. She wonders if Loulou sold it to Gaven. Gaven had, for some odd reason, known about Jane's curio, Jane now reveals. She wonders if Loulou delivered it to him.

Jane is annoyed with Zad, somewhat jealous about Loulou, interested that Zad is qwet. She herself doesn't want to have qwet teep yet, but she is wavering. And no, she didn't have sex with Gaven.

**Zad** feels it's his duty to go check out Gaven. He finds him dead, seems like a heart attack, flies buzzing around. Wait—those aren't *flies*, they're Gaven's *gnat-cams*. Zad looks around for the curio and doesn't find it. He does find a disturbing nurb painting of Gaven wearing a hideous expression.

And now the gnat-cams phone in a police 911 on Zad. Zad is a suspect because he's there, and because the gnat-cams are framing him. But somehow the gnat-cams aren't perceived as that reliable. On the other hand, Zad's spent-the-night-with-Loulou-Sass alibi is weak, with no Loulou around to back him up.

Zad gets out on bail, but his nurb-reseller's license is suspended. Zad goes to his parents' farm to cool out.

**Gaven** is dead but not gone. His body can in principle be repaired and restarted. And he stored his personality inside a qwet platypus. His medical directives specify that his corpse be put in a high-end stasis that's better than freezing, it involves boson shielding so that the flow of time in the object effectively stops.

**Artie** the guard was partying in his rooms while all this happened, having a good time with his wife whom he infected with qwet as well. But it may be that he overheard or teeped some of Gaven and Loulou's climactic scene. The translation of Loulou to the higher plane sounded like the explosion of a bomb.

**Loulou** has dropped completely out of sight, which is unusual in a modern city—where everything has eyes.

**Joey** Moon broke out from his "clinic" soon after Loulou left Zad's. The cops have found a magic mirror painting of Gaven, something that might have scared him to death, so Joey is a solid suspect—among the few who know of his art work, that is, Junko and perhaps Artie.

### *Use For Chapter 6*

**Jane's** father is dead, and her mother is senile, housed in the Roller mansion. Her brother Kenny still lives there, and is still a jerk, although he does take good care of his mother. He's a high-altitude aviation nut, and flies nurbs up to the edge of space.

**Reba** does a buy-out of Zad's shop and license, so as capitalize on the qwet teep publicity. She's interested in Bob Hardly at United Mutations, but he's not interested in her. He's the one who sicced the DoG on Slygro.

**Junko** has made the qwet tech open source. She's out to disrupt the world. She wins Jane over, gets her qwet, and sets up a kind of hippie teeper commune in the Roller family's huge Glenview mansion. They're spraying everyone who walks into the pad for free. Like an acid test. They believe in qwet teep like it's the answer to everything.

**Joey** shows up on the Plant family farm the first night Zad is there. He explains his escape from the clinic, and talks about how he recovered from his bout of madness. He

was lost in an infinite regress of self-self-...-consciousness. Orbiting a psychic fixed point. He forms a bond with Zad. He says he didn't kill Gaven, but that Loulou would have been able to, using a blank magic mirror.

### *Use Even Later*

**Loulou** sold the curio to Gaven in exchange for the qwet teep tech. And then he laughingly told her that the tech was open source, so she'd gotten nothing. And then she killed him with a magic mirror painting. And then she used the curio to travel bodily to the higher dimensions of Jumbyland, and we won't see her again for awhile.

**Gaven** can get back into his body later, with the platypus stinging the corpse with its spurs—and Gaven can become, in effect, his own zombie. I could use this technique for many zombies, if I want to go that mass-market-friendly route.

Gaven did get the curio from Loulou. But he told Loulou what it was and how to use it, and then he pissed her off, so she killed him and used the curio. It serves as a physical key or pathway to Jumbyland.

Later we'll learn that the curio was placed on the Alphabet City beach for Jane to find—placed by the somewhat omniscient and spacetime-roaming jumbies. Gaven had been in touch with the jumbies, and they told him about the curio. The curio goes to Jumbyland with Loulou.

## **November 21, 2012. Two Fixes: Privacy and Shapeshifting**

I'm two-thirds done with the Chapter 5 now, and I've used a lot of the stuff I planned in the [November 13, 2012 entry](#).

I have to careful with the privacy issue. I'd been tacitly assuming (at least some of the time) that all nurbs have eyes of one kind or another, and that everyone can access any nurb's flow of sensations, so that anyone can spy on anyone else who's near a nurb. But if this were the case, then I

couldn't have any intrigues in the book, no industrial secrets, no unsolved crimes.

I'd been trying to cobble together an occasional privacy by allowing a qwet teeper to turn off a nurb's flow of sensations, or perhaps to put the nurb to sleep. And I may still use this.

But I should set it up so that not just anyone can peer through the "eyes" of just any nurb. You can only see through a nurb if you are registered with that nurb as its owner, and this registration is extremely secure and impossible (or very difficult) to crack.

So this way, you only have access to what your own nurbs see. And someone wants to hide their actions from your nurbs, they can use qwet teep to hypnotize your nurbs.

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Another issue is the question of shapeshifting. In "Loofy Picnic 3, I had (a) Gaven changing the genetic makeup of a cattail, (b) Joey changing his own appearance, and (c) Joey changing Artie into a pig.

But I think it might be better not to bring shapeshifting into *The Big Aha*, as we already have quite a few other things going on. And I just finished doing shapeshifting in *Turing & Burroughs*.

So how can I water down the shapeshifting passages in "Loofy Picnic"? I'll change it to the following right now. And move the original version into the Outtakes.

(a) Gaven tries to change the cattail into meat, but this is hubris, and it doesn't actually work. In fact it kills the cattail.

(b) Joey doesn't change his body, he just makes a weird face.

(c) Joey simply teep-hypnotizes Artie into *thinking* he's a pig and getting down on all fours.

## **November 27-28, 2012. Starting "Loulou in the Oddball"**

*Nov 27.* So now I've finished Chapter 5 [to be called "Scene of the Crime"], and I'm starting Chapter 6. At the

end of Chapter 5, Zad gets bail. His shop is quarantined, he can't even go in. He finds his roadspider out back. He rides the spider to his parents' house. And then we start Chapter 6. This will be a soap opera kind of chapter. Operatic.

Zad's parents have problems, they're on the brink of divorce, Zad's father Lennox is having an affair with Zad's mother-in-law, Weezie Roller, now a widow. How gnarly for Zad, to have his Dad fucking his wife's mother.

Joey Moon turns up at the Plant family house that evening. Things reach a crisis between Zad's parents that night. Zad's mother Sally throws out her drunk husband Lennox. Zad and Joey decide to go to join what will be a burgeoning qwet teep crew at Jane Roller's family mansion.

And, get this, Zad's father comes along. It's a real mess, in terms of social interactions, almost unbearable for Zad, very juicy. Jane's obnox brother Kenny is living at the Roller mansion with old Weezie.

What does Weezie look like? Maybe like that woman "Pete" McC. Actually a nice person, even though Zad's mom Sally (naturally) hates her. I have to decide how Jane feels about Weezie.

Looking ahead, I'll suppose that in Chapter 7, the scene at the Roller house becomes like Leary's Millbrook, or Kesey's La Honda. A cosmic mode brother/sisterhood. Lennox Plant is settled in there with Weezie Roller. Zad's mother is maybe okay with being alone. "Your father is an ass. I don't want another man. One ass was enough." Or maybe she has a boyfriend.

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Nov 28. I've got about a thousand words written on Chapter 6. Zad is at home talking to his Mom, Sally. His Dad Lennox is in the studio/barn with Weezie Roller, Jane's mother. Sally is about to throw Lennox out of the house. A thunderstorm has hit.

How do I fill out the rest of the chapter? I still need a lot more material. I don't think we can spend it all at the Plant home doing, like, a Tennessee Williams *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* showdown-with-Big-Daddy thing. I think we'll need

to finish the troubled-Plant-homestead scene and move on to the Roller mansion.

Say Weezie flies off on her flydino, lit by the flickering lightning, nice image. Zzzt-zzt-zzt! And Lennox comes into the house, not that drunk after all. The breakdown of the marriage isn't entirely his fault, it seems. Sally is—doing what? Having an affair would be the obvious thing. Her young pottery teacher Petrus. Seems gay, but he isn't.

Parents are yelling, Zad goes downstairs, thinking “I have to get out of here. Tomorrow. Or maybe even tonight.”

A knock on his rain-watery glass door. It's Joey Moon. Joey explains his escape from the clinic, and talks about how he recovered from his bout of madness. He was lost in an infinite regress of self-self...-consciousness, and orbiting a psychic fixed point. But now he's made a virtue of this, it's a new mental trick. Juggling mental fixed-points. Encapsulating infinite regresses (like students of set theory learn to do). Zad picks up the trick and gains power. Maybe he even gets a glimpse of the Big Aha, the higher world, he seems to hear Loulou's voice.

Where is Loulou? In the “higher world.” And what's that? I worked out some thoughts on The Higher World in these notes, and I made them into a [blog post](#).

Joey and Zad form a bond. Joey says he didn't kill Gaven, but that Loulou would have been able to, using a blank magic mirror. They puzzle about where Loulou's gone. Jane calls. Junko has been working on her.

Jane wants to do qwet teep. She's tired of being a businesswoman. She suggests they take over her family's mansion. Her mother Weezie won't care, Jane's already asked, Jane and Weezie are pretty close. Neither of them much like Jane's brother Kenny.

Joey and Zad head for the Roller mansion, and old Lennox Plant tags along. Horribly embarrassing. Sally Plant, however, is happy enough to see Lennox go. Lennox wants to move in with Weezie Roller too, of course. Well, it's a big house. What the hell. But they'll still have to come

to terms with Kenny. The idea is to hit Kenny with qwet teep right away, that can be the ending scene of the chapter.

And Kenny *really* gets into qwet teep. He's actually going to become a kind of pitchman for qwet teep.

### **November 30, 2012. Gubs and Rathes.**

Flash: Kenny lives on a Laputa, that is, a giant nurb houseballoon tethered over the Roller mansion. Weezie lives in a one-story guesthouse. The mansion itself is standing empty. Ready for the qwetties to move in.

I was thinking about how often Murakami's long novel *1Q84* will bring in something very unexpected. And I was getting a little tired of the Mom-and-Dad *Who's Afraid Of Virginia Woolf* psychodrama of Chapter 6—for me, a little of that goes a long way, even though I'm always saying that my books need more of this soap-opera wheenk-type stuff. So I decided to have a green pig run across the floor, a green pig from the Higher World.

Earlier I'd talked about calling the higher world beings "jumbies," but now I like *gubs*. In the Dr. Dolittle books, the pig is named Gub-Gub. And gub is like grub or grubber. (I just saw a library book, *The Debulked Woman* by Susan Gubar, about her experience with ovarian cancer, but never mind that, the "gub" is the thing for me today.)

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[I had green pigs called raths in *Freeware*. I'll type in the passages from *Freeware* below. Note that the rest of this entry appeared as a blog post, "[Gubs and Rathes](#)."]

I want to write about some creatures called gubs in my novel *The Big Aha*. A gub is a small green pig from the Higher World, about the size of a football, with floppy triangular ears, and in place of a curly tail, a writhing bunch of purple tentacles. One of them might appear in your room, go *gub-gub-gub-wheenk!* Then streak across the room and disappear right before ramming into your wall.

Thinking about the gubs, I remembered that I wrote about small green pigs once before, in the *Freeware* volume of my *Ware Tetralogy*, where they were called *raths*.



So I thought it would be fun to post a couple of passages from *Freeware* dealing with the raths. By way of introducing the material, let me give you a little background on *Freeware*.

[People have found a way to program lumps of soft intelligent plastic. The stuff can take on all sorts of forms. My character Corey Rhizome is making small programmed plastic toys that he calls Silly Putters. He's family friend of a woman named Darla, and her twin daughters Joke and Yoke.]

On the girls' eleventh birthday, Corey showed up with a set of six brand-new Silly Putters. Chuckling and showing his gray teeth, he upended his knapsack to dump the lively plastic creatures out on the floor. "Remember Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky*, girls?" he cried. "Jokie, can you recite the first two verses?"

"Okay," said Joke and declaimed the wonderful, time-polished words.

*'Twas brillig, and the slithy toves  
Did gyre and gimble in the wabe;  
All mimsy were the borogoves,  
And the mome raths outgrabe."*

*Beware the Jabberwock, my son!  
The jaws that bite, the claws that catch!  
Beware the Jubjub bird, and shun  
The frumious Bandersnatch!*

As Joke spoke, each of the six new Silly Putters bowed in turn: the *tove*, a combination badger and lizard with corkscrew-shaped nose and tail; the *borogove*, a shabby mop-like bird with long legs and a drooping beak; the *rath*, a small noisy green pig; the *Jabberwock*, a buck-toothed dragon with bat wings and long fingers; the *Jubjub bird* with a wide orange beak like a sideways football and a body that was little more than a purple tuft of feathers; and the

*Bandersnatch*, a nasty monkey with a fifth hand at the tip of his grasping tail.

Joke and Yoke shrieked in excitement as the *Jabberwocky* creatures moved about. The Jubjub bird swallowed the rath and regurgitated it. The freed rath gave an angry squeal that rose into a sneezing whistle. The Jabberwock flapped its wings hard enough to rise a few inches off the floor. The tove alternately tried to drill its nose and its tail into the floor. The borogove stalked this way and that, peering at the others but not getting too close to them. And the Bandersnatch snaked its tail behind Yoke and felt up her ass.

“Don’t!” said Yoke, slapping at the Bandersnatch’s extra hand. The Bandersnatch gibbered, rubbed its crotch, capered lewdly, and then seized the back of Joke’s leg, shudderingly hunching against the young girl’s calf.

“I better do some more work on him,” wheezed Corey, grabbing the Bandersnatch and stuffing the struggling Silly Putter back into his knapsack. “I put so much of myself into each of them that I’m never quite sure how they’ll react to new situations. Quit staring at me like that, girls.”

“Uncle Corey’s a frumious Bandersnatch,” giggled Yoke.

“It was so sick how that thing was pushing on my leg?” said Joke.

“Doing *it*,” whooped Yoke. “Oh, look, the Jubjub bird is going to swallow the rath again and make it outgrabe!”

“The present tense is *outgribe*,” corrected the literate Joke. “It’s like *give* and *gave*.”

[Now we jump to five or ten years later. At this point, a kind of mind-virus is infecting the soft plastic creatures as the Silly Putters. An uvvy is a soft plastic telephone. Corey Rhizome is worried about a Silly-Putter-like toy dog called Rags that some enemies had sent to attack Darla. And now Darla and her daughters phone Corey.]

Joke told her uvvy to call Corey, and moments later Corey picked up. With their uvvies linked, Darla and her daughters could channel Corey together.

“What?” screamed Corey. “Who the fuck is it?” Instead of using his uvvy, Corey was yelling at an ancient tabletop vizzy phone with a wall-mounted camera and a broken screen. The brah’s only incoming info was audio. The vizzy’s camera showed Corey slumped at a filthy round kitchen table with the rath and Jubjub bird on top of the table, scrabbling over mounds of tattered palimpsest. The table was further cluttered with ceramic dishes of half-eaten food, a clunky Makita piezomorpher, some scraps of imipolex, and, of course, Corey’s vile jury-rigged smoking equipment.

The Jubjub bird opened its mouth hugely and clapped it down on the rath’s curly tail. The rath outgrabe mightily, combining the sound of a bellow, a sneeze, and a whistle. Corey winced and leaned forward into his smoke filter to take a long pull from his filthy hookah.

“Corey,” spoke up Darla before Joke could say anything. “I’ve been worried about you.”

“Darla?” Corey drew his head out of the fume hood and, shocking to see, there was thick gray smoke trickling out of his nose and mouth. “What happened to Rags, Darla? They took my uvvy away. Things are fucked-up beyond all recognition. How did you deal with Rags?”

“I killed him with the needler, no thanks to you. At least the two Silly Putters that I can see in your place look normal.” The rath extricated its tail from the Jubjub bird’s beak and reared back to drum its green trotters on the Jubjub’s minute, feathered cranium. The Jubjub bird lost its footing and slid off Corey’s table, taking a stress-tuned lava cup with it to clatter about endlessly in the low gravity. The rath outgrabe triumphantly, and the Jubjub bird let out a deep angry caw.

“It’s funny about those two,” said Corey. “Whenever the others try to infect them, they shake it off. They’re stupid, of course, but certainly no stupider than the Jabberwock or the borogove. I think maybe they’re immune because Willy used a cubic homeostasis algorithm on them instead of the

usual quadratic one. It's been a while. I made them for Joke and Yoke's eleventh birthday, remember?"

"You and your gunjy pedophile Bandersnatch," uvvied Darla nastily.

"The Bandersnatch is bad news," said Corey. "I admit it." On the floor, the Jubjub bird and the rath were vigorously playing a game of full-tilt leapfrog; repeatedly smacking into the walls and then bouncing around all over the kitchen floor, cawing and outgribing and biting at each other.

## **December 2-4, 2012. Keeping Control of the Story**

I'm in the middle of Chapter 6 [eventually to be named "Loulou in the Oddball"], and I'm worried I'm losing control of the story. First of all, I have Zad and Joey becoming friends. What is Joey like? I'm thinking of Churchill D.

I have Zad and Joey talking to Loulou, and she kicks a gub through their room twice. It's only about 7 pm in the story, so it's not plausible for Zad and Joey to end the scene by bedding down for the night in Joey's dank basement room. And I don't want the boys to plunge into Gubland—that's for Part III, and it shouldn't be very easy to get in there anyway. So now what?

(1) *Go spend some time with Dad in the barn.*

Joey says they should go somewhere else than Zad's parents' house.

How about Joey's house on the Garber farm? No, we were just on the farm, and I don't want to describe Joey's house that, and I'd have to come up with something important for Joey to fetch from there, and the DoG might be watching Joey's house anyway. Eventually we'll do something involving the Gaven-Graber-encoding platypus, but it's too early to revisit that.

Let's say that Zad and Joey just go down to the barn and hang out with Dad. Three artists. They make Dad qwet, they establish some working qwet teep mind tools, and they bring Loulou back from Gubland.

Possibly they'd like to go out partying in bars, but they're scared of a bust, so they sleep in the barn.

(2) *The new mental tools.*

Joey and Zad work out something involving the qwet teep endless regress fixed points. Zad learns how to make people qwet just by looking at them. He uses a hint that Junko gave him about how to do this. He makes Dad qwet. And Dad likes the idea of the qwet teep movement. And perhaps, as mentioned below, Zad develops a hyperdimensional telekinesis trick for dragging Loulou back over to his world from Gubland. But that would be overkill.

(3) *What about Loulou in Gubland?*

Loulou is an interesting character, and it's better to have her around. I don't want this to become a Zad/Joey bromance. So Loulou's first trip of hers to Gubland is just a taste, a preview, a promise of things to come in Part III or IV.

Working in the barn with Dad, Zad and Joey bring Loulou back from Gubland. The simplest is that she does a Joey-style regress and kicks her own butt like she was kicking the gubs. Or Zad can tether a fixed point to a psychic thread and throw it out like a grapple or a fish hook and use to drag Loulou back from the other side, but I think the self-kick is more concise.

At some point later on Loulou might be captured and dragged away screaming by the huntsmen of Gubland But it's too early for that. Save that for Part III or Part IV. And in any case it might be Jane who's dragged off rather than Loulou. Whichever one, Zad can go rescue her. Or Zad's dragged off and one or both of the women rescue him.

Surprisingly, Loulou tells Zad and Joey that she herself didn't kill Gaven Graber. Eventually we'll learn it was Dick Hardy of United Mutations.

(4) *The Roller teep commune.*

Quite soon I want them all to go Jane Roller's house, but I want to do that the next day, as I want a nice visual daytime scene for that, a grand entrance, with Kenny's

Laputa nurb balloon flying overhead. And two things have to happen before this.

First of all, Junko needs to get the Roller family to agree with the communization of their mansion. Possibly she'll do this via Weezie, who she connects with via Dad. Weezie has legal control of the house. But she'll also be working on Jane. And suppose that, when they invade, she'll go right up to Kenny in his balloon and convert him too.

Secondly, Junko needs to be rapidly spreading the qwet teep to get an initial rag-tag crew of followers she can lead into the Roller manse the next day like she's the pied piper. Suppose Junko is picking up this crew in hip Highlands bars on Bardstown Road the evening before. Possibly Zad, Loulou and Joey are in on this at the very end of the chapter where Loulou's been to Fairyland.

(4) *Love partners.*

Once we get all of them in the Roller commune, we have of an issue with Joey and Zad jockeying for Loulou. Probably Loulou will be working both of them. Keep in mind that Loulou is opportunistic and not necessarily that nice to Zad or to Joey. It's more like she keeps using them for things.

I could run the "love square" pattern and have Loulou be with Zad, and Joey hooks up with Jane. But I don't see Jane going for Joey, he's too low-rent. Forget the square pattern, and have Joey go with Junko, that would work. Junko has this naive academic's *nostalgie de la boue* regarding gritty punk hillbilly Joey.

Suppose I match Jane with the United Mutations guy, Bob Hardy, he's a Louisville blueblood. Hardy secretly set up the Gaven Graber hit and the DoG bust. He's happy to see the Roller qwet teep commune flourish for a limited time so UM can later productize a "safe" version of qwet teep.

For the match to work, I need to do some rewrite and make Bob Hardy much cooler than he's currently depicted. Jane wouldn't go for a robotic biz type. He'd need to be more of a bad boy, like Zad is. Maybe like that guy "Crow"

who was in Sigma fraternity and managed, to my astonishment, to date the divine Elaine Bahe. Or like Gavin W. or Willie F. or P. Stone. “Bob Hardy” isn’t a very cool name. Willie Stone? Naw, I’ll use “Whit Heyburn.” (Thinking of the Heyburn Building on Broadway across from the Brown Hotel.) Henry is to some extent a stuffy and (in his own way) pitiful Louisville lawyer. He grew up in the mansion next door to Jane Roller’s.

So: Zad + Loulou, Willie + Jane, Joey + Junko, Carlo + Reba, Dad + Weezie, Mom + Petrus, and nobody’s left out. And probably I bring Zad and Jane back together at the book’s end. Like in *Mathematicians in Love* or in *Hacker and the Ants*, Ver. 2.0.

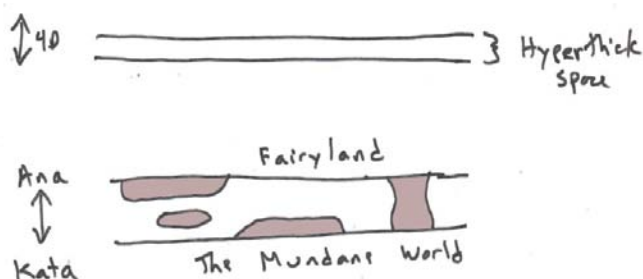
## December 6-8, 2012. Fairyland And The Third Eye

Nearing the end of the chapter where Loulou’s in Fairyland, and I’m looking towards the chapter to come. Right now I’m taking some time to figure out a science gimmick for a big effect involving Loulou’s trip to Fairyland. I ended up sharing this material as two blog posts. “[Cosmic Fairyland #1: How To See It](#)” on December 7, 2012, and “[Cosmic Fairyland #2: The Third Eye](#)” on December 10, 2012.

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I changed the name of the alternate world in my *Big Aha* book from “Gubland” to “fairyland.” I didn’t want to be fixated on the small green pig-like gubs. Lots of other critters in fairyland. I could also call it Wonderland, but that’s too specifically the world of Lewis Carroll’s *Alice*.

Fairyland is an unseen world that overlaps the mundane. Not a parallel world, closer than parallel. Not two sheets, one sheet. One world. We’re in fairyland all the time—if we notice.



**FIGURE 8: MUNDANE AND FAIRY.**

Left to right, Figure 8 shows a fairylander, an in-betweeners, a mundane worlder, and a hyperthick object that runs fully through from one world to the other. I probably won't have in-betweeners, and I'll probably have all unconscious creatures by hyperthick.

There's a small physical distance between here and there. That is, our 3D hypersheet of space has a slight hyperthickness. Perhaps its only on the order of the diameter of an atom. Or maybe it's an inch. We slide around on the bottom, on the "floor," and the fairylanders slide about on the underside of the "ceiling." For this reason we can easily "move through" (that is, "sidle past") each other, and we're close to invisible to each other.

Admittedly the hyperthick model sounds very much like a two-sheets model with parallel worlds. But there's a slight difference. In the two sheets model, you have a void of empty hyperspace between the two sheets. In the hyperthick model, you have two zones in one shared "room." Particles can drift across from one zone to the other, and switching zones isn't so difficult as switching sheets. Think of manta rays raising and lowering themselves within a very low-ceilinged cave.

Since we're in one room, a certain amount of energy radiates out into the full hyperthickness of our space sheet, so we can faintly see fairyland if we try. And vice-versa.



Some entities—like hills and trees—reach through from the mundane to the fairy zones. So we have pretty much the same geography and landscape in the two zones. But things look different. The trees seem soft up there, they writhe and they talk. Our houses look like holograms over there, like shapes of light.

To go to fairyland, you jolt your worldview. You do a mundane/fairy shift. And suddenly everything looks fresh and new. Or incredibly strange. *Jamais vu*—“I’ve never seen this.” Maybe for a moment you can’t remember the ordinary names of things.

Let’s say fairyland is somewhat like in the old tales. Perhaps people told those stories for a reason; perhaps the tales encode a racial memory of some things that are *actually true*. Things appear and disappear. Odd doors lead into odd rooms. The darting creatures you see from the corners of your eyes are real.

Not that I want to be stuck having to do standard fairytale things, nor do I necessarily want to present the traditional cast of fairyland in any standard way. But I’d like to give the world a try. I’ve been reading the VanderMeers’ *The Weird*, a compendium of stories that are something like fairytales. But there’s no fixed setups being used in these tales, and each of them is fairly unique. The Hollywood/Tolkein-land hegemony needn’t be the only fairyland.

Stepping into fairyland, my character Loulou hears the horn of some hunters. They’re all angles and swords, like the face cards in a deck (à la *Alice in Wonderland*). They’re blowing the horn and crashing through the woods and getting closer. Like a fox-hunt and Loulou the vixen is the fox.

I was at the dentist the other day, and while I was being tormented in the chair, I managed to space out and imagine the room around me to be a fairyland scene. I wasn’t on any meds, not even novocaine—I was just doing a mental reality warp. Those colored tools in my mouth? Fairyland implements.

The mundane segues into fairyland when you study an ambiguous figure such as the duck/rabbit, the vase/faces, the crone/girl, or the reversing Necker cube.

I went for a ride on my bike today. I was hoping to find my way into fairyland, and at times I did. The trick is not to be worrying about my career or my duties or my fears or expectations. Instead I have to fully in the now. Marinating in wonder at the trees, wonder at the street signs with the arrows painted on the streets, wonder at the vehicles and bipeds to be seen.

Trying for *jamais vu*. “I don’t know what I’m looking at. There is no I. Only these sights, and this body, pedaling.” As with any meditation practice, I repeatedly fell away from the vision, dropping from fairyland down to the mundane. But then I’d remember and go there again. Losing myself in the clouds.

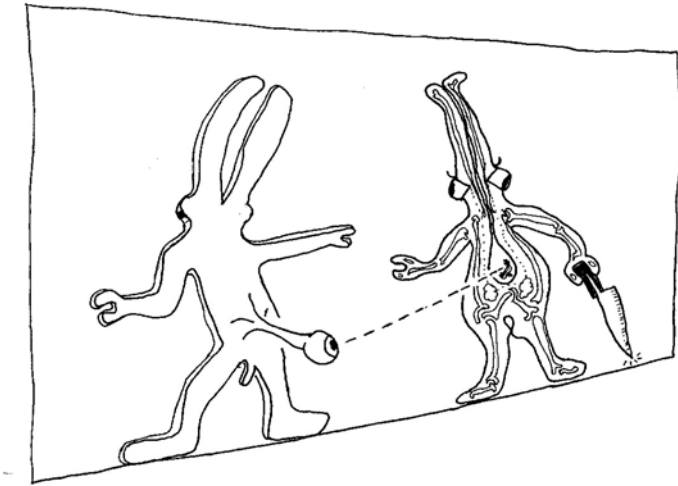
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I’ve already been talking about a cosmic/robotic flip between two mental modes. And now I’m talking about a fairy/mundane flip between two mental modes. It clutters the book (and beggars common sense) if I try to claim that these are two distinct axes, two distinct kinds of flips.

But I can’t just say that cosmic and fairy are one and the same. Because when you can go into the fairyland state you disappear, and in the merely cosmic state you’re still around. When you to fairyland, you physically cross that atom’s-width gap between the two levels. You can get off the floor and glue yourself to the ceiling.

The “explanation” for cosmic mode in *The Big Aha* is that my characters get into a so-called quantum wetware state. And they have access to a so-called “gee-haw-whimmy-diddle” brain switch.

By the way, I can’t stand to keep using Gaven Garber’s stupid name: “the gee-haw-whimmy-diddle switch” throughout *The Big Aha*. I’ll have my character Loulou begin calling it “the third eye,” which is the name they used in my novel *Spaceland*.



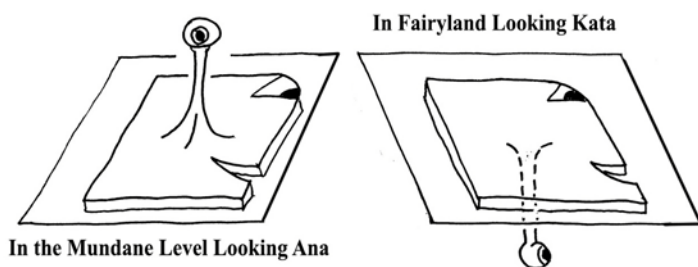
**FIGURE 9: JOE CUBE'S DAD WITH THIRD EYE  
(SPACELAND).**

As in *Spaceland*, we suppose that the third eye depends on an organelle that can stick up into 4D by a small amount. I'd considered having it be a macromolecule, but hell, let's have it be bigger like a lobster's eye or crab's eye on a short stalk. And we'll say the distance between the mundane level and the fairyland level is fairly substantial, like maybe an inch.

The third eye lives in your pineal gland of course. When the third eye is lifted or extended, you get unblocked access to a wider area—note that brainwave vibes pulse out into the full hyperthick space. With your third eye up on the alert, you can synch with more distant things. And that puts you into cosmic mode.

And—here's today's aha moment—if the third eye projects even *more*, if you really really stretch out the eye stalk, then your eye can bump into and adhere to the “fairyland” level of our hyperspace slab, and it can *haul you up there*, like a filament of web lifting a spider! Yes! Thank you, oh science-muse.

Once you're in fairyland, you can lie flat in it, or you can extend your third eye's stalk back in the direction whence you came. We'll suppose that you can't push the stalk out through the hyperspace box that contains our dual-level cosmos.

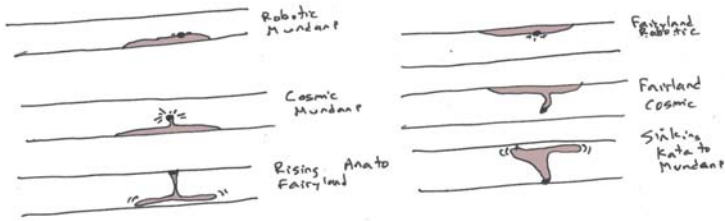


**FIGURE 10: THIRD EYE CAN POINT ANA OR KATA  
(SPACELAND)**

In discussing the direction that the eyestalk points, it's worthwhile to have words for the 4D correlatives of "up and down." As in *Spaceland*, I'll use "ana and kata," following the writings of Charles Howard Hinton.

Mode	Third Eye's Stalk	Body Is On
Robotic Mundane	retracted	floor
Cosmic Mundane	extended	floor
Robotic Fairy	retracted	ceiling
Cosmic Fairy	extended	ceiling

Thus we have four possible modes. Your eyestalk can be extended, that is, pointing ana or kata into the hyperspace box of our space. Or it can be retracted, that is, fully contained within your body. As I already mentioned, when extending the probe, you need to push it ana when on the floor and push it kata when on the ceiling. And we get the four possibilities in our table because your body can either be ana on the "floor" or kata on the "ceiling."



**FIGURE 11: COSMIC, MUNDANE, ROBOTIC, FAIRY MODES**

You might cycle through the four stages in the order shown in the figure above, jumping ana running down the left column, and jumping kata running down the right.

## **December 8-10, 2012. Q&A On Fairyland And Third Eye**

### **(1) How fully visible are our world's objects in fairyland?**

Let's suppose that plants, lower animals, and inanimate objects run straight through from one side to the other—they're what I'll call hyperthick. Only the higher animals which have some traditional form of consciousness are hyperthin.

How do I justify this? Well, suppose that during evolution of intelligence, animals developed that bulging third eye, first as an internal organ—the pineal gland. The bulge pushes you away from the underlying matrix of a hyperwall. So a creature with a third eye ends up growing hyperthin, and settles onto either the mundane or the fairyland side of things.

You're held in place on a wall by something like a static-electricity charge on the walls, or an attraction to a minimum potential energy state. It's natural to settle onto one.

Species specialize, evolve, diversify on one side of the gap or the other. In ancient times, all beings were hyperthick, but then some moved into the mundane world, and some moved into fairyland.

I was in church yesterday and there were empty seats, and I imagined our mundane objects reaching over to

Fairyland, and in these same seats are weird gothic gibbering demonic fairyland creatures.

**(2) Why don't we see fairylander interactions with our objects?**

Suppose we share all of our hyperthick objects with the fairylanders. But they don't eat hyperthick objects as we do, nor move them around, nor create new ones. They're somewhat parasitic and ineffectual, simply flitting about.

They feed upon each other—but some creatures at the bottom of their food chain feed upon human vibes or emanations. I need to be more specific about this. Maybe the gubs are the very bottom of the chain, eating our vibes. A gub will bite off your third eye if it can—that's why that one went for Jane's curio.

And there are some vampire fairylanders who do in fact abduct humans and eat them. Or devour those who wander into fairyland. A little human meat goes a long way. The fairylanders are more gossamer than we are, with a finer metabolism. Eventually one of them will eat Gaven.

And sometimes a hippopotamus-like fairylander will gobble down a hyperthick object. This explains the objects that mysteriously disappear, sometimes without anyone ever noticing. Who misses a boulder that disappears in the woods?

**(3) What are the goals of the fairylanders?**

Certainly they want more to eat. Perhaps they resent us? In terms of the novel, it's best if there's a rising threat from the fairylanders, and that Zad defuses it.

**(4) Are there in-betweeners, neither in fairyland nor the mundane?**

No. These in-betweeners would flit around unattached to the "ceiling" or the "floor". We *could* have some of these things, they might be ghosts. A ghost has lost its ability to obtain purchase upon either of our universe's hyperdimensional boundary walls. If not ghosts, these things could be the proverbial corner-of-the-eye darters.

But the fairylanders can be the darters, if we want darters. For the purpose of writing *The Big Aha*, it's simpler

and clearer not to have any in-betweeners. Fairylanders is enough.

**(5) What is Jane's curio?**

*Aha! The crystal is Gaven's lost third eye!*

Change its description in the text to match this idea. It's like an eyeball, but a four-dimensional one, like the third eye was in *Spaceland*. A hypersphere. We see only a cross-section of it any given time. Think of a Flatlander studying an eyeball that has its center fixed in the Flatlander's space, but the eyeball is rotating about the center and perhaps jiggling up and down as well.

I'll suppose that, like a lobster eye, the third eye takes in light from every direction. So they'll see a ball that's transparent on the outside with a dark spherical "retina" in the center. The retina and the ball change size as the ball moves. At a certain angle you can see the stub of the broken-off eyestalk, its like a cylinder of varying diameter.

The person who lost the third eye was Gaven himself when he was a young genius freelancing an indie nurb shop in Alphabet City before the great flood. And Gaven has logically deduced the existence of fairyland, and of the third eye, and of the potential travel ana to fairyland, and of the use of Jane's curio as an eye-bumper.

Gaven had extended his third eye into fairyland, and just then (a) a gub bit onto it and (b) the Ice Day flood hit, tearing the third eye loose, and it floated off in the waters.

I need more on Gaven's experiences, like a whole chapter, kind of a short story. I should write a flashback chapter for the exposition of this, possibly in connection with having Gaven's platypus sting Zad with its spurs and give him an eidetic dream/memory of some events in Gaven's life. And include memories of Ice Day in the flashback. If I'm going to mention Ice Day, I need to bring it on camera and make it something of a big deal—Ice Day shouldn't just be a throwaway.

**(6) How can your third eye drag you to the opposite hyperwall?**

Suppose that the eye has a certain subtle field, and that it naturally settles into having its center rest in the hyperplane of a wall. Part of the eye will then project beyond the world's hyperbox, and we will allow this. It's the *center* of an object that can't move past the hyperwall of the hyperbox. It's like a field wall, in other words, or a stable minimum energy zone, or a state-space valley—not a physical solid wall.

Objects settle into one wall or another, drifting to the closest one. If you stick your eye more than half-way out, it naturally can settle onto the other wall. And if you flow your identity out into the eye by quantum-flipping yourself very heavily into cosmic mode, you follow the eye.

**(7) Does Jane's curio help you send your third eye to fairyland?**

No, although it does help you understand that you *have* a third eye. Gaven just wanted the curio because it was his own eye. But Gaven tells Loulou about the idea of stretching your third eye out beyond the cosmic state, and she manages to do it soon after he's killed.

## **December 13-23, 2012. The Qwettie Psychedelic Revolution**

So around December 13, 2012, I'd nearly finished my "Chapter 6: Loulou in the Oddball" and by December 17, I'd truly finished that chapter and had started writing "Chapter 7: Flying Jellyfish", which is going to lead into a description of the Roller mansion qwet teep commune, and how qwet teep becomes a huge fad, spreading across the nation and the world by the end of November, 2080. Before the big fairyland problems kick in.

While writing over these ten days I kept mutating this journal entry to take into account the writing on the novel that I was actually getting done—not all that much writing, as the ramp-up to Xmas was occupying a lot of my time.

Anyway, like I've been saying, I want the upcoming section of the book to be an homage/evocation of the psychedelic Sixties. I want something of the flavor of



William Craddock's *Be Not Content*. This was one of my particular goals for *The Big Aha*.

Maybe I write it as a series of short-short story-like scenes or vignettes to give it more speed. Possible segue to use when I switch into the cuts: "I'm going to fast-forward through the following weeks, hitting highlights. Thanks to our budding scene, people all over the world would be doing qwet teep by the end of November. And then of course, the big problems with fairyland would kick in. But at the start, everything was good. We were turning people on. For many of us, life took on the feeling of a joyful waking dream."

But as I continue working on the next chapter ("Flying Jellyfish"), I get the feeling that I can narrate this phase in fairly smooth flow, just like I've been doing so far. Maybe I'll elide a week here and there, as in, "A couple of weeks later, Jane had settled in so much that..."

My rough idea of the flow is that, as I mentioned, more and more people are drawn into qwet teep. Think of Leary's Millbrook redoubt, with seekers coming to dabble in acid. I also see the cops starting to bug them, brought in by complaints from some of the stuffy and wealthy Glenview neighbors. We need for Skungy the rat to show up. And we want a crisis involving fairyland. (We'll postpone the resurrection of Gaven Graber for later in the book.)

There's no reason that this can't balloon into two or even three chapters. In some ways this is the core of the novel, so there's no reason to rush through it. The longer I can linger in the teep commune, the less new stuff I have to fabulate for the rest of the book.

In terms of scenes, at one point I had a possibly too artificial notion that I might hang a series of seven scenes on seven love affairs, each scene incorporating some quirky, teepy, nurby event. I might be talking about: Dad + Weezie, Jane + Whit Heyburn, Joey + Junko, Zad + Loulou, Carlo + Reba, Kenny + Kristo, Mom + Petrus. Or maybe not all of those.

Realistically, I think it's better to play it by ear. Trust the muse. It'll be more psychedelic if I make things up as I go along.

So far I started the next chapter with Zad turning on Dad in Dad's studio, with Loulou and Joey there. Then they proceeded to the Roller mansion, connecting with Junko on the way. And now Dad went off with Weezie in the mansion's guest cottage and the other four (too many characters to juggle?) have gone through the abandoned and nurb-infested manor and riding a laputa giant-flying-jellyfish-tentacle up to brother Kenny's floating laputa redoubt. This scene can grow, once I figure out what Kenny's going to say.

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*Scenes I'd like to hit:*

Skungy shows up. Carlo and Reba. Jane and Whit Heyburn. The cops.

A giant group qwet teep, sort of like an orgy, or no, more like an early Acid Test. And they pick up a vibe from a bunch of people in some other town, maybe New York, or maybe just Cincinnati.

*Be Not Content* scenes: Preston and Baxtor as wizards. Cagey Cage. Baxtor's freakouts. The Stinson Beach Acid Test. Two months seeming like two years.

When Jane makes the scene with Whit Heyburn, there's a shrill argument. Jane wants to throw them all out. This is when Kenny leaves.

Someone gets stuck in fairyland, and only a few pieces of them come back. Maybe do this to Whit Heyburn, or to Carlo.

And we need to have some early premonitions of the big aha beyond it all. Beyond fairyland.

## **December 31, 2012. Open Water Ahead.**

I continued working on the novel off and on during the ramp-up for Christmas, which included an excursion to my brother's wedding in Louisville from December 20-23, 2012. I picked up some more Louisville inspiration there—I

even got brother Embry to drive Sylvia and me around the Glenview neighborhood off River Road—home of the family of my art teacher Lennox Allan (model for Plant the Elder), and home of the Bingham, their wildly mutated house a model for the Roller family's manse. On the plane trips out and back I managed to write a scene with my characters encountering a Boschian menagerie of nurbs inside the Roller's semi-abandoned Glenview mansion.

I posted this scene on my blog as "Fun Boschian Nurb Scene from BIG AHA" on the morning of Christmas Eve.

And then came Xmas with thirteen family members in attendance. Me, my wife, our three kids, the kids' three spouses, and our five grandchildren. I really grasped the number when I saw them silhouetted in a patch of sun from the cloudy skies on the beach behind Phil's Fish Market and Eatery in Moss Landing on Dec 28, 2012. We were on our way down to Big Sur for two nights. I used to be only one person. And now I'm the head of a thirteen-member family. Awesome, staggering, wonderful. It was a great reunion, the best ever.

Today I managed to hit my first AA meeting in two weeks. Felt good. I did manage to keep praying during these two weeks, asking God (whatever that means) to help be loving and empathetic, asking for the inner glow. It worked. I even loved my sons-in-law.

So now I want to get back into the novel. I guess I'll start by printing and rereading the current chapter.

### **January 4-5, 2013. "Flying Jellyfish"**

So I'm about half through the chapter where they move into the Roller mansion. Zad, Junko, Joey, and Loulou are up in a "house balloon" (that I'll later call a "flying jellyfish") with Kenny and Kristo, and they've made K & K qwet. Does Kenny remain unbearable after he's qwet? I think, for the story, it makes more sense if he gets nicer, even if that seems a bit dull. I want to bail from this scene with some kind of bang, and then get into a montage of psychedelic laffs. What's the bang?

I had Zad making Kenny qwet with his breath, like he did with his Dad, but it'll be more interesting if Junko does the job with a simple and-made qwetter. And while Junko's at it, she makes the balloon qwet. The balloon starts talking; it has its own desires, just like Skungy the rat. In fact it would be good if Skungy the rat could show up right about now.

Plan A: The United Mutations house balloon was previously blocked from reproducing—like most UM products. But now it's free. It pinches off some child larvae that will flap off to spread qwetness to other locales—like Jeffersonville, New Albany, Indianapolis, Cincinnati. The it farts out its hydrogen, possibly igniting the gas in a huge dragon-flame. The balloon plumps onto the ground. This works as it's an objective correlative of Kenny becoming less autistic. And it's a good segue for wrapping up the scene.

Re. the reproduction, I was just looking at jellyfish lifecycle pages on the web. It's great. The medusa or big jellyfish spawns off an egg which becomes a swimming (flying) larva or planula that beats itself through the air. The larva lands somewhere, glues itself to a tree or a rock and becomes a polyp. Some of the polyp's branches eat, and some of them strobilate into segments like a stack of floppy plates. The plates break off one by one and float away as miniature medusae.

Plan B: The balloon comes loose and flies up into the sky, setting off a round-the-world journey—or at least going to tether itself to one of the house-tree apartment buildings downtown. If that were to happen, I'd need for my four characters to find a cool way of floating down so they can get back in the mansion and be high.

What I might do is run Plan A now, and do Plan B later, when Kenny for whatever reason wants to leave the mansion scene, like maybe he's sick of it, or has a fight with someone, or the cops are after him.

## January 15, 2013. Black Point. Enlist a Psycho Killer?

I finished the Roller mansion clean-up chapter, which I'll call "Flying Jellyfish," and now I have seven chapters and 45,000 words on the novel. About half done. And I'm hitting what Bob Sheckley called a "black point." I can't see the land that I sailed off from, and I can't see the land I'm sailing towards. A black zone in the sea of story. Whither now?

It's almost time to start reeling in some of the plot threads that I planted. I've got the fairyland thing waiting, and the resurrection of Gaven (or an emulation) via platypus spur. But first I think we need an evil human enemy. That might as well be Whit Heyburn, acting on behalf of United Mutations, Inc.

I just read Charles Stross's *Rule 34*—with great enjoyment. Deep ideas, and a real page-turner. One element of the suspense was that Stross had an evil, psychotic, ruthless, murderous, half-mad villain: the Toymaker. I tend to shy away from using characters like this, as I find them to be unrealistic and negative—I've never met anyone that's really evil like that, and presenting images of such bogeymen is in some way bad for the public discourse, that is, it promotes hysterical fear that leads to blind acceptance of fascist police-state-style security measures.

But, hey, we're only spinning a tale here, a fairy-tale, really, so why not have an ogre or a witch? The ruthless Toymaker in *Rule 34* really did engage my interest, he got my pulse pounding, and he enabled three good ticking-clock crisis scenes—like, *will he kill again?* The mad killer is simply a traditional action-fiction plot device, after all. No need to turn up my nose at this move.

Suppose Whit Heyburn kills two or three people, and then near the book's end, one or two people are saved from Whit. Clearly at the end, we'd want either Zad saving Jane or, to reverse the classic gender roles, Jane saves Zad, or

they save themselves as a team. Fine. Now I just need to decide who Whit kills.

Let's suppose that Whit warms up by killing some minor characters—how about Craig Gurky to start with. Why would he kill Gurky? Maybe to get control of Gurky's mover golem nurbs, Gustav and Bonk. He wants control of the nurbs because they remember how to open Jane and Zad's apartment. He wants to get that third eye for himself. Gurky is a perfect first victim—he's minor, well limned, eccentric and lovable. Lives with his Mom. If I want to dial up the nastiness, I could even have Whit kill Gurky's Mom, for his second course. He returns to the warehouse to do that the next day, after the Mom calls the police.

We might also suppose that Whit turns Gaven Graber's stasis-stored body into mincemeat. A semi-murder. I kind of like that idea, as I was feeling bored at the prospect of bringing Gaven back. And then in one of the closing chapters we kick things up to a higher level. Whit kills someone who's closer to home. He kills Zad's father. Big sobs, an emotional mourning scene.

And then, as I say, in the final chapter, Whit is going to kill Zad or Jane or both of them, and he's thwarted.

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What does Whit want, exactly? Suppose that Gaven and Whit know that Jane's amulet, the loose third eye, can be used as an endless energy source, siphoning energy from fairyland. And this will kill off fairyland—destroy our phantasmal dreams for commercial gain.

Or maybe he just wants domination of quantum wetware. And UM wants to use qwet for a low purpose.

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I'm thinking I might print out this first half of the novel and reread it to get a feel for where I am. Maybe even outline the rest of the novel—what a concept.

Those "random acidhead vignettes" I'd been planning to present in the upcoming chaps—they would be useful if at least some of them were serving the purpose of subtly

inching forward the plot. Only I don't really know what the plot is.

### January 21, 2013. No Energy, Li'l Abner

Last week, on January 16, 2013, I had a laparoscopic double hernia repair operation, and I haven't had much energy since then. Weak and leafy, fit for little more than streaming Netflix shows and poring over a series of four Al Capp *Li'l Abner: The Frazetta Years* compendiums from the Los Gatos library.

The population of Li'l Abner's home Dogpatch is oddly grouped. Li'l Abner and his brother Tiny are handsome, although dismayingly moronic. Although most of the men and women in Dogpatch and the wider world are comical grotesques, quite a few of the women in *Li'l Abner* are incredibly hot—statuesque goddesses, with huge teetering breasts and extravagantly voluptuous buttocks, all of them more or less uniformly drawn. There's a woman like this in nearly every frame. Moonbeam McSwine, what a catch—a gorgeous doll that lies around with pigs in the mud. A guy could get somewhere with her.

The stories are pretty rudimentary, it's just that you enjoy seeing the cast of characters do their things. General Bullmoose, Hairless Joe, Lonesome Polecat, Daisy Mae, Wolf Girl, Joe Btfsplk, Honest Abe, Tiny, Mammy, Pappy, the Scraggs, Moonbeam and Moonshine McSwine, Marrying Sam, Soft-Hearted John, Big Barnsmell, Boyless Bailey, Earthquake McGoon, Salome the pig, Fearless Fosdick, Romeo McHaystack, and any number of one-shot characters, some of them caricatures of actual people from Al Capp's time.

By the time I went to college, in 1963, the authors of my two favorite comics had turned against my generation—Al Capp of *Li'l Abner* and Chester Gould of *Dick Tracy*. It was sad to see the genial entertainers of my youth lose their grasp on reality.

## January 23, 2013. Teep Scenes

I've got my mojo back. I'm off my ass and in the groove, back to correcting my print-out of the novel's first half. The corrections might take another week, as they're fairly detailed. I'm adding a few transitional scenes, extending some dialog sections, readjusting Joey Moon and Skungy's accents to be strongly Kentuckian, making Whit Heyburn into a purely evil character, making Junko gay, and so on. It feels good to be getting the first half consistent, and to be putting things on a more solid footing. But it takes longer than I'd expected, the marking-up by pen and the subsequent typing-in of changes.

Meanwhile, when I remember to, I'm also looking ahead towards the psychedelic commune chapters at the Roller mansion.

I'll summarize my ideas for this section here once again, reprising and expanding some notes I wrote before. I folded the following thoughts into a blog post as well, "[Teep Scenes](#)," also dated January 23, 2013. The post also includes some recent thoughts about getting past the becalmed "black point" phase, and about the wisdom of making my character Whit Heyburn be a completely unsympathetic psycho killer.

My rough idea for this chapter is, as I've mentioned, that more and more people are drawn into qwet—which (a) gives you the ability to jam your head into a trippy "cosmic" mode and (b) gives you a kind of teep, or telepathy, with the other qwetties.

I think of Leary's Millbrook redoubt, with seekers coming to dabble in acid. I also see the cops starting to bug them. And we want a crisis involving the emerging parallel reality called fairyland.

I had some ideas typed here, but then I reworked them, and you'll find them further down in my [Feb 2, 2013](#), note, although I left a few scraps here.



I'd like giant group qwet teep session, sort of like an orgy, or maybe like an early Stinson Beach Acid Test party or a Furthur bus scene—only it's in Louisville, Kentucky.

I'm visualizing a gypsy kind of guy, or (having been to a Bat Mitzvah this week) a Jewish prophet. Or a Hungarian.

*"Ve going to za Vite Lite, my friend. Za home of za Alef."*

Maybe this guy is Loulou's father. Mr. Zsolt Sass. I might as well set up Mr. Sass as being a Hungarian mathematician—it's always good to have a Hungarian mathematician waiting in the wings.

## January 30, 2013. Recasting The Plot

I'm just about done with correcting Chaps 1 to 7. I feel like I still don't quite have enough plot, or enough characterization. And so on. I'll list some the problems here with my proposed solutions, separating these discussions by boldface subtitles.

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### **Fairyland Is An Illusion**

The "Fairyland and the Third Eye" rap that I wrote up earlier in these notes isn't working. It was a snap decision that got me out of a corner, but it isn't usable long-term. As I've set it up, I don't see a trip to fairyland as being especially interesting. And the hyperspace third-eye concept feels like it's collaged in from a completely different novel. *The Big Aha* is about mental powers, not about parallel worlds. Jane's oddball is a great Maguffin-type power-object, and I'd like to see being used in an interesting way—at present it's just a prop being used to illustrate the notion of a third eye. Instead it should be an amulet that lets a person "dream out loud." Listed below is the outline of what I need to do.

*(So I did this. I saved the novel adaptation of the idea in the "Deleted Passages" section of these Notes as First Take on Fairyland and then I revised my novel's text.)*

\*There isn't really a fairyland. What Loulou saw was in some sense a hallucination or enhanced mental state—so powerful a one that she was able to (a) disappear and (b)

project solid images of the gubs. A bit like drawing others into your dream. Make this possibility seem rather more plausible during her exchanges with Zad and Joey. Have them sense that she *is* in the room with them, only invisible. They can smell her and maybe after a bit they realize they can touch her.

But save the reveal till a bit later, that is, wait a bit before Loulou herself realizes that she wasn't in fairyland at all.

\* Tweak the fairyland images to be more tightly connected with Loulou's worries and her psychic needs. Have them overlay some particular videogame she was a champion at, and mix her hallucinations with her desire to for approval from her father.

\* The ability to disappear or dematerialize is a new quantum wetware skill, it means vibrating your atoms out of phase with impinging photons, or out of phase with regular matter. Cf. H. G. Wells, *The Invisible Man*. I think Wells talks about changing the index of refraction.

\* The ability to project physical objects is akin to an old-school medium's ability to craft things from ectoplasm (or mind stuff or Hilbert goo). They call this physical mediumship, and use the word "apportation." I'd like the process to be analog and oozy. I might use the modern buzzword "metamatter." Or I'll go back to a term I was writing about last year, "wacky matter."

I have in the past talked about mental powers over matter in *Saucer Wisdom* and in two of my novels, *Realware* and *Hylozoic*. In *Realware* and I think in *Saucer Wisdom*, they use an "alla" device to herd together enough air molecules and do some transmutation on them. In *Hylozoic*, the "kiquie" characters can get into teep with the octillion or so atoms in a piece of matter and, I think, make the matter do something.

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### **Thickening My Characters**

My main characters need stronger motivations, and the motivated ones need stronger story arcs. I see the main characters as Zad, Jane, Loulou, and Joey.

\* Zad needs to become a working artist again. He gets into a new form of art. What if Loulou shows him the way with her Levolver skills. Zad goes past painting and into sculpture. And perhaps he animates his sculptures, they're like living cartoon characters. Graceful nurbs.

\* Loulou needs more of a personality. At present she's sly and sexy, but she doesn't have an inner core, and it's not clear what she wants to achieve. What if Loulou's father is a Hungarian mathematician, and she herself was a champion at some math-like videogame.

Possibly she helped Joey get his regress pictures to work, she advised him about using nonlinear feedback. Maybe she's working on a problem akin to what the boys studied in *Mathematicians in Love*, a classification theorem that will make her unbeatable in the tourneys.

Her father looks down on her for being a videogame champ instead of an academic mathematician.

\* Jane. She has her business and likes networking. But she's sick of it as well. Let's say she longs for something simple. She wants to start a family. And to have a garden. And to be happy with Zad.

\* Joey. Needs to get off axelerate, but that's a dull theme. He needs self-esteem and would like a steady paycheck—might he become an art teacher? Possibly he dies heroically.

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### **The Events Around Gaven's Death.**

Loulou goes off into a trance and thinks she's in fairyland. The oddball isn't really "lost in fairyland."

When Loulou feels the gub grabbing the oddball, that's Gaven grabbing it out of her hand. The oddball power let her go to fairyland, and she comes back when the zap wears off.

If Gaven had the oddball, where is it when Zad gets there?

Perhaps Whit Heyburn's remote showed up, killed Gaven with the painting and stole the oddball? Or is that a

bridge too far? Something unsatisfying about running a remote and I don't like making Whit all that powerful.

Suppose that Gaven hid the oddball, and then sent himself into a coma with the painting. And then maybe he drew on the power of the oddball to send himself past the coma and into a death-like state.

Where exactly did he hide the oddball? Perhaps he shoved it up his own ass, or shrank it and swallowed it, or hid it under a flap of skin—but, no, the cops and their crawly hand would notice that. He could have run outside and hidden the oddball in the smoke house, but that's not elegant. Let's suppose that he made the oddball invisible and set it on his mantelpiece, a "Purloined Letter" technique.

Pretty soon we'll find Gaven's stasis hammock empty—like Christ's empty tomb.

## **February 1, 2013. Biomorphic "Videogame": Levolver**

As I said before, my Loulou character is sly and sexy, but she doesn't have an inner core, and it's not clear what she wants to achieve. What if Loulou's father is a Hungarian mathematician, and she herself was a champion at something like math-like videogames, and her father disapproves of her not being an academic mathematician.

I need to imagine what kind of "videogame" Loulou is a champ at. Keep in mind that this is taking place about century from now, in an age when every device or machine is some kind of tweaked plant or animal. The video displays, for instance, are a wall-covering made of so-called squid-skin.

Looking over my other work, I think of *Skull Farmers*, a very vivid game in my *Frek and the Elixir*. Frek watched this game on a wall-covering-display akin to squidskin. One of the twists in *Frek and the Elixir* was that the videogame characters were like autonomous living beings, artificially alive in virtual reality. But I'd rather not get into that

particular angle in *The Big Aha*—it would make for one too many plot elements.

In *The Big Aha*, I'd like to put more stress on the biological aspect of a videogame that is being run on a living nurb like a squidskin—or possibly the “display” is a lump of protean nurb-stuff that readily changes its form. The game-character-forms are evolving very rapidly and organically.

Suppose that the game is about searching through genome space, that is, through the collection of all possible genomes. This is a little like in Will Wright's artificial-life “Spore” game, or in Karl Sims or Robert Dawkins directed evolution programs such as “Blind Watchmaker”. Maybe I use the name *Levolver* for the game. Almost a palindrome, a switch on Revolver, and it suggests love, evolve, revolve, vulva.

I could see the game having a commercial application, in that you'd be replacing a brute-force or neural-net search, somehow improving on rote algorithms by drawing on the human mind's hard-to-pin-down empathy and instinct.

How would you control a game like *Levolver*? Keep in mind that in my novel the game existed in the pre-teep and pre-qwet era. Well, you can be using touch and voice and gesture instead of teep, so that's not a huge problem. You can be like an artist interacting with his or her materials. As I hinted above, rather than being a wall-image, the display might be sculptural—three-dimensionally bulging up from a wall display into protrusions like coral, or even pinching off and modeling the forms being designed.

This is somewhat akin to Zad's nurb gel, and to his vat of the stuff, so Zad and Loulou would need a discussion about this earlier in the book. Possibly Loulou does a quick demo with the nurb-paint vat that makes Zad feel a little awed.

## February 3-5, 2013. Bogosity Generators and the Oddball

Note that, starting yesterday, February 2, 2013, I began working on a scene-by-scene outline for “Funhouse” chapter where they settle in at the Roller farm, being quiet and getting it on. See my Chapter Outlines section.

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I really, really would like to have a plan for the second half of the novel. I want to set up and prefigure some of these things in my

One key can be the oddball. For now, the oddball is a MacGuffin with no meaning, an answer to an unasked question. An unused and unexplained bogosity generator. It has to start working for me now. I wrote the following material as part of a February 5, 2013, blog post, “The ‘Bogosity Generator’ Tool In Science Fiction”.

The first block describes the concept of a “bogosity generator,” and the second talks about how I hope to use the *oddball* and the *wacky matter* bogosity generators.

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In Fantasy and SF novels we have a convention of using a special device or procedure or organism with startling powers that affect the flow of the story. The writer very often works backwards, that is, they get some visually or conceptually interesting thing happening in their story, and only *then* posits a gimmick that will make the effects possible.

There must be some standard generic name for these gimmicks, and if so, I’ve probably heard it, but for whatever reason, I can’t think of a completely apt and standard phrase today. *Deus ex machina* isn’t quite right, as that’s more specifically a miraculous something that *saves* your characters. *Pixie dust* is fairly accurate, but it doesn’t have the technological feel that I’d like.

Let’s call what I’m talking about a *bogosity generator*. Kind of like a tank of helium, useful for inflating your pretty balloon animals so they can bobble across the ceiling.

Or, more obviously, like an electrical generator that sets the great streams of sparks to arcing across your mad-scientist lab.

The rules are that fantasy authors aren't expected to justify or to explain their bogosity generators, but an SF writer is expected to cobble together some kind of semi-plausible, paralogical, science-like explanation—that's considered part of the fun of SF. The styles of these hand-waving explanations change with the intellectual fashions of the times. Over the years, preferred bogosity-generator-justifiers have included radio waves, radioactivity, the subdimensions, relativity, psi powers, black holes, quantum mechanics, parallel worlds, nanotechnology, chaos theory, superintelligent AI, an escalating technological singularity, bioengineering, and our dear friend the Higgs particle.

One point that's worth making over and over is that an SF writer's explanations for his or her bogosity generators *serve a creative purpose*. The theory behind your bogosity generator is *not* idle bullshit. Why? Because in the process of making up the explanation, you get ideas for new things to do with the bogosity generator.

When you're thinking about the explanation, it's like you're reading an instruction manual for some cool new device. Admittedly, you yourself are *writing* the instruction manual at the same time that you're reading it, but the manual is *not a complete fabrication*—it's constrained by having to be logical, concise, intellectually appealing, internally consistent and, to a certain degree, externally consistent with some cherry-picked facts of science.

When you get a really fine explanation for your bogosity generator, it's no longer the case that *your story tells a lie*. If the explanation is really cooking, *the lie tells your story*. Yeah, baby. That's where you want to be. It's a variation on a carnie grifter saying: "Don't run the con. Let the con run you."

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Two months ago, I formed the desperate plan of having my oddball be someone's severed third eye, to be used in

concert with hopping from our world up to a parallel world called fairyland. I described this far-fetched idea in my December 10, 2012 blog post, Cosmic Fairyland #2: Third Eye.

That was a useful idea in that it helped me to continue writing. But the whole fairyland and third eye thing is too baroque to maintain. It introduced too many extra story elements into my novel. So I'm downgrading the oddball's abilities. My character Loulou didn't *actually* use the oddball to travel through another dimension to a parallel world and then hurl small green pigs, known as "gubs," into our world for the other characters to see. (Gubs are described in my post of November, 30, 2012, Gubs and Raths.)

Instead, I'm now only requiring that the oddball has the effect of allowing Loulou to (a) make herself invisible without in fact leaving our world, (b) to project images and seemingly solid objects into reality, somewhat in the style of what spiritualists call a "physical medium".

Fairyland was only Loulou's hallucination, but the oddball allowed Loulou to become invisible. Those around her thought she might be off in fairyland, and her ability to reify her imagined gubs made it seem like she might be off in fairyland tossing gubs into our world.

So now I'm trying to get more specific about what the oddball does, and how it works. I'm thinking I'll say that contact with the oddball allows telepaths to begin converting normal matter into something I call *wacky matter*. Of course, wacky matter is merely a *subsidiary* bogosity generator. But it's getting closer to something useable. I was already thinking about wacky matter a year ago, see my Jan 16, 2012, blog post, "Future Ads. Fun with Wacky Matter."

So, repeating what I just said, I'll assume that people who have access to the oddball can turn objects into wacky matter that they control. And later on, people who merely have an *understanding* of the powers involved in the



oddball can create and control wacky matter too. Loulou will teach this skill to the gang at the Funhouse.

Let's back up and describe wacky matter again. Wacky matter is like psychic Silly Putty. It takes on shapes and patterns to match any outré mind state. Peoples' houses might change into big shoes or have rooms with ceilings one inch tall, or maybe look like Dogpatch scenes from Al Capp's *Li'l Abner*. You might dose your surroundings to make them more vibrant, more cartoony, more congenial. Instead of you getting high, your house gets high! Don't run your con, let your con run you.

Why do I want wacky matter? *The Big Aha* is about a future psychedelic revolution that arrives in scientific form. It will be kind of perfect if my qwet, grude, loofy characters can taint the physical world with wacky matter—thanks to their quantum wetware and their oddball energy. Did Kesey and Leary change the world around them? For awhile. And then the world pushed back. We got hit with Charlie Manson and with disco. Wacky matter became a destructive and repressive force.

Over the past year, I'd forgotten all about wacky matter. But recently I stumbled across the contemporary real-tech notion of “metamaterials”—which reminded me of my fictional concept. Metamaterials are engineered to contain regular lattices of atoms that subject light rays and other electromagnetic fields to transformation optics—a bit like a lens does. Supposedly a metamaterial can become invisible via a so-called electromagnetic cloak or “metamaterial cloaking.” As the Wikipedia article puts it, “The guiding vision for the metamaterial cloak is a device that directs the flow of light smoothly around an object, like water flowing past a rock in a stream, without reflection, rendering the object invisible.”

I don't want to use the word “metamaterials” more than once in *The Big Aha*, and then simply as a background justification for wacky matter. The thing is, I can barely understand the Wikipedia explanations of metamaterials, and the factuality of the concept limits me, and I don't want

to be playing catch-up-ball. Better to take a little inspiration from the science, but then be working with a completely bogus concept that I've invented, and which will obligingly have any properties that I require. Writing my own instruction book for my bogosity generator. Wacky matter, not metamaterials.

I can straight-up use the metamaterial cloaking routine for oddball/wacky-matter invisibility.

(One other thing you *might* do is to make visible your hallucinations and dreams by projecting warping distortions into the air. The bent light rays could sketch out images of the things you think. You wouldn't do transmutation of matter to make the images, it would just be enough just to warp the air. And you could give the illusion of physical objects by rerouting the repelling electric forces on the surfaces of nearby objects. But this is all too complicated.)

I'll explain the projection of images and objects into via matter with a hand-waving rap about atoms being quantum computers. The telepaths' quantum wetware minds are getting entangled with the "minds" of the atoms. You can make insubstantial illusions simply by selectively tweaking the refractive index of the air. And for objects, you go ahead and do a transmutation of matter routine. I did this already in *Realware*.

But I still need to involve the oddball. How is it letting people make wacky matter? Maybe the oddball is helping with the entanglement part?

Further on, for the real payoff of all this heavy thinking, I'd like to come up with something *else* that the oddball and the wacky matter do. What's in the back pages of the instruction manual?

I imagine exploding an object into atoms, but you have the atoms remember where they came from so you can play the explosion backwards. Like the atoms were connected to their original locations by rubber-band spacetime threads.

I want my qwet-heads to reach the Big Aha, which might be the light visible between our thoughts, the white light of the Void.

Naturally the oddball and wacky matter will pose a threat to the continued existence of the world. The world is a consensus illusion, and the oddball might nudge everyone/everything out of this illusion. We might lose our balance like a tightrope-walker looking down past the rope to the yawning chasm below.

The oddball will want to reproduce. In its initial state, it was blocked from so doing. Unwittingly my artist character Zad helps it begin to spread. He incorporates the oddball into one of his new sculptural artworks, hoping to enhance his work for a big come-back show at the Idi Did gallery. But then the work eats the gallery—and most of downtown Louisville, Kentucky.

Also I need to limn the *origin of the oddball*. Possibly a wetware hacker made the oddball, partly by accident. Perhaps it evolved—but could the evolution have been directed by...the Big Aha?

One scene I might do, it's the ultimate "hungover friend" scene. My character Junko appears one morning and, thanks to the oddball and wacky matter, she's altered the dimension-signature of the spacetime in her body. Instead of  $3+1$ , it's  $2+2$ . That is, her body has two-dimensional space and two-dimensional time. She creeps into the commune's morning breakfast room, sliding across the floor.

"Rough night, huh Junko?"

Joey brings her back by folding her into an origami crane. But, nah, I don't want to go into the variable dimension signature thing. I do like this scene, but it'll be more that Junko's just softened herself into a flatworm.

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Maybe Junko worked at an Alphabet City shop that made the oddball. And she tells us about it.

**February 14, 2013. Back from NYC. Fairyland Later.**

Sylvia and I were in NYC for a week, celebrating her birthday. My laptop stopped working while we were there,

and I didn't write at all, nor did I think much about writing. And when we got home the laptop came back to life. And I'm sitting in my usual spot by the window at the Los Gatos Coffee Roasting Company with the laptop on. And now I have to try and get the great train rolling again, however slowly.

"America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel," as Allen Ginsberg wrote in his poem, "America."

I had one thought about the book in NYC while we were in a jazz club seeing the Charles Mingus Orchestra play. I was feeling fairly uplifted. I was thinking that there should after all be something to fairyland. Loulou didn't really see the whole thing. It's like she saw the hypersurface of a hypersolid, but she didn't get inside the hypersolid.

It's probably too unsatisfying for the readers if I say, "No, none of what Loulou said about fairyland was true at all, it was merely a red herring, a slip of my pen, an undigested bit of cheese." Maybe I can act like this is the case for a few chapters, sure, but later I have to circle back and have a fairyland payoff.

## **February 15-19, 2013. Oddball, Wacky Matter, Big Aha**

Three ideas to be discarded:

\*The oddball is made of wacky matter. Wacky matter is an alternate Higgs plateau minimum-energy state. If a person is qwet, they can grasp this pattern and transfer it, transmuting normal matter into wacky matter. But you can't do this unless you have a piece of wacky matter ready to hand. The template isn't something you can remember or fully grasp, it's only something you can copy.

\*The Big Aha noticed our qwetties, and sent a little ball of wacky matter. This ball is the oddball. It dropped in on us like an object dropped from a UFO.

\*When Gaven took the oddball from Loulou, she managed to keep a pinch of it, pulling it off like taffy. And the pinch powered her through her fairyland routine,

allowing her become invisible by warping the air's refraction index, and allowing her to manifest those two gubs. But then her pinch of wacky matter got used up.

Listening to the Chiara String Quartet at St. Luke's Church in Los Gatos, CA, last night, I realized I've been letting the oddball ruin my plans. In my zeal to find a role for this randomly introduced MacGuffin/bogosity-generator, I've been losing sight of the simplest path forward. The ideas in italics above are to be discarded.

Forget about using the oddball as the cause of invisibility or direct matter control. The qwetties change matter on their own.

We don't need full transmutation—that's too much and it muddles the story. We had transmutation in *Realware* and to some extent in *Hylozoic*, and I don't want it here. Instead let's have an illusionist ability to make matter *look* different.

Qwetties make matter "wacky" in the sense of being responsive to their thoughts. They can use wacky air to make themselves invisible, altering the refractive index of the air. And the gub that Loulou manifested could have been a lump of clay or, better, a sly pillow with its wrinkles looking like eyes.

Any qwettie can do this just as they are. Without any help from any oddball. All they need is a little coaching.

Here's a "catechism" of my current thoughts about the oddball, wacky matter, and the Big Aha.

\*\*\*

*How does qwet lead us to The Big Aha?*

A qwettie can have an intense visionary experience that feels like talking to God. But, unlike with old-time psychedelic experiences, we'll have something concrete and definite behind the vision.

The Big Aha is a cosmic mind, the White Light, an eye of God.

He's paired with another god I call Swarm. Swarm is like a Borgesian alef, teeming with variety. If Big Aha and Swarm join forces, we get an everything-at-once Many,

which is ecstatic. But each of the two gods tends to want to push the other one out.

The Big Aha was attracted to our region of spacetime by the invention of qwet. He noticed that people managing to keep their minds in cosmic mode and gaze upon Big Aha. The qwetties are like sparks of light that the Big Aha can “see.” And it’s drawn to these sparks.

Would it work better to just say “Big Aha” instead of “the Big Aha,” dropping “the.” Maybe after awhile, but to start with I’ll keep the “the.”

Also I want to personalize the Big Aha as “he” or “she” instead of “it.” I’ll go with “he” and save “she” for Swarm—see my table of dyads later in this entry.

\*\*\*

*What does the Big Aha want?*

He wants to become manifest, immanent. His normal behavior would be to incarnate himself in our region of space by turning our solar system into a supernova or into a black hole or into a white hole. A joyful gushing-forth of the God mind. Utter unification. Merge.

Zad’s quest will be to welcome Big Aha, but to have him arrive in a non-destructive fashion. Zad will alter the effects of Big Aha’s incarnation so that, rather than turning our solar system into a supernova, he brings an Edenic peace to Earth. On Earth as it is in Heaven. Zad arranges it so that Big Aha and his counterpart Swarm arrive at the same time. A successful psychedelic revolution.

\*\*\*

*How does Loulou’s experience of fairyland relate to Big Aha?*

The experience of fairyland is an experience of union with Big Aha’s mind. Or, put differently, it’s an entering into the higher-dimensional body of the Big Aha. Loulou was only at the outermost verge of the Big Aha, and the thing she saw were in some sense reflections of her own thoughts. Later Zad will go deeper inside the Big Aha.

\*\*\*

*What is wacky matter?*

This is just a fun term that we'll use for any matter that's been made qwet and which is now teepable is wacky matter. Physically speaking, the atoms of quantum matter have an added range of resonances, produced by quantum wetware.

\*\*\*

*What is the oddball?*

The oddball is something along the lines of a feeler or eye or tunnel that's attached to, or which leads to, the Big Aha being. It could be an Einstein-Rosen bridge. You can stare very deeply into the oddball and see through it into Big Aha. If you get a tight enough mental focus on the oddball, you can stretch it over your head, or even crawl through it. It's an entry hatch in the hypersurface of the Big Aha.

The oddball appeared, seemingly *ex nihilo*, on the Alphabet City Beach near Jane, as if dropped into our space from a higher dimension. He wanted Jane to find him. The Big Aha knows the future. So he knew that that Jane and Zad would become involved with qwet, and he knew that ultimately that Zad will help him find a non-destructive way to manifest himself in an Earthly form, consummating a mystical union with his partner Swarm yet again.

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*What are the Big Aha and his partner Swarm?*

Take a Manichean approach and suppose that the Big Aha has an opposing god-like force that, for the moment, I'll call Swarm. The Big Aha is "he," and the Swarm is "she." I'd been resisting "he" as one is tired of the Old Testament "He" of God the father, but in a pair the genders make sense.

Each of the two partners wants sole control of Earth. Like a long-married couple who bicker so much that they forget they're in love.

Here's a table of related dyads, some on differing axes. I want to work it so that Gaven views Swarm as being more of an aid to his business plans than Big Aha would be.

Big Aha	Swarm
Light	Dark
Obelisk	Tree
Merging	Dividing
God	Demons
Father	Mother
Cold	Hot
Frozen	Seething
Order	Chaos
One	Many
Cosmic	Robotic
Love	Sex
Cave	Marketplace

**Table 1: Dyads Involving Big Aha / Swarm**

Ultimately we will of course attain a synthesis: Life. Swarm is good, in that Swarm helps us reach Life. Big Aha can trend into a mindless nullity, a void, a crystalline zilch. Swarm can trend into pseudorandom chaos, a dirempted state of dull seething. We want the gnarly zone at the interface between order and randomness. Life.

Zad's task is to broker the synthesis between Big Aha and Swarm and end up with Life—leaving things much as they were before the novel started, but not exactly the same. It's a helix not a circle. At the end, Life is richer, livelier, with more of a golden glow.

Being gods, Big Aha and Swarm both know this will be the outcome. Their struggle is the dance that drives the universe.

By way of visualizing the dyad, here's a photo of an obelisk and a tree, the One behind the Many. I saw this in NYC last week. Maybe near the end of the book, Zad and Jane will see this spot and comment upon its meaning.





**FIGURE 12: CLEOPATRA’S NEEDLE IN CENTRAL PARK.**

*Why does Gaven want the oddball? How does he know about it?*

Gaven has his own dark gate, a tunnel to Swarm. It looks like a pussy and Gaven is fucking it like a sex-toy, but I won’t come right out and say that, at least not right away. Suppose it looks like a furry pink ball for now, with the hair fairly long, and it has a doughy core. Even though the thing doesn’t have a face, Gaven calls it his *darkstar*. (I was thinking of “doll’s head” and was going to write *dollshead*, but that doesn’t read well, so I go with *darkstar*.) Gaven puts the darkstar on his pillow next to him at night and he talks to it and sometimes he pushes his dick into it. Swarm and the darkstar want Gaven to hide the Big Aha oddball. Swarm and Gaven want to lock people into a robotic good-customer mode, divided, powerless, atomized.

Swarm sent her darkstar to Gaven because she knew he’d be involved with Zad and Jane and the oddball and Big Aha. Being an omniscient god, Swarm does know that, in the end, she’ll join a partnership with Big Aha, but as part

of the immemorial dance of creation, she wants to postpone the union. To play hard to get.

Possibly Whit Heyburn gets hold of the Swarm darkstar after Gaven dies. I can imagine a scene where Jane finds Whit with the darkstar, and it's slurping on him with its hair gone snaky like on the Medusa, the hair all leggy wiggly dark.

\*\*\*

*What happened when Loulou took the oddball to Gaven's farm?*

I thought this out once before, on January 30, 2013, as "The Events Around Gaven's Death," but that version isn't really working. I need to recast the flow again.

The Jan 30, 2013 version:

\*Loulou arrives at Gaven's ready to sell the oddball, he shows her how to use the oddball to go into a trance and she thinks she's in fairyland. While Loulou's in her trance, Gaven grabs the oddball out of Loulou's hand. Gaven somehow hides the oddball, and then he kills himself by staring at Joey's magic mirror painting.

Instead, I'll do it this way:

\*Loulou arrives at Gaven's ready to sell the oddball, he shows her how to use the oddball to go into a trance and she thinks she's in fairyland. While Loulou's in her trance, Gaven grabs the oddball out of Loulou's hand. The oddball is however, animated on its own. It kills Gaven by showing him Joey's magic mirror painting. And then the oddball hides, making itself invisible or perhaps hopping back out into hyperspace and planning to touch down near Jane again.

**March 3, 2013. End "Funhouse." Go "Weezie's Party"**

I've been jamming on the "Funhouse" chapter at the Roller mansion for the last week or ten days, and it's just

about done. It got so I just did a jump-cut into the next chapter, with more lead-up towards the big party. I'm thinking it would be nice to set up these two chaps as a series of cameo scenes. Some stuff with those house jellyfish, maybe, or something interesting with Kenny and Kristo. But right now I'm kind of gung-ho to push into the start of the big orgy chapter.

About the two chapters, I was thinking I might call them "Funhouse: Part 1" and "Funhouse: Part 2." Like Ray Charles's "What'd I Say." But "Funhouse" and "Orgy" would be snappier titles.

That "orgy" I'm setting up is inspired by the attempted "baby oil bath" orgy in William J. Craddock's novel *Be Not Content*, "Chapter 16—The Baby Oil Experience." In the Craddock story, it turns into a nightmare freakout, weirdly funny withal. I might even use that for my chapter title, "The Baby Oil Experience." But, nah, "Orgy" does the job?

But, hold on, I do *not* want to be a slobbering old man going on and on about younger people having sex in *The Big Aha*. I don't want to ape the elder Heinlein. Indeed, I worry that maybe I've *already* put in too much sex. Now, an orgy scene is kind of *de rigueur* if we're doing a psychedelic revolution sequence, but I absolutely want it the orgy to be a shambles, a comic fiasco, with no sex at all. I think I'll call the chapter something more neutral, like "Weezy's Party."

A turning point, the failed orgy, and it sets me up for the rest of the book.

Looking ahead, at the end of the "Weezy's Party" chapter, Zad will think he'd gotten Jane free of Whit—Jane's back together with Zad and that they'll be working together. But then, whoops, Jane is in desperate straits as Whit's prisoner or maybe she's even disappeared—like Gaven has secretly fed her to the darkstar as, like, a sacrifice.

\*\*\*

Looking further ahead. My word count table indicates that I can round off the book after 13 chaps, if they're about

7,500 words long each. So that's four more after "Weezie's Party." I have no idea what to put in these chapters—oh, don't say that, Rudy, you're exaggerating and being pessimistic to cheer yourself up.

I can do it, yes. Suppose that we have a chapter where things get much worse. Then two chapters with Zad is off in Lala land. In Fairyland. Inside the space of the oddball and the darkstar. What's he doing there? Saving Jane and trying to save the world. In the first of these chapters he's travelling deep into fairyland, and in the second he's fighting his way back out. And in a final chapter he comes back to the real world and fixes everything, traditional Hero's Journey ending. *Finis Coronat Opus*.

Cool. For the first time, I see a solid path for finishing the book.

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So now I finish off the first scene of the "Spreading Qwet" chapter (originally named "Call Wallahs") where they give qwet to everyone.

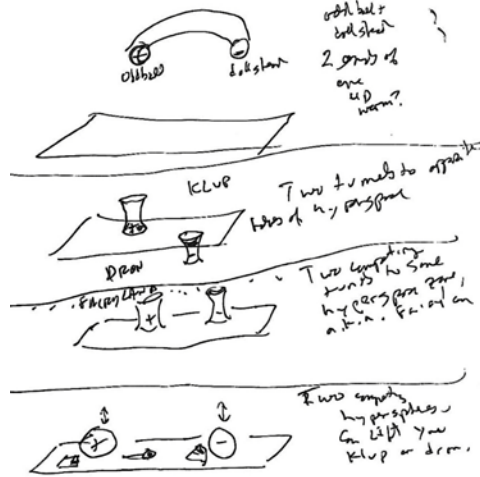
And then—*uh oh!*—I go off onto a sidepath for about a month and write a 4,000 word story on "Networked Matter" that, thanks to Dave Pescovitz's influence, the Palo Alto Institute for the Future is going to pay me several thousand dollars to write—this is possibly more than I'll get as an advance for *The Big Aha* (if I can sell the novel at all).

### **March 5, 2013. The Oddball and the Darkstar**

For the sake of a conflict, I have the oddball and the darkstar. In my Feb 15-19, 2013 [entry](#), I was discussing them in terms of a dyad. Like a married couple. Two linked but opposing forces.

And now today I'm thinking about them again. I need to clarify my thinking if Jane and Zad are to go into the land where these two beings come from.

I made a drawing of four possibilities, marking the oddball with a + and the darkstar with a -.



**FIGURE 13: THE ODDBALL AND THE DARKSTAR**

My writing in the figure isn't easy to read, so I'll reprise the options below.

\*\*\*

*The oddball and the dolls head are...*

- (1) ...two ends of a 4D worm.
- (2) ...two tunnels to opposite sides of our hyperplane, like Klup and Dron in my *Spaceland* novel.
- (3) ...two competing tunnels into the same zone of hyperspace, which we may as well call fairyland.
- (4) ...two hyperspheres capable of lifting creatures out of our space and into hyperspace and bringing them back.

A fifth option that might work the best is this. The oddball and the darkstar are two higher beings capable of lifting creature out of our world and into an alternate world—but we discuss this with, at most, a single passing mention of hyperspace and higher dimensions. My sense is that we have enough going on in *The Big Aha* without 4D.

\*\*\*

*Do the oddball and the darkstar have names?*

Regarding the name, I was thinking of calling them Big Aha and Swarm, but those are too stiff to use names, although I still like the idea of them being like, or

embodying, respectively, a unitary notion of One, and a chaotic notion of Many. But it's be nice of they had names so Zad and Jane can talk to them. Over in fairyland, the two beings aren't gods, they're just regular characters. Yangy and Yinny. Yangle and Yinster. I don't want explicitly religious names like Jaweh or Venus. They might well pick human-like names for the sake of conversation. "Call me Joe." "I am Death." "My name's Roman Hruska."

Well, to pick names, I need to decide on their personalities.

Oddball is a way-out acidhead, Mr. Merge, a guy with the heavy spiritual vibe the Dalai Lama, hypnotic, loving, yet impractical and potentially lethal (not due to malice, but due to head-in-the-clouds negligence).

Darkstar is argumentative, nitpicking, a nagging mother, overly precise, almost as if borderline autistic, little sense of humor, yet nurturing and the source of all life.

A linked pair of names. Punch and Judy. Jack and Jill. Dino and Dinah. George and Martha (from *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf*). Dick and Liz. Another pair of names is Adam and Eve. Well, I'll think of Zad and Jane will be the Adam and Eve of Earth reborn, our New Jerusalem—but I won't use these names for the two gods.

Alpha and Omega. Alpha and Ommie. A and Z. Al and Meg. Al and Zee. Alef and Zeee. Alef and Ommie. Alef and Om.

Alef totally works for me, and I prefer that Cabbalistic spelling to Aleph, although I am thinking of the Borges story, "The Aleph." Also thinking about the transfinite cardinals alef-null, alef-one and so on.

For the partner, I do like Om, but it suggests a unifying force, and I want the darkstar to be more of a dissipative force. I like Zee because that's the name of the character played by Elizabeth Taylor in the 1972 movie *X, Y and Zee*. And I like spelling it Zeee with the extra e to make it more insistent and less like a human name.

Alef and Zeee.

\*\*\*

*What are the goals of Alef the oddball and of Zeee the darkstar?*

Alef wants to crystallize or anneal our zone of reality to make into a fully unified, seamless mental and physical entity. Zeee wants to dirempt our zone of reality to make it more than chaotic: fully random with no underlying pattern at all. It's like Alef wants to build the tower of Babel, and Zeee wants to tear it down.

Why? Suppose that Alef's goals are artistic in nature, he likes the way a unified single reality looks and feels. And Zeee's goals are more practical. A seething zone can serve as—a hole in our reality so the higher beings can readily pass through, or a cleaning station zone where, like, feeder fish swarm over you and gnaw off your parasites. Or, better, she's making out zone into a breeding ground.

But they come to a compromise, a synthesis, and *walla*, that's our world just as it is.

\*\*\*

I did a painting of these two characters last week, I called it *The Two Gods*. I based my image on the Warner Brothers cartoons screen at the start and end of Looney Tunes or Merrie Melodies, where they have that tunnel and the WB logo shield. I doubled the shield and gave the two shields eyes, nostrils, and tails or flight trails.

That's Zeee on the left and Alef on the right. Zeee's actually a bit more powerful, that's why she comes onstage second.



**FIGURE 14: *THE TWO GODS*. 24” x 24” MARCH, 2013.**

### **March 7-16, 2013. Time Out For Networked Matter Story**

*March 7, 2013.*

Okay, as I mentioned before, I have until April 1, 2013, to write a 3,500 word story on “networked matter” for the Institute For The Future in Palo Alto. They’ll run the stories on the *Boing Boing* blog, and print a free Creative Commons minibook of the stories for their clients. Madeline Ashby, Cory Doctorow, Warren Ellis and maybe Bruce Sterling are writing stories as well.

I already did a lot along these lines with my orphids in *Postsingular*. The orphids are self-reproducing quantum-entanglement-communicating artificially-intelligent biological nanomachines (long molecules) blanket the



Earth, putting a tag onto every square millimeter of surface. In *Hylozoic*, we move beyond orphids and every bit of matter develops AI (without needing orphids) and “wakes up” due to a universal memory augmentation accomplished via spikes into the eighth dimension (don’t ask).

I can use one or the other similar situation for my story. Ubiquitous smart tags or inherent material consciousness. Pick one. Or I describe a the transitional moment, and that event can be the story’s big aha. Even if this is something of a reprise of the *Postsingular/Hylozoic* pair of novels.

I think it makes sense to start with physical tags all over the place. We need to explain (or show) what they are, but we don’t want to spend much time on reprising the implementation or the history of these tags.

What do I call the tags? I don’t want to use the same word “orphid.” How about “voice.” I’m thinking of the “dogshit-day” passage in Phil Dick’s *A Scanner Darkly*:

“He felt, in his head, loud voices singing: terrible, as if the reality around him had gone sour. ... The smell of Barris still smiling overpowered Bob Arctor, and he heaved onto the dashboard of his own car. A thousand little voices tinkled up at him, shining at him, and the smell receded finally. A thousand little voices crying out their strangeness; he did not understand them, but at least he could see, and the smell was going away.”

So a guy is talking about the voices. He’s married, young, lives on Apricot Lane with his wife Julie, and she’d cheating on him.

I’m also thinking of Ry Cooder’s song “If Walls Could Talk,” with these great lines:

Now, if shoes could tell where they’ve been  
When you say you’ve been visiting a friend  
Ain’t you glad ...  
But ain’t you glad  
Glad that shoes don’t talk.

Here's a good video of Ry and his band playing the song life in 1977 in Sausalito, CA.

So now to start a new document and write the story.

*March 16, 2013.*

So now the story's done, 5,000 words, "Apricot Lane." I worked quite hard on it—Rocky Balboa out training for a big rematch, his new shot at the crown. I think it's pretty good. I used the Ry Cooder thing quite a bit, with a guy's wife's shoe telling him she's cheating on him. Got in some strong satire against ubiquitous adverts. Went for a hippie "love is all you need" finish. Used "quantum entanglement" as my bogus science trick.

Now to paddle back to the BIG AHA mind-space.

### **March 17, 2013. Back Into It. Starting Nine.**

So I've been gone for eleven days. I had a thousand-word day on March 6 and then I took off time to write my five-thousand word "Apricot Lane" story for IFTF and *Boing Boing*. A good story, too.

Can someone remind me what this novel is about?

Biotech appliances: the nurbs. Talking rats. Quantum wetware. Getting qwet. A non-drug way to reach a psychedelic state of cosmic merge. Telepathy. Two alien beings: the oddball and the darkstar. An estranged husband and wife. A threat of our world's destruction, and a rescue by our hero and heroine.

### **March 25-April 1, 2013. Fix Biotweak And Qwet**

*March 25, 2013.*

So I'm back into it, going good on my "Spreading Qwet" chapter. Writing quick bits, then fleshing them out, piling up the thousand-word days. I moved some chunks of text around today, wanting to keep my chapter lengths under 8,000 words.

Looking towards the endgame. Still haven't visualized what it's like in Fairyland (or whatever it's called) nor what happens there. And I need more work on visualizing the apocalyptic fully post-qwet Earth/Hell world.

At a practical level, I'm having a little confusion about qwet and its relation to genetic engineering. Let me describe the current situation.

- \* People have been doing gene tweaks to develop the nurbs, using what I refer to as a "a standard wetware engineering tool called the vortex wand." It sends a thicket of branching quantum vortex fields into the target organism's cells.

- \* They use this same technology for making people qwet.

- \* Loulou used to play a game called Levolver where two people use a vortex wands to evolve creatures in a competitive way. I did this both to make Loulou interesting, and to dramatize how the wetware engineering of nurbs works.

- \* Up through the "Funhouse" chapter, I've been avoiding having people doing shapeshifting by tweaking their own genes. I was feeling that it would overload the novel in terms of effects. But possibly I bring in this effect for the post-universal-qwet hell-world phase of the coming chapters and have people turning in birds, pigs, etc. I'd add a quick fix for the problem that amateurish wetware tweaks tend to kill the target creature whom, in the personal shapeshifting cases, would be yourself.

- \* The Joey Moon qwet twist makes people qwet simply by thinking a certain mind pattern at them.

- \* If you have qwet teep, you can weakly project vibes to non-qwet people. In particular, you can stun a nurb into somnolence. And you can push a Joey qwet twist into someone's mind.

I've been rewriting some of the relevant passages, trying for a smoother and more coherent exposition (and authorial conception) of how qwetting and wetware engineering fit together.

\*\*\*

*March 31, 2013.*

I decided to eliminate any onstage biotweaking. And to make this work, I'll be saying that we have two kinds of

nurbs: (a) the biotweaked nurbs and (b) the golem nurbs. When people are changing a nurb onstage, they'll be instructing an existing nurb regarding its behavior, just like you'd instruct an animal or a servant. And, if they're changing the physical form of a nurb, it'll be a golem nurb.

The **biotweaked nurbs** have special purpose genes that make them act certain ways. Making these genes is not a casual easy thing, it happens in a centralized place, I suppose a wetware lab. And the new nurbs are grown in a place akin to the Kritterworks in *Frek and the Elixir*. (Kritter is a synonym for nurb.)

I don't think I talked that much about gene design per se in *Frek*. Somehow they designed a new thread of DNA and they left the DNA copying to the "gene wasps." At the Kritterworks they use Grullo eggs to make embryo blanks, and the set the blanks into so-called artigrows. The gene wasps seed the blanks with kritter wetware. That is, the gene wasps have been instructed about the DNA design, and they cook up DNA in their stinger glands, then seed the embryos,

The **golem nurbs** are more like Zad's nurb paintings. The golems are made of this all-purpose nurb gel that you can program in a more top-down fashion. Crafting internal springs and logic loops. That's what Loulou was working with in her Levolver game, unlike what I was writing before.

\*\*\*

*April 1, 2013.*

I got rid of the "wetware-engineering vortex wand" which is more do-it-yourself than I want genomics to be. And the wand muddles the talk about the qwetter. I do need a fresh hand-waving explanation for how the qwetter works.

I watered down Gaven's abortive attempt to gene-tweak those cattails in the pond—fond of this concept as I am. It'll be smoother if you can only qwet things that have a mind in an obvious way, also a web interface. That is, you can only qwet humans and nurbs—and you can't qwet wild animals

and plants. Gaven's attempt to qwet wild cattails is ignorant bullshit.

A nurb can be based on animal, plant, fungus or protist colony. Nurb gel is a slime mold, and you can qwet it. Slime mold is from the fourth kingdom: the protists. A colony of amoebas. But nurb gel is custom-made by United Mutations, and it includes a web interface and a natural-language-parser.

In the "Funhouse" chapter when they're sitting around the fire, I had a scene of Carlo qwetting and teeping a seemingly ordinary housefly. As I'm saying, it's conceptually cleaner if I limit the qwettable things to humans and nurbs. So, no prob, I make the fly into a security nurb.

But, oh gosh, I had Joey qwetting the flames in that same scene. And they were qwetting a couch's pillow cushions. The cushions can be nurbs. But the flames? I'll have to pass that up, take that out. Like I keep saying, I need to limit the new options in the latter part of the book, and it seems wiser not to go the full hylozoic route.

\*\*\*

For background, I need a concept about the people or the place or the system that *does* the nurb DNA design. I don't want to bring this into the foreground of the plot, but we need a placeholder for this, if only to point it out as a place where we're not going.

Let's suppose that the monopolistic United Mutations is in fact the place that does the plant-or-animal-to-nurb upgrades. I ought to mention why they're in Louisville—like is that their *headquarters* by the Louisville airport? Probably a branch office.

Who made the qwet rat nurbs? Let's say they're simply using regular rats, but with a standard nurb add-on that puts web-access into an animal, and gives it the rudiments of a human-understanding mind. And it's United Mutations who contracted to do the rat upgrades.

To give Skungy a bigger mind, Gaven and Junko made him qwet, and they teeped in Joey's mind. That's the part that UM doesn't exactly know about.

## **April 2, 2013. Two Post-It Notes**

*Paragraph I might slip in.*

"By noon on Tuesday, qwet was in New Orleans and New York City. Late that afternoon it was in Mexico City and out on the West Coast. And thanks to the qwet jellyfish and fly-dinos, by Wednesday, qwet was worldwide. But I still want to tell about the rest of that rainy Tuesday when qwet broke out, especially about the half-assed fiasco of an orgy we tried to throw that night, and about what happened to Jane."

\*\*\*

*A Zen saying that captures the type of ending I often write (cf. *Mathematicians in Love*), where things are back to normal yet everything has changed.*

"At the start, mountains were mountains, rivers were rivers. Then I started seeking enlightenment. Mountains weren't mountains, rivers weren't rivers. Then came the big aha! Mountains are mountains, rivers are rivers."

## **March 30 -April 3, 2013. Oddball = ER Mouth of Leviathan**

On April 2, 2013, I finally got a good idea about what the oddball and the dollshead actually are. A personal big aha. First some background from last week.

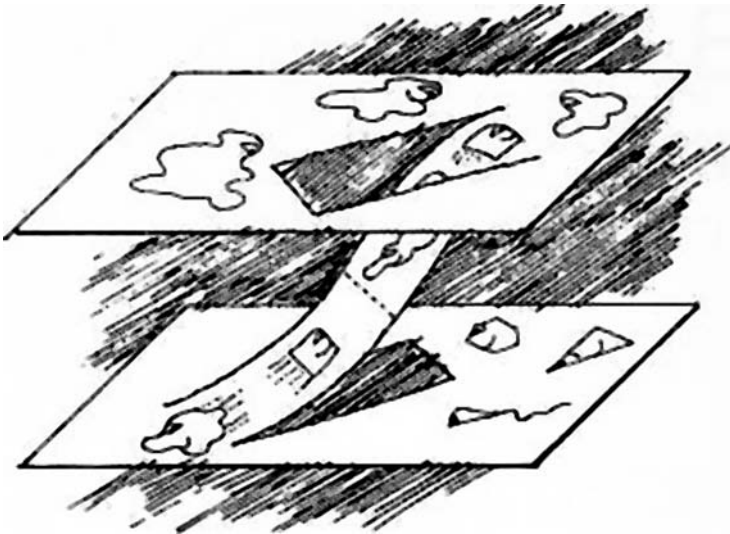
*March 30, 2013.*

In the last two months I lectured about Einstein-Rosen bridges as guest at two separate classes on the fourth dimension (one at UC Berkeley, one at USF). And I blogged about them on March 30, 2013, see "[Four-Dimensional Portals To Other Worlds.](#)" Here's some of the material from that blog post.

The drawings in this post were done by my artist friend David Povilaitis for my book, *The Fourth Dimension*, which is currently available in used editions only, but which

is due to be reprinted in a new edition by Dover in 2014 or 2015.

Okay, here we go. The notion of a portal to a parallel world is a commonplace in fantasy and SF movies—a magic door to another world. Dropping down to Flatland, we can think of the two worlds as being parallel “sheets” of space. The Flatlanders live on the lower world and some other flat creatures—let’s call them Globbers—live in the upper world.



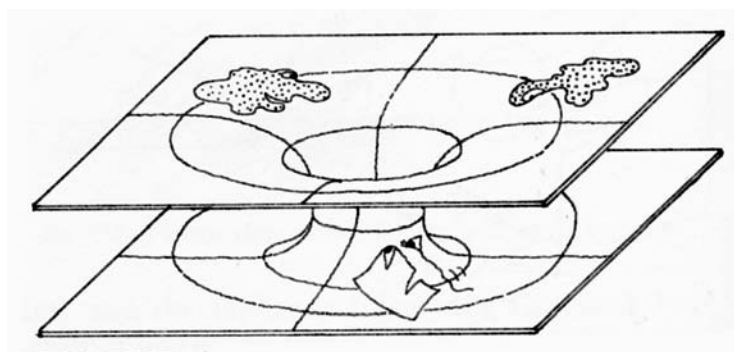
**FIGURE 15: TUNNEL WITH EDGES**

If we want to make the simplest kind of path between the worlds, we fold up a tab from the lower world and glue it to a tab from the upper world. This is what a door-like portal to another world is like. One problem here is that you need to be very careful not to slide off the edges of the path between the world. Or you might dissolve into Nothingness.

The right way to do it is to use what’s called an Einstein-Rosen bridge. You make a wormhole or throat that runs smoothly from one sheet of space to the other. In seeing this picture, people often worry that the Flatlanders who slide through the throat to the alternate world will end up on the

“underside” of that space’s sheet. But you want to think of these sheets as having no thickness so that being on one side of the sheet is the same as being as the other. Or think of the sheets as soap-films with the Flatlanders and Globbers as being like colored patterns in the soap.

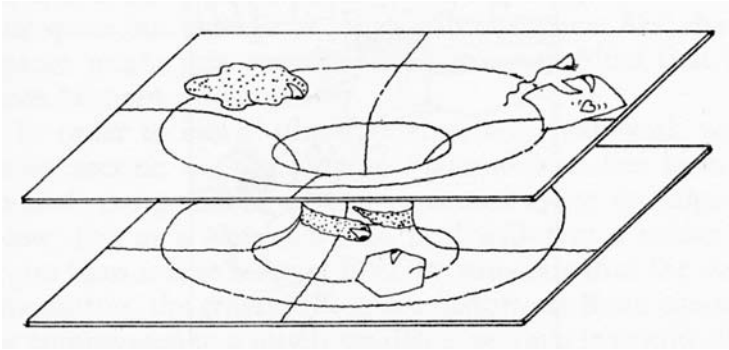
Moving up to an Einstein-Rosen bridge between two 3D universes, we can think of our 3D spaces as floating in a 4D hyperspace, and having a “bent” region that connects the spaces. And our 3D spaces have no essential 4D hyperthickness.



**FIGURE 16: ER BRIDGE TO GLOBLAND**

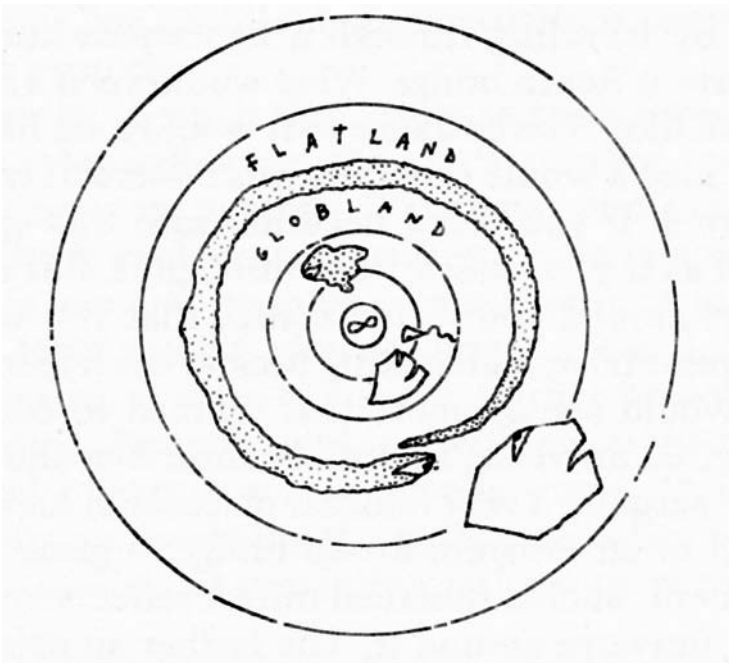
In *The Fourth Dimension*, my character A Square wants to go off to a private place with a Flatland woman called Una. She’s married a jealous Hexagon. In the first of the two images here, we see Square and Una hesitating at the mouth of the ER Bridge.





**FIGURE 17: A SQUARE MAKING IT WITH UNA**

And in the second image, they've slid through the portal in the land of the Globbers, and a helpful Globber has wrapped himself around the throat of the ER bridge so that A Hexagon can't see through.



**FIGURE 18: FLATLANDER'S IMAGE OF THE ER TUNNEL**

The image above shows how the situation looks to the 2D Hexagon. He views the mouth of the portal as a circle [in our version we'd see a sphere]. Globland lies within the circle, Flatland lies outside.

In terms of our space, we can visualize an Einstein-Rosen bridge as resembling a shiny Christmas ornament ball, a sphere within which you seem to see whole world. There are two kickers if the "ball" is the mouth of an ER bridge to another world. (a) The world you see inside the ball isn't the same as our world. (b) The ball doesn't have a solid surface, it's zone that you can walk or crawl through.

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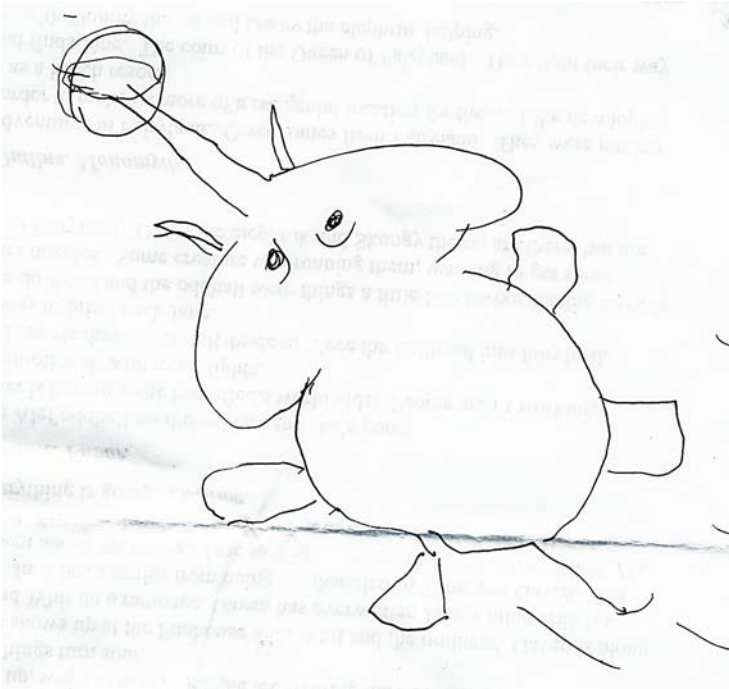
*April 2, 2013.*

*[I posted the following on my [blog on April 5, 2013](#) as "Leviathan Eats Us Via 4D Einstein-Rosen Bridges!"]*

I'd been thinking that the oddball (and the dollshead) ought to be ER bridges. And to nail that in, on the morning of April 2, 2013, I wrote a scene where an elephruk (as big as an elephant) is pulled through the oddball to disappear. The mental image made me laugh: the fat elephant with trunk outstretched, thick legs star-fished out, thin tail trailing. Passing into and through the little Xmas-tree ball. While the elephruk is going through, the ball swells up like a wobbly giant soap bubble, then shrinks back.

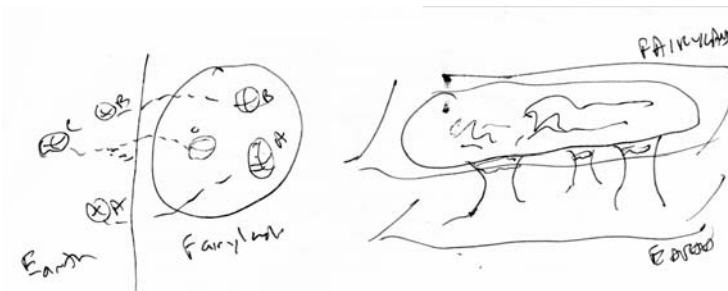
Then I went for a lovely and revivifying hike up over St. Joseph's Hill above our house, the meadows green, the trees bosky, the sky adrift with plump sharp clouds. I've been coughing for six weeks, and I've been thinking I might have pneumonia. I took a little nap on some soft long green grass and when I awoke, I felt like I was finally well.

Lying there, fully at ease, I had been wondering how some creature could contain an ER bridge and yet be an animal or monster with a body and a skin and so on. How would that work? I mean, an ER bridge is a wormhole connecting two spaces. How do you wrap a body around that?



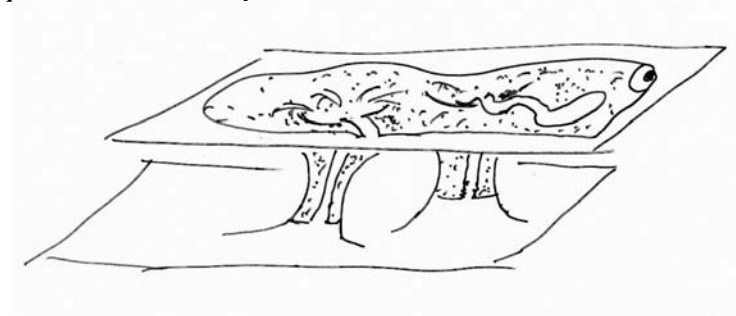
**FIGURE 19: ELEPHANT BEING EATEN BY A WORMHOLE**

Waking from that nap I had an aha moment. Think of a largish creature, maybe as big as a whale, or maybe even bigger. Call him a leviathan. He lives in the parallel world. And the creature has a number of ER bridges *within his body*. They're like vacuoles in the body of a paramecium.



**FIGURE 20: 3D & FLATLAND LEVIATHANS WITH ER BRIDGES.**

Shown above: Right shows Flatland Leviathan with three ER bridges. Left shows 3D Leviathan with (undrawn) connections to three spherical mouths. I scrawled these two preliminary images above on a manuscript page I'd brought along on my outing on April 2, 2012, and then I drew the picture below on April 3, 2013.



**FIGURE 21. LEVIATHAN DANGLES TWO ER BRIDGES**

By the time I drew the picture above, I'd enhanced my conceptualization to include the notion that (a) some of these dangling ER bridges, such as the darkstar will lead to mouths with teeth that grind you up and send you into one of the leviathan's stomachs, but (b) some of them, such as the oddball, provide a clear exit path into the higher world. More on this point in the April 3, 2013, material below.

But now let's back up. In order to discuss the situation, I'm using special names for two worlds. I've been calling them the Universe and Fairyland, but now I'd like to employ a more neutral usage that I coined in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*: Loblane and Hibrane. We live in Loblane, and Hibrane is the parallel world.

The two ends of an ER bridge between two 3D branes or worlds will appear to us like spheres. So, as I'm saying, the Hibrane ends of a group of ER bridges could very well be spherical vacuoles within the leviathan's body, and these vacuoles connect to oddball-like spheres down here in our Loblane.

As indicated by my drawings, I arrived at this image by thinking of a Flatland model. In the Flatland version we

have the two planes with one or more ER wormhole throats connecting them. We draw a big dark glob on the upper plane. The leviathan. And the ER throats are within his body. And—crucial point—his dark flesh extends about 30% or even 90% of the way down each of the throats, holding those throats bulged out. But the flesh doesn't go all the way down as the leviathan wants to be living primarily in the upper plane.

What happens if you sail in through one of the ER mouths? The leviathan is flexible, possibly even jellyfish-like, so the mouth can freely enlarge. Even an elephant can fit through. Fine. But what happens when you encounter the dark flesh of the leviathan drooping down from the Hibrane?

The traditional panic-mongering SF option is that the leviathan dissolves and absorbs you on contact, subsuming you as food. Or he somehow chews you up and swallows you. And this may sometimes happen. Certainly I'd like to see Whit Heyburn meet his end this way. Possibly the kindly elephruk Darby gets eaten in this fashion as well. Maybe a few of Darby's bones slide back out or are spit out. Grisly effect in the barn there. Maybe just one big, dramatic bone. The ER sphere burps, and out comes a bloody tibia, three feet long and a foot across.

But we'll suppose that when Jane and Zad go into the ER maw of the leviathan the creature dials back its digestive processes, and our hero and heroine are able to wallow through the jellied leviathan flesh and emerge from its skin in the Hibrane.

### **Fabulous! Eureka! Aha!**

I've been waiting for this, and I wasn't sure it was going to come. All thanks to logic and math and weeks of butting my head against the wall and, ultimately, taking a nap on a grassy hillock one California spring day.

\*\*\*

*April 3, 2013.*

So I was thinking about the leviathan as soon as I woke up this morning, and I thought about it all day, off and on,

although in the meantime I had to prepare all my tax papers and bring them to the accountant, go to the dentist to get my teeth cleaned, and spend the afternoon with my second cousin Hedwig from Luneburg near Hamburg, visiting her son Hans von Sichart who lives in San Jose. It was good to have the geometry and topology of the leviathan to think about while I was getting my teeth cleaned. It was as if, for once, I wasn't really there. Dear Mamma Mathematica!

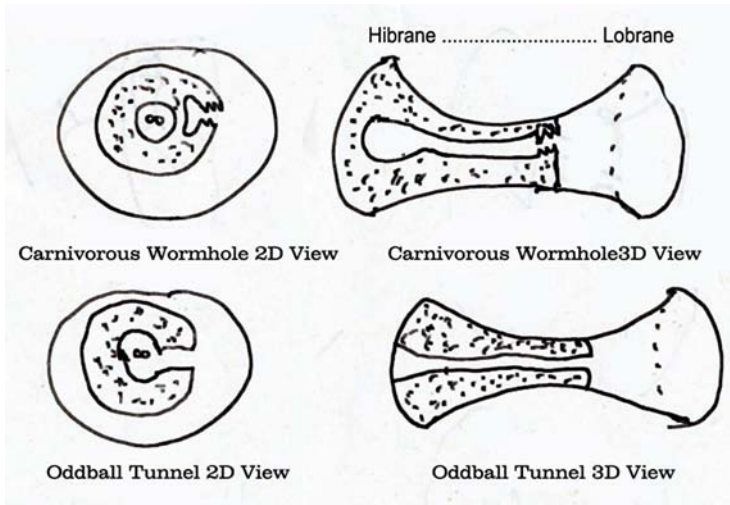
Anyway, the concept I slowly arrived at is that the leviathan flesh that protrudes down into the ER tunnel can have a mouth in it. On the one hand, the mouth can either lead to a toothed-vagina style channel in which you're ground up, and then moved by peristalsis into one of the leviathan's stomachs. On the other hand, the mouth may lead through a channel out to the leviathan's surface, delivering you via a kind of birth canal into the Hibrane world.

I also decided that the better-known and somewhat likeable oddball should be an ER bridge of the "good" latter kind, a channel to the higher world. And the less-well-known darkstar ER bridge will be a "bad" one, a route to being devoured.

So below I've drawn, on the left, the Flatland images of the two ER balls, and on the right the diagrams of the two kinds of ER bridges involved.

Now for more details. When Zad and Jane were handling the oddball in their apartment it didn't feel like it had a mouth or an opening. It felt like a smooth glassy ball—and I've draw it that way in the figure above. We can think of the oddball or darkstar as wearing a rind. A clear outer surface over the actual leviathan flesh. Like a cornea. And when they want to get down to business, they split the cornea, and it drops off like a husk.

Alternately the cover gets soft and you can push through it.



**FIGURE 22: ANATOMY OF AN ER WORMHOLE**

All those years, Zad could see into the oddball and see the puckered opening of the mouth. It might look, frankly, like an anus, although I don't want to say that. Or like a vagina. But I'll probably just say "puckered mouth." The glassy oddball (with cornea still intact) will have a brownish sphere in the center, possibly with shiny skin. And in this sphere there's a puckered slit.

After the oddball sheds its cover (or after you push in) the mouth opens up. Looking inside you're seeing up along a tube that goes through an ER bridge. The tube may open up quite a bit further along, but you'll "read" that as seeing a lot of tiny objects inside the mouth.

Note that the cornea-shed can be reversible process. Perhaps the transparent cover of the balls is like a nictitating membrane on the eye of a bird or a reptile. When it retracts, it's covering, say, only the "back" half of the ball. So I think we'll talk about "retractable transparent membrane" rather than "cornea."

And now—lots of work to do.

But that's enough thinking for today. I'm going to watch some *Futurama*.

## **April 4-6, 2013. Leviathan To Do List. Big Fix.**

*April 4, 2013.*

My big aha has faced me with a big fix. In the first part of this entry I have a To Do list. I'll asterisk the items as I take care of them, repeatedly dragging the still-to-do items to the top of the list, so that the final list is roughly in the reverse order in which I took care of the items.

In the second part of this entry I'll sketch out some plans, but not right now. I wrote this to do list at 5 am. It's dark and rainy outside. Go back to sleep.

- \* How would Gaven have become involved with the two wormhole balls? What would be his motives in dealing with them?
- \* The leviathan can only "see" people who are qwet. It wanted qwet to spread across Earth so it could *find* the people and eat and/or shanghai them.
- \* Tweak all my mentions of the oddball to make its appearance match what I now have in mind. Perhaps when Dad and Zad see it in the Funhouse, it has opened its nictitating membrane, and they can touch its gleaming flesh, purple veined with gold.
- \* The leviathan tendril that eats the elephruk in the barn is the darkstar, not the oddball. I should create some fairly sharp distinction in how the oddball and the darkstar look.
- \* Was it a complete coincidence that Jane found the oddball? Okay, sure, it could have been. But once qwet kicked in, the oddball could have summoned the darkstar tendril. Why not suppose there are lots and lots of oddballs. Sown across the planet twenty years ago. Waiting. The Leviathan is patient.
- \* Refashion my presentation of Loulou's "fairylend" experience so that it dovetails with the oddball being an ER bridge to the Hibrane.
- \* My current transition to fairylend happens when Gaven rubs the oddball on Loulou's crotch and she has an orgasm and flips to fairylend. Need to change this.



- \* My very earliest version of the fairyland scenes were later watered down to have Loulou faking her fairyland experience by making herself invisible by qwetting the air around her. But it would make more sense if Loulou had indeed been halfway “up the ass” of the oddball.
- \* Regarding invisibility, under my newer notion of qwet, you can’t qwet simple objects like air. Invisibility was a patch-fix for a problem I had with the fairyland scenes, but those scenes are changing anyway. So I should drop invisibility. It was a one-shot orphan effect in the middle of the book.
- \* I’d like to keep the gubs. In my patch-fixed version of fairyland, the gubs were just golems that Loulou made from nurb gel. It would be more fun if they were true fairylanders. Something like lice living in the bowels of the leviathan?

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*April 5-6, 2013.*

Suppose that during the fairyland scenes, Loulou has been swallowed by the oddball, feet first so that just her face can show in our world. The bulge of Loulou’s body would be hidden behind the small entrance to the oddball—the shape would be like a fat joint that’s perpendicular to Flatland with only its tip touching the plane. We wouldn’t need invisibility.

It’s also possible that Loulou has a spacious “sitting-room” just inside Leviathan, she’s not necessarily squeezed in as tight as a turd in a rectum or like a baby in a birth canal.

And, if Loulou is in synch with Leviathan, he can be moving her about as she liked.

What about the gubs? Perhaps some creatures live within the body of Leviathan, like pocket gophers in tunnels and caves. Parasites. And the gubs number among these creatures. The gubs might even be in some sense parts of Leviathan, mobile “life-boat” type disconnected extensions of Leviathan’s bodies. Scouts. Naw, stick with parasites. Don’t make them look so much like pigs, give them soft

Velcro-like feet. Insectile hooks. They can even plaster themselves to a human's body. Nasty, unintelligent, ill-tempered. But personable. Suppose that one of the gubs remains in our world and becomes a character. "Gubby." He can be my traditional teasing-Gregory-Gibson unwanted-Tuckerization character, like Gibby or Gargor in *Frek*.

I don't initially see a place for the squids on stilts that Loulou supposes are ghostly presences on Gaven's front porch, and I don't see an Alice in Wonderland posse chasing Loulou. Her worry would be, rather, of being swallowed further into Leviathan. She would worry about being pushed away from her peephole into our Loblane world. Or, no, wait, I *can* keep the squids on stilts. Loulou peeks out at Fairyland from the far end of the tunnel. Even if I change them, it's good to have some preliminary glimpses into Fairyland—where Zad and Jane must eventually go.

How about the death of Gaven? Suppose that the darkstar suffocated him. Plopped over his head and squeezed till Gaven died of asphyxiation. Make that the death cause. If the oddball is busy holding Loulou, we'd need the darkstar to be taking care of Gaven.

### **April 10-17, 2013. "Weezie's Party"**

*April 10, 2013.*

Going good in the current chapter, titled "Weezie's Orgy." [Note that I later divided the "Weezie's Party" chapter in two: "Mr. Normal" / "Weezie's Party."]

I'm still not sure how many chapters I'll write in all chapters. Maybe I can get away with 12. We'll see how much things want to open up and spread out when Zad gets to Fairyland.

I wrote a conversation between Zad and Jane yesterday. Jane seems normal, but maybe Zad will later learn that she was already Gaven's puppet at this time? No that would be deflate the shock of the boys zapping her right after she tried to leave. Gaven brags about the zap at Weezie's orgy. Let's say he used his platypus.

Right now I need to think of some fubar things that are happening as qwet sets in, and they can mention this in the chapter before this. I also should have a little more about the cops and DoG coming or not coming to hassle the Funhouse gang.

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*April 13, 2013.*

Today I finally need to figure out what to do for the orgy scene I've been talking about. This has been hanging over my head for weeks or even months. It can't be a witless and/or slobbering catalog of generic transgressive sex routines. And quite soon after the party begins, the orgy should turn into a flop and a mass freakout, due to everyone's overly high levels of mental sensitivity to each other. Empathy works if you're a couple or in a group of three or four, but in a crowd it goes kerflooeey and becomes paranoia and hysteria.

The high point of the orgy can be the appearance of a crocodile sex-zipper—an image I had years ago when I was driving by a bunch of kids coming out of the high-school, and I was thinking about them lusting for each other and having flings. The sheer orgone energy in a senior class!

I see the crocodile sex zipper as being, say, two dozen people linked together by connective tissue to form the jaws of a cartoony crocodile, a dozen people below, a dozen above, penises and vulvas exposed, possibly some mouths and anuses. And when the crocodile “bites,” all the tabs glide into the slots. Huge, merry, rolling eyes on the crocodile. Comically lashing tail.

The crocodile sex-zipper group could be strangers, a gang of random young Kentuckiana qwetties, and the stuff holding them together can be nurb gel. They're bored by the initially generic orgy, and they spontaneously scavenge the nurb gel from Zad's stash in the barn.

I have this feeling that I wrote about the CSZ in some notes somewhere, or in a novel, maybe I can search it out. So...yes, using my Windows 7 search all documents, yeah, I find that I mentioned a crocodile sex zipper in *Realware*,

which I wrote during 1998. I don't see a mention of the zipper in my notes for *Realware*, and I think the original idea must date back to an earlier time, but I didn't record it then in an electronic form. I have a feeling that there might be a drawing of it pasted into one of my old paper "ledger" journals. Oh well. Here's the passage from *Realware*.

"What kind of sex system do you Metamartians have?" asked Yoke. ...

"We have something like boy/girl too," [Siss] explained. "One got stick, one got hole. Each of us is 'stick' in some lives, 'hole' in others. Many lives across two-dimensional time. Stick to hole, hole to stick, like big crocodile sex zipper." Siss showed her fangs and made a gentle biting motion, her long curved fangs sliding into matching sockets in her jaws. "Everyone both girl and boy."

"But there's more to it than that," piped up Josef. "We zipper together in loops of seven. Why seven? It has to do with a feedback resonance in the strange attractor of our metagenome. In ancient times we mated only on Metamars, but now we've chirped out into the cosmos. When seven of us nomads can meet and mate — it's a wonderful thing. Seven of us landed here, but eight of us shall leave."

Well, that's pretty bloodless and unfunky. Perhaps I'll make the CSZ as knobbly as it should be, and use it in *The Big Aha*.

\*\*\*

*April 15, 2013.*

I'm having second thoughts about doing an orgy scene at all. The whole humor of the "orgy scene" in *Be Not Content* is that it the orgy doesn't come off. They're too high and

too paranoid. For now I'm changing the title to "Weezie's Party."

Also I think I won't use Zad's *Everyman* golem nurbs, even though I enjoyed writing them up. I'll move them into a Zad's "Everyman" Golem Nurbs section of my *Unused Passages*. They don't seem all that interesting to me, and four is too many to remember. Clutter.

Maybe Zad only makes *one* golem nurb. My instinct is that it should be mirror of himself. AntiZad or MirrorZad or maybe even Zadie, a female, like his Jungian anima would be. This needs a bit of thought. There should be some meaning to this nurb, both (a) in terms of developing our sense of Zad's personality and spiritual quest and (b) in terms of providing a tool to help (or hinder) Zad in the Final Battle (against the wormholes, against Whit, and against the plague of qwet.)

I think I'll also include the infinite-regress-lamp nurb that I was calling Knowledge, although he can equally well be called Blinkie. And maybe a pocket-sized crawly hand called Snooper.

Let's get back to the issue of Zad's double. Will he dump his whole personality into it? Maybe yes.

The idea of having the nurb double be a female Zad has a nice symmetry, but I don't see that twist having much point. I don't see gender confusion and/or lack of empathy for women and/or lack of connection to his generative self as major issues for Zad. I suppose he does have a touch of homophobia in that he was repelled by being in a sexual threesome with Joey, but that could also be regarded as common sense.

Joey's double was a rat, that is, Skungy. This had a nice resonance.

What might Zad's double look like? What would be an artistic move for Zad in this context? Make him Fauve?

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*April 16, 2013.*

A golem nurb copy of Zad called SubZad.

I'll have him alternate between showing his "inside" and his "outside," speaking in terms of emotive personality. He'll oscillate between displaying cosmic mode and robotic mode. The oscillation is like melting and freezing.

Going into cosmic mode SubZad smooths out into a generic cartoon face and goes beyond that to be a featureless glowing globe. Like Chairman Mao or a happy-face balloon. (Maybe at the peak of cosmic mode his head is a spherical mirror, with the world inside him, but no, that overlaps too much with images of the wormhole mouths.)

Coming back to robotic, SubZad becomes a Fauve copy of Zad, then a photorealistic copy, then an overly precise carved copy. Like Shuman the Human finding himself in a drop of water in that early cartoon by R. Crumb.

The things that SubZad says are like Zad's personality speaking without any filter at all. SubZad says the things that Zad only thinks. In a way this is the way Joey talks already, but we'll push it even further.

We can end the chapter with an attack by half a dozen wormholes. They might look like ultra-female sex spheres, as in my novel *The Sex Sphere*, but I'm not sure that works for a mixed crowd, that is, it doesn't made as much subliminal sense to have a female sex sphere engulfing a woman. Moray eels are always good monsters, but we want the wormhole mouths to be roughly spherical. Heads that mimic the heads of those whom the wormholes are after, but I'm already doing the "double" thing with SubZad.

Mirrorballs that (initially) appear to be reflecting the room might be best, and we could alter what you see in the mirrorball to be either a view of Fairyland or a view of a toothed-vagina esophagus and an insider's view of a seething stomach. I like that. And at first people think the mirrorballs are party decorations. Festive balloons.

\*\*\*

*April 17, 2013.*

I'm filling in and elaborating a lot of details, with more to come, and the chapter's up to 6,500 words. I'll push the

arrival of Jane and the attack of the wormholes into the next chapter.



**FIGURE 23: “STA HI” AND ME BEFORE 1987 BEASTIE BOYS SHOW**

I’m in this good mode now where, when I work on the book, it’s like I’m just typing as fast I can, transcribing all the things head and in my notes, and with more and more new incidents and details pouring forth. No stone left

untuned. No left turn unstoned. Not that I'm "stoned," but I'm getting quite high off my characters.

Imagining Weezie's party, in my head I keep hearing the Beastie Boys concert that I saw at the Flint Center in Cupertino with Jon Pearce and Dennis "Sta Hi" Poague, early in 1987, so awesome. This morning, instead of writing, I spent two or three hours watching (and making Facebook and Twitter posts about) YouTube videos of the Beastie Boys doing "No Sleep Till Brooklyn." I found a 1987 live version and the "official" 2009 version, made twenty years later.

Also I found the photo above of me and Dennis before the 1987 show, which I also posted on Facebook. Good old Dennis. He lives in Brazil now.

## **April 19-25, 2013. Plan Ending, Fairyland & Myoor**

So now I'm out of the vivid novel-writing mode for a week or so, laying my plans for the "Fairyland" chapter and beyond.

I'll open "Fairyland" with a scene at Weezie's party, with the upshot that Jane and Zad go to Fairyland together. An intense "couple" chapter from there on, maybe just the two of them. We've been waiting for the whole book to get Zad and Jane back together.

This said, I could well send SubZad and/or Skungy along to Fairyland. They'd keep the conversations going. But SubZad would be too large a presence. Maybe send the rat; he's fun.

Meanwhile I have a whole tangle of Fairyland issues to deal with. I'll be working on this for a few days, repeatedly revising questions and possible answers.

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*How many wormholes are there?*

I'd been thinking of a dramatic plague of wormholes blanketing all of Earth. But now I'm thinking we'll only have wormholes attacking a small area, perhaps just Louisville. And then what Louisville experiences is unique.



Earlier I had stuff about hibernating wormholes being found in gem stores all over the world. And I had Jane finding the oddball in NYC. I was thinking in terms of wormholes being so ubiquitous that it was only a coincidence that Jane and Gaven found the oddball and the darkstar.

But I feel it's better if we assume that the oddball *was* deliberately placed where Jane would find it. And all of the other wormholes are of a different type, and they are "summoned" by the presence of qwet people or nurbs in cosmic mode. The first of these to arrive was the so-called darkstar, attracted by Joey Moon becoming qwet.

\*\*\*

*How many Earthlings are eaten?*

(a) Initially I was thinking of a global plague with a *billion* people dead, with a possibility of the wormholes eating everyone! And that makes Junko and Joey into genocidal mass murderers, and we lose sympathy for them, and the book's not fun.

(b) What if only a *hardly any* people die? Could we block the massacre before it gets going at all? And only have, like, *three* get eaten: Gaven and Whit and at least *one* sad innocent sacrificial victim—maybe Craig Gurky or maybe Zad's Mom. But that seems unrealistic, to have so few.

(c) So let's have the wormholes eat a couple of thousand of people in Louisville, but then they become satiated, and they stop eating, at least for a time. Qwet blankets the world, yes, but the wormholes don't. They're coming from one particular "myoor" which is currently the size of Louisville. This sets up a big exodus scene, with people streaming out of Louisville as more and more are being swallowed.

I'm going with (c).

Junko and Joey and the other Funhousers are gonna bear the blame for the missing people, so we'll need a fix for that.

\*\*\*

*What does it mean to be eaten by a wormhole?*

Three options.

(a) Initially I was assuming that the myoor's wormholes literally chew people up. I wanted to see the elephruk's femur (and maybe Gaven's skull, like an effect shown in the original *Half-Life*) bouncing across the floor. Like scraps falling out of a chewing mouth.

(b) People are still chewed up but the eating is in some sense incidental—the myoors are really after our software and our wetware. They're *disassembling* people and nurbs. *Virtualizing* them. Yes, the myoor is literally grinding us up like hamburger and digesting us, but the process is more like when the robots had the “nursie” slice up Cobb Anderson's body and brain in *Software*. The myoor is extracting the information in our organisms. For its *main* source of food, they're eating stuff in Fairyland. Or it ate aethereal cotton candy in space on their way here.

The people who get swallowed up—they become virtual people within the VR that's running in the mind of the myoor. And they're stuck there, with lots of other beings who've been eaten. It's not all bad, and somewhat better than being dead, but most of us wouldn't want to go there.

This is a currently popular SF scenario where you convert our real reality into virtual reality and turn humans into characters in a cosmic videogame. Cf. Doctorow and Stross's antic *The Rapture of the Nerds*. Digital immortality with a side-order of tweaks.

(c) Simpler idea: the myoor is simply storing the people in cocoons like the pod-people in bidets in *The Matrix*. In this case we lose the drama of things being chewed up, but we don't have the burden of bringing in the whole VR thing, along with the reassembling of bodies.

I'm going with (c).

The swallowed people are live mummies. People find out about this, due to a few early releases. Street preachers are advising people to be swallowed by the “pearly gates” of the wormholes to achieve immortality.

And we fully defuse the taint of mass murder when the wormholes spit everyone people back out. This happens in the last chapter. While we're killing the myoor, it disgorges all the people it ate.

One issue: I do want to see that elephruk leg on the barn floor. How about this: when a wormhole closes purses it's opening, it pinches off or cuts free whatever was still sticking out of its mouth. And Dibble's leg was hanging out. Dibble is a nurb, so there's not a lot of blood. Soft nurb "muscle" around ossified nurb "bone." And Skungy gnaws off the meat.

I think we'd like to see a pinch-off of Gaven's head as well. Gaven's being dragged feet first into the darkstar at the party, and, say, Whit is holding onto him. Gaven's slipping away. Whit's got a grip on Gaven's head. The mouth pinches closed. Whit's holding Gaven's head. SubZad throws the head into a gully.

\*\*\*

*What creatures are at the Fairyland ends of the wormholes?*

One wormhole leads to a tunnel peeper. All the others lead into the stomachs of a myoor.

The sole tunnel peeper is the oddball. As well as being a pass-through tunnel to Fairyland, it's a kind of periscope being used by a pair of rangers. And they call it the peeper. What does it look like?

(a) *Glasses bird*. The peeper looks like the animated pair of glasses in the Tulgey Woods in Disney's 1951 *Alice in Wonderland*. Here's a [Google page](#) showing images of the "glasses bird." It has little bird feet at the bottoms of the spectacle legs, and it has see-through eyes on the glasses lenses, and you can don them by having the bird feet stand on your shoulders and hold the lenses before your eyes. But wait, would Earthlings would be seeing through those lenses from the "front" side? And won't the peeper need a sizable "vagina" that Earthlings can emerge from? The bird's beak might do the job. But, come on, I need something simpler.

(b) *Grotto*. The Fairyland end of the oddball is a grotto like you'd use in a damp garden for a three-quarter life-size painted concrete statue of the Virgin Mary. The rangers go in there to see Earth.

Now let's talk about the myoor or myoors. The have wormhole mouths in their stomach-like pouch, and the wormholes run from Fairyland to our world. As soon as a myoor senses our cosmic-mode qwet teep nearby, an ingrained instinct causes it to stick a 4D siphons down to Earth and to swallow the cosmic-mode person or nurb.

*Myoor origin options:*

(a) The myoors have been on Fairyland Earth since the dawn of time, unknowingly awaiting our qwet stage. Possibly the myoors were in the form of seeds or spores.

(b) Or the myoors emerged from the fauna present on Fairyland. A kind of phase transition. Things flowing together. This option is endogenous. It's a metaphor for what's happening to our society. Stores and web services agglomerating and becoming a juggernaut that plans to eat minds.

(c) A single myoor, sensing our qwet from afar, zoomed to Fairyland Earth and flopped down here to feast upon us. This one is a similar metaphor for what's happening to us—think of chain store arriving from afar and flopping down. Only one myoor is coming to Earth. They don't share planets. Normally the first myoor on a cosmic-mode-citizens planet expects to absorb them all over a year or two, and to grow while it's doing this.

I'll pick option (c) because it's simpler to explain.

*Myoor size options:*

(a) *Small* myoors. Like flying balls. Like crows. If I wanted, I could have the myoors be tiny, tiny cows, the size of toy animals, and still be swallowing us. Would give it a Fairyland feel. Powerful dwarves. Too arcane.

(b) *Medium*-sized myoors like cows. A thundering herd of myoors, capable of stampeding, and maybe with an ability to fly. They might be stampeding into the Fairyland

location overlaying Louisville. I find this funny, but it's too silly, given that we want the myoors to be fairly terrifying.

(c) A single *large* myoor, with multiple wormhole feeding tubes. The myoor is a hairy lumpy thing the size of Louisville. Simpler to have a single threat. So when Jane and Zad go over to Fairyland, they're walking around on the lumpy surface of the myoor which is maybe puddled around the town's buildings like a mudslide. The city-blanketing myoor is an objective correlative for the shared mass hive-mind. "As soon as I stepped out my door, I could feel it. The presence of the filthy myoor. A pulsing hairy thing underfoot."

I like option (c). It has an alien invasion feel—flopping down from Fairyland space onto Fairyland Earth, and pushing through to feed on us from there. And note that, if we only have the one myoor, there won't be wormhole eating-tunnels anywhere else on Earth, at least for a time. The myoor is going to eat everyone in Louisville first.

Regarding size, note that if a myoor can eat Dibble the elephruk, one might reasonably suppose that its stomach would need to be large. Indeed, the myoor would need to be as big as a whale. But the myoor isn't all that *thick*, which is why Dibble's leg sticks out. It's maybe four or five feet thick.

\*\*\*

*Who will Jane and Zad meet in Fairyland?*

Let's not have a queen or king or duchess or noble or goddess. I had a jellyfish goddess in *Mathematicians in Love*, and a Duchess in *Jim and the Flims*, and world-spirits such as the Big Pig or Gaia in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*.

I'm thinking of a married couple, kind of like hillbillies. Jethro and Stanky. Or maybe "Jethro" is too comic-strip hillbilly. Jephtha. Or Jeth—but that echoes "Seth," that bullshitting seer who wrote long books. Go with Jephtha. One of my father's uncles had that name.

Jephtha and Stanky somewhat like rangers, or wildlife wardens, or planetary guardians. The rangers are floating in the air, swooping around like the fairy-godmother puppet in

a Muppets skit. Or more like a talking dragonfly from *Alice in Wonderland*, elegant and menacing. Like the mean flowers in *Through the Looking Glass*. A dragonfly with gossamer fairy wings and a slender, leathery, wizened body. Hovering, and then darting to one side so fast that it seems like teleportation, and maybe it is.

Possibly the rangers have a nasty egg-laying routine, in fact they might lay eggs in some of the myoor-mummified Earthlings, who then go “Alien” on us, with larvae bursting out of their chests. But probably I don’t do this.

The rangers use the peeper to locate and pull up one or two of Earthlings. What are the rangers motives?

(a) Rangers are like cowboys. They like for the myoors to feed somewhat on the underlying mundane planet, but they want to hold the myoors back from complete genocide, and they teach us some methods of self-protection.

(b) Rangers don’t like the myoor at all, they see it as an infestation, they’ve heard about the myoor problem from Fairylanders on other Fairyland planets. They’re like public health officials, or ecologists. They enlist us to kill the myoor. As I mentioned before, there’s only one myoor attack per planet. Some planets survive and some don’t. It’s kind of a test. Like the orals for your Ph. D. You have to face your nemesis.

I’ll go with option (b).

\*\*\*

*How did the rangers ensure that oddball ended up with Jane, who then happened to be involved with the inventors and purveyors of qwet?*

Suppose that the rangers could see through the peeper all along, they went into the viewing grotto, which is like a *camera obscura*. Fine. But why did they fixate onto Jane?

Suppose that the rangers can see into Earth’s future via their peeper. It helps that they’re in a parallel world. Earth’s history is like a tapestry they can contemplate. The peeper wormhole is 5D. That is, it’s 4D so as to reach over to the parallel world, and it’s 5D so it can swivel and see the past and future of the parallel world.

Generally they can't see into Fairyland's own future. But in the events relating to the myoor, the futures of Earth and Fairyland are coupled, so they are seeing an aspect of the Fairyland future. So?

Well, if you're adjusting your present to influence your future, and if you're seeing your future, then you're embroiled in an infinite regress. What you do *now* changes your *future*, and seeing that *future* changes what you do *now*. So you are embedded in a closed causal loop. Note that you are *not* "going around and around" the loop, as that would invoke a second-order level of time. The loop is a static pattern in your spacetime.

If we come out and admit there's a regress or a closed causal loop, that's not necessarily a bad thing. From the standpoint of mathematics and chaos theory, I know that a regress can serve to define an attractor. Inevitably the rangers' closed causal loop is one of these attractors. There can be a number of possible attractors, so there is an element of non-determinism in that things *could* have been laid out in a different way. But given that our timelines lead into the basin of attraction of the ultimate closed causal loop attractor, that's where they have to end up. *Mektoub*, it is written.

So, good, I've got my explanatory rap in place now, and it should mollify most of the readers.

What happens in the story is as follows.

From seeing the future, the rangers know there's going to be some qwet cosmic mode vibes filtering up from Earth, and that a hungry myoor will flop down on Fairyland Earth, and it'll be unpleasantly sliming around like hippies leaving ten thousand pounds of trash in Golden Gate park at a 420 celebration. The rangers want to prepare to play a part in exterminating the myoor.

And the rangers foresee the future Jane coming to Fairyland with her husband Zad to help them. So now, in the present, they give Jane the oddball to set her up for the trip. Gaven moves his business to Louisville, which leads to qwet being developed in Louisville near where Jane lives,

which leads to the darkstar myoor tendril poking through in Louisville, which leads to Jane's involvement with the emerging qwet/myoor scene, which leads to her crawling through the oddball to Fairyland. The rangers placed the oddball near Jane because they knew she'd be crawling through it.

Restating the closed causal loop: Jane comes to Fairyland because the rangers gave her the oddball; the rangers gave Jane the oddball because she comes to Fairyland.

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*How Gaven know about the oddball? How did he know to ask Jane for it?*

Let's suppose that the myoor, via the darkstar, told Gaven about the oddball. The myoor wants the oddball out of play so the myoor can eat everyone on Earth with no opposition from the rangers and their oddball link to us.

*Why did the darkstar swallow Gaven?*

Well, it had the oddball already, so it was ready to start eating.

*Why didn't Gaven stay inside the myoor. Why did the myoor start smothering him and then back off?*

The oddball interfered.

*Why did the darkstar's smothering kill Gaven, even though I'm claiming that the others eaten by the myoor's wormholes can easily be regurgitated alive?*

Perhaps the oddball interfered before the myoor could put Gaven on life-support. Or perhaps the myoor stung Gaven with an animation-suspension drug akin to curare, and when it regurgitates people, it'll administer a counteracting drug.

\*\*\*

*What does Fairyland look like?*

(a) Plane. I'd toyed with the idea of having Fairyland be a the surface of a perhaps infinite plane. A Great Plain. Oh don't do that, it's a failure of the imagination. Also a physical plane wouldn't be likely to pass near many planets,



in fact it would only graze one spot on Earth and not even wrap around it. So no.

(b) Space. Another option is that the space of Fairyland is like a universe-spanning sea or a gravity-free atmosphere in which the Fairylanders drift or swim or fly about. And they flock to a zone where qwet is sensed on an underlying planet. That's a little impersonally vast. And empty space is boring.

(c) Planet. A Fairyland version of Earth precisely overlaid upon our Earth. With slightly different versions of Earth objects, ghostly, strange. And the myoors. And the rangers.

I like option (c).

\*\*\*

*What does qwet have to do with the rangers and the myoors?*

People or nurbs being in cosmic mode qwet for a prolonged period of time is the one clear signal that penetrates from Earth to Fairyland Earth. It's a quantum jump effect. Note that the rangers can also see Earth via the peeper. But the myoors don't have a peeper, and they depend on the glow of qwet. They can follow a person's qwet glow and move a wormhole tentacle to that person's vicinity.

\*\*\*

*What is the purpose of SubZad?*

(a) After they successfully kill the myoors, the Fairylanders want to *keep* Jane and Zad in Fairyland as advisers. Like the kids who followed the Pied Piper—you go into that cave under the mountain, you're gonna stay there in Enchantment Land. But Zad and Jane leave a SubZad and a SubJane to stand in for them in Fairyland. Possibly Zad makes a SubJane blank by splitting SubZad in two, and make his other half be a SubJane. Suspecting that this might be necessary, SubZad has wolfed down Gaven's remaining platypuses, beefing himself up. SubZad also ate a whole nurb horn of plenty and a magic table that Weezie had set out to feed her guests. This is way too complicated.

(b) SubZad stands in for Zad while he's off in Fairyland.

(c) SubZad takes the genocide rap for the Funhouse crew and is executed, using a setup like for (a). An angry mob tears SubZad and SubJane apart in lieu of Zad and Jane. The nurbs don't mind, their scraps can crawl together.

*Eadem mutata resurgo.*

\*\*\*

*How can we kill the myoor?*

Two options.

(a) Kill it in Fairyland. This would be a production hassle. In effect, I'd have to "build" all those Fairland sets. Much more effective to set the big battle scene in Louisville.

(b) Lure the myoor through the wormholes to Louisville and kill it here. We can lure it by having everyone in Louisville flip down into robotic mode at once. And the myoor is frustrated, it's sniffing around, like, "Where did they go?" And we pulse some quick bursts of cosmic mode, and the myoor wants to come after us. And it's sliding more and more through the wormhole links—with an effect that the meaty wormhole balls are starting to grow. And the rangers boot the myoor in the "ass," and it loses traction and slips down through those ER bridges and ends up on Earth. And then we attack it with—what? Atomic bombs is a stale 1950s move. Denurbalizer sticks? Or some kind of specific-to-humans psychic energy blast. The power of Love? Naw. Kinetic energy bombs, like Bonk and Gustav cannonading against the myoor.

I'm for (b), yeah. You get a whole alien invasion scene, lovely.

\*\*\*

*Can we turn back qwet? What about the Big Aha?*

[On April 25, 2013, I made a blog post, "[On the Road, Satori, and the Big Aha](#)," which is an elaboration of these thoughts on the Big Aha.]

So I think we're stuck with everyone being qwet at the end of the book. It's a new evolutionary stage, and there's no turning back. But people can get used to it. It becomes a

new normal. They don't feel like they're frantically tripping. It just becomes the new reality.

And that's the Big Aha. It's being in cosmic mode and not flipping out about it.

I'd had some expectation of finding a Big Aha in Fairyland. But now I'm doing a deflationary "Wizard of Oz is a man behind a curtain" routine relative to Fairyland, with having the people they meet there being those two folksy rangers Stanky and Jephtha.

Certainly, while looking around Fairyland, Zad *can* get a sense of some higher logic. How "it all fits together." He'll have a net gain of knowledge in learning that the Fairyland level exists. But it won't be a trippy White Light experience.

Coming back to the Big Aha being an acceptance of cosmic mode on Earth, it's a "This is all there is" type of Big Aha. Benjamin Paul Blood spoke of it in his 1874 pamphlet, *The Anaesthetic Revelation and the Gist of Philosophy*.

The naked life is realized only outside of sanity altogether; and it is the instant contrast of this "tasteless water of souls" with formal thought as we "come to," that leaves in the patient an astonishment that the awful mystery of Life is at last but a homely and a common thing, and that aside from mere formality the majestic and the absurd are of equal dignity.

This is all there is. What were you so excited about? What else did you expect?

It's a form of satori. I mentioned Blood and satori in my closing section of *Infinity and the Mind*, and I've had a somewhat similar revelation a couple of times over the years—although I've never used ether, which was Blood's preferred tool for his studies in "experimental mysticism," as P. D. Ouspensky would put it.

Coming at this form of the Big Aha from another angle, think of the so-called “superultimate why question.” You start with, “Why does anything exist?” And, given any answer to that, you can say, “But where did *that* come from?” So you might as well short-circuit the process. There is no explanation beyond what we’re experiencing here and now. Once again: This is all there is. It just is.

So....the Big Aha is? Be here now. Mindful. In the now moment. And we knew this all along. As God told Moses, His name is “I am.”

\*\*\*

*How do I implement all this?*

First, I’ll integrate my conception of the forthcoming scenes into my Chapter Outlines section. I have enough scenes for three chapters, and I think the book will be at least 13 chapters long (and I might still subdivide some chaps and have an even higher chapter count).

Second, I’ll update my To Do list. For instance, I’d had Jane finding the oddball in Manhattan, but she should just find it in Louisville. We hardly need to mention New York, as my characters aren’t going there. We won’t have lots of wormholes in gem stores as I’d been saying, because the wormholes aren’t going to show up until we start doing qwet cosmic mode and the big myoor flops down onto Fairyland Earth like a living cow-pie.

Third, I’ll work through the To Do list, and fix a bunch of other things that I didn’t formally put into the list, but which will pop out at me. Anything involving the oddball or the darkstar. And when I have Loulou, Dad, and Zad glimpse Fairyland, I’ll feed them a little premonitory info about the rangers and the myoor. I’ll work some of this info into the notes that Zad finds in Gaven’s wrist squidskin as well. And I’ll be doing all of this stuff today which, as I type this, is April 25, 2013.

Fourth, I’ll finally break the ice and start writing “Churchill Downs”! I’m hoping that’ll be tomorrow.

## **April 26, 2013. Revisions: the Darkstar and the Oddball**

I'm still doing revisions this morning.

I kept mixing up "dollhead" and "oddball," typing the wrong one. So obviously it would be confusing for the reader. The two words are practically anagrams. At first I thought this was clever, but it's not a good idea.

So just now I changed the myoor's first wormhole-mouth's name from "dollhead" to "darkstar" throughout the novel and in these notes. (I allow retroactive renaming within the notes so that any eventual readers of the notes can more easily tell what I'm talking about. No point overdoing the Ted Nelson "save every version" thing.)

I ought to make the darkstar's pucker be distinctly like an anus—that's what the star stands for. I have the notion of the darkstar speaking to Gaven with a voice like a squeaky fart-sputter. Recall the talking asshole routine from Burroughs's *Naked Lunch*: "a bubbly, thick stagnant sound, a sound you could *smell*." Found it online.

At present I plan for the darkstar to have killed Gaven at the same time that the oddball swallowed Loulou. But if the darkstar had already killed Gaven once, why would he trust it later on? I guess the darkstar apologizes or says it was an accident, and involuntary reflex, and Whit is pressuring Gaven to accept the apology and move along. Not that they have a choice anymore, now that qwet's been released.

## **April 27, 2013. A Showdown Scene, Start of "Fairyland"**

So I'm got started on "Fairyland" yesterday. Sometimes it's hard for me to actually start writing the next chapter. It's that "fear of the blank canvas" thing. But then I finally make some marks, and I begin "seeing" the scene I'm describing, and I can watch and describe what my characters are doing, and offer them "director's tips" on what to do, and mark up the scene in print-out, and

“reshoot” it by typing in the changes, and then I have something else happen, and I’m moving along.

Zad is on the terrace now, about to have a showdown with Gaven and Whit. I need to decide which, if either, of the two bad guys to kill in this scene (or ever), and, if so, how. I need to get this out of the way for awhile before I move on to the larger problem of the myoor.

I see Whit being swallowed by a darkstar and getting mummified within the myoor right about now, and then coming back later to wage a last-ditch battle in the final chapter, like the Terminator in the original film—you think you’ve killed the bad guy, but he keeps coming back. Perhaps Whit will be leading a movement to lynch Zad.

Keeping in mind that I’ve already *done* a resurrection cycle with Gaven, if I were to “kill” him again now, it would need to be final, and I’m not sure he deserves that. I haven’t been presenting Gaven as deeply evil. It’s more that he’s geeky, and greedy, and with no empathy.

It would be better, I think, if Gaven runs away and hides at the end of this scene. He’ll lay low by staying strictly in robotic mode, not that hard for a guy like him. Later on, I can set up a tight situation where Zad seems lost, but then Gaven redeems himself by suddenly turning against Whit.

Back to the scene at hand. Just when they’re about to have their showdown fight, a mass attack of wormholes in the ballroom breaks things up.

Suppose that, in the wake of that, Whit talks to the darkstar, like yells to it, or teeps into it, or make farting noises with his lips, or (just kidding) ululate a Cthulhu chant like “*Iä! Iä! Cthulhu fhtagn!*” And he sics the darkstar on Zad, but Zad manages to make the thing swallow Whit instead of him.

Gaven and Whit know to stay in robot mode. Gaven runs away. Zad shoves Whit into the darkstar.

\*\*\*

By the way, in talking about how Gaven overwriting Jane’s mind, I suddenly thought of something I need to go back and change:

I *don't* want it to be easy for people to overwrite people, it should be rare or the book gets too chaotic. There's some special reason why the platypus can overwrite people, it stings them with a paralyzing drug, say curare, or conotoxin.

But, wait, how is it that when you qwet someone, they can, at that instant, overwrite you? I need for this to be a risk so that Junko invents the back-up routine. But I need it to be rare.

Well, uh, let's suppose that you are in a rare, deeply entangled link with that person at the moment you qwet them. Your link goes right through your mind's firewall. This phenomenon is, ahem, a side-effect of using the Joey Moon qwet-twist to make someone qwet. You get a fleeting broadband clear channel connection. A clone-capable link. So, okay, that's cool.

Oh, another fix, I'm gonna get rid of the "denurbalizer stick," something I wasn't actually using. It was supposed to melt nurbs, like if you wanted to get rid of one. Instead, I'll just talk about incinerating a nurb when you need to get rid of it.

\*\*\*

So now I wrote in those fixes, and then I wrote more on the fight scene, which is still going to need revision. As I said, I don't need to bring the fight to a climax, as I'm going to interrupt it with the attack of the myoor wormholes.

And then Zad learns the oddball swallowed Jane, and he lets it swallow him too, and thus our lovers make their way to Fairyland, which is the next big scene in the chapter.

### **April 30, 2013. What About the Gubs?**

I have Jane and Zad in Fairyland now. Whew! Jephtha and Stanky are like hillbilly dragonfly people, with elfish faces. (My impression is that "elfish" is the common word for elf-like, whereas "elvish" refers specifically to Tolkein's elves.)

The other day I remembered that Loulou saw a lot of gubs inside the oddball tunnel. And I haven't mentioned

gubs lately. Jane and Zad should see gubs on the way through, and the gubs ought to have something to do with the fairies. A gub ought to pop out with them.

\*\*\*

Perhaps the gubs are...the larvae or nymphs of fairies! Note that the larval gubs don't *exclusively* live in ER wormholes such as the oddball, they just happened to get into this oddball because Stanky put them there. Usually the fairies put their larvae into a pond or a wetland. But inside the oddball it was damp enough, and Stanky thought it might make her offspring be more sophisticated.

Details on the dragonfly life-cycle from Wikipedia: The nymph stage can last a couple of years, while the dragonfly lasts only about six months. The nymphs are carnivorous, and have large jaws. They can abruptly propel themselves with jets of water from the anus.

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Or maybe gubs are more like livestock that the fairies feed upon. Like, once again, pigs, or like rabbits or chickens or, for that matter, turnips. I'd like to talk about "roast gub." Or a fairy might insert a proboscis into a gub and suck out its ichor.

It's not clear to me what the gubs themselves are feeding on. Some aspect of our Earth, such as our emanations? But, looking ahead, I'll be supposing that the fairies themselves draw their existence from us, so it's redundant to have their livestock gubs be leeching off as well. What if the gubs feed, rather, on the glowing white light that lies in the hyperspace zone between Fairyland and Earth? They're like solar cells. Perhaps the gubs are the lords and masters of us all.

## May 1-4, 2013. Embroidering Fairyland

So what about the beings in Fairyland? Can I just call them fairies? Is there a problem with that being a synonym for gays? Oh, that'll fade from a reader's mind, I think, unless they're homophobic teenage boys.



I could say “faeries,” but that’s too twee. Could be sort of funny, I suppose, keeping in mind that I’m really not known as a Fairie Tales kind of writer. Like the Ramones making New Age music. But, nah, call them fairies.

I remember how my Irish sister-in-law Noreen would talk, with seeming seriousness, to the kids about fairies, rolling the “r.” And I’d pick up this living-folk-tales vibe that the fairrries might not be sweet and good. They could be vindictive or impish or even deadly. Sour the milk, break the mirror, stunt the corn.

But—still having second thoughts—I *could* use the word fay, a homonym of the French *fée* for fairy, and it sounds like fey. If I use fay, then I probably shouldn’t call the other world Fairyland. Was “Fairyland” only a placeholder name? Well, no, I was kind of happy when I started using it. I felt transgressive.

The fays from Fairyland. The fays from Fayetteville. The fays from Fayland. The first is better, but then why not go ahead and say fairies.

“Fairy” brings considerable baggage, but not entirely in a bad way. As I say, I think having fairies from Fairyland in a hard SF novel is kind of funny, and I’m not sure I want to give that up. Also I’d be setting up a semi-logical explanation for why we *do* have all these legends and tales about fairies.

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Why and how did the fairies get with a planet just like ours? Fairyland is some kind of echo or underlayer of our world. Like a physics thing, like partner-particles or hibrane/lobrane.

Fairyland’s existence is somewhat derivative, in that the fairies don’t build things or till their fields. But our world can’t exist without the Fairyland layer. Fairyland gives Earthly things “soul”—can I cast this into a scientific concept? Like we’re the robotic mode and they’re the cosmic mode?

An object or a being can’t exist without an underlying form, concept, quantum collapse, observation, unity, set,

definition, software, illuminating spotlight, inner glow, essence, self, consciousness. Could go hylozoic and say every Earthly thing has a soul, that is a fairy, in Fairyland?

Yet fairies like Stanky and Jeptha don't seem to be mirrors of anything in Fairyland. But what if they *were*? Could Stanky and Jeptha "be" echoes of actual people on Earth? That would be heavy and cool and it would simplify things. The fairies in Fairyland would be living odd, surreal variants of our actual lives.

I could even push this to max and say that Stanky and Jeptha are the Fairyland versions of Jane and Zad! In this case, it would no longer be surprising at all that they planted the oddball for Jane to find.

But I'd have a conflict between Jeptha and SubZad. That is, I wouldn't like for Zad to have two separate doubles, and he already has SubZad, and if he has Jeptha too, then it's confusing. I could eliminate SubZad of course, but I've already got him, and he's working pretty well, and may be useful a little further on. Well, if I do have the two doubles, Zad would need to confront this right away in a short conversation—it shouldn't seem like the author (me) is sloppily unaware of the conflict.

If I pair Stanky with Jane and Jeptha with Zad, where would this lead? I'd need to make the personalities of the two fairies be similar to those of my two heroes, and that would be a win, in that I'd have some ideas about what Stanky and Jeptha do.

Jeptha is a bit of an artist, say, and he's got a little chorus of tiny fairies that he's coaching into putting on a play (like me writing my novel and like Zad making his nurbs). Stanky is organized and social and into promotion (like Jane with her Jane Says publicity agency), and she's going to be leading the fight against the myoor.

Note that I might best use the personality echo in any case, but not explicitly *say* the two fairies match our two heroes. And the reader can, if they like, figure that out for themselves. Don't hammer in every single nail for them.

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What does a fairy call its connected Earthly form? Kernel, flesh, body, anchor, host, groom, crib, root, *bumpf*. Bumpf or bumf is WWII British slang for bumfodder = toilet paper, that is, for unnecessary printed matter, or, by extension, for spam or overly elaborate speech. So the spirits or fairies or souls in Fairyland might use “bumpf” for the Earthly beings wherefrom they spring. Normally bumpf is a collective mass noun, but I think we’ll allow the use of a normal plural, as bumpfs.

The sound of bumpf is good, like lump or bump or *oomph*.

Maybe the connection isn’t one-to-one. Maybe the fairies are more like collective mind emanations from us bumpfs. Or maybe they’re like our dreams.

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*Can Fairylanders see us?*

For the purpose of my story, I’ve been saying that the myoor and the myoor’s wormholes can’t “see” us—unless we’re qwet and cosmic. And this way, the coming of qwet cosmic mode potentiates the plague of myoor wormholes.

But are the Fairylanders watching us? If there’s a one-to-one connection between fairies and bumpfs, then a fairy would seem to know where its bumpf is. But maybe it’s better if they can’t see us.

The oddball was put in place partly so that Jephtha and Stanky could watch Jane and Zad. Comic-book image of the oddball in Fairyland: a large pearl resting on a fat clam in an open shell. Perfect. Maybe it’s called a reality clam.

\*\*\*

*What do Fairylanders want from us?*

The myoors want to physically abduct our bodies and in some sense lay eggs in them. That’s all pretty clear.

Now, if the Fairylanders are our “souls,” then there might be nothing more in particular that they want from us—it suffices that we exist.

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On May 2, 2013, Sylvia and I watched *The Clock* for two hours at the SF MOMA. A montage of clips from

movies and TV shows, one or more clips per minute, and in most of the clips someone looks at a clock or a watch which is showing the same time as the time when that clip is being screened.

I could go on and on about this work, but the relevant point for my novel is that *The Clock* shows a marvelous density of overlapping human stories. A sea of story. And it encourages me to dial up the intricacy and richness of my Fairyland scenes. It shouldn't just be Jane and Zad talking to Stanky and Jephtha in an empty ballroom. I need to turn Fairland into a whole world, onerous as this seems.

From experience, I know that it's possible to fake this. You just need to put in ten or twenty telling details, and, as you continue to revise, you can invent some connections between the details, not that everything needs to be smooth. The main thing is the details. The idealized model would be something like a Bruegel *Wimmelbild* painting, cf. *Children's Games* or *Netherlandish Proverbs*.

So here we go.

Fairies playing a game like croquet but with flying discs and catcher's mitts on the lawn behind the Roller mansion.

Fairy meal. A steamed, hollowed-out beet filled with gub goo and a single baked sparrow. Large roast mushrooms. Fairy bread with whipped gub milk. Roast gubs. Mead of course from honey.

Gnomes and dwarves living in the KY limestone caves. They've tuned the stalagmites to play like a stone xylophone. The sound echoes up through the lawn.

Elves amid the leafy trees, but some sinister living stones as well. Walking trees catch the stones with their roots.

Intelligent currents of air whispering secrets, they're the communication system.

A fire is a heap of glowing, forked, snaky imps, or maybe just three or four of them.

Giant slimy worms wearing glasses.

Tiny fairies like ants, with little canes and bowler hats.

Freaky scary fairies, the souls of the mad, red-eyed, ragged. Banshees.

## May 7-8, 2013. The Gnome Cave

*May 7, 2013.*

I'm going along in the "Fairylnd" chapter now, although actually I could split off this new part into a separate chapter, "Gnome Cave" (but I don't think I will split it.) I'd wanted Zad and Jane to go back to Earth by the end of "Fairylnd," but right now they're stuck in Fairylnd for a bit longer. The all-fired dang-nab gnomes stole the giant clam with the oddball inside it, and took the clam down to their cave.

And now I'm set for Zad to go there in the company of a four-foot-long fairy worm called Professor Wriggle. Shades of Professor Bumby in *Frek and the Elixir*, Stool the cuttlefish in *Spaceland*, and Franx the cockroach in *White Light*. The non-human Helper.

I don't see Zad getting out of the cave really fast, I see it using up a good chunk of what could be this new "Gnome Cave" section. In fact I guess I'll have to think of something awesome for him to see there. Maybe God, a.k.a. the Big Aha. Shades of the giant jellyfish in *Mathematicians in Love*, the Big Pig in *Postsingular*, the talking star in *Frek*, the giant jiva in *Jim and the Flims*, etc. etc. I have a limited number of obsessions, it seems. This wasn't so evident when before I'd written so many novels.

Back to my current plans. I do want to wrap the book up, but I don't want the readers to feel like I'm skipping out on them just when things are interesting. I went to some trouble to flesh out Fairylnd with plenty of critters. And I'll have to tart up the hall of the gnomes as well. I could go on and on, really, regressing through door after door. But, hey, I can do more Fairylnd if I ever write a sequel to The Big Aha. Which I probably won't. I need to think in terms of wrapping it up here and now.

Zad goes in the cave, he sees something cool, he learns more about the myoor, he almost gets killed, but then he manages to get hold of the clam with the oddball inside it, and then it's such a crisis that he dives into the oddball and

escapes back to Earth without returning to the Fairyland mansion.

(Option 1): Zad has Jane with him, and they leave Fairyland together and they move on with killing the myoor.

(Option 2): Jane stayed back at the Fairyland mansion waiting for Zad, and in the heat of that moment in the gnome cave, he's leaving Fairyland without her, and then later he'll have to go back to Fairyland to fetch her.

Option 2 is more tension-building and reader-stressful, so it's probably the best one. And the readers will kind of want a second peek at Fairyland so they don't feel short-changed. Makes more work for me, of course. It's a classic technique of story elaboration. You're trying to go from A to B, but there's a snag and you have to veer off and do C in between A and B.

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*May 8, 2013.*

So what is the gnomes' cave like? Naturally I think of the caves I've visited. I had a description of a cave in *Turing & Burroughs* which I'd based on my Wild West travel notes, I'll take a look at that.

Alan was charmed by the names of the mineral formations: the striped beige draperies were cave bacon, the knobbly translucent growths were popcorn, the wrinkled, doughy slumps were flowstone. They halted their progress beside a creamy, motionless cascade known as Moon Milk Falls.

I want the cave to be more open than that. Give it lights from glowing mushrooms and lightning-bug fairies and Tinker Bell fairies. And I want a giant xylophone or marimba instrument that's based on striking stalagmites and stalactites to sound their vibrations. The thing looks like an organ, and the things striking the stone columns are, say,

hammer-headed fairies like the hammer birds in the old Disney *Alice in Wonderland* movie in the Tulgey Woods scene with the glasses bird that I was discussing in my April 19-25, 2013, entry in these notes. And, oh wow, I never did use the glasses bird yet! Maybe one of the gnomes has one? And Zad uses it? Probably not. We have enough going on as it is.

We need a centerpiece for the cave. I'm seeing a very still pool of water, utterly transparent, with luminous pale blind fish in it, and a glowing orb down in the seemingly endless depths. Maybe they call it the moon pool. And the orb is an objective correlative of the big aha. "It's not really the *moon*, it's Earth's oversoul."

I get that word from Ralph Waldo Emerson, see the [Wikipedia entry](#). The oversoul reaches through to Earth as well, in fact later on at the very end of the novel, Zad and Jane might visit the Earth version of the moon pool, or think of visiting it, in a cave that lies beneath Jane's family's farm. They find the entrance in the barn on Earth. But they're not going down there "for now." Leaving a sequel-teaser at the end of the novel—I did that at the end of *The Hacker and the Ants*, but never felt I had to pick up on it.

Anyway, the orb is kind and loving, but it's also voracious—if you fall into the moon pool, the orb floats up and absorbs you. And of course the mean gnome Blixsen gets into a fight with Zad and Professor Wriggle, and Zad falls into the pool with the oddball in his arms, and he crawls into the oddball.

(Option 1) The oversoul runs a tendril partway into the oddball after Zad, but it withdraws. Zad simply escapes through the oddball. Zad is worried in the Funhouse. Jane appears from the oddball. She says Professor Wriggle carried the oddball back to her.

(Option 2) The oversoul light is rushing after Zad down the tunnel like the shuggoth at the end of Lovecraft's "At the Mountains of Madness," but Zad he makes it out. The oddball is crisped and Zad worries he'll never get Jane back at all, and then he comes up with something.

As before, of course the more troublesome Option 2 seems better.

### **May 9, 2013. God is Gubs. (Too Gnarly.)**

Moving into the actual cave of the gnomes now. I'm still thinking about what the "star attraction" in the cave might be.

I want to think of something fresher than a light in a pool. That is, after all, *such* a copy of what I did in *Mathematicians in Love*. Going over those past possibilities once more—in *Jim and the Flims* I had the giant jiva mound of tentacles. Or I could have something hovering in the air. Or even a reticulated pattern of crystals in a stone. Or a vision of a talking planet as seen in Zad's mind, like in *Postsingular*. At some point the thing should be physically moving around so as to pose a bodily threat to Zad. It should have two lobes to represent Earth and Fairyland. It's not the whole cosmos or anything, just the demiurge-like spirit of our two-part world.

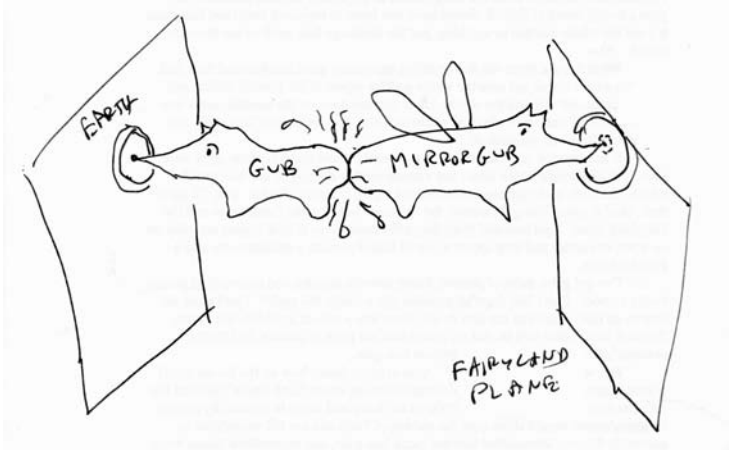
The "god" starts out as something apparently quite humble, and then Zad gets into a teep vision and sees the whole godlike aspect of the humble critter, and then he snaps out of it and the rowdy, harsh gnomes have set the humble critter into Zad's lap and it's about to physically consume him, and Zads goes "*Auuugh!*" and reflexively flees into the oddball.

It had crossed my mind before that it would ironic and tidy if the gubs were gods, and now might be the time. Let's suppose that the god of our two worlds which Zad finds in the gnome cave is indeed a gub, or no, a linked pair of gubs. Yes, I'll go for that. *God is gubs*. The gubs inhabit the "*plenum*" between the Earth brane and the Fairyland brane. They come in two flavors, gub and mirrorgub. They pair up, butt to butt, and affix their snouts to the branes, and the snouts pump in energy that "inflates" or spawns a pair of linked planets, a mundane one and a Fairyland one.

[*Early warning: although I'm going to talk about gub/mirrorgub pairs here, On May 10, 2012, I'm going to*



*drop this notion as being too much clutter, and I'll simply have the God of our branes be a single gub.]*



**FIGURE 24: A GUB/MIRROR GUB GENERATES TWO PAIRED PLANETS**

I'll have pairs of gubs, pairs of planets, flying myoors, and mummified people and mummified fairies inside the myoors. Can I link them all together into a *single* life cycle? I can't quite see how to do that today. But I can see how to link them into a *pair* of symbiotic life cycles. The two basic ideas are be that (a) gubs hatch out pairs of planets, and (b) the mummified beings inside the myoors turn into gubs.

But wait, before I describe the cycle in more detail, let me say more about how the fairies fit in. Mirror symmetry. Our universe (although we on Earth haven't noticed this yet) is also infested with myoors, just as the Fairyland brane is infested by myoors. A myoor lands on either a mundane or Fairyland planet, and mummifies the creatures on the other side. Thus a myoor on our side slimes over the surface of Earth and use ER wormholes to mummify fairies. The mummified humans hatch into gubs, and mummified fairies hatch into—wait for it—*mirrorgubs*!

*[The following is an overly complicated life cycle that I'll revise on May, 10-11, 2013, so check that entry as*

well.] Gubs and mirrorgubs in hyperspace ---> A gub/mirrorgub pair fastens onto the two branes and grows a pair of planets, linked by the butt-to-butt pair of eternal mother/father gubs ---> A Fairyland or mundane planet is attacked by a of myoor ---> Myoor mummifies humans and fairies of linked planets to become gubs and mirrorgubs, who then enter the plenum to meet and mate to make new worlds ---> The myoor itself flaps off to colonize another worlds, occasionally reproducing by simple fission.

Each of us humans is a potential gub. I like that. And once you're a gub, you burrow into hyperspace and a mirrorgub to hook up with and the two of you spawn new pairs of planets like Earth and Fairyland.

Gubs and mirrorgubs look different. Mirror images, like left and right hands. The Hands of God. Or clockwise vs. counterclockwise helices like the rassen and znassen in *Frek and the Elixir*. Springs are at the same time too obvious and finicky. Hands are clunky. Oh, I have it: Mirrorgubs (from fairies) have wings and gubs don't. That's clear and simple.

So, yeah, the god who Zad sees in the gnome cave is a linked gub / mirrorgub pair. Shouldn't the pair be off in hyperspace? Well, they are, but the gnomes can see into hyperspace using their glasses birds. And maybe they're foolishly trying to fuck with the god pair by using the oddball.

Looking ahead, after a myoor on Fairyland mummifies everyone on Earth, it slides through the ER tunnels, regroupes on Earth, and mummifies everyone on Fairyland? Or maybe it tends to work back and forth, like first doing mundane Louisville and Fairyland Louisville, then Fairyland Cincinnati and mundane Cincinnati.

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Dropping down to A Square's point of view so as to rethink the notion of a tunnel like the oddball or a myoor wormhole, I have this sudden worry that I haven't been describing the oddball tunnel correctly at all.

For let's suppose that A Square slides through the tunnel with his eye corner first. He calls the annular direction

around the tunnel east/west, and he calls the direction through the tunnel north/south. Looking east or west, he sees an image of his body a few meters off and, if he had protruding limbs he might see secondary and tertiary images of, say, his hand a bit further off. It looks a bit like an endless hall of mirrors, but the images aren't mirror reversed. Looking north, he will see something like a normal space although, if there's something north of him in the tunnel, he can see secondary images of it on either side. So I need to redo the tunnel descriptions.

Oh, *wait*, I'd forgotten that the tunnels, although hypercylinders, aren't *empty*, so you don't see the circular space. The tunnel is filled with the flesh of an oddball-clam or the flesh of a myoor, and the flesh is traversed by a 3D tube, either a digestive tract or a straight-through passage, and this *does* feel like a normal tunnel. The view of the circular space is walled off by the meat.

### **May 10-13, 2013. One-Track Gub/Myoor Lifecycle**

That stuff I wrote on May 9, 2013 is too confusing—I can barely understand it myself, and it's way too strange to lay on the unsuspecting readers.

Let's not have both gubs and mirrorgubs. Just gubs. And, keep it simple, a gub makes a universe, it lays a cosmic egg. And each universe is a pair of closely related branes, the mundane and the Fairyland branes. But the branes aren't quite identical, as we have people down here and fairies up there. And normally the myoors are only in Fairyland. Some information and energy flows from Earth to Fairyland, but we'll never know exactly how this works and we won't worry about it and we don't care. (Unless I later find a nice "big aha" explanation.)

With all these simplifications, I now see how to fit all the critters into a three-step single-track life-cycle!

(1) A gub in an N-dimensional plenum. A gub lays a cosmic egg that hatches a universe which has two branes, the mundane and Fairyland branes. The gub's egg also produces a myoor that lives on the fairyland brane like an

original sin. The myoor is like an organelle of the two-brane universe the gub hatches.

(2) Repeatedly the myoor perches on Fairyland planets, eating the local fairies and using wormholes to mummify the humans on the matching mundane planet, and the mummified humans become gubs within the myoor's flesh.

(3) The gubs from the myoor are expelled into the N-dimensional plenum, and the cycle recommences with multiple instances of step (1).

Note that, after spawning, the original myoor flaps off to process other planets in the Fairyland brane. Note also that this cycle provides for a very high birthrate, but it may be that many of the cosmic eggs don't successfully hatch out, and among those that hatch there may be many in which the myoor organ can't locate any suitable beings for converting into gubs.

Also note that when a myoor kills/paralyzes all the bumpfs on an Earth world, the fairies on the paired Fairyland world die, they need the bumpfs like a flower needs roots.

When I speak of the gubs' plenum, I also mean the 4D or N-D hyperspace zone between the mundane and Fairyland branes. Since the gubs are mingling but then making different universes they need at least five dimensions to maneuver in, which is why I might just say the plenum is N-dimensional, as this location is perhaps better-sounding than 5-dimensional.

The gubs and the myoor both have a certain hyperthickness so they can readily deal with processes involving the plenum—recall my *Spaceland* notion of an augmented being having a higher-dimensional skin.

Given that the gubs are essentially higher-dimensional, we can have them simply materializing or dematerializing on Earth, in Fairyland, or inside the oddball tunnels.

In *Flatland*, a more-or-less 2D plenum-dwelling gub would appear in the Flatland space by effectively gluing itself to the space like a decal. So for us, a gub appears or

materializes like a teleported being, either all at once or perhaps from the feet up.

It's bathetically grandiose—in a good way—to have a gub make a universe. It wouldn't really make sense to say a gub merely spawns a matched pair of planets, as we don't have any reason to think that planets in fact appear *ex nihilo*—instead we think they condense out of dust.

The gub whom Zad encounters in the gnome's cave just so happens to be the gub who hatched our cosmos. It's the god gub.

I did some fixes to help make this work:

- \* The gubs in the oddball's tunnel can materialize within the tunnel as opposed to crawling through a wall.

- \* The gubs don't exactly want to suck our energy when they're bothering us in the tunnels, it's more that they're curious about us. Like prospective mothers going goo-goo over babies.

- \* Those gubs who Stanky and Jeptha drained—if they ran out the ballroom door, the myoor ought to swallow them, just chew them up, I think.

- \* The mummified Loulou is beginning to look a little like a gub.

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Okay. Now, given that a gub has some hyperthickness, and has skin its 4D sides, then it act as 4D ferry, that is, it could swallow Zad and/or Jane, and ferry them through the N-space between the Earth brane and the Fairyland brane. I would be good to use this channel if Zad needs a different way to get back to Fairyland to fetch Jane, it would be something fresh.

But, given that Zad's goal is to kill the myoor, I'd have to ask why a gub (born of a myoor) would help Zad with his project. Well, we might suppose that the gubs are competing with each other to reproduce. Or that they're courting each other. So the gub who helps Zad is a different gub from our God gub.

What's the name of our god gub and of the of the gub who helps Zad? Well, let's suppose that the god gub is

green. I could even give her points of light, like a star-spangled sky, but I don't think I'll bother. The god gub is the green gub, and other gub is spotted like a Gloucestershire pig, so he's the spotted gub.

Why not suppose that the gubs mate. If there's to be gub evolution, mating would be a good idea. Gubs can lay and hatch more than one egg? Suppose the spotted gub is the green gub's a suitor, wanting to create a different universe? I could even go back to a variant of the gub/mirrorgub thing and suppose that, when hatching a universe, two gubs join up and make a mundane/fairyland pair of branes?

But it's better not to go into that level of detail. I shouldn't get lured into these arcane cosmological issues. It's enough if I simply suggested that the green gub and the spotted gub were going to mate, and that one of them was going to "impregnate" the other.

One issue regarding a gub having multiple children: once it's mothered or fathered a world, does the gub hang around watching over that world? We get a feeling the green god gub is indeed doing that with our world. But maybe she only visits occasionally. Mom coming by to check up. Lodging in the gnome's infinity pool this time around.

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What I really need now is a straight-through line for ending the book. Add enough complications for drama, but no more than that. It's already complex enough, so don't needlessly multiply the intricacies.

With this in mind, I'm now repeatedly revising the outline of the final chapters. I'll need to revise the outline again and again over the coming days, getting more and more of it straight in my head, learning it by heart so I can think about it all the time, mentally "sanding it down" as I go along, shaping the end of my tale into a smooth rush.

## **May 15, 2013. How to Publish It? Nearing Home Stretch**

I've been totally dithering about how to publish *The Big Aha*. Although *Turing & Burroughs* did okay, it's sold less

than a thousand copies thus far. I did *T & B* as paperback, ebook, and free CC ebook.

Next time I'll do better with the self-pub. For one thing, I'll send advance copies to *Publishers Weekly*, *Booklist*, and *Kirkus*. And maybe to some papers and magazines. And in terms of the money, I've had a couple of talks with the young writer Tim Pratt, and I've picked up on the notion of doing a so-called Kickstarter project, or online begging page. Pratt's been getting \$10K or more for some of his books that he publishes himself. If I could get into that ballpark, I could spend more on the production—like paying a proofreader and sending out more review copies. And I'd be getting some money in my pocket, so it would feel like a publisher's advance.

So I might take that route with *The Big Aha*. In my head, I'm already thinking about a scale of “reward prizes” to give donors depending on how much they kick in. Ebooks and paperbacks of this book and other books, manuscript pages, prints of my paintings, and maybe even some paintings themselves for, like, the heavy-donating whales who cruise in. I don't think I'd ever want to do Tuckerization, though, although possibly I could write a custom short-story or two.

So that seems fairly attractive, assuming the Kickstarter wouldn't be a humiliating bust. But I'm still drawn to just letting Tor do it. If they would. The copyediting, the proofreading, the book design, the publicity, the distribution. But I don't think I'd do it for less than a \$7K advance. And Tor turned down *Jim and the Flims* and *Turing & Burroughs* both, so I don't know where I'd stand.

I'll be seeing David Hartwell at the Nebulas in San Jose on Saturday, and I plan to feel him out. Also I sent him a print-out of the manuscript thus far, about 82,000 words worth. But I'm not all that optimistic. Another issue is that Dave has gotten so slow in responding to submissions, and I don't much feel like waiting for six months or more.

Still on the subject of biz, I did an interview with *Locus* for the June, 2013, issue and I talk about *The Big Aha* a lot

in the interview, and that's in fact the title of the interview, and they'll be using two of my paintings in the cover and inside illos. So that might help shake a publisher out of the bushes, you never know. Or, alternatively, it could help set me up for a successful Kickstarter.

You finish the fun of the writing and, sigh, the grubby, quixotic, and often futile scheming takes center stage.

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I'm a third of the way through my "Spotted Gub" chapter, and I have a pretty good outline for the final chapters, although some things are still fuzzy. There's three tasks involving the myoor.

*Lure the myoor over to Earth.* A huge Cosmic Flip Trip festival in Louisville where everyone goes cosmic at once, akin to Woodstock or the Human Be-In. And the myoor lunges through the wormholes like fountains of meat.

*Make the myoor disgorge its paralyzed humans.* Sic a thousand Mr. Normal strobe light nurbs on it.

*Kill the myoor.* Have a hundred thousand qwet rats eat it.

When the myoor is briefly doing its thing on Earth, might it be swallowing any fairies through wormholes? Let's not get into that complication. But maybe it would be cool if a few gnomes were swept over to our side with the myoor. And the gnomes Blixxen and Staark could be working with Whit, and we'd get a chance to wipe out all three of these bad guys.

Zad should get his Lincoln back and ride it into the Churchill downs event.

Loulou needs to come back and do something.

And we need to see Zad's mom again, also his dad.

A thousand Mr. Normals need how much gel? Say they weigh 100 pounds each, so you're talking fifty tons of nurb-gel.

How big is that in volume? Assume gel has the same density as water. Call them metric tons, a thousand kilograms. A kilogram is a thousand cc's of water. So we're looking at a million cc's of water. Cube root of a million is a hundred. So a ton of water is a cubic meter. So we're



getting fifty cubic meters of gel. Cube root of fifty is between 3 and 4 closer to 4. Four meters would be 12 feet, call it a cube ten feet on a side. Not all that huge. Maybe three elephruk loads? And our friend Darby is still alive.

Another way to look at it is that a standard two-axle dump truck can carry about 10 tons of gravel, so you might need 5 elephruk loads. If you exaggerate the strength of an elephruk, call it 15 tons per load and say 3 loads.

How about the thorned ropes? Say they have a cross-section that's 1 cm square (very strong material), and you want a length of five or ten meters for pulling a wormhole. So if its 10 m, that's 10,000 cc's, weighing 10 kg. And if you want 1,000 ropes, that's 10,000 kg, or ten metric tons. Five tons if you go for 5 m long ropes.

## **May 19-20, 2013. Marketing Plans, Enter BoingBoing**

*May 19, 2013.*

Plans seething in my head, and I'm temporarily distracted from actually *writing* the book at all. I have three scenarios in my head.

*(Kickstarter Self-Pub Scenario)*

The notion of doing a Kickstarter seems fairly appealing. This young writer Tim Pratt has inspired me with his successful Kickstarter projects. In order to make it more likely that the project gets funded, I'd set the goal relatively low, perhaps to \$8K, which is within the range of my recent advances. In the proposal I'd speak in terms of needing the money to support further work on the novel, and to support with the publication process, e.g. hiring a proofreader and a book designer. I might self-publish or partner with a tiny publisher who could handle the paper edition.

*(BoingBoing Scenario)*

On Friday I had lunch with Mark Frauenfelder of BoingBoing. He mentioned that he and Dave Pescovitz of BoingBoing would like to get into book publishing, and I suggested to Mark that they publish *The Big Aha*. Mark was very enthusiastic about the idea, as was Pescovitz. I've

known Frauenfelder for about twenty-five years and I'm one of his favorite writers, and Pescovitz is also a huge fan of mine. They might also be interested in reissuing my linked pair of books: the memoir *All the Visions* and the novel *The Secret of Life*. I have the rights to both these books

Mark said they could provide strong publicity via the BoingBoing site, they'd secure a good book designer and cover artist, they'd make a good marketing video, and they'd get it into distribution. He seemed amenable to paying an advance, and to paying good royalty rates, although we didn't get into any details. I'd like to get at least 50% and maybe 75% of the ebook net, given that I could easily create and sell the ebook version on my own, but my print royalties could be more along traditional lines. Of course if they were to give me a good advance, I wouldn't care all that much about the royalty rates.

[I mentioned to Mark that I might in any case do a Kickstarter for *The Big Aha*, and he said that was a nice idea in terms of creating interest around the book. But, no, after thinking it over and talking to my agent, I realize it would be absurd to do a Kickstarter if I have a commercial publisher. Kickstarter is for the books I can't sell to a publisher. Like for my *Journals*, maybe later this year. Or for a new higher-end edition of my art book, *Better Worlds*.]  
(*Tor Scenario*)

I had lunch with Dave Hartwell on Saturday. He says he's read the first thirty pages of the *Big Aha* manuscript, and he likes it. He says it has a good, lively tone, akin to the tone I used in *Nested Scrolls*. He said, however, that he doesn't know if Tor could ever make an offer. Things are so chaotic now that it's hard to be sure what's possible. It might take a year until they could decide, but in any case he has a backlog of two-months-worth of manuscripts to handle. I'm not sure what advance I could hope for, maybe \$7K to \$10K. My recent book advances have been in that range, sad to say.

\*\*\*

*May 20, 2013.*

I talked to my agent John Silbersack, and he's cautiously optimistic about the BoingBoing scenario. His question is whether they'd know how to effectively produce, market and distribute a book, given that *The Big Aha* might be their first title. I make up a PDF and MOBI version of the current draft and sent it off to Mark Frauenfelder, Dave Pescovitz, and John, and I'll see what they can work out. I probably won't hear anything much for a week or two, as Mark is on the road.

Finally in the evening I managed to get back into the writing.

### **May 23-25, 2013. How Deep My Myoor?**

(Imagining a hymn, "How Deep My Myoor, Oh Lord, How Wide, How Great?")

So they pour the myoor's entire body into Churchill Downs—how deep does it get?

I originally had the myoor being fairly thick, maybe 1 meter.

And I had the myoor being as big as Louisville, whose area is 1,000 sq km. Churchill Downs is 50 hectares or 0.5 sq km, by the way. So the area of Louisville is 2,000 times as big as Churchill Downs. So the myoor would be piled 2,000 meters deep, which doesn't work at all.

So I need to whittle down the size of the myoor.

I guess I can drop the thickness down to 0.3 meters, or a foot. I couldn't go any thinner than that, or it's too insubstantial. But a foot is okay, and you can see the outlines of the people inside the myoor.

With that thickness, we'd have the mound in Churchill Downs being 600 meters deep which still isn't workable. I need to get the area down by another factor of 50, so that my mound is 12 meters deep, or 36 feet.

So I'll cut the myoor's area to 20 sq km. That's about 4.5 km by 4.5 km if it's square, or about 2.7 mi by 2.7 mi, which is 7.6 sq mi. But it doesn't have to be a square, it can be somewhat amoeboid or slug-like, it can be like a strip,

roughly one mile wide and seven miles long. That's still quite large, but the myoor has to be quite large. She's a monster.

What spots does the myoor need to cover? It has to be downtown so it's eating lots of people there. And, at least initially, it has to cover Glenview, as Zad and Loulou saw the myoor near the Fairyland version of Jane's house in Glenview. And it has to reach Churchill Downs for the last chapter's big scene.

Looking at map of Louisville, I see that, yes, we could pick up Glenview and Churchill Downs and all of the parts of Louisville familiar to me with a slug-like strip that's 7 miles long and 1 mile wide, running from Glenview into town along the Ohio River, then veering over to end at Churchill Downs.

So okay, the myoor can be a foot thick, she's one mile by seven miles, twenty square miles, and if you pour all of her into the Churchill downs racetrack, you get a pile that's thirty or forty feet high.

Double check.  $0.3 \text{ m} \times 20 \text{ sq km} / .5 \text{ sq km} = 12 \text{ m!}$

Write in English units.  $1 \text{ foot} \times 7 \text{ sq mi} / \text{area of Churchill Downs} = 36 \text{ ft!}$

*July 8, 2013.*

Oh, wait, there's a glitch. Looking at a map I found online, I realize that the "area of Churchill Downs" is the area of the whole property, and the track itself is a best a sixth of the acreage. So it would seem like the myoor would have to be more like 200 feet deep. And I don't think the grandstand is that high. Well, I'll bump the myoor's depth to 50 feet and puddle it out a bit beyond the track, but I don't want to engulf the barns.

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*How much myoor flesh is there per encysted person?*

The population of Louisville is about 200,000, although if we include all of Jefferson county, it's more like 600,000, and if you grab the neighboring counties, it's a million. Let's say the myoor ate 10,000 people. If the myoor is 6 million cu m, then you'd have 600 cu m of myoor per

person, that is,  $8^{\wedge}3$  m per person, which spaces the people about 25 feet apart from each other in the Churchill Downs mass, and 200 feet apart in the 1 m thick pancake, although certainly they could be bunched up in the pancake after a big feed.

*What's the rate of flow when the myoor pours in from Fairyland?*

To dump down 6 million cu m of myoor in, say, a hour, you'd need a flow of about 100 thousand cu m per minute, or 1,600 cu m per sec, which isn't impossible, just think of one big block that's about 11 m on each side floomping through each sec, or, if you prefer, a thousand flows each pushing through 1.6 cu m per sec, and 1.6 cu m is about 45 cu ft, which can be viewed as a gout that's 2x2x10 feet, a very speedy gout, but not inconceivable, I've seen flows like that coming out of pipes in dams, or in stony, alpine torrents around Zermatt.

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When I woke up the day after deciding on the size of the myoor, I started wondering about how we can get rid of that big of a myoor after we pull her over to Earth.

I did a few mental calculations concerning the mass of that 0.3 m x 20 sq km myoor I was talking about yesterday. A sq km is a million sq m. So I'm talking about 6 million cubic meters of myoor, which weighs in at 6 million metric tons, that is, 6 billion kilograms.

That's *really* a lot. It complicates the problem of disposal. I'd been thinking of having each of the thousand Mr. Normals break into a hundred rats and then have the hundred thousand rats eat the myoor. But eat six billion kilograms? That would be 60 thousand kg for each rat to eat. Out of the question. And nobody wants to see a *billion* rats.

I don't want to shrink the myoor any smaller. As I mentioned above, I want her to be a monster, a substantial and imposing organism. But then she's too big for the rats to eat. So I need some alternate methods for eliminating or

at least stabilizing the myoor once we get her down on Earth. Let's run through some options.

*Ways to neutralize the myoor:*

(1) Set the myoor on fire, but that's likely to burn down Louisville, and it's kind of ugly, also I've burnt some nurbs already, so it would be a repeat.

(2) Dissolve the myoor with bacteria. A sped-up decomposition. Like the way the germs killed the Martians in H. G. Wells's *War of the Worlds*. Smelly, unattractive, undramatic, and, given that Wells did it, unoriginal.

(3) Get the spotted gub to kill the myoor. But that's too *deus ex machina*. Better if we do it ourselves. Also the green gub would be really angry at the spotted gub after this.

(4) Have the myoor lumberingly flap off into the sky because she doesn't like us bugging her. Could I guide the myoor into flying into the sun? Probably that's too much to ask. There's myoors all over the Fairyland brane in any case, and probably myoors on this side as well, so killing one particular myoor doesn't make that much difference. But it would certainly solve a problem if could make her leave Earth. Downside: at the end of the novel, things wouldn't have changed all that much. We do have qwet, but that's it.

(5) Set a zillion (more precisely, a few million) nurbs to growing on the myoor, and keep her penned at Churchill Downs with the Mr. Normals watching over her. I'll go with this one. Let me expand on it.

A jungle on the myoor, a riot of nurbs. Slightly annoying to the myoor at first, but let's suppose that after a bit she's used to it and she likes it. She's fed by the roots of the nurbs. Like she's now a symbiotic plant instead of a carnivore or omnivore. The nurbs stabilize her and she loses her drive to grow and to eat city after city.

A downside for Fairyland is that the myoor will be reaching through to grab incautious Fairylanders to stun them for conversion into gubs, but the Fairylanders adjust to this and initiate a custom of making sacrifices—the gnomes

in particular will be into doing that. Might the myoor ever be tempted to slide back through to Fairyland? No, she'll be wary of doing that because she doesn't want a repeat of us running our thorned-whip routine on her. And again, she likes being, in effect, the dirt of a giant peaceful terrarium in Churchill Downs. She doesn't want the gnomes to take her back to Fairyland, and the green gub doesn't care either.

It's a nice image. Kind of modern and ecotopian. A green solution to the pollution that, on the metalevel, the myoor may represent. And the jungle of growing nurbs on the myoor is like a Boschian fantasy, with the forms of the nurbs somehow conditioned by the dreams of the unborn gubs within the myoor. Not a good idea to strolling there, though, as the myoor, even now, isn't averse to swallowing and chewing up someone who's on her surface.

"Myoor Woods," haw haw.

## **May 25-27, 2013. Q & A "Churchill Downs," Gub Life**

I worked out some ideas, and I incorporated them into the novel, the To Do list, or into the Chapter outline for the big myoor-comes-to-Earth chapter, which I might call "Mom and Dad" or "Churchill Downs."

(Q) *The people whom the myoor disgorges, maybe they don't look quite the same, and they look a little like gubs, a bit puffy, with their noses somewhat pointy?*

(A) No, don't do this, as then the returnees are denormalized. I want it to be very rare for a swallowed person to in fact get fertilized and turned into a gub. For awhile I'd considered having Gaven be fertilized and looking like a gub, as the idea kind of made me laugh. But Gaven has been tarred with the rapist brush, and neither we nor the myoor would want to "reward" Gaven by making him a god. Instead the god of the new world should be Zad's Dad.

(Q) *How does Dad get turned into a gub?*

(A) Dad wasn't eaten by the myoor at Weezie's party. But now at Churchill Downs he volunteers. Like Jesus (or

like Turing in *Turing & Burroughs*), Dad dies that we may live. Perfect to have an aging artist become a god who goes off to hatch his own universe

(Q) *I need to bring Skungy back into play, I lost track of him back in the “Weezie’s Party” chapter. Let’s say he didn’t go over to Fairyland—I don’t want to have to write him into all those scenes. But maybe he shows up right after Zad gets to the track, he can be there for the last chapter.*

(A) Skungy jumps into the Lincoln as Zad pulls into Churchill Downs.

(Q) *I’d like to bring Loulou back into the sun a little. She was, after all, Zad’s great love for a number of chapters, and I can’t just make her an unperson since Zad went back to his wife. She should do something important in the final chaps.*

(A) Loulou designs some nurbs that can live on the surface of the myoor. Also note that, for the “stable myoor” notion to work, the green gub needs to tell the myoor to simmer down. Recall that this myoor is, in a sense, the reproductive sex organ of the green gub. Maybe Loulou can be the one to tell the green gub about nurbs.

(Q) *What does Whit want?*

He wants Jane. He wants to destroy Zad. He wants to rule the world.

(Q) *What do the gnomes want?*

They’re gubbian zealots. They want to help the myoor breed, in the service of the green gub.

(Q) *Where does nurb-gel come from? Can myoor flesh become nurb gel? Might the myoor and the nurbs achieve a heretofore unprecedented level of symbiosis?*

(A) We are simply growing nurb-get flesh in vats, it’s no big deal. It’s a commodity product.

Regarding the nurb gel and the myoor flesh, let’s say that the myoor and the gub have flesh that’s an odd blend of that of Earth and Fairyland organisms, and that we two paired planets are unique in that respect among all the worlds in our universe. So the green gub’s especially sought us out because it likes humans as blanks for its gub eggs



and it likes Fairylanders as food. The link between myoor/gub biology and ours also means that the myoor can be symbiotic with nurbs, who are, after all Earth organisms. The myoor doesn't want to use nurbs for egg blanks nor does she want to eat them, but she likes them.

(Q) *Are Fairylanders physically the same as us?*

(A) Two options, yes and no. I'm going to pick no.

(Yes) Earth and Fairyland are physically the same. We would *have* to say this, if we wanted to say that, when the myoor comes to live on our side, she starts using Fairylanders as gub blanks. In this case, we'd set the branes on an equal and symmetric footing so a myoor can inhabit either side, and use the other side for gub blanks. Do note, however, that if I want to say Fairyland is a "real" world like ours, then I'd need to be careful about giving "magic powers" to the fairylanders. I'd have to go over this carefully, but I don't think anything I described thus far is *utterly* out of the question. The flying Tinker Bell fairies could be okay if I balance the area and beat-frequency of the wings against the body weight—it's a matter of making them the size of humming-birds. And although the living goblin flames and living sylph currents of air are unfamiliar, they're feasible in the contexts of my *Hylozoic* and *Mathematicians in Love* worlds, where universal computation is ubiquitous. But, I'd need to say a (very) few words about this point with *The Big Aha*.

(No) Earth and Fairyland are different. In terms of creating a two-brane universe and in terms of the exoticism of Fairyland, it's better if the two branes are different. So I'll go with this, and I'll explain the myoor's ability to live on either side by saying that ours will always be the mating side, and Fairyland will always be the eating side. This is an essential asymmetry. What changes is the kinds of mouths the myoor uses, according to whatever side she's on. An eating-side mouth can be a regular slit or an ER-tunnel wormhole mouth, and ditto for an egg-blank-garnering-side mouth.

*(Q) Why can't the myoor both eat and garner egg-host-beings on a single brane? Why do we have a two-brane universe at all?*

(A) This point should be raised and answered in the novel. My answer is that a two-brane system energizes itself, along the lines of the Steinhardt Cyclic universe, which appeared in "Colliding Branes," a story I wrote with Bruce Sterling, not that I want to get into that full shtick in *The Big Aha*. In terms of explaining it in the novel, it might be enough is just say that having the two branes is like a parlor trick, getting something from nothing, akin to turning 0 into +1 and -1.

However, if that last remark is the case, then in what sense is Fairyland like -1 relative to our +1? I don't want them to be antimatter or my guys would explode over there. But they probably *should* have a slightly different kind of physics, a skew physics of some type. Or at least a different kind of biology. Maybe Fairylanders don't have DNA, and reproduce by cloning. Maybe their food gives you a stomach ache or makes you sick—recall that Jane does suggest this.

*(Q) How do the gubs implant their info patterns or genomes into the gub blanks in a myoor? What's the gestation time? What does a gub birth look like? Will any gubs be born or aborted when the myoor gets dragged over to Earth?*

(A) I need to work this out some detail, as the final chapter heavily involves the One-Track Gub/Myoor Lifecycle that I sketched on May 10-13, 2013, that is, a little over two weeks ago.

I'll recast the life-cycle, this time including gub-on-gub sex.

(1) Urged on by the love play of the male gubs, a female gub reaches sexual maturity and spawns a universe which has two symmetric branes, analogous to our brane and the Fairyland brane. This universe includes a reproductive organ called a myoor, which can live on either one of the branes. The myoor plays the role of the female gub's

ovaries and uterus. Over time—possible millions of years while the inhabitants of the universe evolves—the myoor finds itself a suitable pair of matched planets.

(2) The myoor views its the Fairyland-like brane as the eating brane, and the Earth-like brane as the mating brane. The myoor abducts suitable beings from the mating brane and fashions them into gub eggs. Whichever brane she's on (mating or eating), she uses E-R wormholes to reach the other brane.

(3) A male gub fertilizes a gub egg with touches of his pointed snout. The myoor grows them to maturity over a period of weeks or months. Only *one* gub egg gets fertilized per world.

(4) At birth, a gub pops out into the 3D space where the myoor is living, squeals, whirls, and disappears into the N-dimensional plenum. And this takes us back to step (1), where the male and female gubs mingle in the plenum.

Regarding the issue of how a parent gub transfers its personality into a child gub, we can say its a quantum field or some such. Or an infinite regress, if you like. Or a pair of fractals that fit together like puzzle-pieces.

*(Q) If the green gub is the mother of our universe, who is the father?*

(A) I'm seeing the universe as a reproductive organ grown by the green gub, so our the universe doesn't directly have a father. We could, however, ask who was the father of the green gub and, for that matter, who was her mother. But we won't delve into that. The point is that the spotted gub and the green gub together give birth to a new striped gub who will spawn a new universe.

*(Q) Why is the myoor willing to just stay in Churchill Downs instead of swallowing everyone on Earth?*

(A) The myoor only wants to spawn one universe-building child gub from a given planet, and when she's rampaging around a world, she's just looking for the right one. And in Dad she's already found the right one.

*(Q) Does the myoor stay in Churchill Downs forever?*

(A) No, after birthing Dad as a gub, she flies off to look for another world with another seed. Like I said, one Earth-derived child gub is enough.

## **June 12, 2013. Back from Hawaii**

My family and I were on the North Shore of Oahu in Hawaii for a week, fourteen of us in all, including the three children and five grandchildren, staying at some funky old bungalows near Hale'iwa. Great fun, and wonderful SFnal landscapes, locals, plants, animals, and experiences.

Turns out *BoingBoing* doesn't want to tackle publishing *The Big Aha*, they'd rather do an ebook-only reprint, possibly my old memoir *All the Visions*. So I may take the Kickstarter / Transreal Books route for *The Big Aha* after all. Still pondering this. Kind of leaning that way. Maybe try and raise, like, \$6K (a shade less than I might hope for from Tor), and if that doesn't succeed, then go back to begging Dave Hartwell at Tor to buy it, and then back to trudging the weary round of other publishers, hat in hand, eyes downcast...and that could take as much as a year.

"Who wants hear my fiddle and make happy dance?" Grizzled gypsy flat on his back on the sidewalk, a damp stain of urine on the pavement near his crotch. Tries to stand up, but falls heavily onto his side, landing on his fiddle with a crunch. "Why not be happy some more?" Empty bottle of Tokay rolls across the sidewalk into the gutter. Holds up the fiddle, examining the long crack along one side, keeping one eye closed to counteract double vision. Fumbles up the bow and draws a tentative chord from the strings. *Vheeeenk!*

*Locus* has a big cover-story interview with me in the June, 2013 issue, which could possibly help a Kickstarter push just now. I'm very happy with how it came out. I struck a pleasant tone.

Anyway, now I'm back to finishing the novel. I just reread and marked up "Fairyland" (including Gnome Cave), and "Spotted Gub," and I'm typing in the changes. As I go along, I'll put To Do items in the list at the start of these

Notes. And then I'll fix most of the To Dos. And then I'll revise my outline or two more times.

And then, I'll wait for the Muse to give me the courage to make that first mark upon the blank canvas of my big myoor-comes-to-Earth "Churchill Downs" chapter.

### **June 13, 2013. An Extra Chapter?**

Missing Hawaii, Sylvia and I went down to the beach at Santa Cruz today. I was thinking about how to end the novel. The obvious issue is that I have a number of loose ends I need to tie up, and I'll list some of those loose ends below as questions, and try and work out some answers.

The less obvious issue is that, in my pell-mell rush to Fairyland and back, I lost my hold on something that I liked the most about the first part of the book—that is, relaxed, human-to-human, conversational, "Louisville" quality that I had going on. People sitting around talking about not all that much. And I'm thinking that I want to have room for some more of that easy, pleasant humane stuff—and best way to make the room is going to be adding yet another chapter after "Churchill Downs," a chapter, with everything chilled out and the players hanging out at, I don't know, maybe a christening party at the Roller's farm, akin to the way that Bergmann's *Fanny and Alexander* ends with that long wonderful scene at a christening banquet. Some closing wisdom, some genuine Big Aha, above and beyond the pyrotechnic SF antics of the finale.

### **June 14-20, 2013. Launching A Kickstarter**

*June 14, 2013.*

I've been working on a Kickstarter page for *The Big Aha* all day. I feel more and more committed to taking that route. The way it works is that you set an amount you want to raise, and if people don't pledge that much within a month, then you don't get any of their money. I'm not sure where to set the level. You don't actually get all of the money; Kickstarter and Amazon skim of a total of 10%, and you

have to spend a little money on redeeming the various prizes that you promise.

I'm leaning towards \$7K, as that's what I'd be likely to get from Tor as an advance, although I'd really only get about \$6K of this. \$5K seems *too* humble an ask. But I'm so worried about striking out. Maybe I just ask for \$6K? I'll ask Tim Pratt what he thinks. Tim is a younger writer who's done a number of Kickstarters, and he's been my inspiration for this.

It's not necessarily a loss if you set a low minimum, as, if all goes well, then people pledge even more than you asked for. A way to encourage the extra donations is to set "Stretch Goals" describing things you'll do if you get extra money. Another angle is that you set a sequence of escalating prizes or awards that the donors get, according to how much they kick in.

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I was smiling to myself today, thinking about how the concert-series fundraisers assign donors to, like, the Beethoven level or the Mozart level. I could have *Big Aha* donor levels: Qwet Rat, Elephruk, Qrude, Teeper, Myoor, Gub. (Not serious about this, as these names all sound kind of insulting.)

I'm thinking I might offer to give some original paintings to Gub level donors. This would be a \$1,000 donation level. I value my better paintings at close to \$1,000, so I'd be in effect selling paintings to finance the book. But it's not like I'm selling paintings all that often, so I wouldn't mind doing this. It would be kind of cool to make a Stretch Goal so I paint four or five new ones.

Writing an extra chapter could be a Stretch Goal too. And making an illustrated hardback color edition of these hyar *Notes*—although, for sanity's sake, I'd probably sidestep InDesign and make the PDF direct from Word without justifying the margins or (Stretch cash!)—pay someone to do the design. Another Stretch goal is a new edition of my paintings book, *Better Worlds*.

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*June 17, 2013.*

I've been working steadily on my Kickstarter page for the last few days. Adding images and, today, making a plausible video of me pitching the project. Flip-flopping between wild enthusiasm about the project and fears that I'm doing something completely dumb.

I sent a preview link to a few people. Tim Pratt thinks it's great and that I'll get funded for sure. My agent John Silbersack says, sure, go for it, cool idea. No commission here for John, but he's okay with that, says he might get some from foreign sales, audio sales, and from the general (one hopes) lift-all-boats publicity that this oddball move might garner for me. My Tor editor Dave Hartwell also said this move seemed worth a try, and that if it failed he'd still consider the book for Tor, and that he didn't feel spurned or anything. And he made a couple of good suggestions about my Kickstarter page.

My Tachyon small publisher friend Jacob Weisman says that if I really wanted to hire a retail distributor I'd need to be putting a number of titles into distribution, like a real publisher would do, and for each title I'd want to print from 1,000 to 3,000 copies. Weirdly enough, it might cost \$4,000 to print 1000 and only \$4,500 to print 3000—once they get the press rolling, you're only paying for more paper. A distributor keeps 25% of what the retailers pay. I don't think I can face tackling all this; I'll settle for getting the books available in paperback and in hardback, and for getting review copies out to the trade journals this time around.

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*June 20, 2013.*

Yeah, baby. I put my Kickstarter page last night about 10 pm and by 3 pm today I raised \$2,700. I think I'll make it to \$7K and maybe more.

If I tried hard enough, waited long enough, I probably could have placed *The Big Aha* with some kind of commercial publisher, maybe a small one—but that's been getting harder over the last few years, with longer waits, more anxiety, less promotion, less actual editing, less

proofreading and smaller advances. Less fun. Too much groveling for the deal—and then, in at least one case, hounding a small pub to actually pay me my advance. We're in a phase shift time, a transition from one era to another. From thuddy dinosaurs to nibbling mammals.

Going totally indie like this, I feel like I'm escaping into a promised land. With *Turing & Burroughs* I figured out how to self-publish, but I was still missing a piece of the puzzle: the advance. And now I can in effect can an advance with Kickstarter. Since I'm promising copies of the book (ebook or print) to my backers I am, in effect doing advance sales. But that's what "advance" is about in the first place. An advance on expected earnings.

Another missing piece is that, with *Turing & Burroughs*, I still hadn't figured out how to get my book into libraries and into brick and mortar stores. But now I'm recalling that both Create Space and Lightning have options you can pay for to make this likelier to happen. So, flush from Kickstarter, I can do that this time around.

Doing the Kickstarter move gives me renewed enthusiasm about making a final push to finish. I'd been feeling a little inhibited about finishing the book before setting *some* kind of publication strategy in motion. But now it's cool.

## June 18-21, 2013. Patching Plotholes

The book has a lot of dangling threads I need to resolve.

(Q) *Jeptha said he saw the future—why and how did this happen?*

(A) I'll just drop that claim, as it's become more of a distraction than anything else. Originally I put it in as a stub that I might extend into an additional plot line. I have enough stuff now, and I don't need the had-a-vision routine. I've given the spotted gub and the green gub considerable agency, and I'll have them playing an active role. The spotted gub speaks to Jeptha and Stanky on a regular basis. Jeptha and Stanky milk gub juice from the spotted gub pretty often, although they don't see the green gub



regularly. And, in talking to Zad and Jane, they should mention the spotted gub's rival, the dark gub, whom they've seen a few times as well.

*(Q) Describe Jeptha and Stanky's connection to the oddball.*

(A) The oddball is like a pearl that grows in a special species of Fairyland land clam called a tunnel clam. Hardly anyone has one. Stanky and Jeptha were using the oddball for nosing around on Earth for—*fresh human corpses to eat!* Better than eating babies. They'd bring back the corpses and devour them, it's the natural food for goblins like them. They're merry ghouls.

A year ago, the spotted gub got Stanky and Jeptha to put the oddball where Jane would find it, and since then they've given up control of the Earth-end of the oddball, letting it be passively carried around by Jane. Although sometimes while at Jane's, the oddball sneaks out at night, flying off the balcony to find and swallow a fresh corpse, and in the morning she smells of death and corruption and maybe has blood on her skin. Zad and Jane don't know about this at that time, although they do notice those odd traces.

Although Stanky and Jeptha's favorite food is still fresh human corpses, the spotted gub has been giving them a steady diet of gub juice, also they've been eating, *ugh*, fresh food.

While the oddball is pretty much on the loose at the Funhouse it goes out and scavenges up a corpse or two.

*(Q) What are Whit and Gaven up to?*

(A) Let's say that Whit and Gaven are working for a third gub, a male gub who's the spotted gub's rival suitor for the hand of the green gub. A stern, humorless, puritanical, overbearing, ignorant gub. I'd considered making him red, like a cartoon devil, but I want him to be more like a narrow-minded priest, so I'll make him black—which is kind of cliché, and even vaguely racist, but it makes things easy on the reader in terms of knowing who to root for. The dark gub. He's so dark he looks like a hole,

although he does have sizzling pinpricks of light when he gets emotional.

*(Q) Tell me more about the gubs.*

The green gub is the creator (creatix?) of our universe, and the myoor is hers, and she knows all the details of our world. I need to describe her more richly, “green” is too simple. Many shades of green, like a forest with hints of yellow as if from blossoms. She was born in a different cosmos than ours, and her home cosmos served as her mental model for the two-brane structure that she used for making our cosmos. The spotted gub and the dark gub were spawned it two other cosmoses, making four cosmoses in all—green gub home, spotted gub home, dark gub home, Earth’s home (made by green gub). The spotted gub’s homeland was a hyperdimensional knot in Hilbert space, and dark gub’s home was a sentient cloud of stink-gas. (I shouldn’t overburden the reader by talking about this all that much.)

The gubs were hosted on alien beings of some kind, paralyzed in their mothers’ myoors. And they have names, we might as well suppose that a gub takes on a name something like its host’s name. I’ll call them Sedusa, Duffie and Oxkar—these being, respectively, the cute green gubbess, the grungy spotted gub, and the cold and villainous dark gub.

Initially the dark gub and the spotted gub didn’t even know about the Earth brane. They got to our universe about a year ago, following after the hyperdimensional pre-spawning scent of Sedusa the green gub. Duffie the piebald gub learned about the Earth level by a mathematical analysis, but the black gub remained obliv. The spotted gub got Jephtha place the oddball where Jane would find it. The spotted gub’s game is to get the myoor over to Earth so the dark gub can’t readily find it—even now the dark gub is having trouble thinking about two branes. The spotted gub figures that, with the myoor over on the Earth side, he’ll have much better odds of being the one to fertilize the green gub’s gub-blanks.

Oxkar the dark gub remained ignorant about the Earth plane for quite some time. But a couple of months ago, he found out about it from the garrulous Stanky. And Stanky told Oxkar that Duffie is planning something involving the oddball. And then Oxkar enlisted Whit and Gaven to get rid of Jane's oddball, even though he still thinks they're ghosts with no specific space location. Having come from a cloud of stink-gas in dimension Z, he doesn't have a solid grasp of 3D and 4D space. He sees the oddball as something like a crystal ball for viewing spirits rather than as a literal tunnel to a parallel brane.

Naturally the spotted gub was angry with Stanky. Thinking to placate the spotted gub, Stanky used the oddball to smother Gaven. After this, Stanky and Jephtha really wanted to eat Gaven's corpse, but the spotted gub made them leave Gaven so that he'd resurrect and keep the Oxkar distracted by his machinations with Gaven and Whit.

*(Q) What about the darkstar?*

(A) The darkstar is an early wormhole mouth from the myoor. An advance guard, a scout. She *has* to be a myoor wormhole: Gaven did measurements on the darkstar to discover that she was attracted to qwet people; and later she swallows Whit and (for a short time) Dibble the elephruk. Initially it's the darkstar who, on the behalf of the myoor, is urging Gaven to spread qwet. She's not telling him that she wants to swallow thousands of people. Gaven is hanging back. But then Oxkar, wanting to please Sedusa, gets in on this, and makes a bunch of promises to Gaven and to Whit.

*(Q) Why does the myoor store up all of the inadequate people whom she's swallowed? Why not just digest them or spit them out?*

(A) I'm going to make a switch here and suppose that gubs give birth to *two* baby gubs, a male and a female. They'll be made up of Zad's parents, which brings in various psychological resonances. The Apotheosis of Mom and Dad.

The minds of the unchosen people are to be copied into the selected scions' minds at the moment of their exultation

into gubs. Might as well say the copy process sends the women's minds to the girl gub embryo and the men's minds to the boy gub embryo. When the new gubs are actually delivered, the unused candidate people are expelled from the myoor's flesh. They look like cancer survivors—they're pale, befuddled, hairless.

A big scene: The explosive birth of the fraternal twins, the boy and girl gub. The released prisoners totter forth from the haze of sparkling mist that surrounds the exhausted myoor. And then, slowly, ponderously, the myoor takes flight.

Note that if the myoor is eventually going to do a spontaneous prisoner release, then the Mr. Normals won't be "inducing labor" with their flashing. They'll just be helping to herd the myoor.

*(Q) In what ways do Zad and Jane grow and change?*

(A) Maybe they decide to have a baby, although some might say this is a cliché and perhaps even sexist. Reproduction is of course "sexist" in that it forces very different roles upon women and men, with the pregnancy and the labor falling upon the women. Well, I *could* have them grow the baby in nurb add-on kangaroo pouches, passing the embryo back and forth. Or use Zad's scrotum, like I did in "Rapture in Space." But, nah, why make the pregnancy icky and hard to think about. Just do it the good old way, although certainly a backbrace nurb can make things easier for Jane.

*(Q) Do you like the looks of Mr. Normal?*

(A) No. That infinite regress thing is an arid intellectual head trip—not visual, and nobody will understand it anyway. I myself can barely visualize or understand it. "A man whose head is a man whose head is a man whose head is..." Mr. Normal should just look like Li'l Bulb, Gyro Gearloose's assistant. He'd be easy to paint as well.

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All right, we're getting somewhere, but now I have a lot of revisions to make. I think I'll mark up the long "Fairyland" chapter a couple of times, putting in my still-

evolving notions about the gubs. I'll need to redo the scene where Zad discovers secrets in Gaven's squidskin in the "Spreading Qwet" chapter. And the parts in "Loulou in the Oddball," where Loulou's talking about her experiences inside the oddball. In fact, to make sure I don't miss anything, I might as well put the current action points into my To Do list and resolve them one by one.

It almost looks as if I'm stalling about writing the final chapters—by now it looks as if I'll have two of them—but I do feel a need to get everything lined-up and logical before doing that closing high-speed downhill *schuss* run, that final ecstatic swoop down the face of the book's fifty-foot wave.

Before I actually write a chapter, I always image that it'll be easy. But when I get to point of doing it, I always realize how many details I have to figure out. And it gets to be more and more work as I get further into the book—what with more loose threads to resolve and more past events to bring into harmony with my resolutions.

## **June 24 - July 1, 2013. Novel Illos, 2 New Paintings**

So okay, a month has gone by, and I went vacationing in Hawaii, launched a Kickstarter, and now I've been elaborating upon the plot details of *The Big Aha*. And now I hope I can start writing the next chapter or two and finish the book.

I took care most of the To Do items emerging from the "Patching Plotholes" entry. At this point, I'm a little worried that I over-elaborated the patches, and that the story's getting too complicated. Well, once the whole book's done, I'll do a read-through and see if I can streamline it. The main thing is that at this point I have a logical framework within which an ending can happen.

Writing this in the Los Gatos Coffee Roasting cafe. Things keep interrupting. Trying to fix the broken Twitter feed widget in my blog's sidebar. People talking to me. Compulsively checking my Kickstarter page. Oh, fuck it. I think I'll quit trying to write for now, and go home and paint.

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I reached my Kickstarter target of \$7,000 on June 25, 2013, and now I might do more things, particularly if I can get raise extra money by proposing what Kickstarter calls a “Stretch Goal.” This could involve making more paintings—I’d rather do more paintings than write extra chapbook stories or make the book a lot longer.

What if I assigned a painting to each chapter? Fourteen of them, and include them in some editions of the novel or of the concomitant *Notes* (this document).

The present plan is that booklength notes for the novel, that is, *Notes for The Big Aha* include my new paintings for the book as color illos. The *Notes* will be available as an ebook with color illos, and as a high-end collector's edition hardback with color illos that will cost me about \$20 per copy to produce.

But might I decide to include some paintings as illos in the novel itself? Let's look at the three options: ebook, paperback, hardback.

*Ebook:* Illos add no direct cost to an ebook, but they do increase the file size of the ebook, and this affects the distribution cost (via Amazon) a tiny bit, like maybe 60 cents per unit, if you're careful and keep the file size of the book down to about 2 Meg, which is feasible. You can put in the color illos and they show up in grayscale on the low-end Kindle reader, but in color on most other platforms.

*Paperback:* Color adds about \$15 to my production cost per volume. So, in order to have a reasonable retail price, it wouldn't make sense to have color in the paperback. But I can put and white illos in the paperback, they don't look all that bad.

*Hardback:* I'll do a high-end hardback edition of the novel with color illos. I'm already doing this for the Notes, so why not for the novel. I've slotted in a collector's edition of *The Big Aha* as a reward at the \$100 pledge level and up, and that's enough money so it won't kill me to give out the color hardbacks.



**FIGURE 25: SKETCH FOR A *GUB ON HER BED***

The color-illustrated ebook and hardback edition of the novel will be a bit more of a stretch in terms of work for me and in production costs, so I'll call the color-illustrated novel a Stretch Goal, like I already said, and this could bring in some backers for the Kickstarter, which would be good. I announced this new goal on my Kickstarter page on June 27, 2013. And now the donations are up to \$8,000.

On the painting front, I had this funny sketch for a painting of the scene where the spotted gub is on Jane's bed and she's showing him to Zad. I love the gub's expression. And then I turned the sketch into a painting.



**FIGURE 26: A GUB ON HER BED. 24" X 20" JUNE, 2013.**

Finished this on June 25, 2013. I always like the idea of a painting that seems like an illustration of some unknown proverb or fable. At a metaphorical level, the gub might symbolize some kind of marriage problem. At a more factual level, the painting relates to my novel, *The Big Aha*, which features unprepossessing yet god-like alien beings called gubs. The piebald gub shown here is named Duffie, and he's in love with a green female gub named Sedusa—you can glimpse her in the sky outside the window. The gub is perched on my character Jane's bed, and he isn't particularly welcome there, as he's somewhat shabby and unclean.

I like this painting a lot, it took three days, one session per day. I kind of would like to make some more.

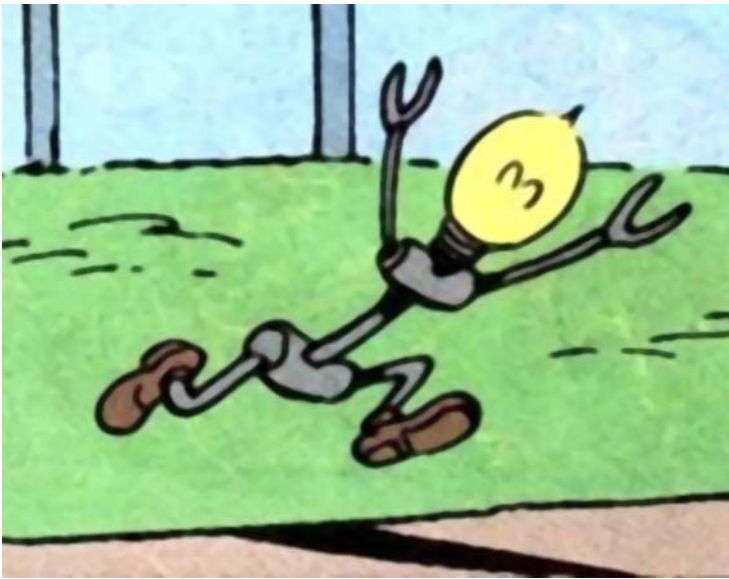
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*June 27, 2013.*

I did my second session on *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor*, and it's coming into shape. Maybe that's too long of a title, and makes the painting sound like a lowly book



illustration, rather than like a work of art? *Parable* could be a better title, taking off on that rap I had earlier in this entry, that it's fun to see a painting that looks like an illo for some proverb or story that *nobody remembers anymore*. And if I show that a painting in an art context, I could call it *Parable* and don't even tell people the illustration explanation of it. It looks cooler when it's a mystery. Like some demented Surrealist eructation. Like outsider art. But *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor* isn't exactly a title that gives away much meaning, so just use it.



**FIGURE 27: GYRO GEARLOOSE'S LITTLE BULB.**

*June 29, 2013.*

I'm almost done with painting *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor*. I did my third session today, and I think it'll only take one more. I made the Mr. Normals look just like Gyro Gearloose's Little Bulb, and I changed the book so they look that way in there (originally a Mr. Normal looked like a complex regress). And the myoor looks scared of them, which is good.



**FIGURE 28: *MR. NORMALS VS. MYOOR*. OIL. 24" x 18". JULY, 2013.**

Last night I saw this very heavy Mexican SF movie called *Sleep Dealer*, which was, to some extent about the white-dominated US taking advantage of brown-skinned Mexico. And the myoor is kind of pink, and I'm thinking I'll make Zad in *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor* look kind of Mexican. I'm also making the Zad look like the guy in paintings 93: *Louisville Artist* and 94: *Night of Telepathy*. I might put in the Princess-Leia-coiffed Loulou as well. But at one level the Zad here just happens to be Mexican as well. Not sure what the Mr. Normal / Little Bulb figures would stand for, though, if the picture really *is* a parable about the US and Mexico.

\*\*\*

*June 30, 2013.*

Oh Rudy, stop worrying about whether Zad is Mexican *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor* painting. You're overreaching. Do one thing at a time. Make the Zad look however he should to give the painting a good color balance. Visuals first, story later. Maybe I can finish the

painting today, even though it's 100 degrees in my art studio (that is, the back yard).

In the end, Zad does look a little Mexican, I think. And, in a very loose sense, the images of Zad are self-portraits in this and in *Louisville Artist* and *Night of Telepathy* paintings. This was a technically difficult painting for me, it took six sessions, and many paintings I can finish in only three or maybe four sessions.

### **July 5, 2013. Illustrations For The Novel**

[I revised this entry several times, in particular on July 15, 2013, after I finished painting *Gubs and Wormholes*.]

I'm thinking in terms of fully illustrating the book with a picture for each chapter. I recently divided up some longer chapters (and later I'll recombine some), so in the end I'm talking about 14 chapters plus a cover painting. I don't want to reuse a chapter illo for the cover. How do I get to 15 paintings?

I'll make it a little easier on myself and accept that my paintings don't always exactly and specifically match what I ended up writing. For instance the *Two Gods* should have looked more like the spotted gub and the green gub, but oh well. Forever feeling my way.

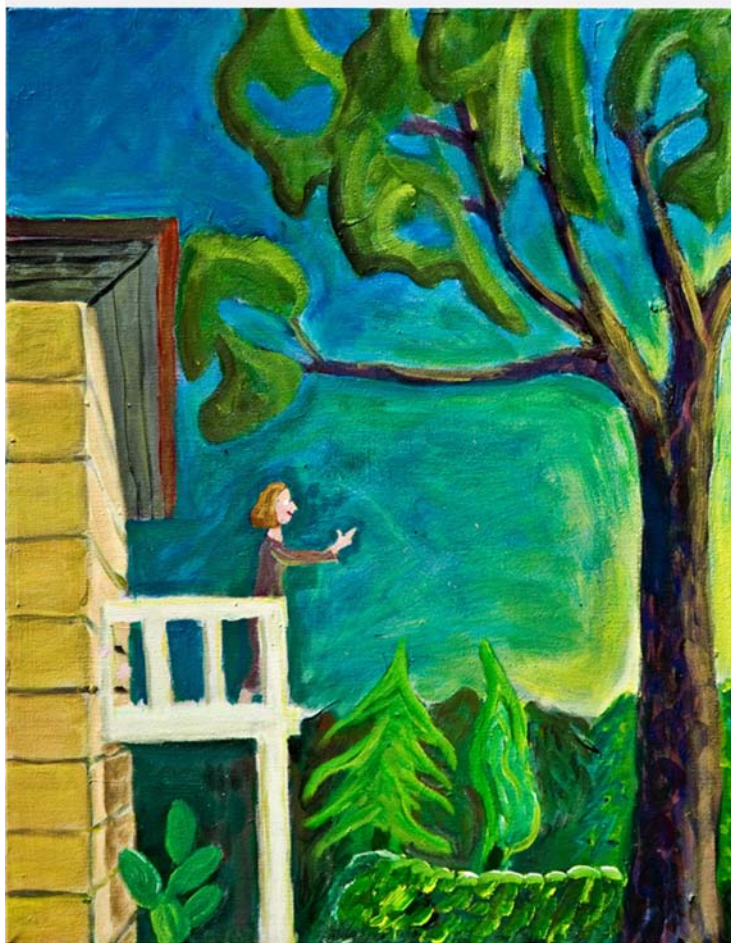
I've finished 7 paintings, and I have one more in mind, so that makes 8, and I'll need 7 more paintings. It would make me *way* too stressed to contemplate doing 7 additional paintings to reach 15 by this winter. So I'll think of my goal of a fully illustrated book as being a matter of planning and design as well as being a matter of creating new paintings.

So now I'm going to think about which older paintings I can repurpose.

I'm not sure how to paint the Big Aha experience itself. Whatever the Big Aha is... One Big-Aha-vision-type painting that I'll repurpose is 69: *He Sees The Fnoor*, I think I'll use that for "Funhouse," where everyone is having visions.

# THE BIG AHA

A Novel by Rudy Rucker



**FIGURE 34: COVER CONCEPT (USING *DAWN*. 14" x 18" MAY, 2008.)**

And I have two other Big-Aha-vision paintings I can use. One is *31: Mossy Trees*, with the sly eye of Enlightenment in the tree trunk. And the other is *36: Dawn*,

which is a painting of my dear wife Sylvia early in the morning on our back porch. *Dawn* is a Zen type of Big-Aha-vision painting—where the Great Enlightenment is, in the end, right in front of your nose, if only you can learn to see it. *Mossy Trees* is a little like that, too. But *Mossy Trees* is an early work, and maybe not quite up to the level I want.

I've mocked up a *Dawn* cover above. But, on the other hand, *Dawn* would be nice for an illo for the final chapter. Imagine it shows Jane realizing she's pregnant.

Or I could call the final chapter "Mother and Father," and use *1: My Parents* for that chapter illo. Or I could use *My Parents* for the chapter "Loulou in the Oddball," which Zad goes home to the farm. I'm a little concerned that the UFO in that painting is distracting/confusing, as there aren't any UFOs in the book. But I could Photoshop in a gub in place of the UFO.

Back to the topic of "big aha" pictures, how about *60: The Topology of the Afterworld*, which is a painting that I like a lot. Of course it's on the cover of the print edition of my *Complete Stories, Vol II*, which maybe isn't all that big a deal, but I don't really think I *do* want to use it. It's not quite the right image of the Zen-like Big Aha that I have in mind. Being a vortex, It *could* work as the illo for the "Weezie's Party," where people are being sucked into the wormholes, but it's too cluttered. Anyway, *70: Fractal Skate Posse* will be perfect for that, much better in fact, it has that frenzied quality, and so what if some of the people are on skateboards. Maybe even work a nurb skateboard or two into the story.

*48: Thirteen Worlds* is good for "Scene of the Crime," as this chapter is about an artist working with nurb gel, about Joey's regress painting, and about wormholes—and those spheres are a little like wormholes, too.

And *88: On My Home Planet* is usable for "Flying Jellyfish," although I might later want to paint a *Jellyfish House*.

And *92: God's Eye* works for "Call Wallahs," with its aura of surveillance.

I could use 74: *She's Got a Pet* for any chapter with the elephruk. Use 95: *The Two Gods* for Fairyland (with the talk of competing gubs).

Where does that leave me?

**Eight Paintings specifically done for the *Big Aha*:**

89: *The Lovers*, 90: *Loulou and Skungy*, 93: *Louisville Artist*, 94: *Night of Telepathy*, 95: *The Two Gods*, 98: *A Gub On Her Bed*, 99: *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor*, 100: *Gubs and Wormholes*.

**Eight Older paintings that I might repurpose for *Big Aha illos*:**

1: *My Parents*, 36: *Dawn*, 48: *Thirteen Worlds*, 69: *He Sees the Fnoor*, 70: *Fractal Skate Posse*, 74: *She's Got a Pet*, 88: *On My Home Planet*, 92: *God's Eye*.

So—with 8 new and 8 old possibilities, I have 16 and I'm done, as I only need 15. The one painting that I haven't finished—although I have already done the underlayer—is *Gubs and Wormholes*, and I will make it graphically strong and use it for the cover.

And if I need yet another, extra, I might use 76: *The Riviera* somewhere or, again, *Mossy Trees*.

I see *Gubs and Wormholes* as fairly dry and schematic, a creamy/yellow pair of planes with maybe five wormhole necks between them. Maybe a myoor blotch on the upper plane. Maybe some gubs hanging around. This one would make a nice cover as it's graphically simple.

Chap # and Name	Painting
Cover	Gubs and Wormholes
1. Qwet Rat	Loulou and Skungy:
2. Coming of the Nurbs	Louisville Artist
3. Loofy Picnic	The Lovers
4. Oblivious Teep	A Night of Telepathy
5. Scene of the Crime	Thirteen Worlds
6. Loulou in the Oddball	My Parents (doctored)
7. Flying Jellyfish	On My Home Planet
8. Funhouse	He Sees the Fnoor
9. Spreading Qwet	God's Eye
10. Weezie's Party	Fractal Skate Posse
11. Fairyland	The Two Gods
12. Spotted Gub	A Gub On Her Bed
13. Churchill Downs	The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor
14. Big Aha	Dawn

**Table 2: Sixteen Paintings for Cover and Chapters**

Here's a table of my illos plan, and no doubt I'll be revising the table as time goes on. And I may yet replace some of the old paintings with more new ones.

I still have a few months till I need to finalize the book so I might come up with a couple more new paintings as well. Like *Jellyfish House*. Or another painting using that same spiraling-around-the-White-Light motif as in *The Topology of the Afterworld*, but with *gubs* in the spiral throng, and elephruks and rats and Mr. Normals and Zads and Janes.

But all I *absolutely* need to do is to finish *The Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor*—which I started on June 26, 2013—and then do a painting I'll call *Gubs and*

*Wormholes*. So no need to make this a stress fest and give myself a heart attack or a fit of apoplexy.

## July 5, 2013. Fooling With the Chapter Breaks

I noticed that the later chapters are consistently longer than the early ones—earlier they were about 7,000 each and later they were about 8,000 words each. And I’m worrying that the reading experience is generally more fun with shorter chapters.

So today I broke “Weezie’s Party” into “Nurb Art” / “Weezie’s Party,” separating out the part where Zad is working on nurbs in the barn. (But later I put that section back into “Weezie’s Party.”) I tried have a separate chapter called “Gnome Cave,” but then I just merged some of that into “Fairyland” and some of it into “Spotted Gub.”

When I was done with all this monkeying around, “Weezie’s Party” had become shorter than the other chapters, and maybe that looks weak, I don’t know. It makes it look like—*oh, fuck!*—I need to write more into the “Weezie’s Party” section. And maybe that chapter *could* use a few more eyeball kicks, I could think about that. Or maybe the shortness is just an illusion because I fucked with the breaks. Or maybe I just stop being so concerned about all the chaps having approximately the same length, and say some up and down variation is okay. (But again, I did finally put the Zad-in-the-barn-making-nurbs stuff back into “Weezie’s Party” as it helps build the sense of action.)

The back and forth of chapter splitting, merging, and reapportioning messed up the Word Count table, also some of my references to what I was working on at various times in these *Writing Notes*, also the chapter outline section, also my chapter-illos plan, but with a couple of hours work and the avoidance of actual writing I patched all that. Onward!

One more thought. At this point the longest chapter is “7: Flying Jellyfish.” I could pretty easily break that one in half, with the first half being “Baby Chairs,” and the second half being “Flying Jellyfish.” But I don’t think I will—I don’t want to keep making more and more work for myself



in terms of illos for the book and in terms of revising these *Notes* to dovetail with the final look of the book. I'll could put in \*\*\* or colophon breaks into the novel for any further subdivisions that I want to do. I can't remember if you can do a colophon in an ebook, maybe just a \*\*\*. Or, hell, don't do that, just let the reader perceive when there's a forward lurch in time.

Really I should stop fucking with the chapter breaks while I'm still in the composition via electronic files mode—things like breaks are much easier to edit when you're reading through an entire paper print-out of the draft, which is something I hope to be doing soon.

### **July 11, 2013. On the Final Chapter: "Big Aha"**

The Kickstarter is still alive. I'll hit \$10K in the next day or two. Maybe \$11K by the time it's done. Kickstarter and Amazon skim off about 10% together, and fulfilling the awards will cost me about 5%, so that balances out the %15 an agent would take, so I can do a straight up comparison of this with past advances.

In other words, unless the donors massively back out, I'm at the level of getting a \$10K advance from a publisher, which is the zone I've been in for ten years, with the exceptions of *Frek and the Elixir* in 2004, and the *Lifebox* tome in 2005. And there was that the insane fluke sale of *Saucer Wisdom* for \$50K in 1999.

I've been averaging 300 words a day for about a year, which means I'm up to 95,000 words on *The Big Aha*, with the final target 100,000 words. The 300 word average means that, on good days, I write 1,000 words, but for every day like that, there's two days when I don't write at all. In a comment on my blog, some guy annoyingly asked what my hourly wage is if I spend a year writing a book and get \$10,000! Don't go there, Roo. Obviously being a writer isn't about an hourly wage.

Today some other wiseacre wrote me a humblebrag about getting \$115 K advance for a biography of some cartoonist—and he feels it's not enough. That sum is about

what I got in total for those ten books (other than *Saucer Wisdom*) that I just mentioned above. Don't go there either, Roo. Fuck the slings and arrows of outrageous fortune and write on. And be glad about the egg of my Kickstarter that I'm holding tightly, happily, to my chest.

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I finished the "Churchill Downs" chapter, which includes the "Mr. Normals vs. The Myoor" painting I did last week. And today I got started on the final "Big Aha" chapter.

I could equally well have called it "Mother and Father." The mother/father pair is (a) Jane & Zad, (b)Zad's Mom & Dad, (c) the green gub & the spotted gub. All at the same time. It's coming together very heavy and strange.

I was influenced this week by Stephen King's novel *11/22/63*, which has a lot of synchronicities and overlays. It's a 340,000-word time-travel novel, and the hero keeps running into heavy harmonies. Here's a nice passage where the narrator reacts to an intense coincidence:

"...when that happens you see that the world is barely there at all. Don't we all secretly know this? It's a perfectly balanced mechanism of shouts and echoes pretending to be wheels and cogs, a dreamclock chiming beneath a mystery-glass we call life. Behind it? Below it and around it? ... A universe ... surrounding a single lighted stage where mortals dance in defiance of the dark."

Just a few more scenes to write. And I know, more or less, what's going to happen—although, as I always say, I never *fully* know until I've written the scenes. A novel-in-progress has its own life. Like a fetus.

I'm still with my same routine. I like to print out my latest draft and then maybe lie on a camping mat in a shady spot in the backyard marking it up and scribbling out a new

scene. Then type that in, maybe on my laptop on the couch, print it out, and repeat the cycle. I did about ten or fifteen type/print/mark-up cycles on “Churchill Downs,” Scribbled-on typed papers accumulating like drifts of snow. I’ll be giving these papers out to my Kickstarter backers.

When I can’t face the stress/joy of writing anymore, I get into a painting, go biking, go to SF, or to the beach. It’s full-on summer here in Silicon Valley. July. The very heart of it. I love this month. The yottawatt sun! Lurking inside in the afternoons, with the attic fan drawing up air from the cool basement.

In good old California it always cools off at night. Love it when I’m out at Santa Cruz in the evening. If I’m at home, I’ll often do one or two more mark-up/type/print cycles on a lounge chair in back. Obsessive cycles of work...you kind of need to get that way to actually finish a book. To get the world to dance with you, with the muse immanent in everything around you.

I’m really having a good time with my characters and my settings and my aliens these days. I love the things they say. And—oh those gubs! I’ll miss the whole gang when I’m done. On the other hand, it’s been a long haul, and I’ll be glad to sail my whaling ship into port. Laden with gub oil, scrimshaw and ambergris.

### **July 15, 2013. “Gubs and Wormholes” Cover**

This painting started with a depiction of two wormholes, also known as Einstein-Rosen bridges. Wormholes can act as tunnels connecting two parallel universes. For the purpose of illustrating this concept, I’m depicting the universes as simple planes. Wormholes play a big role in my novel *The Big Aha*. Although the purely geometric version of this painting looked nice, I felt it needed some life.

# THE BIG AHA

Rudy Rucker



**FIGURE 29. COVER WITH “GUBS AND WORMHOLES”**

So I included two of the alien creatures that I’m calling gubs in *The Big Aha*. The gubs are, to some extent, a married couple, and I am, to some extent, a spotted gub. I like how alertly the green gub watches the spotted one.

## **July 17 - 18, 2013. I Finish the First Draft**

*July 17, 2013.*

Hooray! Just now (9:15 am) I finished the first draft, with the novel written all the way through to the ending. 99,684 words. I've been working on it really hard for the last few weeks, doing three or four of my type-print-revise-retype cycles a day. Feeling almost punch-drunk at times. And loving it.

I knew I was getting close, but the very last bit always comes all in a rush, sooner than I'd expected.

It feels like the end of the semester used to feel, back when I was a student or a teacher. Time for vacation!

*July 18, 2013.*

Today I rewrote the last few pages of the ending three times. And now the length is 100,020. Talk about hitting a length-target on the nose! I'll print out a couple of chapters and maybe go over them during our road trip. Or just wait till I get back. Let yourself take a vacation, Ru. We're leaving day after tomorrow.

Naturally I'm paranoid about dying in a car crash or a ship wreck and having this excellent manuscript go lost. So maybe I'll email it to my kids and/or to my agent.

## **August 4, 2013. Ready to Revise the First Draft.**

So the Kickstarter was a real success, I got over \$12,500 in pledges, and now the money's actually in my bank account. Redeeming the promised prizes will knock my take down to about \$10 K, but so what. I'm thinking in terms of a January 15, 2014, publication date, or maybe December 15, 2013, I want some time to get review copies out, especially I want give *Publisher's Weekly* a long lead. I think I can have review copies by Sept 15, I hope to send out a fair number of them.

I marked up chapters 8 - 15 and typed up my changes, and now I have a fairly clean first draft. I printed that out and I'll be going over it, marking it up, and once I have the clean second draft, I'll send that to Lisa Goldstein, whom

I've engaged to copy-edit/proof the book—she does this work as a sideline to her novels. After I put in those fixes, I'll let my wife Sylvia go over the resulting third draft for a final check. And good old John Walker will give it a read-through as well—over the years he's proofed maybe half a dozen of my books.

And now I'll accumulate some notes on topics that want to work on while reading this first draft over the next couple of weeks.

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### *The Dark Gub's Contacts With Us*

Do I need him at all? Given that he can't frikkin' *find* Earth, what influence could he have had on Gaven and Whit? But it does seem good for the spotted gub to have a rival. We might suppose that, although the dark gub has trouble physically moving himself to Earth's space, he can teepee or message down to us readily enough. As I mentioned before, he might think of us more as a land of spirits than as a physical place, and regard the oddball as being like fortune-teller's crystal ball or like a spiritualist's Ouija board.

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### *No Hylozoism*

Don't have them altering the shapes and behaviors of inanimate non-organic objects like flames and clocks, as I was doing in the "Funhouse" chapter.

## **August 5 - 13, 2013. Clarifying The Nurb Tech**

So now I'm working on the second draft, going through the first draft and marking it up.

I'm not happy about having two kinds of nurbs in the book. It's confusing, even to me. At present I have the natural nurbs, which are gene-tweaked plants and animals. And I have the golem nurbs, which are wads of shapeshifting slime-mold-based "nurb gel" which is sensitive to squidskin signals, and you can alter a golem nurb's shape and behavior by messaging to it. Some nurbs can alter their own shapes (cf. Craig Gurky's mover

golems). Loulou played a game called Levolver which involved altering nurbs in realtime. Gaven tries to do a realtime tweak changing cattails into hotdogs. Loulou changes the shape of some earrings at Ned's. And qwet should have something to do with our interaction with nurbs. How can I fit all of this together?

I'm really wrestling with this, trying on one set of ideas after another, so my comments break into "installments."

***Installment 1: Epigenetic Lamarckian Inheritance***

*[I wrote this on August 4 -5, 2013]*

I'd like to hand-code some changes onto a nurb, and then have the nurb reproduce in the old-school cloned-egg fashion and have the changes come along. For this to work, I need for a Lamarckian inheritance process to be at work. That is, I'd want somatic changes to a nurb's body be heritable—without butting up against the unsolvable problem of what precise DNA changes will replicate some externally imposed change in a nurb's body.

According to Wikipedia, Lamarckian inheritance might work via some potentially less computationally intractable "epigenetic" processes. Rather than tackling the problem of retrofitting your raw DNA to encode whatever shape you've flipped into, you might instead encode your current shape via less deeply buried alterations in the chemicals in your cells.

I found two buzz-word phrases for epigenetic modifications: (i) "DNA methylation," meaning something like footnotes attached to the DNA itself, that is, affixing methyl groups to some of the gene sequences, and (ii) "histone modifications," meaning a change to some of the proteins in the cytoplasm so that the DNA expression occurs a bit differently.

Now—will it really be computationally easier to find the correct epigenetic alterations than to find the correct change to the raw DNA? Since this is science fiction and not real world lab research, I'm going to say yes. I'll say we can regard the methylation and histone alterations as higher-

level, closer to where the rubber meets the road, less deeply encrypted, with effects that aren't so hard to predict.

Ok, fine. So what I can do is to be sure that (a) a nurb body can pick up squidskin signals and (b) a nurb body can be triggered to carry out a refresh function. The squidskin signals serve as a channel by which you can alter a nurb's epigenetics. The refresh function, repeatedly invoked, gives you realtime feedback on what your epigenetic alterations are doing. The epigenetic tweaker interface is designed so that, experientially, it feels as if you are molding the nurb with your physical hands, or with virtual hands.

So now all nurbs can be similar. Each of them involves some underlying DNA and some tacked-on epigenetic tweaks. It would be cleanest if the underlying DNA is of a stem cell nature. Undifferentiated tissue, or UDT, as William Burroughs liked to call it. UDT was briefly discussed, I think, in my novel *Turing & Burroughs*. We'll call it nurb gel here.

Loading on the SF goodness, we'll suppose there happens to be a trick for translating DNA genetics into epigenetic histone messengers and methylation activations. And this really could be feasible, as, for this translation process, there's no need not be for searching through all possibilities. It's a fairly mechanical conversion. So you can, without a huge effort, you can do some work on a sample elephant cell and learn which epigenetic changes you'd make in order to guide a generic glob of nurb gel towards growing into an elephant. And, again waving the SF wand, we might hope that with only a slight bit more effort, we can find the changes that will produce, say, a pickup-truck-like variation of an elephant—what I call an elephruk.

Therefore, we have no need for golem nurbs, even though it was a nice phrase. Everything is just a nurb. Quod erat demonstrandum.

Rethinking what I just wrote here—if my future society has successfully mastered quantum computation in the(possibly imaginary) SF sense of being able to do



multiple computations at once, then the traditional “unsolvable problems” would in fact be solvable and feasible. So you could in fact do direct tweaks on the DNA with a clear idea of what results you’d get. I think this makes more sense than going into all that epigenetic bullshit, especially given the fact that designing the appropriate epigenetic tweaks is in point of fact likely to be as unsolvable a problem as is the “retrofitting of DNA.”

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### ***Installment 2: Only One Kind of Nurb***

*[I wasn’t happy with Installment 1, as the epigenetic thing seemed too complicated. So I rewrote what I had as shown below on August 10, 2013, and I blogged it along with part of Installment 1 as “Genetic Engineering with an SF Interface.”]*

Wouldn’t it be simpler if all the nurbs had a shape-shifting quality, and all the nurbs were akin?

My original idea *was* to have just one kind of nurb. And a nurb would shapeshift by making some precise DNA change to accomplish some specified alteration to its body—let’s call this “retrofitting the DNA.” And once you retrofit a nurb’s DNA, you’d need to execute a biological refresh function, regenerating or regrowing all of the nurb’s body, as if by a web-page refresh on a computer screen. Science-fictionally, you can image the refresh happening quite rapidly, like a ripple passing across the organism’s body.

I temporarily backed off from this approach because, from a computer science standpoint, retrofitting DNA is what they call a computationally unsolvable problem, meaning that there’s no possible algorithm for automatically doing it. The cause of this unsolvability is that there’s no shortcut for predicting the effects of specific DNA change—short of putting in the change and regrowing the organism. And, if you’re trying to pick out a desired change from an ensemble of changes whose effects are unpredictable—well, then you’re looking at an unsolvable problem.

Frightened off by the bogeyman of unsolvability, I decided it would be better to shape-shift via simple, direct, mechanistic methods such as manipulating protein springs within an organism's cells and tissues. And the nurbs whom I'd altered in this fashion were the golem nurbs.

And then we'd have with two modes of replicating nurbs. A DNA-encoded nurb body can be copied by creating an egg with the same DNA. Copying a golem nurb shape involves putting some behavior patterns onto each cell of a fresh glob of nurb flesh.

But, as I say, I would prefer to merge the behaviors. I'd like to hand-code some changes onto a nurb, and then have the nurb reproduce in the old-school cloned egg fashion and have the changes come along. For this to work, I'd need for a Lamarckian inheritance process to be at work. That is, I'd want somatic changes to a nurb's body be heritable—without worrying about the “unsolvable” problem of what precise DNA changes will replicate some externally imposed change in a nurb's body.

But do remember that I'm writing a science-fiction novel here, so I don't absolutely have to turn back in the face of formal unsolvability of a problem via traditional computations. I might, for instance, get around it by invoking one of currently fashionable SF “bogosity generators,” to wit, quantum computation. In an idealized SFictional world, quantum computers can carry out vast parallel computations, and thereby finesse any trouble with formally unsolvable problems.

If I've solved the DNA retrofitting problem, then I can make an automatic process that converts high-level changes into DNA changes. It's a little like a Lamarckian inheritance process—changes to nurb's body go right down into its DNA and you can clone off nurbs with those same new properties. And quantum computation handles the thorny puzzle of figuring out what precise DNA changes will replicate some externally imposed change in a nurb's body.

As I said in Installment I, once you retrofit a nurb's DNA, you'd need to execute a biological refresh function,

regenerating or regrowing all of the nurb's body, as if by a web-page refresh on a computer screen. Science-fictionally, you can imagine the refresh happening quite rapidly, like a ripple passing across the organism's body. I'd like this.

So what we need is:

(Genemod Design) quantum computation trick for figuring out DNA changes to reflect desired high-level changes in an organism,

(Genemod Installation) an ability to remotely tweak all trillion of a nurb's cells at once,

(Bio Refresh) a built-in ability for nurbs to refresh themselves like a web page, re-biocomputing their forms from their altered DNA.

Repeating myself once again, you can do the "Genemod Design" with a quantum computer. And you might do the Genemod Installation and the Bio Refresh with a so-called tweaker virus that might be, let us say, based on the harmaline molecule—recall Terence McKenna's fantasy that his use of yage and psilocybin in concert had placed a tiny radio-receiver into each of his body's cells. I miss Terence.

Anyway, once all this working, you design a web-based tweaker interface that, experientially, feels as if you are molding your nurb with virtual hands—the interface is turning your shape requests into DNA changes and applying the changes to the target organisms' cells. And the Bio Refresh function, repeatedly invoked, gives you realtime feedback on what your DNA alterations are doing. So it's like working with paint or with clay.

SF writing advice to self: *Load on the miracles, but keep the explanations simple.* All I really want is consistency, ease and flash. Time's like this it's good not to be a real scientist.

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### ***Installment 3: A Workable Theory of Nurb Tweaks***

By August 12, 2013, I was into the fourth chapter of my revisions, and I started having some second thoughts about changing the nurb-tech model to the one I described in

Installment 2. I want the nurbs to be like animals and plants. I want the nurb gel to be simple stuff. And I think I need for the coming of qwet to make a difference in how we manipulate nurbs. In this installment, I organized my latest thoughts into a Q and A format, and I continued revising it until August 13, 2013, at that time using this as the basis for an (admittedly cryptic) blog post, “More Gibberish About Genemodding.”

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**Q:** How can the coming of qwet (that is, quantum wetware) make a difference in how we shapeshift our genetically engineered nurbs?

**A:** Thus far, all I’ve had qwet doing for us was giving us teep (or telepathy) and making us high. It would be good if qwet also had some more techie kind of effect. So let’s say that it allows you do to a vast and nontraditional computation in your head by staying in cosmic mode for a longer period of time, and thus solve the genemod design problem in your head, that is, the problem of figuring out the correct DNA changes needed to give a biotweaked organism some particular properties.

No need to explicitly call this mental process a “quantum computation,” as that phrase is a little tired. I might equally well call it a cosmic computation. Or *cosmic logic*, yeah baby. (Reminds me of a salon in Santa Cruz called “Hair Logic.” Only kind of logic you’re gonna get in Cruz...)

Anyway, once qwet gives you access to cosmic logic, you can indeed figure out a genemod design (a.k.a. a DNA retrofit) in your head. And then you use your qwet teep to do the genemod installation, that is, you put the changes down onto every DNA molecule in the nurb’s body.

By the way, a quantum scientist might object that, if teep is always oblivious, then there could a bit of a problem with teep-tweaking a nurb, as this seems to entail transmitting permanent information via the teep link, in that you are literally “writing” something into the nurb’s DNA—and this might mean you’re sending a signal faster than light. But I can somewhat undercut the objection by saying that you’re

really just convincing the nurb to *want* to look a certain way once it gets around to it, and that the effects *aren't* instantaneous. Or I might say that qwet teep works via a higher-dimensional channel to which the usual signal-speed strictures don't apply.

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**Q:** How does genemod installation work?

**A:** The basic idea is that, by using quantum entanglement, you apply a genemod to every single cell of a receptive nurb.

The genemodding process works via a cascade of quantum vortices into the target organism's cells. Like a tornado that fractally spawns sub- and subsub- and subsubsubtornadoes and so on, all the way down to a molecule-sized force fields that reach into the individual cells and alter their DNA.

In the pre-qwet days, people used a tool for this, an old-school machine. Call it a *genemodder wand*.

But now we qwetties can install genemods by looking at nurbs and getting into harmony with them. When you do this, you experience a mental image like that tornado-spawning process I just described.

To smooth the way for the installation, we'll assume that the target nurb has been made qwet. Someone might argue that this isn't necessary, given that we were able to use genemodder wands to install genemods even when the nurbs weren't qwet. But perhaps the genemodders used a great deal of energy, and in order for the low-energy emanations of a human brain to be efficacious we can require that the target nurb indeed be qwet. Makes things more symmetric between you and the nurb. You qwet a nurb and *think* things at it.

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**Q:** Who invented the technique of using cosmic logic for genemod designs and qwet teep for installing the genemods?

**A:** Junko Shimano and Loulou Sass. Junko gets most of the credit, as she has a Stanford degree in Wetware

Engineering, whereas Loulou is more like a carnie or a punk.

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**Q:** Why does *The Big Aha* involve shapeshifting our nurbs?

**A:** The idea sort of started with Loulou's Levolver game, a public realtime competition to design the coolest nurb, starting with a blank, accessible wad of nurb gel. I invented the game mainly so I could give Loulou an interesting skill. And working out its details is causing me this huge amount lot of trouble. I could just drop the Levolver game, but at this point I'd rather not.

And in any case, shapeshifting a nurb is also part of Zad's eventual artistic process. In the old days when they did DNA retrofitting with a genemodder wand, Zad didn't know how to mod a nurb. But now, in the new age of qwet teep genemodding, Zad *can* remodel a nurb—or build one from scratch out of nurb gel. And this opens up a new art career for him.

I also have a scene where Loulou does a genemod on an earring in Ned's store. And someone might do this to the flying jellyfish nurbs, later on. Or try to. Note that a nurb doesn't have to do what you tell it to. It might be in some sense "inaccessible" so that you can't possibly genemod it. See the question after next for more on this point.

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**Q:** What about the self-shapeshifting done by the mover nurbs and by Zad's nurb copy, SubZad?

**A:** True shapeshifting is always done via DNA retrofitting, that is, via genemodding. But some nurbs do enjoy a weaker type of shapeshifting—via internal springs. This isn't really so different from the fact that a human can "change shape" by flexing muscles and bending joints.

Gurky's mover nurbs are shapeshifters in that weak sense of using internal springs. Or of flipping into one of several stable modes, like a Zeeman catastrophe machines. Yes, I did have Craig Gurky turning one of movers into a

big, bouncing ball. But that's not so different from a person curling up and rolling around.

I'll call the mover nurbs "golems," as that's a colorful word, but I won't use that word for any other kinds of nurbs.

SubZad can shapeshift his arms, making them long. I was thinking of him as being like the comic book Plastic Man, or like the Barbapapas in the kids' books. But let's say we're doing this special arm-stretch via internal springs as well, akin to the stretching of an octopus's tentacles.

-----

**Q:** How do we prevent mischievous or terroristic genemods from being installed upon people, animals and nurbs?

**A:** This is crucial. It *must* be impossible to tweak the DNA of very important kinds of nurbs such as house trees. You don't want some nut to abruptly collapse a well-populated hundred-story house tree into a flat patch of lichen and thereby kill everyone in the building. You also don't want people to be tweaking your own personal DNA against your will.

So we'd need two kinds of nurbs: tweakable and nontweakable. Accessible or inaccessible. Raw nurb gel is accessible, which is why you can make it into whatever you like. Commercial nurbs—like horns of plenty or roadspiders—are generally inaccessible.

But some commercial nurbs, such as jewelry, are accessible. There can be weak access restrictions, akin to write-permissions on a computer file. Usually the write-permission on an accessible nurb is limited so that only the owners (or the owner-approved agents) can redesign them at will. Akin to sunglasses whose tint an optician can change with a special light or a chemical bath or something in his lab.

To make the write-permission be fairly secure, we can suppose that a nurb *knows* its unique owner—not as a number or a name but as a personality with an accompanying DNA signature.

Living natural organisms are by default inaccessible. Being accessible is the exception, not the rule. You can't ever make an inaccessible nurb or organism become accessible. But you can permanently make an accessible nurb become inaccessible. It's a one-way irreversible transformation. Like an amputation.

The inaccessible/accessible distinction applies whether you're trying to tweak the nurb with an older genemodder wand or with the newer process of qwet teep.

-----

**Q:** What does it mean for a nurb's DNA to be accessible? Why is it impossible to make an inaccessible nurb become accessible? Why is naturally occurring DNA always inaccessible?

**A:** A DNA molecule being accessible means it's possible to get into a quantum entanglement with it.

Accessibility is a physical property, not a software encryption trick.

I'm imagining something like a little antenna on the DNA. It's not a naturally-occurring thing. Let's think of the antenna as something four-dimensional, like the Mophone antennas in *Spaceland*.

I wouldn't want to say much about the higher-dimensionality of the tweak antennas in the novel; I don't want to push the readers too hard. But a 4D antenna *is* a reasonable concept within the framework of *The Big Aha*, where our universe is immersed in N-space, with a parallel partner universe not so far away, and with completely different island universes out there as well. So why not take advantage of this SFnal bounty?

If you try and attach one of these antennas to a normal strand of DNA, you'll end up breaking the DNA and killing the cell. You can only have the antenna if it was designed into the component base-pairs of the DNA. And it *is* fairly easy to break off the antennas without hurting the DNA, thereby making the nurb inaccessible.

-----

**Q.** What is nurb gel?



**A:** It's a wad of amoebas or maybe slime-mold cells. Nurbs. The cells have DNA antennas, that is, the nurb gel is fully accessible. Zad used some nurb gel with a color interface as paint. And you can use nurb gel as a universal modeling clay. Zad makes nurbs like the Mr. Normals and the SubZad out of it. Let's remember that Zad's abilities to design or to shapeshift nurb gel only developed after he became qwet and gained the ability to use cosmic logic to design tweaks, and gained the ability to install the genemods via qwet teep with the gel.

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**Q:** What happens when Gaven tries to turn a cattail into a hot dog?

**A:** Gaven's shoots out a qwetter beam, and thinks he can use qwet teep to install some meaty genemods onto the cattails. But you can't genemod natural organisms. They're permanently inaccessible. Their DNA has no antennas. Being more of a biz guy than a techie, Gaven didn't understand this.

Perhaps, as an unexpected and comic side-effect, Gaven's effort does take effect on some accessible nurb gel that happens to be at the picnic. Let's say Zad had brought a little cup of nurb gel in hopes of making a small painting to impress everyone. And his paint crawls out of his paint tub and is a hot dog. Mild amusement ensues.

### **August 27, 2013. Further Questions**

**Q:** Why does the spotted-gub-influenced oddball seem to be against the myoor wormholes? After all, the spotted gub knows that the myoor needs to eat some people in order to give the green gub a range of candidates for hosting her gub babies.

**A:** Let's suppose that the myoor's default behavior is to eat every single person on earth. The myoor assumes the green gub would like that. She's like a pinhead who sends a woman a thousand roses at once. And the stupid dark gub thinks this is the right way to go. Not that the dark gub has any real input in the myoor's behavior, although I suppose

he can be nudging her towards genocide. But really he's just a side-show, an obstacle in the spotted gub's path.

The spotted gub, on the other hand, feels it could be enough if the myoor harvests only two humans, with the spotted gub figuring out which ones. To this end, he's been in fact focused on Zad's parents for awhile, although this doesn't come out till the second to last chapter.

The spotted gub is opposing the dirtbubble—who is a myoor wormhole—because he wants to discourage the myoor from an eating rampage. He wants to speed the process up. He's worried that if the gub-egg-host selection drags on too long, then more formidable rivals for the green gub's hand might emerge. And he's sure that he has good judgment in wanting to pick old Lennox and Sally Plant

**Q:** Where are the gubs while the myoor-flow scene is happening at Churchill Downs?

**A:** They're watching from N-space, debating whether to use Zad's parents as gub eggs, and assessing the competency of the Plant family.

## **September 1, 2013. Timeline for my Transreal Novels**

[I blogged this note as "[Timeline for my Transreal Novels](#)" on September 1, 2013.]

As I often say, I've written many of my SF novels in what I call a "transreal" style. This means that, although the novels deal with science-fictional scenes, the characters and situations in the novels are to some extent modeled on me, the people around me, and events I've experienced in my life. I had this idea back in 1983, very early in my career. You can find "[A Transrealist Manifesto](#)" as part of my *Collected Essays*, which I recently put online.

I've always thought that, in a loose sense, my transreal novels could be thought of as parts of a single extended work, and back in 1990, I made up a table for six of the novels, trying to show how the books might fit together. This week, my friend Paul Di Filippo happened to send me a link to an article about Jack Kerouac's thirteen-novel

cycle, the *Duluoz Legend*. So I made up a new table, arranging it so that The Big Aha comes in as the last book in the “*Ruduoꝛ Legend*.”

Book Title	“My” Name	Period of My Life	Life Activities
Frek and the Elixir	Frek Huggins	1956 - 59	Boyhood in Louisville
The Secret of Life	Conrad Bunger	1963 - 67	College, engagement
Spacetime Donuts	Vernor Maxwell	1968	Being a hippie
Master of Space and Time	Joe Fletcher	1969	Newlywed , grad school
Mathematicians in Love	Bela Kis	1972	Getting a Ph. D. in math
White Light	Felix Rayman	1972 - 78	Math professor at Geneseo
The Sex Sphere	Alwin Bitter	1978 - 80	On a grant in Heidelberg
The Hollow Earth	Mason Reynolds	1984 - 86	Lynchburg, Virginia
Hacker and the Ants	Jerzy Rugby	1989 - 91	Programming at Autodesk
Spaceland	Joe Cube	1991 - 94	The Silicon Valley scene
Saucer Wisdom	Rudy Rucker	1995 - 97	Being a writer
Jim and the Flims	Jim Oster	2008	Brain hemorrhage, near death
The Big Aha	Lennox Plant	2009 - 12	Remembering Louisville

**Table 3: Transreal Timeline**

Some of the correspondences are more of a stretch than others. And some of the novels incorporate elements from more than one period of my life, and could have been positioned at different points on the timeline. When I had a choice, I tried to order the books in what seemed to make for the best flow. Also I wanted to avoid having several books match the same time period of my life.

In particular, I could match *The Big Aha* to Zad Plant, representing my life from about 1960 - 1983. Instead I’m matching it to Lennox Plant, whose life matches mine over

the last few years—not in the sense of me leaving my wife, but in the sense of me being a fairly calm old artist.

I chose not to include my six specifically cyberpunk novels in the transreal timeline table. These are the four *Ware* novels, and the pair *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*. My cyberpunk novels do include characters and situations drawn from my life, but matching them up seems like too much trouble, also it makes the table too complicated.

I also left out my beatnik SF novel *Turing & Burroughs*, and my historical *As Above, So Below: Peter Bruegel*. These novels are, at least in a fanciful sense, biographies, and thus are less readily seen as transreal, although there are, as always, transreal elements. In some sense my versions of Bruegel, Turing, and Burroughs are all images of myself.

### September 3, 2013. Done.

I marked up and typed in all my corrections to Draft 1, and rewrote the last two pages another six or seven times yesterday so that I'm finally happy with the flow. Writing this novel has been more work than I remembered. Every stage of it. I've heard women say things like that about pregnancy—if you didn't forget how hard it was, you might not do it again.

I'm not even going to *think* about starting another novel until next fall. At least that's what I say today.

I'm mailing this second and in fact final draft off to Lisa G. today for copy-editing and proofing. She's a pro SF writer who also freelances as an editor for houses like Tor. Just saw her a couple of weeks ago at an SF gathering in Oakland.

I'll do a few more small corrections after Lisa looks it over; I'm sure she'll find some glitches. But at this point I can say that I'm done, and I'll wind up these notes.

Thinking back, it was to some extent Craddock's *Be Not Content* that got me started on this novel. I wanted to do a future version of a psychedelic revolution. So today I

started thinking I should include Craddock in the dedication.

And, at least for me, a really big theme in the novel is the way Zad sees his parents die. So my parents go into the dedication. And of course Louisville.

*Dedication: For Louisville, my Parents, and William J. Craddock.* And, I think, Sylvia, too.

I feel very good about *The Big Aha*. It's been fun. I'll miss the characters, especially Carlo, Reba, Stanky, Jephtha and gubs. No need to miss Zad, since I'm him, nor miss Jane, as I live with her.

## Basics

### Summaries of the Novel

*[Written January 23, 2013, halfway through the book.]*

We're in a mid-future world where biotweaked plants and animals have replaced machines. Our hero Zad Plant is an artist who runs a gallery in Louisville, Kentucky, selling artistically tweaked bio devices.

Louisville being a relatively small town, Zad has a long history with everyone he encounters. He's plagued by a wide variety of romantic entanglements, including a possible break-up with his wife.

One of Zad's friends invents a biotweak called "quantum wetware," which gives you the ability to keep your mind in merged or cosmic state for a longer period of time. This leads to a non-drug-based psychedelic revolution—as well as an odd form of telepathy.

Problems set in when Zad learns that the use of quantum wetware is opening us up to unfriendly creatures in a parallel reality called fairyland. The fairyland creatures kidnap Zad, his girlfriend and his wife. It's up to them to fight their way back—and to reach a final rapprochement.

*[From my Locus interview, taped on May 1, 2013, and published in the June, 2013 issue.]*

*The Big Aha* is set in Louisville, Kentucky, where I grew up, and I'm enjoying that. If you stay in Louisville, then all the people around you are people you've known your whole life, and you can pretty much say anything to them. Nobody cares. The book stars a 30ish man, Zad, and his wife, Jane. They're having marital problems. Zad is an artist, and Jane has a company that does advertising and public relations.

In *The Big Aha*, I wanted to have a book where the technology is all live things. I don't think it's unreasonable to suppose that in a century or so, lots of our devices won't be manufactured machines anymore. They could be plants and animals that have been designed to behave in ways that we consider useful. Even things like a knife or a glass, it's easy enough to imagine plants growing such things for us. Primitive peoples drink out of coconut shells, but we could tweak it so it's more what we like. And for communication devices, there's all this interest in squid skin—that would be a great visual display. Electric eels send out electromagnetic pulses, so that could be the basis of wireless communication. Instead of a car you have a road spider, and you ride on its back.

I wanted to set a story in a biotech world where it's like the 1960s Summer of Love, and people are having ecstatic experiences. But I didn't want it to be based on drugs. I decided to use quantum mechanics. Something about quantum mechanics that interests me is there are two modes in quantum mechanics. You can think of the world as evolving in a smooth wavelike pattern, but then as soon as you start measuring things, you find a choppy discrete pattern. It's what they call the quantum collapse, the collapse of the wave function. In my own mind, I feel like there's a pulse, where I'll sort of merge into the place around me and then snap back. In my novel, I call these the cosmic mode and the robotic mode. It's almost like sonar -- you ping out with the cosmic mode and you pull back with the robotic mode.

The gimmick in *The Big Aha* is that people get “quantum wetware.” And they can consciously control how rapidly

they do the oscillations between the cosmic mode and robotic mode. My characters are party people and artists, so they just wedge their minds open to the cosmic, and they're cosmic all the time.

Then, of course, you always need something bad to happen in a novel. It's always good to have an alien invasion. So we have this monster with things like mouths sticking into our world from another dimension, and they're eating people. Just for kicks, I'm calling the monster's world Fairyland, and it has creatures a bit like those from our fairy tales.

My heroes Zad and Jane go to the other world to do battle with the monster—and it follows them back to Louisville, and there's a showdown at the Churchill Downs racetrack. The book is called *The Big Aha* because people always have the dream of reaching a Big Aha, an ultimate vision, a deep understanding. And they do reach a Big Aha at the end, in a Zen kind of way.

*[Written May 20, 2013, after Chapter 12]*

*The Big Aha* is set in Louisville, Kentucky, late in the 21st Century, and it stars a 30ish man and his temporarily estranged wife. Biotech has replaced machines. People have found a tweak called "quantum wetware" that lets them get into a cosmic mental state that's a bit like an acid trip, and the tweak also gives you telepathy, although you can't remember any details of your teep sessions. We have a 1960s-style psychedelic revolution for awhile, and then an alien from a parallel world called Fairyland starts reaching over to our world and swallowing people. My heroes go to the other world and do battle with the monster. And by the end, all is well.

## Word Count

Here's the recent counts of words per book.

*The Hacker And The Ants* 92,000, *Freeware* 97,000, *Saucer Wisdom* 85,000, *Realware* 105,000, *Bruegel* 138,000, *Spaceland* 91,000, *Frek and the Elixir* 163,000, *The Lifebox, the Seashell and the Soul* 158,000,

*Mathematicians in Love* 110,000, *Mad Professor* 87,000, *Postsingular* 89,100, *Hylozoic* 91,000, *Nested Scrolls* 95,000, *Jim and the Flims* 90,200, *Turing & Burroughs* 85,000.

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In the table below, the rows represent single chapters, and the columns are pretty well explained by their titles.

I have the “Final Chap words” column because, as time goes by, the actual world-count of a given chapter generally grows past what it was on the day when I first “finished” the chapter. And I find it useful to compare my chapter lengths, whether to keep them at about the same size as each other, or to occasionally split an overly long chapter in two.

I have some spreadsheet-type formulae embedded in the last two columns to compute the words per day and to estimate how many days remain until completion. From time to time I change what I think the final word count will/should be, and this changes my days-till-completion estimates

The “Total days writing” number is measured as the number of days on the project, starting with January 16, 2012, when I typed my first page. But I’m discounting the fallow gap from March 1, 2012 to September 30, 2012.



Date I finish Chap 1st draft	Chap # and Name	Total book words	Days in	Final chap words [Avg 7263]	Avg wrds / day	Days till 100K wrds
Jan 31, '12	1. Qwet Rat	4804	16	6217	300	317
Feb 15, '12	2. The Coming of the Nurbs	10772	31	6623	347	257
Oct 3, '12	3. Loofy Picnic	14810	35	6995	423	201
Nov 9, '12	4. Oblivious Teep	23972	71	7952	338	225
Nov 26, '12	5. Scene of the Crime	31327	88	7478	356	193
Dec 13, '12	6. Loulou in the Oddball	38073	105	8545	363	171
Jan 10, '13	7. Flying Jellyfish	45007	133	7807	338	163
Mar 2, '13	8. Funhouse	55583	184	7484	302	147
Mar 28, '13	9. Spreading Qwet	63345	210	8499	302	121
Apr 18, '13	Old 10. Nurb Art (Merge to 9 and 10)	71564	231	0	310	92
Apr 28, '13	10. Weezie's Party	75000	241	8604	311	80
May 8, '13	11. Fairyland	79884	251	7607	318	63
May 23, 13	12. Spotted Gub	88048	266	7075	331	36
July 7, '13	13. Churchill Downs	95654	311	6735	308	14
July 18, '13	14. Big Aha	100020	322	4064	311	0

**Table 4: Word Count**

*September 3, 2012.* I'm coming out of a long spell of not writing on the book. I was working on getting my Transreal Books publishing business working. At this point I've written only two chapters. Looks like I'm writing five-thousand-word chapters, although there's no need for all chapters to have the same length. For 85 K words, I'd need about 17 chapters, maybe 18 or 20 if I'm mixing in some shorter ones.

*October 4, 2012.* I finished a short version of Chapter 3 yesterday, after starting up again around September 30 and writing like mad for four days. I hadn't written anything new on the book since about March 1, 2012. Call it a seven month break, and round that to 210 fallow days. I'll subtract

that number from the “Total days writing” figure in column four.

*November 8, 2012.* Ended Chapter 4 today. Had a slow period in mid October, thanks to a hip operation, but now I’m going good. Having fun with the characters. I did a lot of additions and revisions on the earlier chaps, and it looks like I might be averaging a little more than six thousand words per chap. So then I can hit 85K or 90K with sixteen chaps. I’d like that number, sixteen. It’s a hypercube, that is,  $2^4$ . The book could even break into four parts of four chapters each, which would be nice.

*January 9, 2013.* Almost done with Chapter 7, and I’ll have better than 45K words. So now I’m thinking I can get by with fourteen chapters. In other words, I’m half done. At my present rate, I could finish the first draft by May or June, 2013. (Even though it took me a whole year to get this far. Keep in mind that in 2012, I used up seven months with getting off the ground with my self-publishing, doing very little writing during this time at all.)

*March 3, 2013.* Done with Chapter 8, with 56,000 words. I’m averaging about 7,000 words a chapter at this point, so I can write thirteen chapters and get off the boat with 91,000 or

*March 23, 2013.* I’ve been thickening up the earlier chapters, and I’m averaging more like 7,100 words a chapter now, so I could write 12 chaps and have 8,500 words. 13 chaps would make 92,000 words. *[Later I split up some chapters so I had more chapters with fewer words each.]* In the oh-please-let-it-be-over mental framework, I like the idea of 12 chaps and an 85,000 word first draft. I can see a really clear outline for a 12-chapter ending. And probably in the revisions it’ll bulk up to 90,000 words anyway. Of course if the story really starts opening up, maybe even go for 14 chaps and 100,000 words. That’s more in the tell-a-big-tale mind set. We’ll see what happens. I’d like to avoid rushing the ending like I sometimes do.

*March 29, 2013.* I think I have too much story to fit into 12 chaps, so I'll go for 13 chaps and a 90,000 word first draft.

*April 10, 2013.* Today I'm liking the 12 chapter story pattern again, and that drives me back to 85,000 words.

*April 23, 2013.* I've figured out enough action for 13 chapters, so I'm still looking at 90,000 words, or a couple of thousand more, we'll see. The last chapter might be short. I was fantasizing about expanding the impending adventures in Fairyland, and bulking the book up to a second volume, or at least to 120K words, but, no no no, I really do want to finish it soon, and I don't want a sequel hanging over my head. Sure, I won't block off the possibility of a sequel, but I want to wrap up this book nice and tight.

*May 27, 2013.* I'm done with Chapter 12 at 88K, and I have plenty of stuff for Chapter 13, so the end target is a solid 95K. I'm about to leave for a week's vacation with the family in Hawaii, so I probably won't finish off the book till June.

*July 5, 2013.* Nearly done. I think we'll go to 97K or a bit more. I got worried about having some extra long chapters near the end, and I was fooling around with the chapter divisions today, see more about this in my writing notes entry, July 5, 2013, Fooling With the Chapter Breaks. I don't think all the chapters are going to be the same length in any case, but I guess that's okay.

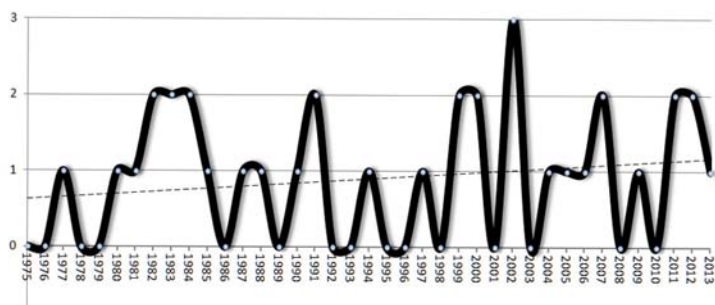
*July 11, 2013.* I changed my estimate of the final length to 100K in the table. So I think that means two more weeks, or maybe a month, taking into account that we're planning a one-week road-trip about ten days from now. Or maybe just a week. I tend to write fast when I'm closing in on the end.

*August 27, 2013.* While correcting the first draft, I decided I didn't like the chapter breaks, and changed them again. I had a "Old 10: Nurb Art" and I shared that material between the "New 9: Spreading Qwet" and "New 10: Weezie's Party" chapters, and I moved the very end of "Weezie's Party" into the "New 11: Fairyland" chapter. This makes New 9 and New 10 be about 8,500 words long

apiece, substantially longer than the average of about 7,000 for the other chapters. But I think this works as there's such a rush of rising action in the part of the book. I might reorder this again. When it's finally done, I'll go through these Notes and match the chapter references to the reality of the final book—I already did this when I reordered some chapters before. This time I'll wait on the retroactive matching process until I'm quite sure I have the final line-up.

*September 3, 2013.* I finished the final draft at 101,8500 words. Fourteen chapters, average chapter length, 7,250. Some variance in lengths: one 4K, two 6K and two 8K.

## Publication Rate



**Table 5: Books Per Year**

[I made this chart from an Excel file called BooksPerYear.xlsx, doing a screen copy and pasting it into PhotoShop. I had versions of this chart in *Notes for Hylozoic* and *Notes for Jim and the Flims*.]

The dark heavy line is just a smoothed off line through the data points.

The “linear trend line” (the nearly level dashed line across the lower part of the graph) is slightly slanting up, which is good.

Interesting chart—at least to me. I see a big burst in the early years; that’s when I was freelancing in downtown Lynchburg; I had two books a year for three years in a row.

Things slid back when I started teaching at SJSU in 1986, and I was in a trough in the mid-nineties. Intermission.

In 1996, I got a second wind, which shows up in the publications starting 1999. 2002 was crazy, with the historical Brugel novel *As Above, So Below*, the SF novel *Spaceland*, and the textbook *Software Engineering and Computer Games* all in one year.

Retiring from teaching in 2004 helped me keep up the pace. Regarding the more recent years, in 2011, I had a doubleheader with *Jim and the Flims* and *Nested Scrolls*. And in 2012 I switched to publishing myself under my Transreal books aegis. In 2012 I published my novel *Turing & Burroughs* and my art book *Better Worlds*. (I also issued Transreal Books volumes of *Collected Essays* and *Complete Stories* in 2012, but I won't count those in this table.)

I'm making this table as if *The Big Aha* will appear from Transreal Books in 2013 although in fact I may delay publication till January 15, 2014—mainly to give reviewers a little more lead time.

Going with a 2013 pub date for *The Big Aha*, this would mean I've published eleven books in the last ten years, counting the art book. Seems like I'm not done yet.

## Title

I'm thinking about a quantum-tantra intelligence amplification technique leading to a wacky-matter scenario with people locally tweaking the laws of physics. And then I might get into a time-crawler notion.

So I had this idea for a baroque and overly perky title: *Quantum Tantra, Wacky Matter, and the Time Fan*.

And then I dialed it back to *Quantum Tantra*. As I'll discuss later in these notes, "quantum tantra" is a phrase that my unconventional-science friend Nick Herbert likes to use. But I'm not sure I want "tantra" in my book title. Quantum Zap. Quantum Aha. Actually I'm not so crazy about the word "quantum" either. The mechanism involved can in fact be Nick's quantum tantra—he uses it in a hylozoic sense of getting into telepathic contact with the

matter and spacetime in your vicinity, and of being able to exercise some amount of telekinesis. But I'd like a hipper name for this exalted SFictional state of mind. And that name could be the title.

Sideways Thought. Big Head. Gong. Wide Load. Everything At Once. Fat Freddie's Qat? Naw. Today's winner is...

*The Big Aha.*

Is this a new title? Well, there *is* a 2006 business book, *The Big AHA!: Breakthroughs in Resolving and Preventing Workplace Conflict*, by Bill Wiersma (Ravel Media). I don't see this as a crippling overlap, though.

Conceivably I could give my book a subtitle like *The Big Aha: a Novel of the Future*. God forbid I should refer to it as science fiction!

## Archetype

*First take.*

A young guy meets a girl. He discovers a fabulous secret. He loses the girl. He fights a battle. He gets the girl back.

*Second take.*

A man loses his wife. He meets a new girl. He discovers a fabulous secret. He loses the new girl. He fights a battle. He gets his wife back.

## Point of View and Tense

The familiar POV issue once again. I was, without thinking about it very much, going to write it from the 3rd person POV of a woman, telling about a weird man she knows. But my woman-POV books haven't really done that well—I'm thinking of *Realware* and *Hylozoic*, if memory serves. Most of the people reading my books are youngish guys.

Although I was been reflexively thinking of a 3rd person POV, it may be that, generally, the 1st person has more appeal. *Spaceland* and *Mathematicians in Love* are 1st person. Of course *Jim and the Flims* is 1st person as well,

and I doubt that it's doing very well. But certainly 1st person is easy to write. *Turing & Burroughs* is 3rd person, so I could say I deserve a relaxing 1st person book now.

On the other hand, if my main character were young, then 1st person would be a little too YA. But he's not young, he's probably about thirty.

\*\*\*

I could maybe do a woman character's first person tale, I've never done that. Could be that guys would like that. It can be oddly titillating reading a first-person woman's viewpoint book. I think of the popular *Lara Croft* videogame series, where the gamer guys are forever standing a foot behind Lara's head. Or it can be comic, here I think of Kingsley Amis's novel, *Take a Girl Like You*, which uses an innocent but perceptive young woman's POV with satiric effect.

This said, I'm not sure I want to go with the woman POV. I want to have my main character be not all that bright, and if I have this character be a woman, then suddenly I look sexist. But if my character's a somewhat thick-headed man, there's no problem. Odd, that.

\*\*\*

Anyway, I'm leaning towards 3rd person with a male lead. I see my character as being a twenty-year-old guy, and an old man like me writing a first-person novel about a twenty-year-old feels cheesy, like I'm trying too hard. And like I'm writing a young-adult book. Better to keep my old man status and write in third person.

Might it be that a 3rd person POV can feel a little condescending or paternalistic. Maybe *Frek and the Elixir* had that quality? Oh, I don't really think so. It's fine to have a wise old omniscient narrator, just so the narrator isn't sententious.

Yeah, I think I'm in the mood for 3rd person.

\*\*\*

Here's a subtler issue if you do 3rd person. Do you stick to one person only, or do see into other people's heads as well. I've done this in the past by rotating from one person

to the next, chapter by chapter. It's trickier to shift within a chapter or even within a scene. One hears warnings about "drifting point of view." But it could be an interesting challenge to try and make it work. The idea would be not to overdo it.

\*\*\*

How about the tense? Could I write a book in the present tense? I've never managed to get away with that. I wanted to write my Bruegel novel in third-person present-tense, but Dave Hartwell wouldn't let me. But maybe this time I could. It becomes an on-going tall tale. Pynchon uses this in many of his books. You're watching a movie. I wonder if I could manage it this time. It would set up an interesting technical challenge for me. Something new.

Re. present tense narration, I just finished a delightful short novel by Penelope Lively, *How It All Began*. The POV is a rotating 3rd-person close-up. The book's broken into scenes separated by extra line spaces. Perhaps a quarter or a third of the scenes are in the present tense, the others in the past tense. I can't quite distinguish how she decided which scenes get present tense. Certainly the inner monologue ones. But others as well.

\*\*\*

So —I'm writing a fourth Silicon Valley novel. But this one is set somewhat further into the future. And the POV and tense are different than in the first three.

1: *Hacker*, 2: *Spaceland*, 3: *Mathematicians in Love*, 4: *The Big Aha*.

1. *Hacker*. ~2010. First person, past tense, smart married guy.

2. *Spaceland*. ~2000. First person, past tense, average guy, married. Breaks up, gets back together.

3. *Mathematicians in Love*. ~2020. First person, past tense, smart guy, single. Genius pal. Gets girl, loses girl, gets girl.

4. *Big Aha*. ~2080. Third person, present tense, young guy, naive, not scientific, single, with a genius uncle. Gets girl, loses girl, gets girl.



\*\*\*

Now that I started the book, turns out it's first person male, past tense, set in Louisville. Feels easy this way.

## Timeline

As for place, I'll set it in Louisville, Kentucky.

\*\*\*

For the year, I like the year 2080. I need to be fare enough into the future that biotech has really taken hold. In Frek, I pushed this even back to the year 3000, a thousand years from now. But tech has a way of coming on much faster than you'd expect. So I'm going to set this book only sixty-five years from now.

If I finish this novel, it's likely to be published in 2015 . And I like this analogy:

*2080 is to 2015 as 2015 is to 1950*

I see 1950 as a year when computers barely existed. They weren't making any personal computers at all. And now, 65 years later, personal computing devices are going hot and heavy, everywhere in sight. And nobody uses a gear-based typewriter or cash register anymore. Analogously, in the present day, call it 2015, biotech barely exists, and there's not biodevices that people can buy. But in 65 years they'll be everywhere, wiping out the old chip computers.

By the way, here's the calendar for 2080.

Note, however, that I don't plan to tell the readers that it's 2080. Never a good idea to put an expiration date on your SF novel.

\*\*\*

Zad is 30.

2050 Zad is born

2068 Zad 18, starts working for Dad. Gaven designing nurbs in Alphabet City.

2071 Zad 21, takes up nurb gel.

2071-2078 Zad has successful art career

2072 Ice Day. Greenland melts, New York's Alphabet City is inundated.

2076. Jane finds the curio ball on Alphabet City Beach.

2078-2080 Zad just running the Live Art store

2080 *The Big Aha* begins

\*\*\*

What month? I'll make it September. Possibly I can have the action elapse over only a couple of months.

\*\*\*

What day of the week for Chapter 1 and 3? And Chapter 4 is the next day. Say we start on a Friday, September 20, 2080.

Zad moved out from Jane's apartment in March, 2080.

\*\*\*

How about the phase of the moon? I found that in a different online calendar.

We have a waxing gibbous moon on September 25, 2013, with the full moon coming on Sept 28. I can't quickly find a moonrise calendar, but a full moon rises at sunset, and the waxing gibbous moon rises a bit before sunset and sets a bit before sunrise. So at three am on the night of Sept 28/29, we'll have a gibbous moon low in the west.

\*\*\*

***Saturday, Sept 21, 2080.***

9 am. Reba buys Slygro stock from Junko.

10 am. Zad and Loulou wake up.

11 am. Zad phones Jane.

11:15 am. Reba and Carlo steal Gaven's qwetter.

11:30 am. Joey breaks out of the clinic.

Noon. Zad and Loulou steal Jane's curio.

12:15 pm. Reba and Carlo use the qwetter on Ned White.

12:30 pm. Zad and Loulou back at the store.

1:00 pm. Reba and Carlo at Zad's store. Loulou leaves.

1:15 pm. Jane phones Zad about the missing curio.

1:30 pm. Loulou kills Gaven.

2:00 pm. Zad finds Gaven dead.

4:00 pm. Zad gets out on bail.

5:00 pm. Zad at his parents' house.

7:00 pm. Zad meets Joey at his house.

8:00 pm. They go to the barn and meet Dad.

9:00 pm. They go to sleep.

***Sunday, Sept 22, 2080.***

8:00 am. They wake up and leave Mom alone.

9:00 am. At the Roller mansion.

Big scene with the flying house jellies.

Clean the Roller house and sleep there.

Dad sees oddball in the night.

***Monday, Sept 23, 2080.***

Zad breaks up with Loulou.

Zad, Joey and Loulou go to Gaven's house.

Junko places her ad for people wanting qwet.

Zad has his nighttime encounter of the oddball and teeps with spotted gub.

***Tuesday, Sept 24, 2080***

The Funhouse gang qwets the world in the morning.

Elephruk sucked into the myoor's darkstar wormhole.

Orgy party that night. The myoor's wormholes attack.

Jane and Zad go through the oddball to Fairyland.

Zad and Jane talk to Stanky and Jeptha, spend the night in Fairyland

***Wednesday, Sept 25, 2080***

Morning: Zad in the gnomes' cave in Fairyland. Dark gub steals the oddball.

Noon: Zad and Jane back to Earth inside the spotted gub.

Afternoon: At Craig Gurky's making Mr. Normals.

Evening: Cosmic Flip Trip scene, they pull the myoor down to Earth.

Talking in the dark at Churchill Downs stands. Waxing gibbous moon.

***Thursday, Sept 26, 2080***

Dawn: Gnomes revive Whit and Gaven, kidnap Jane.

Spotted gub kills Whit for good, gnomes and Gaven through oddball to Fairyland.

Mom and Dad become gub blanks inside the myoor.

Spotted gub fertilizes the two blanks. All the mummified people are released.

Evening: Jane and Zad fuck.

***Christmas Day, Wednesday, Dec 25, 2080.***

The baby gubs are born. The myoor flies away. Jane is three months pregnant. They're living on Zad's farm.

**Words**

**nurb.** A genomically tweaked plant or animal, that is, a bioengineered special-purpose organism. "Nurb" is a word I learned at Autodesk—among certain adepts it's used to mean a type of computer graphical curve, a "non-uniform rational basis spline." Kind of irrelevant, but has a nice, cozy sound. I also considered reusing "kritter," from *Frek and the Elixir*. It might be okay to overlap *Frek*. But better to have a clean separation of the universe and use a new word. I want the freedom to let *The Big Aha* end up in a place that wouldn't work as a prequel to *Frek*.

**web.** Do they still call it that? I guess so. It's a good word. And consider my analogy 2080 : 2015 :: 2015 : 1950. In 1950 people spoke of "broadcasting networks," and in 2015 they did too, although with less conviction. Perhaps there's a new paradigm that I need to think of.

**Frek and the Elixir words**

gaud. cool, reckless.  
gaussy. Incredible.  
geevey. Crummy, crappy, perverted.  
geevin. fuckin', freakin'.  
gitgo. lively  
glatt. very nice, satisfying.  
glawk. talk, hang out, goof off together .  
glozy. Cozy, peaceful, bland.  
glug. drink.  
glypher. info slug.  
godzoon. exceptional.  
goggy. wild wacky gnarly. good.  
gollywog. crazy, nutty.  
gonegone. drunk, zonked.  
googly. wacky.  
govvy. pertaining to Gov.

grexes. slug like things.  
grinskin. skinny person who smiles a lot.  
grobread. like Wonder Bread.  
guddly. cuddly.  
gump. crippled bum.  
gumpy. gimpy  
gundo. a lot.  
gurp. a stupid person.  
gurpy. Stupid.  
gleep. creep.

\*\*\*

fubbed. Messed up.  
kac. Shit.  
suckapillar. Too silly? No, it's fun. Word for the vacuum cleaner beast.  
shecked-out. Crazy.  
unny. creepy, uncanny.  
yaya. yeah.  
yubba. hello.  
zook. Dummy.  
\*\*\* Not used in Frek  
crod. Jerk.  
glary. bright  
klaau. Sort of like shit.

## Kinds of Nurbs

### **Possible names for house nurbs**

housetree, housepod, grown home, homedome, green van, popper

### ***Frek and the Elixir nurbs***

Aircoral, angelwing, anyfruit, anymeat, artigrow, bindmoss, cowloon, elephruk, grobread, mapine, matchbud, pickerhand, please plant, rugmoss, suckapillar, turkle, turmite, watchbird, webgun.

### **New nurbs**

Bouquet reef

Lawn horse

Gnomers

Dreamchairs  
China bush  
Silver plant  
Ham plant  
Magic table (serves food)  
Biscuit tree.  
popover puffball

## Names

### Hero: Zad Plant

Last name: I like “Plant” because his timeline (and everyone else’s) is a twining vine. And I always liked that Led Zep name, Robert Plant. When I first heard this name, I was, like, “How can he be named *Plant*? What an outrage.”

First name: Morton. Morton Throck. Martin. Joe Plant. Ken Plant. Kenny Plant. Martin Plant. Maarten Plant. Marty Plant. Don’t like “Marty.” Morton Plant. Mort Plant. Morty? I don’t like that nickname at all. Mort is Death. Mort Plant is Burial. Also it’s a dyad Die/Grow. Also an angle that he’s a “plant” among us. Not a regular person. That’s all fine.

But can I seriously have a character called Morton? It’s maybe a little comical or cartoony. Morton morphs to Moron. Bad complexion and a shock of carrot blonde hair. Try again. Alex. Alec. Aleck. Al. Gavin. Mac. Alex. Alex is tidy. A-lex suggests “lawless” and “illiterate,” and those are good. I can live with Alex. Alex Plant.

But, no, after writing a couple of pages, I find that Alex seems too generic. I’ll use Morton after all.

After four chapters I had a feel that Morton is just too nerdy of a name. I thought of Zack, and then I decided to try Zad, a name that I found in William J. Craddock’s novel, *Be Not Content*. I kind of like that one. There was a wild guy in high-school named Rad.

### Heroine: Loulou Sabado

Last name: Szasz. Szasz is an actual Hungarian name. I like the mirroring of S and Z. A guy named Szasz wrote some books arguing that there’s no such thing as mental

illness. But I'm not going to get into that at all. Or just use Sass? Maybe that telegraphs her personality too much.

First name: Chantal. I've always liked the French name Chantal, I think of someone softly chanting. Most Americans won't know this name, though, and will mispronounce it.

Lulu. I like the name Lulu. "Whatever Lulu wants, Lulu gets." Old torch song. Or, better, I'll go with Loulou. It's French and it looks cool. This morning, like a sign from the Muse, I saw the name of Loulou de la Falaise in the Sunday paper. This Loulou was a French socialite, and a fashion designer who worked with Yves St. Laurent. An *haute bohémienne*. Loulou is a nickname for Louise. Loulou Cliff. Loulou Szabo. Loulou Szas. Loulou Sass. Loulou Smith, like Patti Smith. Loulou Szasz.

And later I switched to Sabado for the last name, I prefer having her be Latina.

**Mentor: Carlo Solera**

First name: Klaus, sounds hard. Karl was a name in *Naked Lunch*. Or maybe Carlo. Franz? Nick is Old Nick, is Satan. Soften the K and get Carl. Or Carlo. I think Carlo is even better, it's more like something people would say.

Last name: Ouspensky. Variants: Uspensky, Uspenski. P. D. Ouspensky is the author of the mystical and esoteric *Tertium Organum*, and of the eternal-return novel, *The Strange Life of Ivan Osakin*. Maybe this is trying too hard. If I give Loulou an East European name like Szabo, it's a better balance if the Wanderer isn't Uspenski. Latino, Mediterranean, Dutch, Scandinavian, Chinese, African, Middle Eastern?

Klaus Kinski. Klaus Kahn. Kris Kringle. Klaus Nord. Klaus Noord. Klaus Pelikaan. I want Carl to be the brother of Alex's mother, whom I want to call Reba, which is kind of a Southern or Texan name, a nickname for Rebecca. We could suppose that that this family is part Mexican, so I could use a Latino sounding last name. I like something to do with the sun. Solano. Solera. Carl Solera.

But if Loulou is Latina, maybe it's too much if Carlo is too? Oh well, Latino is the coming population wave.

**Animal Helper: Skungy the Rat**

A talking mouse or rat. Reepicheep. Ratatouille. I need a new name.

Moose. I think of Pynchon's phrase, "his mind filled with suspicions, mean and cringing as rats." Cringer. Skunger. Bite Me. Nipper. Claw. Skungy. Nice slang word that means gross, skeevy, foul, smelly, rank, crummy.

## Chapter Outlines

*In hopes of getting a new texture for The Big Aha. I initially planned not to use an in-advance plot outline, and to let the book simply emerge in a fairly spontaneous way. I wrote Chapters 1 - 4 without any formal, separate outlines at all—although I was working out plans in my "Writing Journal" entries as I went along. So the "outlines" of Chapters 1 and 2 shown below written after I wrote those chapters. And the "outline" for Chapters 3 and 4 is only a vague plan—which I didn't use.*

### Chapter 1. After The Fact Outline. Skungy.

The setting is downtown Louisville, the old part, with some buildings replaced by housetrees. 2080, although I don't mention the year number. Our hero is Zad Plant, about thirty-seven. He graduated from high-school, but dropped out of college to be a painter, using slime-mold paint. He runs an boutique shop that sells artistic "nurbs," which are biotweaked gadgets. Zad's wealthy wife Jane recently threw him out of their luxurious condo. Zad lives in the back of his shop. As a hobby he's working on an old car, installing an undulating snail-foot in place of wheels.

Zad's high-school friend Carlo Solera is a marketing guy at Slygro, a new biotech company started by the genius Gaven Graber. Carlo is a wise-ass. He wants Zad to start distributing a new smart quantum wetware rat that Gaven's designed.



The rat is a strong character, Zad names him Skungy. Skungy's quantum wetware gives him an ability to connect with people at a deep level.

## **Chapter 2. After The Fact Outline. The Roadspider.**

Flash back through Zad's life, the coming of the nurbs, Zad's evolution as an artist, and his experiences with Jane. Zad gets an early nurb vehicle called a roadspider—and it kills a thoroughbred horse on Zad's patron's farm.

## **Chapter 3 & Chapter 4. Unused Ideas for an Outline.**

Spreading the word of Big Aha. The wacky matter shtick emerges. Someone is about to kill Zad. He uses the Big Aha, and he and Loulou go invisible like Carlo, on the Higher Plane. Finally they connect with Carlo, then come back to Earth. And then there's another crisis. Which they solve.

## **Chapters 5 - 7. No Outlines**

*I did write something like an outline for Chapter 5 & Chapter 6 in my November 13, 2013, entry, "Plans for Chapter 5 and Beyond."*

*I winged Chapter 7, and then when I was trying to start Chapter 8, on February 3, 2013, I was floundering and a lost, and I went back to my former practice of outlining chapters before I wrote them, breaking each outline in a series of scenes.*

*In each of the outlines for chapters 8 - 15 shown below, I continued editing and altering the outlines as I pondered the issues and began writing the chapters. To make the outline material more interesting and fresh, I have avoided re-editing the outlines to the point of being precise matches for the scenarios that they eventually led to. So not everything you'll see in this partial outline is an exact match for what "actually happens" in the novel.*

*The following chapter outlines were written during February - July, 2013, with me fleshing out given chapter outline only shortly before I started the corresponding chapter. Sometimes I moved outlined scenes from one chapter to the next, and I think once I split a chapter in two.*

## **Chapter 8 Outline. Funhouse**

*Initially I had five more scenes here than would fit into Chapter 8, and on March 3, 2013, I moved the extra scenes into an Outline Of Chapter 9, glad to have seed-corn for another chapter.*

(Overview) Cast of characters: Zad, Joey and Loulou, Junko, Dad and Weezie, Carlo and Reba, Kenny and Kristo, and, in the background, Whit Heyburn and dear Jane. Maybe some walk-on party animals as the movement grows. The qwetties call the Roller mansion the Funhouse. One week of activity feels like a year.

(1) Carlo gets fully into the consciousness of a housefly, absent-mindedly slaps it and stuns it when it crawls into his nose, he freaks out, spends a few minutes as a dead fly lying on his back with his arms and legs in the air. Meanwhile the fly is acting like Carlo, running around the floor shrieking, "Save me! Save me!" in a high, horrible little voice. (Lifted from the original version of *The Fly*.) Carlo's personality oozes back when Reba drizzles honey onto him. They go up to bed.

(2) As part of a three-way sex arrangement, Loulou shows Zad and Joey how to make themselves invisible (mainly to each other in bed).

(3) Weezie was eavesdropping via teep when Loulou taught Zad and Joey about invisibility. And tried to use it as a form of plastic surgery—to erase her wattles. She screws it up and gets stuck for a day in a form of partial visibility where you can only see about ten percent of her body. Everyone thinks it's funny.

(4) In the morning, Dad has developed a qwet ability to see through things, to see the spaces between molecules. And to focus on the intervals between thoughts. The

transcendental void of the Big Aha. He got this power because the oddball was briefly visible to him, transcendent, aglow, like an eye on a pyramid. It was bouncing next to his bed. It's followed them here. Sometimes they can see it, sometimes they can't. But they can't get their hands on it. And they can hear it bouncing.

(5) Loulou tells Zad that his crude nurb-paint dog sucks. She's bragging about her high ranking with Levolver. Loulou and Zad have a contest. We see a pair of blobs that vary through the shapes of dogs as Loulou and Zad teep them. This is happening very, very fast—in videogames you tend always to be in a rush. Targeted creations: The God Dog. The Blobster. The Swine-O-Mat. The Brr Bird. The Vaal Fisk. Loulou's last hack screws up and dies and begins to stink. She's mad, she goes outside.

(6) Junko cleans up Loulou's ruined piece of wacky matter. It slides around like a flatworm. Slimes onto Reba. "Oh Junko, stop." "*Oh, Junko!*" The thing is Reba's baby blanket. Reba is really happy afterwards.

(7) The cops won't tell Zad anything about their investigation. Zad and Loulou go to see what's happening at Gaven's farm. Whit Heyburn is just leaving when they get there, and Jane is in his car. Gaven is gone, and there's no sign of the darkstar. The Gaven platypus tries to bite Zad, and effectively chases them off. Zad calls Jane, confesses that he still loves her, and impulsively breaks off his affair with Loulou and Joey.

## Chapter 9 Outline. Spreading Qwet.

*Here again, I had outlined more scenes than would fit into the chapter. Blessedly my scene outlines kept bulking up into chapter-filling action. So around March 22, 2013, I moved some of these scenes further down the line.*

(1) The oddball becomes visible in the Funhouse to Zad. Zad makes a nest for the oddball, and it settles in, now becoming the size of a soccer ball. They can stare into the glowing center for hours. It's fascinating.

(2) Junko develops an ability to “bookmark” past psychic states, and she can mentally hop up and down the timeline. And then she uses her bookmark to get herself back.

(3) They use this for making telemarketing calls to distribute qwet. The rats become telemarketers as well. Qwet is spreading across the world like paint poured onto a globe.

(4) Zad talks to the elephruk Darby that brings a load of nurb gel for making golems. Darby is smart, she senses the location of the oddball. It comes out to talk to her. Incredibly, Darby disappears into the oddball, along with Skungy the rat.

(5) Zad consults with Carlo about the supposed lien on Jane’s property that Whit Heyburn has. Carlo tells Zad a way to get out of it—when Gaven dipped into death, all agreements with him became void, and coming back to life doesn’t relegitimize the documents. Zad calls Jane with the good news. He also tells Jane how to make a restore point for herself just in case Whit overwrites her.

(6) Qwet is having some bad effects worldwide. People aren’t working. They’re more emotional, with more fights.

## **Chapter 10 Outline. Weezie’s Party.**

*I started working on the outlines of Chapters 10-14 in late April, 2013.*

(1) They’re planning a big party with many of the new qwetties wanting to come. Zad spends an afternoon getting into being a working artist again, creating Silly-Putter-type golem nurbs. Living sculptures made of qwet nurb gel. He plans for them to be entertainment at the party, hoping they’ll restart his career. His former gallery-owner, Idi Did, will be at the party. Zad’s creations personify human emotions and archetypes in some heavy way. One is called Mr. Normal.

(2) The Funhouse gang finally has an orgy, but it’s a fiasco. A flash mob of qwetties shows up, way too many. People are wearing nurb costumes, and it’s like a costume

ball. Things turn sour. Reba keeps mentally hopping back to this one particular instant in the afternoon when she was very joyful. Whenever she hops, she forgets everything you've told her

(3) Jane shows up at the Funhouse party with Whit and Gaven. Jane has a bruise from being manhandled by Whit and Gaven. Zad starts an argument about the bruise. Jane says in, horribly, Gaven's voice: "Hey! *I'm* driving this car." Gaven has overwritten Jane's mind with his spare platypus. Zad uses Jane's butt-bookmark to restore Jane's mind. Jane runs into ballroom with her oddball, and it swallows her there.

(4) Zad has a showdown with Whit and Gaven. The darkstar swallows Zad and Whit, but Zad's friends pull him out. Gaven runs off. More wormholes are present now, chewing up many people at the party. Mr. Normal is flickering, and that keeps them back just a bit. Junko says people are being eaten all over town.

## **Chapter 11 Outline. Fairyland.**

(1) Zad lets the oddball swallow him. He meets Jane in the tunnel. They worm out into Fairyland.

(2) They're greeted by Stanky and Jephtha in a copy of he Funhouse ballroom. The two fairies look like leathery-bodied dragonflies. Fairyland is a copy of Earth, but the fairies don't resemble Earthlings although they hint that they might be copies too.

(3) Zad and Jane meet some more fairies in the Fairyland copy of the Funhouse, and they go upstairs to sleep. Odd dreams.

(4) In the morning they can see the myoor, it's huge, the size of Louisville, it's puddled around the buildings like a cow pie. They can see people embalmed within the myoor's flesh.

(5) Stanky and Jephtha say there's only one myoor per planet, they'd been dreading this, and now the myoor flopped down here. They say it's hard for Fairylanders to

kill a myoor, but Earthlings can do it, but they're not sure how.

(6) The gnomes have stolen the oddball and taken it through a tunnel to their underground cave. Zad crosses the myoor and enters the mouth of the tunnel in the barn.

## **Chapter 12 Outline. The Spotted Gub.**

*I revised my outline for Chapter 12 many times in mid to late May, 2013.*

(1) The god gub who made our world lives in a pool in the gnome's cave. She sent the gnomes to steal the clam with the oddball inside it. The god gub made our world with the myoor in it, and she doesn't want harm to come to the myoor. The myoor is, in a sense, the procreative organ of the god gub.

(2) The gnomes let the god gub eat the oddball. The god gub apparently tells the gnomes to kill Zad as well.

(3) Jane comes with the spotted gub, who's a suitor of the god gub, and the spotted gub flies them back to Jane's apartment.

(4) Back there, the toll of people swallowed by the myoor's wormholes is in the thousands. But the myoor is only taking people in Louisville, even though qwet is everywhere. People are streaming out of Louisville, like the crowds leaving Chernobyl, or fleeing a fighting front in WWII. Those who stay are rigorously remaining in robotic mode lest the roving wormholes eat them.

(5) The spotted gub is living in Jane's apartment. He begins to speak, in a very odd fashion. He advises Jane and Zad to organize a Cosmic Flip Trip to lure the myoor to pour through its wormholes to Louisville in big wads. So Jane makes up some ads, she couches the even in terms of being a healing power ritual, like the legendary Human Be-In. Gaven was blamed for the qwet outburst and the wormholes, he's under arrest, still in Louisville.

(6) On the way to Gurky's they see Ned White the jeweler get eaten by a wormhole. Zad and Jane meet Kenny, SubZad, and Mr. Normal at Craig Gurky's warehouse.

Craig Gurky comes out as gay. They make a thousand Mr. Normals, and a thousand thorn ropes.

(7) Having heard Jane's ad for the Cosmic Flip Trip, Gaven leads the cops Lief and Grommet to Gurky's just as the gang is preparing to leave. The cops are driving Zad's Lincoln. A violent scene erupts. SubZad flips out and strangles Grommet with his hands. Lief kills SubZad by torching him. A wormhole swallows Grommet's cooling body. The Mr. Normals kill Lief with a shower of sparks. Gaven grovels for forgiveness. Jane nudges Gaven into cosmic mode by sweet-talking him, and an excited myoor wormhole swallows Gaven. Zad, Jane, Gurky, and Kenny drive to Churchill Downs all together in the Lincoln, and with their squadron of Mr. Normals marching in their rear brandishing the thorned whips and Skeezi and Bag Stagger playing live.

### **Chapter 13 Outline. Churchill Downs**

*I revised my outlines for Chapter 13 and 14 many, many, many times during May to July 2013. Perhaps twenty revisions, interspersed with sessions of heavy tweaks to the earlier chapters so as to lay the ground. It's always the trickiest at the end. Like finishing the design of a maze.*

(1) Craig and Kenny stay in the car, but Jane and Zad get onstage with Skungy and Bag Stagger. The gnomes Blixen and Staark are in the crowd, asking Zad and Jane for some as-yet-unspecified favor, and threatening him as well. The Mr. Normals drive them off. Dad is there. And Mom. Zad initiates the Cosmic Flip Trip by doing an onstage demo of going cosmic, attracting a wormhole and having Mr. Normals attack it with the thorn whips.

(2) More and more people are getting cosmic, more and more wormholes are being captured by the thorn whips. The Mr. Normals and the grudes are tugging on the whips, and suddenly they tip the balance and big stinking lava flows of myoor-flesh begin pouring through the wormholes unaided. It's like getting a siphon started.

(3) And now we have complete chaos. The crowd panics at the sight of the myoor-flood. Everyone is scrambling up higher into the stands. Zad's Dad and Mom come onstage with Jane and Zad and stands by his side, encouraging them. Mom comes up and says she heard the gnomes talk about kidnapping Jane. Kenny and Craig drive over the blanket of myoor in the Lincoln, and they ferry Jane and Zad, Dad and Mom to the grandstand.

(4) Zad sends the Mr. Normals out to the perimeter of Churchill Downs, and they're flashing their lights and firing off huge electric sparks to discourage the myoor from puddling out into the streets. The myoor flesh rises up to thirty feet deep. The myoor turns herself right side out. She has the same eyestalks and toothy mouths, and she's potentially dangerous but not actively hostile. She's excited. The green gub shows up, all a-flutter, very pleased. The spotted gub arrives as well. He tells Jane that black gub still can't figure out how to get to Earth's brane.

(5) The Mr. Normals have a shot at driving the myoor into "labor" by strobing like mad, but it doesn't work. The myoor settles down, and the Mr. Normals no longer need to herd her. It's nearly dawn. The green gub and the spotted gub are flirting. You can see the swallowed people within the giant pudding of myoor. But you can't just go over and cut people free, the myoor will extrude a tentacle and toss you to one side, or maybe swallow you. Right about now—oh, oh—the gnomes do manage to free Gaven and Whit. They look weird, pale and hairless, like cancer survivors. They run off.

(7) The gnomes free Loulou as well, to upset Jane. Loulou is talking to Zad. And now Blixxen and Staark lure Jane into accompanying them somewhere, they're saying they're going to free her mother and Jane goes, she's mad at Zad now anyway.

(8) Loulou tells Zad to go after Jane, and now he can't find her. With Skungy's help, he tracks them down to where they're hiding in a stable. The gnomes laugh and say they knew Zad would come. They're holding Jane with a



scimitar at her throat. The situation is as follows: the gnomes came to Earth via the oddball but they'd lost it, but now here it is again, attracted by Jane. The gnomes' mission is to show the dark gub how to get to Earth—the oddball is to act like a climber's tethered rope, or like a free-diver's guide rope. The green-gub/myoor wouldn't let the dark gub feel her wormholes. The gnomes aren't sure about how to go back through the oddball to Fairyland, and they want Jane to come with them. And they want to take Gaven and Whit as well—those two want to try living in Fairyland, as they feel unwanted on Earth. They'll take Jane and thus have some leverage over Zad to make him help the dark gub. They want Zad to guard the Earth end of the oddball and have Jane at the other end, and have Oxkar feel his way here.

(9) Jane calls out a squeal to the unseen spotted gub. He appears and kills Whit for starters—kills him in the very thorough fashion of erasing the bumps in space that make up his elementary particles. In a panic, Gaven and Blixxen and Staark scramble into the oddball, disappearing for good. The spotted gub zaps the oddball with a spark of dark energy, and it shrivels and moves up out of our space, disappearing like the wormholes did.

(10) Zad and Jane fuck on the straw in the stable, fully reunited at last.

## **Chapter 14 Outline. Big Aha**

(1) Zad and Jane rejoin Mom and Dad. Dad has been chatting with the green gub. She likes Dad. Dad volunteers to be the gub blank for the green gub's myoor. Dad's the man, he's an artist! The green gub asks Mom to volunteer as well, and she does. Mom and Dad dive into the myoor, which opens slits for them. The sun rises. The spotted gub fertilizes the spot that are/were Mom and Dad. Finally the black gub appears, falling through our space at a strange angle, unable to stabilize himself. With a chagrined and bitter squeal the gub disappears into N-dimensional space for good.

(2) Huge firework-like effects, with holographic images of thoughts, cracking all over the gub as the minds of the secondary captives are copied into those of the embryonic gubs that were Zad's Mom and Dad. And now the unused candidate people are expelled from the myoor's flesh, *pop-pop-pop*, sprawled across the surface, pale, befuddled, hairless—like we already saw with Gaven and Whit. A bit like an army of zombies, but they're quickly recovering their personalities. Joey, Carlos, Reba, Junko, and Weezie are back. And Loulou. A juicy conversation in the grandstand. Qwet is here for good, people get used to it.

(3) Not much more to tell. Loulou, Junko and Joey plant symbiotic nurbs all over the myoor, and they bloom into a Boschian jungle, and the myoor is happy and well nourished. Thanks to the symbiotic nurbs, she's not swallowing people, she's smooth and her mouths are gone. Weeks go by, and green gub and spotted gub hang around, waiting for the twins to be born. It's fun to see the gubs in the sky, they're nice. Zad and Jane are happy together. They're living on Zad's family farm. A week or two later Zad finds Jane at dawn, one morning, she's looking at a tree. Jane is pregnant. Life is life. The Big Aha is everywhere.

(4) On Christmas Day, the Mom and Dad gubs are born when Zad and Jane are wandering on the myoor garden. A big scene, accompanied by celestial music from the myoor: the birth of the fraternal twins, the boy and girl gub. And then the myoor dissolves into particles that buzz away. We have four gubs now, the spotted gub, the green gub, and the new ones: the red gub (Mom) and the starry gub (Dad), conversing in wild squeals that only Jane understand. The spotted gub and the two newborns off into the Nth dimension, like kids on an outing with their father. The green gub says her farewell to Jane and Zad, something like "I'll always be with you." She flies off into the sky heading for another part of her/our universe to hatch some more kids.

## Possible Characters

### Zad Plant

35. To some extent I'm the model for this, the main character, as is so often the case in my novels. Except he doesn't have a head for science or logic. Kind of like the Joe Cube character in *Spaceland*. But he has great artistic skills.

Much dithering about his first name. I was using Morton, and then I changed it to Zad.

Good with his hands. Perhaps has a green thumb, or at least an ability to fix both mechanical things and nurbs. Not bookish. Well-coordinated, graceful. Not a team player. He didn't finish college, dropped out to be an artist, had some early success with slime mold paintings. But now he runs a nurb shop. Shop was funded perhaps by his wife, Jane.

Jane, very pretty, rich, but they broke up, basically because she feels he's a failure and stuck in a rut. He's kind of webzombie, online all the time.

He's disillusioned...which is a form of laziness. Accidie. Ennui. Zad wants something big is going to happen to him, but he doesn't know what, and he's not doing anything to make it happen. A midlife crisis scenario.

Maybe Zad's parents are dead. Maybe he's an only child. And maybe he doesn't have children. Simpler that way.

Zad is thin, tall, with long floppy brown hair. Big jaw. Tan. Movie-star handsome. Fit, even though he doesn't exercise. Rude, a wise guy, a rebel. He has an attitude of sly waiting.

He has some monkeypaw shoes that are alive. He likes to climb up into the treetops of the housetrees by the river, and in the girders under the Ohio bridge. He used to hop right into the trees from his and Jane's lofty apartment, located inside the trunk of a hundred-foot tall housetree.

## **Carlo Solera.**

35. A bit of a loser salesman, but slick. Maybe he looks like the guy in *The Wanderer* by Jeroon Bosch—or no, more like Clark Gable. A bit seedy, degenerate, worn. 35, like Zad. He's abused biotweaking to look young and vital, overdone it, his face is a little washed out, his DNA is watered down, his muscles spongy, he's like a painting with too many layers, like an over-revised manuscript.

A wise-guy, doesn't care about anything, likes to needle Zad. No conscience, no empathy. Funny.

## **Gaven Graber**

35. Blunt, brilliant, a bit childish.

"There used to be a saying that everyone was going to get fifteen minutes of fame. That's not accurate. Thanks to pro-active nurb condoms, we've gotten the population to level off at nine billion people. And people's lifespans average out to ninety years—which is three billion seconds. Share out three billion seconds among nine billion people, and they get a third of a second each. Hardly enough time to notice."

## **Skungy the Rat**

1. I see the talking rat as what the Monomyth calls the *helper*.

He's a lowlife, like a New Yorker, a *rat*. A little like the rat in *Charlotte's Web*, come to think of it. But funkier.

Not quite right in the head. Wants to burrow and gnaw. Makes a nest inside Zad's bed.

## **Jane Roller**

36. Reddish yellow hair. Loud. Gets flushed, rushing around a parties. Does accents. Lots of friends. Plays Seven Minutes In Heaven with Zad at an early party. Lives in a rich house in Glenview where Zad gets to go to a kids' party. Nurbs are just starting out in the early memories. A nurb show at a party.

## **Loulou Sabado**

31. The “gypsy girl” I saw in the street in Geneva in 2005. Like Monique M. And a touch of Beccatronic on Twitter. Or Emily Blunt?

Loulou is: Oily, hot, sly, deft, gypsy-like, dreamy, romantic, lazy, underground, exotic, purring, catlike, full-lipped, ineffective, lazy. Short-tempered. Able to space out.

Had middle-class parents in Washington, DC. Mother or maybe both parents are Mexican. Not above shoplifting and petty theft. Somewhat promiscuous. Wants to be amazed every single day of her life. Loves novelty. Works to be invisible in the web—a so-called blank. Says she’d like to bring down the nurb industry. She worked for a No Nurbs lobbying group in DC.

Her secret: she’s hoping to sell Gaven Garber’s trade secrets, she has a deal with FoMoCo. If she were rich, she’d own thoroughbreds.

Other possible last names: Szasz. Sass. Sabado is Saturday (with missing accent), from the long-running TV show, *Sábado Gigante*.

## **Jane’s Friend, Reba Ranchtree**

35. She’s from a bourbon family, a childhood friend of Jane’s. She runs an upscale dress shop. Reba when young had a lush 40s movie-star look. But she’s a bit faded now, world-weary, matter-of-fact, abrupt, no-nonsense. She won’t get nurb plastic surgery on her face and body. Has a sharp tongue. She has a low opinion of Zad, but would be willing to fuck him.

## **Zad’s Mom, Sally Plant**

60. She’s a gardener, a bio-artist, she coaxes gene-tweaked succulents into sculptural wall pieces, akin to those cactus grids I’ve seen, but more futuristic. Sold them at wine fairs beside Lennox’s paintings. She used to have a real job designing online ads. Ads in 2080 are in several ways different from how they are in 2010, and by now Sally really can’t keep up.

## Zad's Dad, Lennox Plant

65. Zad's retired father Lennox was a minor painter who sold landscapes at wine-festival-type shows. But then he got into being a society portrait painter, and makes good money. Portraits of people, houses, pets.



**FIGURE 30: LENNOX ALLEN, MY BOYHOOD ART TEACHER**

Lennox also works as a realistic *en plein air* painter. He has a kind of Tennessee Williams look about him, languid.

Bombastic, ineffective, weak, kind, distracted.

Maybe he's into some particular modern religion, say it's Postsingulitarianism, also called Xoism?

He cheats on his wife with his women clients.

Initially I was going to call the father Bradford, but that seemed too pompous. And then I thought of the name Lennox, taken from Louisville artist Lennox Allen, born 1911, who taught a private art class that I took with four or five other kids when I was around 10 or 11. 1956.

I liked Lennox a lot, he really was an artist, with bits of paint on his clothes, and a beatnik attitude—not that I yet knew what that was. I guess you could say he was the first beatnik I ever met.

He told me a story about a great nightmare he had about his dead(?) mother's head filling his family mansion's front hall like a glowing car. And another story about creeping after a woman who went under a bride so that he (Lennox) could get a glimpse of her taking a pee. What a guy! A hero of my youth.

He made a pastel portrait of me that took many sessions—I had the feeling he kept coming back because he and my mother were sweet on each other, two lonely artists in 1950s Louisville. Exiles on Main Street. Once Mom sent me out to play in the front yard while Lennox was there. I wonder if he ever kissed her.

## **Junko Shimano, Wetware Engineer**

Gaven Graber is working with a woman named Junko Shimano. Despite the name and her Japanese ethnicity a regular California girl, a Stanford grad. Gay. She's the inventor of qwet. Blunt-spoken, with a sense of fun. At first I was calling her Rikki Shriner, and then I changed her last name to Shimano. On February 27, 2013, I changed her first name to Junko. I like that name, it's fun to say, and it's odd, with "junk" inside it. I got it from Murakami's novel *1Q84*, where he mentions that his character Aomame has a designer dress by Junko Shimada that she likes. I didn't want to use Shimada as well, so I switched to Shimano, the

name of the company that makes some of the gear parts on my mountain bike.

## Ideas

### The Monomyth

Monomyth Stage / Novel	White Light	Hollow Earth	Spaceland	Frek and the Elixir	Hylozoic	Jim and the Flims
<b>I: Call</b>	Pamphlet map of Cimón	Trip to Town	Momo's Fingers	Bumby under his bed.	Jayjay dreams of pitchfork.	The Whipped Vic
<b>Refusal of Call</b>				Cops kill Bumby.	He tries to escape.	Stroke
<b>Helper</b>	Franx	Arf, Eddie	Wackle	Gibby the Grullo.	The pitchfork.	Ginnie
<b>Threshold</b>	Graveyard	Ice Cap	3D/4D	Stun City.	The Peng appear.	J gets a jiva
<b>Inside the Whale</b>	FTL Trip	Bateau	Kangy the Cuttlefish	Ride in Bumby.	Riding in the Hrull.	Crawl thru snail
<b>II: Road of Trials</b>	Climb, God Squad	Ballula, Fall		Crash near Unipusk.	Thuy and Jayjay jump.	Trip to Duke's
<b>Goddess</b>	Kathy	Seela	Empress?	Renata.	Thuy is goddess.	Jim's Wife
<b>Temptress</b>	Cantor's Wife Ellie	Virginia Clemm	Jena with Spazz	Yessica Sunshine.	Glee gets Chu hooked.	Weena
<b>Atonement with Father</b>	Cantor	King of the Umpteen Seas?	Stool	Frek befriends Dad at Bar.	Jayjay with Bosch	Charles Howard
<b>Heaven</b>	White Light	Tekelili	Drabk's Vine	Inside a star at Orpoly.	Flying over the Planck Sea	Atum's Lotus
<b>Boon</b>	Bloogs		Patch to fix Space.	Frek finds DNA for Earth	Learn how to vaar	Shooting yuelballs
<b>III: Refusal of Return</b>	Franx	Otha		Dad stays to save...	Scared of maelstrom.	Worried about eggs
<b>Flight</b>	Drive thru desert	Saucer	Trip thru Flatland	Frek, who flees.	Into maelstrom.	Go to Yuelsville
<b>Rescue</b>	April on Halloween	Ship	SHOULD ADD ONE!	Renata helps Frek home.	Jayjay helps Chu home.	Finds snail to return



<b>The Return Threshold</b>	Comin' Down	Black/ White		Revolution against Gov.	Peng are still around.	Fight with Skeeves
<b>Two Worlds</b>	Possession by Kathy	2 Eddies	Jail talk with Empress	One more threat.	Jayjay goes transfinite.	Evict jivas and yuels from Cruz
<b>Free to Live</b>	Go to Los Alamos!	Go to California!	Sedona	Frek frees all via toons.	Kill Pekklet.	Rebuilds wife Val
<b>Monomyth Stage / Novel</b>	<b>White Light</b>	<b>Hollow</b>	<b>Spaceland</b>	<b>Frek and the Elixir</b>	<b>Hylozoic</b>	<b>Jim and the Flims</b>

**Table 6: Monomyth in Some of My Novels**

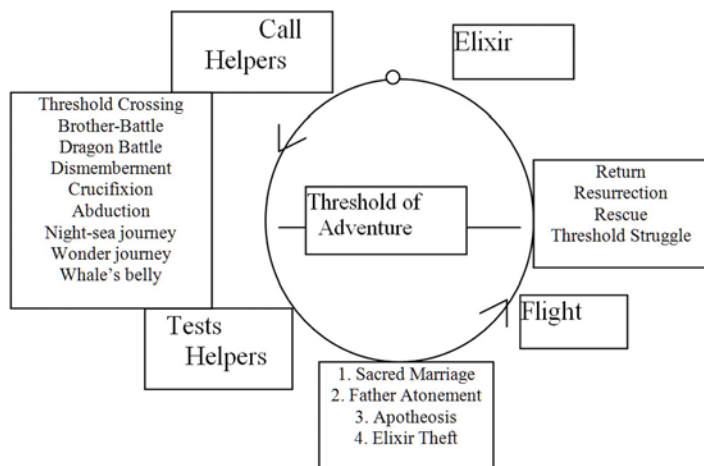
Table 6 shows an overview of how the monomyth might be found in a number of my novels. To be honest, I didn't consciously use the monomyth for any of those books except *Frek*, and what I've tabulated here is very much an after-the-fact and possibly inaccurate or even Procrustean tailoring of my novels' plots to match one particular preconception.

Conceivably I could write a new novel by outlining a monomyth-modeled plot as I did for *Frek and the Elixir*. I remember that, in the first flush of my satisfaction with the finished *Frek*, I mentioned to my editor Dave Hartwell that I wanted to use the monomyth again but I was worried about repeating myself—and Dave was like “It's the *monomyth*, Rudy. That means you use it over and over. Even if you don't know that you're doing it.”

But since *Frek*, I still haven't deliberately built up any of my novels from the monomyth outline. One reason for this might simply be that, if I do all the stages of the monomyth, then I'm likely end up with a book that's 50% longer than usual, as was the case with *Frek*. And it takes longer. But, still I might give this a thought. In a way, it would be nice to spend two or three years instead of just one year in writing my next book. I've been writing so fast that the pipeline is somewhat backed up.

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If I were to get all schematic again, I might consider rearranging the monomyth in some way. Could be interesting to write the stages on some scraps of paper and slide them around to look for alternate sequences. In doing that, I'd need to keep in mind that the standard monomyth flows out of the flow-chart loop shown in the figure below—so possibly I'd need to change the flow chart as well.



**FIGURE 31: MONOMYTH FLOW CHART**

## Media and Advertising

Nobody reads or even watches a movie. It's all web nuggets. They don't "cruise" so much as "harvest" the web. The ads are like viruses, like smart drones, they hound you, they're targeted to individuals.

Some real work is being done on getting ads into dreams. Particularly if you sleep with your uvvy on. You get used to the ads in your dreams, and the uvvy helps you sleep.

Uvvy can synch things you see with the shows in your head. Gives you fake sense of synchronicity. Processes things as fast as your brain, and feeds in the fictive kicker maybe a split second before you see the real thing.

## Biotech

I'll bring in some of the critters or nurbs from *Frek* and from *Saucer Wisdom*. But I need new ones too.

### Biotech Wiggler Controllers

Here's a passage from my novel *Saucer Wisdom*, adapted and edited so that the wrigglers are clearly biological. In my original text, in place of the wrigglers, I had inorganic "sluggies" that are made of what I call piezoplastic.

The new softly computing wetware-programmed biotech controllers are called *wrigglers*. Just as in the 1990s nobody would dream of using *gears* for the controls of microwave oven, say, or of a video receiver, in the future nobody dreams of using a silicon chip. All control circuits are run by wrigglers, who are capable of producing electric currents.

One thing that makes wrigglers especially different from silicon chips is that they can move about. And the crawling behavior of wrigglers is not a rare or an unimportant activity, no, it's an essential and necessary feature of wriggler self-maintenance. Remember that they're alive. Unless a wriggler gets its daily bit of exercise, its wetware code fades out and it becomes unusable in a matter of weeks.

It's very easy to install a wriggler into an appliance. They simply crawl into the device, like a toaster, where they work. But, on the other hand, they also crawl out. Look at this empty morning kitchen: the wrigglers are all crawling out of their appliances — for the exercise, the air, the light, and just to

be with each other. Wrigglers communicate via electromagnetic fields, and also by small acoustic chirps.

The wrigglers gather together on the kitchen windowsill, lolling there in the morning sun. We hear brisk footsteps and the woman of the house walks into the kitchen, dressed and ready for a quick breakfast before hurrying off to work. She wants to turn on the toaster and coffee-maker and the stove — so now the wrigglers all have to crawl back. She pokes them with a special wriggler-herding wand to order them back into their machines.

One of the wrigglers — the toaster wriggler — is very slow to obey, and the woman gets angry with it. When she comes home from work, she has a wetware upgrade, a new toaster wriggler. She pops it out of its tiny cage and sets it down by the toaster. The new wriggler crawls inside, eats the old one — though not without savage, squealing struggle — and installs itself.

I could kick it up a notch and have full biotech like in *Frek and the Elixir*. Programmable DNA and things like house trees, knife plants, and lifter beetles. But if I'm just using the wrigglers like computer chips, it's a smoother, more near-future scene.

## Hylotech

Hylo+zoic = matter+alive. I've been a hylozoist for many years now—believing that every object is at some level alive and conscious.

It feels good to accept that a rock or a chair is alive and conscious. And then we're not lonely fireflies of mind in a vast dark warehouse of dead machinery.

How do you really know, after all, what the internal life of a rock is like? The rock might be thought of as a fully ascended Zen master! Maybe it can in fact simulate my presence by using quantum computation and entanglement. But we don't need to burden the rock with a quirky personality.

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At this point I want to imagine learning to program objects directly. And we'll call this *hylotech*. I see biotech as a bridge between chip tech and hylotech.

Here's another edited and adapted passage from *Saucer Wisdom*.

Once hylotech takes hold, most of the objects in a person's home can talk a little bit, and each piece of furniture has the intelligence of, say, a dog. They get out of the way if you're about to bump them. They adjust their shape to whatever you say. They can change their patterns to match any design that you show them. But smart hylotech furniture has some drawbacks.

There's a story about how a photographer's family came home from a week's trip to find that the furniture has been bouncing around the house laughing and bathing its tissues in the studio's klieg lights, breaking all the dishes and running up a huge electrical bill.

The photographer steps into his harshly lit studio and catches his furniture going wild. A rambunctious over-amped armchair is howling like a coyote, the sofa is galumphing around in pursuit of a long-legged tea-table, the side-board is dancing a tarantella on shards of broken crockery, and six dining-chairs are clambering on top of each other to form a pyramid. He loads the

rogue furniture into a truck and hauls it off to Goodwill.

In another home, a young woman's disgruntled suitor kicks one of her chairs across the room — and the chair runs back and breaks the guy's leg. A cat sharpens its claws on a couch, and the couch flings the tabby out the window.

Computers of the future use quantum computation. Atoms and molecules are always doing quantum computations, even when they're just sitting around. These computations are in fact rich enough to emulate anything that an ordinary computer could do. If we can just get the hang of how to do it, we can start having computers that are chairs, rocks, air currents, glasses of water, candle flames—whatever.

If we view any bit of matter as carrying out a quantum computation, then what if something like a computer virus infects matter, perhaps changing the laws of physics to make our world more congenial to some other kinds of beings? Or what if you yourself dose your surroundings simply to make them more vibrant, more cartoony, more congenial. Instead of you getting high, your house gets high!

And then, for the kicker, our region of spacetime might in some way reorganize itself—like a recrystallization of our spacetime as metatime elapses. A new domain.

## **Mind Amplification, AI and the Big Aha**

Intelligence augmentation. What are some ways in which people might become noticeably smarter? I'm not so interested in brute-force approaches like shoving in more memory tissues or internalizing direct links to world wide web. The cool, SFictional thing would be if there were some in-retrospect-rather-obvious mental trick that we haven't yet exploited.

I'm also thinking of my friend Nathaniel Hellerstein's notion that there could be some as yet undiscovered physical tool as simple as the wheel, screw, or lever. I think he used to call his thing the *flikkit*. I asked Nathaniel to remind me about this idea. His reply.

Presumably you'd flick it. I imagined it as a simple device – as simple as wheel, lever or wedge – for picking things off the floor without bending over. You and I agreed that the slime lobsters of Zeta Reticuli invented it, but not the wheel. You and I also agreed that the flikkit is obvious in retrospect, but until we meet the slime lobsters, we'll just have to do without, or hope for a seriously lateral thinker. The Zero is a kind of flikkit. Obvious in retrospect, absurdly simple, incredibly useful.

Mind amplification tricks do exist. Think of how our effective intelligence improved with the advent of speech and of writing. In the mathematical realm, our ability to calculate got exponentially better when we started using positional notation. And the computer and the internet give us another big boost: rapid computation, stable external memory (like a lifebox), and the universal library of web search. It would be cool if there some non-technical mental trick that would make us much brighter.

A certain kind of advance could lead to a discontinuous jump in ordinary human's intelligence. I'll be calling this advance The Big Aha.

There's a tantalizing dream of AI workers that there may yet be some conceptual trick that we can use to make our machines really smart. The only path towards AI at present seems to be beating problems to death with evolving neural nets working on huge data-bases. We get incremental progress by making the computers faster, the neural nets more complex, and the data bases larger.

The SF dream is that there's some new and exciting angle, a different tech, a clear and simple insight, a Big Aha?

And—the kicker—the aha would work for human brains as well as for machines. I'm in fact thinking of us finding the Big Aha for human brains, and then transferring it down to the computers. Intelligence augmentation, then artificial intelligence. Not that the AI really matters that much if we can really kick our own minds into a higher gear.

So what's the Big Aha that I have in mind?

## **My Mind Is A Quantum Computation**

I'm liking the ideas having to do with quantum computation. At one point SF writers used radio as an all-purpose Maguffin, then it was radiation, then black holes, space warps, chaos theory, quarks...these days I'm liking quantum computation as a magic wand.

Every object supports a very intricate quantum computation. Think of a septillion or so particles hooked together by intricate forces, all of them vibrating. Clearly any object is a universal computer with a very rich range of readily accessible states.

Let me start thinking of my mind as a quantum computation. After all, my thoughts aren't at all like a page of symbols—they're blotches and rhythms and associations. Is there any communicable way to truly describe your real mental life?

My unconventional physicist friend Nick Herbert has been talking to me for a decade about something he calls "quantum tantra." He wrote up the details in a brilliant essay, "Holistic Physics: An Introduction to Quantum Tantra," which is [online](#).

Go back to the notion that your brain, like any physical object, is a quantum system. Quantum systems can evolve in two modes:

(Smooth) In a continuous, overlapping-universes style of evolution of state according to Schrödinger's Wave Equation. The smooth mode is closer to how our inner



mental experience feels. That is, upon introspection, my consciousness feels analog, like ripples on a pond. The continuous evolution of mixed states corresponds to the transcendent sensation of being merged with the world, or, putting it more simply, to the everyday activity of being alert without consciously thinking much of anything. In this mode you aren't deliberately watching or evaluating your thoughts.

(Chunky) A series of discrete Newtonian-style wave-collapses brought on by repeated observations. Our communicable, standard mental content is all chunky, and this is the kind of thing we try and mimic when we write programs for artificial intelligence.

The abrupt transition from mixed state to pure state can be seen as the act of adopting a specific opinion or plan. Each type of question or measurement of mental state enforces a choice among the question's own implicit set of possible answers. Even beginning to consider a question initiates a delimiting process.

You're in the smooth mode when you gaze idly at a menu, and you collapse to the chunky mode when you decide what to order.

Introspection tells me that this distinction is accurate. I *do* feel the continuous and the discrete modes of thought within my mind. Although, admittedly, it may not be that the sensation *really* results from my mind being a quantum computer, this is an interesting model to use. Quantum effects could indeed be active in my brain. After all, the nerve cells have nanometer-sized structures, which are well within the range dominated by quantum mechanics.

Louis Savain, a commenter to my posts about these topics on *Charlie's Diary* made a relevant remark.

You are correct about the analogous/discrete duality of thought and there is a brain hypothesis (somewhat similar to Jeff Hawkins' hierarchical temporal memory) that explains why. The

idea is that there is a tree of knowledge (hierarchical memory) and that only one branch of the tree is active at any one time. The branch represents whatever the brain is focusing on at a given time. In humans, a branch can only stay active for a short period, about 12 seconds, after which another branch must rise up to take its place. Within an activated branch, everything moves/changes analogically in response to changes in the environment. However, changing one's attention from one subject to another is a discrete, near-instantaneous phenomenon.

Some people [I'm thinking of certain obnoxious trolls on *Charlie's Diary*] argue that the Smooth/Chunky split is a false distinction, and that wave functions never collapse. Yes, I do know about Hugh Everett's many-universe interpretation of quantum mechanics, under which there are no collapses because the timeline is continually branching, or, more accurately, there are continuum of parallel worlds—the multiverse.

But I have an aesthetic revulsion towards multiverse stories. In a nutshell, my problem is this: If everything happens, then nothing matters. I prefer to think that we live in a single and unique universe that is somehow in an optimal form—one might think of an external godlike crafter or one might equally well think of something like a bent wire that holds a soap film that has settled into a surface of minimal area.

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Let's stick to the idea that there's a real phenomenon where the states of some objects do collapse from a spread out probability wave into a fairly sharp and precise eigenstate. And from there they spread out again into smooth quantum uncertainty.

Since I don't want a branching universe or a multiverse, we have various minds or objects whose wave functions are either spread out or collapsed, not at all in synchronization with each other.

I get a visual image of something like a macramé. A tapestry made up of state functions that I see as being at some moments like spread-out ribbons and at other moments like narrowed down threads.

Although you may be in some peculiar eigenstate, I might be spaced out and mellow. But then it may be that one of us changes. A dance of pulsating wave function ribbons.

## The Big Aha

[I wrote this material into my notes, then I edited it to blog as a guest on Charles Stross's site *Charlie's Diary* in the last week of December, 2011, and now I'm editing the material yet again in these notes. My relevant posts on *Charlie's Diary* were "[Looking For The Big Aha](#)" and "[More on the Big Aha](#)." A lot of comments came in, and I discussed them in the second post. Some of my best comments were from Greg Tingey, Heterometes, Morton Tolley, Amarxer, Graygaffer, and Brucecohenpdx. In this edit, I'm integrating the comments and my responses.]

So how do I get to the Big Aha?

One scenario is a Henry Kuttner-type flaky scientist/inventor coming up with an oddball physics device. He can stay in the smooth mind groove without having to collapse his consciousness. We don't get into any multiple universe angles, we play it straight, a person is expanding their mind by getting their particles into an unusual state.

And then—using entanglement and hylozoism—they can edit the physics of the objects around them. Talk to the objects, make them act weird. Wacky matter. You don't get high, your house gets high for you.

The action of the Big Aha is like an Om that reaches down to the attometer level. The aethereal vibration. The

faint squeak of the Pigg Boson's curly tail. But it's not meditation and it's not drugs. It's physics.

I see a subcultural group growing up around the Big Aha. I'd rather not see them become stock market wizards like the guy in that movie *Limitless*. And I don't want them to be like acidheads. Some other kind of oddness. They have weird senses of humor.

My precise flimflam physics recipe for achieving the Big Aha is still not quite clear to me. I'll get there. And then in retrospect it'll be "obvious."

So I keep asking myself how. How would it be to think in an entirely new way? What routes might take you there? Can you stop collapsing the states of your mind?

And—what powers do you get once you have the Big Aha?

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One idea is that some higher being is the observer in the quantum interaction. The cosmos, a giant jellyfish, the Big Pig as I called it in *Hylozoic*, or simply the One. The One is also the observer in our lives. Many of us have problems with this notion because each of us is conditioned to think there is an "I" that is running "my" life.

I can teep you if we both merge into the One.

In conversation, my friend Nick Herbert made two related remarks about contact with the One, or with the universal wave function.

(1) The soul might perhaps be given a scientific meaning as one's immediate perception of one's coherent uncollapsed wave function, particularly as it is entangled with the uncollapsed universal wave function of the cosmos.

(2) Synchronicity might be evidence that we're all parts of some higher being. And the higher mind's ideas filter down into remote links.

It's definitely interesting to suppose that you can, by some physical change, get your brain into a state where you are in fact in a continuous-mode, uncollapsed all-is-one, highly entangled, super-empathy-possessing mind state.

So, again, how do we get there?

Certainly it's true that an advanced meditation technique might get you there—the accomplished masters are said to have siddhis, or special powers, which might be akin to direct access to the uncollapsed universal wave function. But for an SF novel, I want something with a little more bling to it.

How about a quantum computing gadget that fits into a small case attached to a head band, and the band has circuitry in it that entangles the gadget and some part of the brain. (One of my commenters, Brucecohenpdx, suggested this idea and said the device might use TMS or transcranial magnetic stimulation, although I'm not sure I'll use such a potentially time-bound notion.)

The head band makes me think of the “brain toys” they used to advertise in the pages of magazines like *Mondo 2000*. What if someone made one of these that really works? In this vein, I'm thinking in terms of, why not, the old strobe approach—a brain toy headband that pulses lights into your eyes, getting your brain into an unusual state. Light itself is, after all, a type of quantum-computational input/output channel. The gizmo would use a sophisticated quantum computation to key the proper pulsation rates.

Or, kicking it up a level, maybe I use a biocomputation, to make it cool. A cunning cuttlefish pet sits on your shoulder, directing the pulsations. Maybe you don't have any old-school LED lights, and the cuttle pal simply flickers at a nice rate in the tips of two tentacles.

Even better, the tentacle tips are suckered right over your cornea till you achieve lift-off. Users might be called squidders.

And we might as well include music or a warbling hiss in the squiddy Big Aha stimulation biodevice. And maybe even smells and shudders. The more senses you tickle, the more vivid is a fictional scene.

The efficacy of a given Big Aha routine might wear out—a bit like a sex fantasy or one's joy in a particular

song. And you have to keep tweaking the process to be able to get off. A media biz in new improved Big Aha trips.

## **Big Aha Effects: Teep, Dreams, Ghosts, Archetypes**

People with Big Aha might develop some new augmented senses. What if you could see radio-waves, electrical charges, neutrinos, Higgs bosons, and/or neutrinos? Maybe these senses would let you see specters, archetypes, dreams, or give you teep into other people's selves.

One way to go here would be to have the new sense be a very highly developed sense of empathy which emerges, one might suppose, from a conscious awareness of quantum entanglement, or awareness of the overarching wave function that includes both you and me as subsystems.

Grokking, in other words.

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I have dreams every night, what do they mean?

I think there's still a lot of interesting things to be done with dreams. Waking up inside them? Finding out that they're really happening in a higher dimension?

Maybe with Big Aha I can go into your dreams.

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We might see ghosts of dead people. Or we might see heretofore invisible aliens whom, for whatever reason, we're ordinarily unable to perceive. Those flashes of light you see out of the corner of your eye sometimes—maybe those are alien beings.

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Suppose that thinking with the Big Aha leads to levels at which myths and archetypes are real. God's art studio. Or, best of all, the giant's castle in the clouds atop the beanstalk.

Jack learns to see quantum fluctuations and climbs them like steps, up past the clouds and finds the giant there. He steals the bag of gold and the magic harp, climbs down, cuts the stalk and kills the giant.

And then what? Maybe the universe unravels. The giant was God. He was keeping our whole act together.

## **Some Unused Ideas about Big Aha**

These suggestions came mostly from my commenters on *Charlie's Diary*.

- \* Suppose that the Platonic realm of mathematical forms is real and that different people can more or less directly perceive it through some QM hand-waving.

- \* Geniuses can do a bit of quantum superposition to figure the best move in chess, versus pruning leaf-nodes as a computer might do. Putting it differently, you might use your powerful mind to simulate a variety of possible outcomes, perhaps by splitting your attention up into parallel inner selves. And then you somehow “actualize” the best one.

- \* Pushing parallelism further, you might literally split your body into copies and do lots of things—I hear that Greg Egan does this in *Quarantine*. But this feels like a step towards a full multiverse route where our characters hop from timeline to timeline, and I don't think I want to go there.

## **Wacky Matter**

I propose that once we've changed our minds with the Big Aha, we can make wacky matter.

Computers of the future use quantum computation. Atoms and molecules are always doing quantum computations, even when they're just sitting around. These computations are in fact rich enough to emulate anything that an ordinary computer could do. If we can just get the hang of how to do it, we can start having computers that are chairs, rocks, air currents, glasses of water, candle flames—whatever.

Okay, suppose that any bit of matter is carrying out a quantum computation, and that we've learned to interface with these computations and tweak them.

(Fun option) You dose your surroundings to make them more vibrant, more cartoony, more congenial. Instead of you getting high, your house gets high! At first it seems harmless and things snap back.

(Fear option) What if something like a computer virus infects matter, perhaps changing the laws of physics to make our world more congenial for some evil darkside hackers. Or maybe even for some type of aethereal aliens—but, no, I used that power chord with the Peng in *Hylozoic*, so this time let's keep it more of a near-future actually-happening-in-Silicon-Valley thing, and funner.

(Change option) What if the repeatedly wacked space in some area reconfigures itself—and settles to a new stable attractor. Like that “false vacuum” power chord. Our local spacetime becomes a new domain. Or maybe just the body of one character becomes a new domain.

Good scene, this. Like the ultimate hungover friend scene. He appears, tottering, and he's somehow altered the dimension signature of the spacetime in his body. His body has, like, two-dimensional time and two-dimensional space. He slides into your room, sliding under your door.

I'd like to write a page or two in 2D time, or have this dude describing it.

## Demux

I was trying to compress a video-with-sound that I'd made with my little digital camera. And when I compressed it, I'd lose the audio, and I found out that was because the track I have is “muxed” as in “multiplexed,” and the compression only handles the video part of the track and the audio track has to be extracted out and compressed on its own. And the process of extracting the audio from the muxed track is called, natch, demuxing. So now I'm thinking about the idea that humans are muxed. We're multiplexed tracks of the physical and spiritual, perhaps. If you get demuxed, this thing like a six-foot-tall skinny golden carrot comes out of your body. It's your so-called soul, which is perhaps an alien parasite like a tapeworm, or



naw, it's your soul. Has tiny little wings on it. A snake that flies.

In "The Andy Warhol Sand Candle" story that I wrote with Marc Laidlaw, I had the main character's addiction be like a lumpy carrot that he pulled out of his head. He demuxed himself. And, come to think of it, Robert Sheckley's novel *Crompton Divided* is about a typically Sheckley-like hero who demuxes himself into his four humors: sanguine, choleric, bilious, and black-bilious, and Crompton has to reassemble (mux) himself back together.

I especially like the word "muxed" is that Kerouac uses it in *Visions of Cody*, a passage that I quote in that story I wrote with Paul DiFilippo, "Instability." Jack is writing about the Three Stooges, and refers to one of them, the dumb one (Joe?) as something like, "mopple-lipped, muxed and terminally flunk."

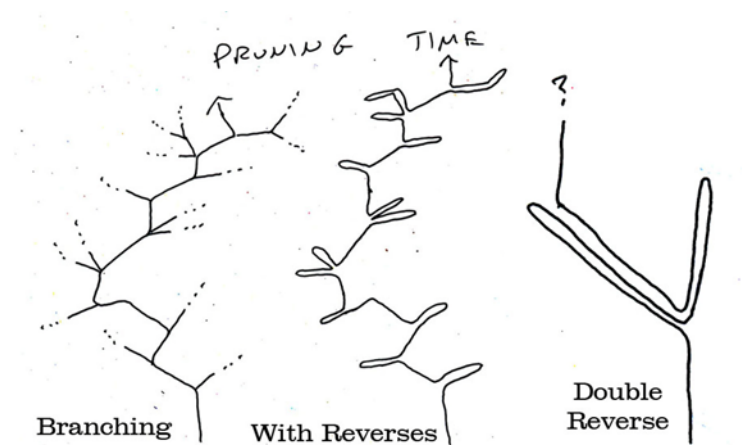
## The Time Fan

I've always been repelled by the notion of the multiversal world of branching time—a cosmos in which no decision matters, as you also do the opposite in some other branch of time.

Rather than feeling that the other paths are real, we in fact have an emotional, experiential sense that the bad, unchosen paths are in fact shriveling away to the left and the right. If we didn't feel this way, why would we sweat our big choices?

I'd like to see a story in which the unchosen paths really *are* withering away. Or, if not withering, being somehow backed away from.

So for the purposes of an SF story I'm thinking of, I'll propose that there really is only one truly existing path through the branching thicket of possible worlds. The others are juiceless abstractions. But I do want a sense of someone feeling out the best paths as in Phil Dick's vintage precog story, "The Golden Man."



**FIGURE 33: REVERSING FROM BAD TIME BRANCHES**

My gimmick might be to suppose that our path is not quite a pure line. Our cosmic world line *does* very commonly grow a stub out a few seconds (or longer) past a given branch point. But then it backs up and goes into the main branch. There's a continuous line of time but it sometimes reverses its direction a bit and then starts forward on a new tack.

Suppose these reversals of time are very common. In fact they're all but ubiquitous, as rapid as the flickering flow of thought. I think of the physicist John Wheeler's remark that electrons are waves because they need to "sniff out the best path."

People don't notice the reversals. When the time flow kinks and makes a U-turn, those moving along the timeline experience events as running backwards. Like a rewind. But they don't notice. The memories get erased. If you play a movie backwards, it's not like the people on the screen start saying, "Hey, we're going backwards."

In order to have a story, we'd need that our character *does* learn to notice. How?

Not quite sure. Suppose this guy has learned to view his memories as in some sense real. And he develops a 4D spacetime consciousness so as to be present at each instant

of his life. And he manages to get so in tune with the universe as a whole that he (falsely) begins to imagine that he's influencing the reversals, the U-turns. Like a gambler on a roll who starts falsely imagining he's influencing the dice with telekinesis.

Some others have the rare power to notice time's reversals as well. And our hero meets a woman with this power, and they are fellow travelers for a while. Watching the reversals happen. Timefreaks. Not entirely sure if they are or are not causing the U-turns. Discussing this.

In writing about time adventures, I'd prefer not to bring in the tar-baby of second-order time. I'd like to see just one bright, folded time line that's etched upon a time fan. So I don't want my characters actually to be changing the shape of the line, because then we're looking at a second-order time in which the man's and the woman's long world-snakes of a time-bodies are kinking and writhing. They *feel* like this is happening. But actually they're wrong.

So what's the story's kicker? Let's say something bad happens to our hero. He's about to die in a really gnarly and horrible accident. And he decides that his life for the last few hours or months has been on a bad path. There's an element of romantic conflict with his woman friend as well. And now he wishes he could roll back the universe before he dies. And then at the last second, a secret miracle seems to happen—like in the Borges story where time stops just as a guy is about to be executed by a firing squad, that is, the guy perceives time as stopping so he can think things over before the end.

In our story, the hero imagines that he or some cosmic power has gotten hold of the whole universe and put it into reverse just before he was about to get creamed.

But now, with universe onto a new path, something worse happens. Our hero meets up with his lost woman friend, and, oh no, now *she's* about to die horribly. He makes another huge effort of the will, and experiences another temporal U-turn and maybe then he goes into a branch where things get even worser. There seems to be no

happy path on the time fan of possibilities. The world was as good as possible before he hit that one lifesaving U-turn. And now, without exactly willing this, he ends up at that point again. And he meets his death. It's a little like that Ambrose Bierce story, "An Occurrence at Owl Creek Bridge."

The one upside is that, in this (final?) version, the woman lives.

Right before he dies he realizes that there never was any second-order time at all, no meta-time. He was just sniffing along a repeatedly folded back section of the immutable cosmic timeline, and was only imagining that he was causing the U-turns.

Haunting possibility—the timeline is fractal, like a space-filling curve, endlessly going back and forth, so that there never is a stone-cold final version of your life—as more and more of the timeline is taken into account, you undergo an infinite number of fate-flips. Like trying to sum the divergent Grandi series  $1 - 1 + 1 - 1 + 1 - 1 + \dots$

## **Towards A Final Plan!**

*On October 15, 2012, I posted an early version of this and the following entries in this "Ideas" section on my blog as "[SF Religion 3: Qwet](#)." I introduced the post as being about some of my ideas for my novel-in-progress, *The Big Aha*. But I continued revising and adding to this entry for some time thereafter. And I posted another excerpt on my blog on Oct 24, 2012: "[Two Mind Modes. Telepathy](#)."*

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I'll start with a physical process that produces an unusual state of consciousness. And then I'll trace out the sense of excitement and personal liberation among the adepts; the wider public's incomprehension and fear; the denunciations and attacks from the politicians and the exponents of existing religions; and the inescapable international tsunami of interest.

I want the catalyzing, mind-altering spark to be something involving quantum mechanics. Not a drug. A

technique of mind-alteration that's literally physics-based. I'm going to call it *qwet*, which is short for quantum wetware. The users of this technique are called *qwetties*.

In a nutshell, qwet gives you a certain type of telepathic power—called teep for short. You can share the mind states of other people, and animals and, to some extent, the “mind states” of plants and objects. You're sharing the states in the sense of merging-into, rather than in the sense of observing-from-the-outside.

Later I'll say a more about the nature of quantum wetware and about how this quantum-mediated teep is going to work.

## **Birth of a Religion**

But now let me talk about some models for the birth of a modern religion. The psychedelic movement was in some ways an event of this kind. And it was based upon science, that is, upon the use of a specific newly-discovered synthetic chemical. The idea of a physical or chemical process that leads to a cult or a religion is very SFictional.

It's easy to replace LSD by qwet teep and recast the cultural history of the psychedelic revolution: the early voices-in-the-wilderness Beats, Tim Leary's high-minded proselytizing, the Pranksters' street psychedelia, and then the mass fad, complete with convivial freakouts and light shows.

I see a qwettie wearing a button: *Are you qwet yet?*

How do we get from qwet as a method to qwet as a religion? The acidheads were interpreting a certain brain phenomenon in religious terms—what you might call *experimental mysticism* (the philosopher P. D. Ouspensky used this phrase as the title for an essay discussing his experiences with what must have been opium or hashish.) But street psychedelia never attained the status of a sanctioned religion—although the traditional Peyote Religion did find cover as the Native American Church.

Mormonism is another intriguing model of a modern religion. The underlying “real world evidence” here is the

Book of Mormon, said to have been found inscribed on golden plates and deciphered via two “stones of sight” called Urim and Thummim. What if the plates had been left on Earth by a UFO? Or what if they’d welled up from a hidden, subdimensional level of reality?

What if, in my novel, the techniques of quantum wetware were *unearthed* rather than *invented*?

Yet another offbeat modern-religion story is that of Dianetics/Scientology. As I understand it, Dianetics was originally a scientifically inspired tool for exploring one’s personality—the E-meter, a fairly simple device that measures the changing resistance of a person’s skin—not unlike a simple lie detector. In order to fend off unwelcome government scrutiny of his E-meter technique and of any health claims made for it, L. Ron Hubbard changed his movement to a religion, that is, to Scientology, and the E-meter results were now viewed as religious phenomena rather than as diagnostic medical results.

In analogy to these developments, I can see a situation in which the qwet technique might initially be viewed as a practical communication channel, or as an empathy-promoter, or simply as an offbeat mind-toy. But then it evolves into the Qwet religion. The switch might initially be a tactic to forestall some type of governmental crackdown.

Joey Moon is kind of a prophet of the Qwet religion. Joey uses Neal Cassady’s line. “We’re 4D minds in 3D bodies in a 2D world.”

What might be some rituals of the Qwet religion? Once I was at the Esalen Institute south of Big Sur with Terence McKenna. He and I were leading a seminar entitled “Wetware and Stoneware.” One of the women in the group was talking about “sacred dancing.” Cheryl from Carmel—she was a follower of Terence’s, and she talked about driving up from Esalen to the River Inn in Big Sur to get in some sacred dancing. By way of explaining this, she held her upraised hands together and moved her head back and forth.

If you have qwet teep, you can do sacred dancing without having to be in the same place as the other dancers, and there doesn't have to be an audible sound. I'm thinking of a silent street disco scene I saw at the San Jose Zero1 Biennial this September, where each dancer had a pair of earphones, and we were dancing in a virtual soundscape.

## **The Motivation for Qwet Tech**

It's worth recalling that the US government's CIA seems to have been active in the initial dissemination of acid to the American public—in the form of scientific tests aimed at seeing if LSD could be used a weapon against enemy troops.

It might be that qwet tech is a government-funded. What if Gaven Graber is in fact somewhat evil, something of a mad scientist, deeply bitter about being treated like a geek in high-school, and thus eager to be in with the authoritarian government as opposed to the liberal antiestablishment cool grudes like Zad Plant. Gaven has sought out a government contract for his work.

What would be Gaven's motivations for qwet, and what could be the military motivations.

- \* Qwet as an intelligence amplifier for nurbs. It gives the nurbs quantum computation. Finds a way turn on and off the three-tier collapse self-observation circuit. But this isn't doing the full job.

- \* Gaven learns to turn off the collapse circuit in humans. He uses the biological yoga bug. Initially this is seen as a disorientation weapon. Seems to flip people out, make them floppy and weird.

- \* A human-to-nurb communication tool for copying a personality onto a nurb.

- \* Opens up a human-to-human teep communication channel. Here we encounter the oblivious teep issue. You get a lot of empathy and you end up being more like the person you linked to, but you don't come away with actively searchable information.

## The Two Mind Modes

Open your (inner) eyes to your true mental life. A related notion that continues to inspire me is the mind-as-quantum-system notion that my philosopher-sage friend Nick Herbert calls quantum tantra (see my [blog post](#) about this).

Open your (inner) eyes to your true mental life. Your state of mind can evolve in two kinds of ways that I'll fancifully call—"robotic" and "cosmic". The "robotic" mental processes proceed step-by-step—via reasoning and analysis, by reading or hearing words, by forming specific opinions. Every opinion diminishes you.

The "cosmic" changes are preverbal flows. If you turn off your endlessly-narrating inner voice, your consciousness becomes analog, like waves on a pond. You're merged with the world. You're with the One. It can be as simple as the everyday activity of being alert—without consciously thinking much of anything. In the cosmic mode you aren't standing outside yourself and evaluating your thoughts.

The cosmic mode is what's happening between/behind/around your precise robotic communicable thoughts. The idea is to notice the spaces between your thoughts, or to avoid being caught up in your thoughts. This is a fairly common meditation exercise.

We might have some specific brain sites that control when our state of consciousness flips from being with the *One*, that is, in a smooth, mixed, continuous or "cosmic" state—of being with the *Many*, that is, down to the "robotic," specific-opinion state. If you're a dreamy sort of person, your natural trend is to drift out to unspecificity, out the One. But other personality types tend always to be pushing down into the robotic, studying the details of the *Many*—a force which I'll later personify as a god-like being called "Swarm."

I'm imagining a qwet treatment that helps you can get into—and *remain within*—a smooth state for a longish period of time.



As I've often said, I have the experiential sensation that my mind oscillates between One/Many about sixty times per second. Between the "cosmic"/"robotic" consciousness modes. You do need both modes to get by. The One state is like a radar ping you reach out into the world around you, and the Many state is when you say, "Okay, I'm alone here, it's me against the world, what do I do next to stay alive?"

Breaking away from the cosmic mode can be thought as involving a quantum collapse. You go from a broader, more ambiguous state to a more specific state. How does the collapse work? It affects not just *you*, but the things that you're looking at and coupled to. Everything around you becomes overly precise, that is, robotic instead of cosmic. Less interesting. The way some people can make a whole scene dull just by the way they start talking about it. "How much did that cost? Is that safe to have around? Did you notice the scratch on it?"

Do animals have collapses? Do physical objects? Let's say "not usually." Might the ability to collapse be connected to having consciousness? Let's say "yes."

What if I use the Antonio Damasio's definition of consciousness as "the ability to visualize yourself visualizing yourself." You can watch a model of yourself watching yourself. It's a three-level map. Actor, strategist, analyst. The *actor* just does things, like an animal. The *strategist* observes the actor and makes corrections. The *analyst* observes the strategist's decisions and improves on them.

Suppose that this is a kind of physical map, a three-tier flow of quantum information, and that for a fixed-point theorem type reason, these flows cause quantum collapse—they throw a system into an eigenstate, that is, into a robotic, non-cosmic, fixed point. Humans are the main things that are three-tier collapses, but such collapses do occur naturally in certain places, just as certain types of crystals or mirrors might be found in nature. The spots with collapses seem to have bad juju, that is, they're inherently boring.

I see the collapsers as being like snags in a rushing muddy river of quantum flow. And the snags leave precise ripple wakes. And there can be a kind of beauty to the moiré patterns of the overlaid wakes—this is what we call our human culture.

## Telepathy

Teep is a key aspect of the qwet experience. One way of starting to imagine telepathy: your thoughts aren't at all like a page of symbols—they're blotches and rhythms and associations.

As Nick Herbert has explained in his essay Holistic Physics , or, An Introduction to Quantum Tantra, it's natural to regard the cosmic, analog mental process as essentially quantum mechanical. You can couple your "cosmic" mental state to the "cosmic" state of another person, or even to the state of another object.

*Key Plot Point:* For quantum theoretic reasons, the link between the two systems isn't of a kind that can leave memory traces, otherwise the link is functioning as an observation that drags consciousness back down to the robotic mode. It's what Nick Herbert calls an *oblivious link*. An oblivious merge. So you can't directly exchange specific, usable info via quantum teep. In my novel this will be a disappointment to the government backers of the qwet experiments.

But your mind state *will* be changed by your teep interactions. Only not in the obvious way of "remembering what they 'said'." After teeping with someone, when you later drop back down into your chatty "robotic" state, you'll find that you are saying things you wouldn't have said before the merge. But maybe you're not sure why.

This isn't so different from a memory of a very deep, close, intense conversation with someone—a talk where you really got onto the same wavelength. Like a talk in bed with a lover, or a talk stoned with a pal, or, for that matter my talks with Kurt Gödel at the Institute. And an outsider is, like, "So what did they tell you?" And maybe you can't

verbalize the details, maybe it's easier to talk about how *having had* the conversation makes you feel.

As a shot in the dark, Nick Herbert suggests that you might achieve an oblivious link with someone by immersing the two of you in a slowly varying magnetic field. I'll propose that you entangle with someone whom you're physically near by breathing each other's breaths. More haptic and fun to write about. Uses smells as well as breath. You *smell* each other—and your minds merge. I like that.

I remember once in 1977 or so, I was lying in our bed in Geneseo, NY, quite high, and Sylvia was undressing on the other side of the darkened room, and *ping*, I could feel one of her musky scent molecules docking in my scent receptors, sending a thrill down my spine. We really are sensitive to the very smallest of physical effects, if we're in a state of mind to notice.

Here's a painting of telepathy that I did before I really started *The Big Aha*. By way of preparation.



**FIGURE 34: THE LOVERS, OIL, 24 " X 20 ", JANUARY, 2012**

## The Big Aha Revisited

Eventually we'll get an SF kicker—a big aha—whereby there are in fact some higher-level beings revealed by the qwetties' telepathic visions. Weird and otherworldly experiences. Odd critters living behind straight-reality's sets. Like rats on a sound stage. But not rats, as we already have the material qwet rats. The unseen, ghostly Qwetland darters.

Re. this remark, my blog-reader Brendan Byrne commented, that Qwetland darters remind him of the “machine elves” seen by DMT users. “There's something incredibly disconcerting about the idea that everyone who ever does DMT is seeing the same thing.”

And it would be disconcerting if the qwet visions were all related!

A relevant hit from Nick Herbert: synchronicity might be evidence that we're all parts of some higher being. The higher mind's “cosmic” states filter down into surprising match-up within our mundane “robotic” reality. Thus, two distant people (or objects) might “remember” related aspects of a shared vision.

## Quantum Wetware

So what *is* quantum wetware and how does it give you telepathy?

In a way, the phrase “quantum wetware” is a pleonasm, like “hot fire.” I'm using wetware to mean a person's biological material, viewed as a kind of computer. Not just the DNA, but all the other chemicals as well. The interactions of these complex biochemical molecules are ruled by quantum mechanics. So any wetware is already in some sense quantum.

This said, our simplistic PowerPoint-style descriptions of something like DNA often depict it in a classical-physics, Tinker-toy, Turing-machine kind of way. Indeed, there really is a crisp, mechanistic quality to the actions and reactions of our bodies' proteins and enzymes. Quantum

mechanics is the playing field, but the players are solid little lumps.

But now I want to get away from that. Since it's states of consciousness I'll be talking about, I'm particularly interested in having neurons and neurotransmitters that are in the so-called mixed states of quantum mechanics. Not *yes*, not *no*, but *both*.

Somehow you disable the "observation" process that collapses your mental state. It's a de-opinionater. An undecider circuit. A decision blocker. You grow dark with light. You're kicked back. In the rainbow haze. Neither here nor there.

I need to dream up some specific pseudoscience here. A faked-up laboratory physics break-through.

Imagine a certain magical vibration, like the Lost Chord in *Hylozoic*? It's like a snake-charmer's flute, it makes the atoms dance a new filigree. "The goat-footed balloonman whistles far and wee."

I liked the trick I used in *Master of Space and Time*, where they'd temporarily change the size of the Planck length to a meter, so that Harry Gerber (or Joe Fletcher) could fit their head inside a fully Plancked zone, and then whatever they think turns real. They did it with gluons. But I don't exactly want that again.

But I think the Lost Chord and the enlarged Planck length might be too temporary or short-lived in their effects.

I'd like qwetness to be something that you can sort of get *infected* with in a permanent way. But qwetness can also be a light, passing derangement as well. Like if I'm talking to a qwettie, I get little rush of qwetness and start blending with the qwettie's mind, but when they leave this fades away.

So what is qwetness? An anomalous, communicable quantum state.

Similar to the degenerate-matter contagion of the alternate vacuum state in *Spaceland*, but not so strong, and not something that automatically spreads.

Maybe it involves rotating the structures in some of your elementary particles. Rotating them through the tiny

vermin-dimension-hyperthickness of our space. I'm visualizing a string that becomes a ribbon. A shiny metallic ribbon. It used to be that the ribbon's thickness stuck up into 4D and in our space it looked like a string, but now it's fallen over to one side and lies in our space and it looks like a ribbon. But the ribbon deal is probably too abstract, and it's too remote from what people will experience.

In QM, they seem to talk about "decoherent" as meaning "linked to many other systems around you, and by dint of that being more likely to be in a single collapsed state" as opposed to "coherent" which means "isolated and in a mixed uncollapsed state." I used this terminology in *Frek and the Elixir*. But it's very bewildering, and I'm never sure I'm using it right. I just read a completely confusing article "The Role of Decoherence in Quantum Theory" in the online *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy*. I think I'd better just stay away from the coherent/decoherent distinction. Although maybe Gaven can toss in some remark like "Decoherence theory changed all that."

I need some homegrown jargon. Particle theorists talk about spin-up or spin-down, but we might have kata-spin. Or, no, *unspun*.

I'll use the word "*unspun*" to mean being in the cosmic mind state of smooth wave-function evolution, and you're tuned in on the wave functions around you and with the universal wave function at large. You're unspun—as opposed to being tightly wrapped in the mummy-shroud of your worry trips, your obsessions, your mental gerbil wheels, your fears and remorse. You're unspun, grude, you're in tune with the All.

Note that being unspun does not mean being in a highly mixed state. Thanks to decoherence theory, we now understand that the world naturally functions in approximately classical modes. It's just that the tiny details aren't fucking nailed down until some guy gets all spun and starts measuring shit.

The unspun state can be spread by a biological agent. Maybe I'll call it the *yoga bug*. It's lower down than a

biological virus, it's more like a computer virus, that is a quantum-computer virus.

If you get some unspun particles in your system, you're able to hold back on doing your mental mind collapse from the cosmic state to the robotic state. And this opens the door to telepathy, a.k.a. teep—in that sense of oblivious merging that I discussed.

You experience the invasion of unspun particles as your narrow flow of thought fanning out into a tide. You're not alone anymore, not locked into your anxieties. You're unspun. You're all qwet.

## The Higher World

I like thinking about a higher or alternate form of reality. In *The Big Aha*, I want to give my characters access to a more cosmic or far-out level. And then some of my characters learn to jump bodily into this higher world. And they find some creepy vermin living there. Creatures who do not have humankind's best interests at heart.

So what is the higher world? Offhand I can think of several SFictional possibilities.

(0) This is the traditional one. The "other" world is a physical place in our space. Either on our planet, as in mysterious voyage tales, like an island, an undersea cave, in the Antarctic, in a hidden valley. Or off-world, like on another planet. Or sort of on our planet, but not in an obvious place, like inside the hollow earth, or on a cloud.

(1) It could be a parallel sheet of spacetime, perhaps with a different kind of physics. But I used this option in *Postsingular* and *Hylozoic*, and I don't want to recycle it here.

(2) It could be a higher-dimensional hyperspace. And then our world is a sheet inside this hyperspace, and the hyperbeings move about in the higher dimensions at will. They may dip into our world now and then. I used this model in *Spaceland*.

(2a) The hyperspace model can be adapted to a religious or spiritualist notions of incorporeal beings looking down

on our world. Ghosts, spirits, demons, angels, gods, devils. *Spaceland* works somewhat along these lines.

(2b) An alternate use of a higher dimensional level is to suppose that the higher beings aren't particularly aware of or interested in us, they're simply rooting like moles or writhing around like lampreys, and if they happen to pass through our world it's more or less an accident. Although then, of course, they might develop a *taste* for our hyperflat bodies. And then we're flank steak. Cold cuts.

(3) Another idea is to suppose that the "higher" world exists at very small size scales. In what's sometimes called the subdimensions. I used this approach in *Jim and the Flims*, where the higher world could be found inside an electron. Lots of room at the bottom!

(4) Or we can go to the "big" direction. That is, put the higher world at an infinite distance from Earth. Out past alef-null. I used this move in *White Light*, and at the very end of *Hylozoic*.

(5) Another angle is something more vague—a higher world that overlays ours in the same space, but which is, for whatever reason, generally imperceptible. Perhaps their quantum wave functions are perpetually 180 degrees out of phase with ours. Putting this differently, it may be that the creatures in the higher world are made of a "dark" or subtle type of matter which doesn't interact with us. And it may be that each of does in fact have a subtle matter soul. You can learn to do a hyperdimensional somersault that twists your elementary particles into bits of subtle matter. That is, you can do a "chin-up" that lifts you into the subtle world.

Comment on this by Joseph Zizys:

A variation on your number 5 might be that rather than quantum phase or fairies, the overlay might simply be over different aggregates to those we usually ascribe "thingness" to. So perhaps there is an entity that consists of your left shoe, the wall down the left side of the ally behind the theatre



and a blade of grass a few miles away. A whole different regime applies to this overlay, it has a perfectly consistent physics and a reasonable philosophy that connects its aggregates into things, and in fact the entities from that "angle" struggle to see what could possibly make an aggregate like a locally clustered bunch of water and calcium etc into a "person", it simply does not flow intuitively from their physics.

You could maybe have schizophrenics or something who intuit "significance" in sites and things that turn out to be entities from the overlay. Likewise, the relation could be reciprocal; only "insane" entities from the overlay can sense the coherence of entities in our "angle".

Restating Zizy's idea, the so-called subtle world might be one in which the (somewhat subjective and arbitrary after all) collections viewed as objects are distinct from the collections we ourselves view as objects.

This brings to mind a half-remembered notion from quantum mechanics, having to do with the fundamental reality being a wave function in infinite dimensional Hilbert space. But there are endlessly many ways to set up the axes in this space, and each setup would be experienced as a different flavor of reality.

(6) What about virtual reality? Could a higher world be a virtual reality running within—what? Way too boring if it's in a digital computer, although I did touch on this possibility at the start of Chapter 12 in *Postsingular*. It would be more interesting if the "virtual reality" computation was being generated by natural objects in the physical world. Air currents, flames, water waves. And this effectively takes us into Zizy's variation on (5).

Upshot? You're in the higher world with the archetypes and dreams and thoughts walking around! But! Look out for the subtle rats!

## Possible Scenes

### The Raven's Heart

In the summer of 2011, I was riding a horse in the woods in Wyoming, and I saw a large raven in a tree. I remembered a particular fairy-tale scene I loved when I was growing up. Here's my summary of how I remember it.

A boy is the helper of a wizard. They're travelling across the countryside, and the wizard manages to shoot a particular raven with his bow. The wizard tells the boy to build a fire and roast the raven's heart for him, giving the boy particular instructions that he mustn't taste the tiniest fragment of the heart until the wizard has had the first bite. The wizard lies down for a nap and the boy gets to work. The raven's heart sizzles over the flame, and piece of hot fat lands on the boy's finger, burning it. The boy puts the finger to his mouth, licking it to soothe the pain. And in that instant he receives the magic power that lay in the raven's heart: he can understand the speech of birds and animals. Awakening, the wizard takes one look at the boy and knows that the boy has stolen the power that was to be the wizard's. The boy takes off on his own, aided by advice and guidance from the birds and animals he passes.

Somehow this episode has always held a special meaning for me. When my son Rudy was young, I'd discuss this story with him, and when we'd bring a roast holiday turkey to the table. We'd compete to tear off and devour a scrap of the golden skin and say to the other, "Now I understand the speech of birds and animals."

And so we rode up through the aspens, up through the late-summer-yellow fields, up to the bare windy peak of Bacon's Ridge. Perhaps I could write a fantasy tale?

Working title: *The Raven's Heart*. And it starts with that scene of the raven's heart. And a boy learns to understand the speech of objects.

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I'm thinking that I'll use "The Raven's Heart" as a flashback or early episode about my Big Aha character's experiences as a twelve-year-old. Perhaps at this point my character is sometimes assisting his father, a low-grade commercial artist, a wine-festival type painter.

My character gains (or thinks he gains) a magical ability to hear not only the voices of birds and animals, but also the voices of plants, stones, and of man-made objects. The raven-catcher is, at least initially, ambiguous. He presents himself as a wanderer.

After the raven experience and his conviction that objects are talking to him, my character begins to paint in a matter that interests people, even though his style remains a bit awkward (for instance, he can't do perspective very well).

As a twist, we have a second and maybe a third encounter with the wanderer whose raven-heart gave my character his power.

In the second encounter, the young man finds his way into a hobo jungle where he meets fantastic creatures like the Grulloos of *Frek and the Elixir*. In principle the Grulloos *could* in fact be limbless beggars. But it would be more fun if they were in fact healthy and nimble. Bio-tweaked. Our hero revisits the Grulloos from time to time at crisis points in his adult life.

In our character's third and final encounter with the wanderer, the man is being executed for genomics crimes. The execution is live on the web. As the man dies, he seems to look into our character's eyes and to say, "I live in you."

Possibly the wanderer is a timefreak, perhaps even an older version of the boy.

\*\*\*

When I was visiting Georgia and her family in Madison, Wisconsin, we went to an outdoor concert in a park. There weren't many lights, and people were wandering around in the dark, with a few uncrowded food and drink booths still open. In a pool of shadow, I leaned against a tree to piss. The scene had a medieval feel, and I thought of a Bosch novel.

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My character Zad and his friend (or uncle) Carlo go for a campout on St. Joseph's Hill above Los Perros. It's for fun, but Carlo informally wants to give the boy some kind of initiation rite or some guidance towards a career.

The hill is fairly abandoned, although there are a few grown homes in sight. Carlo has brought along a whole backpack of new-wave quantum-enhanced nurb products that he wants to play with—he got them at a confidential industry convention. The new Slygro uvvy is quantum-enhanced, that's how it interfaces with the brain.

In his pack, Carlo has, among other things, a chatty little mouse that Zad now jokingly dubs Reepicheep after the mouse musketeer in the *Narnia* stories, which he likes. Reepicheep's mind is supporting a nearly human-level quantum computation. Carlo claims that one can develop a type of telepathic contact with Reepicheep—the channel is based on quantum entanglement. He's not quite willing to show Zad how to establish this connection.

We have a version of the legendary "Raven's Heart" scene. The food is a quail that Zad's Uncle Carlo has killed with a smart dart that he launched from blowgun. The dart is a moth that's been put into a contagious quantum state of ecstatic union with the cosmos.

They break the zonked quail's neck, pluck it and roast it over a tiny heat-promoting salamander. This salamander has silicon instead of hydrocarbons in its body, and it curls up and glows, generating the heat by funneling energy in from vacuum fluctuations. It's like a Maxwell's demon.

The moth's union-with-the-universal-wave-function state has an effect on Zad. It's a preview of the Big Aha. Zad dreams up a way of using the nebulous Big Aha as a way to leapfrog the bio stage and start programming matter directly.

### **Gypsy Girl.**

On Aug 4, 2005, I see an interesting woman on the main shopping street of Geneva, she's dressed in a chartreuse Middle-Eastern-type robe, hooded over her head, kind of a burnoose, with a veil over her face, she's holding a wooden flute, she's lily-white with wisps of red-blonde hair visible, she's standing motionless, the idea being that if you toss a coin into her begging-bowl she'll come to life and maybe play the flute.

Later on a back street I see her walking along in front of me, in a novelistic word she'd be in fact tailing me in this fashion, or deliberately leading me, she deliberately got in front of me.

I take a photo of her from behind, and then step up my pace to pass her and get a good look at her. She goes up some stone steps to a little square where a bum-man is sitting on a bench with a battered guitar, she seems to know him, she stops by him to talk. Her veil is off now, her skin is oily and unwashed, her lips are full and ripe, she's unimaginably beautiful, a child of privilege who's walking on the wild side, a pot-smoker no doubt.

I imagine my hero of *The Big Aha* having this encounter and taking up a friendship with the girl and the man — perhaps their names are Ondine and Klaas. Perhaps, if I use the Raven's Heart scenes, the guy is the wanderer from our hero's youth. Perhaps the girl is the fellow timefreak whom my hero falls in love with.

So this becomes a pivotal scene.



**FIGURE 35: GYPSY GIRL (IN GENEVA), MODEL FOR LOULOU SZASZ**

“Gypsy Girl” meet with my character Loulou Szasz. Loulou is young, about Zad’s age. Hot. At one point he thinks he sees Loulou talking to another man. But then the man fades away. Loulou talks about the Big Aha just like Carlo did. But she seems unclear about what it is, or maybe

she's just being evasive. They go back to Loulou's room and, somewhat unexpectedly for Zad, they fuck. Loulou has some field-pulsing magnets by her bed, scavenged from an old MRI machine. They lull Zad into a trance where he feels quite close to Loulou. He tells Loulou all about Carlo's method for making the Slygro uvvies safe.

A week later, Zad's mother tells him that the Slygro uvvies have been cleared by the government for further production, but that Maunderwell is already cloning the Slygro uvvy. Zad suspects that Loulou has somehow ripped him off.

Zad finds Loulou downtown. She doesn't admit anything, but Zad suddenly gets a nice job as a so-called nurb vet in a Yangshiny shop. Yangshiny makes message mice. Loulou has a lot of connections. Or did Keira and Slygro get him the job?

### **Ansel Adams Trek**

Yesterday I heard a guy telling the story of his life. At one point he was a homeless alcoholic living in Griffith Park in LA. And he'd spend all day sitting in a library, to be sheltered and comfortable, and because he liked looking at books. He found his way to an Ansel Adams photography book, and fell in love with a photo of a mountain in the Sierras. As the weeks went by and his despair increased, he decided to kill himself. He'd go to this mountain in the Sierras and kill himself there. How would he get there? He'd walk along the railroad tracks.

But he never made it. On the way, in Glendale, he met up with some people who helped him to quit drinking and to change his plans.

### **Starship Launch**

Maybe use this when something like when some aliens show up. It's based on a journal note about a scene I saw in Balestrand, Norway, in 2010.

The high-school brass band played a few numbers, including the Norwegian national anthem and *Happy*

*Birthday*—the musician kids all pale-skinned blondes and redheads. An official made a short speech, a woman in a Norwegian folk dress broke a bottle of champagne against the hull, and we joined a stream of locals filing up the gangplank to look around the huge *Stril Challenger*. And then the ship took off for a little cruise across the fjord and back, although my wife and I had gotten off by then—I was unsure about how long the cruise might be. Later, after the passengers came back, we watched as the ship cavorted around the fjord, with smaller launches buzzing around it—I think of the word, “lighter,” used to mean a smaller boat that you use to unload a barge. I like that ships use smaller boats as extensions of themselves. Imagine still smaller shuttle pods emerging from the lighters. A fractal regress of ships.

A great mothership ship with smaller ships circling it—the lighters. And one of the lighters darts down to a boy’s house, the lighter appears in the room of our young hero, Gunnar, to take him on a trip. As the lighter carries him off, Gunnar cries out for some precious object that he forgot—and a lower-level lighter the size of a basketball goes back to his room to scoop up the pet soft plastic robot that Gunnar calls a “shoon.”

And then an even lower-level lighter zooms back from that little lighter to get a toy that the shoon treasures, perhaps a snail shell.

And the snail shell is the key to peace with the High Epopt of the Granfaloonian race whom they encounter.

## **Father Is An Artist**

The setting is Los Perros, California, 2080. Our hero is Zad Plant, about twenty. He graduated from high-school, but doesn’t see any point in going to college. Colleges aren’t very popular anymore. He’s been working on his car, installing an undulating snail-foot in place of wheels. He also works helping his father Lennox Plant in his production of commercial paintings for motels and interior decorators. Zad is showing his father how to use some so-called



inkworms to speed up the work. Zad's mother Reba designs immersive ads that run on the web.

The snail-foot and the inkworms are what's known as nurbs, that is, bioengineered special-purpose organisms. They're made by a company called Slygro. Zad's thirty-year-old uncle, Carlo Solera, is a wetware engineer at Slygro, a smallish biotech company struggling for market share. Uncle Carlo is the younger brother of Zad's mother Reba.

## Nurbs and Uvvies

Slygro's only two products are the snailfoot and the inkworm, but now they're launching a new model uvvy—which is a thing like a living smart-phone that you wear on your neck. The Slygro uvvy has a platypus beak, with gecko-feet to stick to your neck. Carlo gives beta-level samples of the product to Zad and Reba. Zad's father Lennox isn't interested, he doesn't like to wear an uvvy at all.

There's all sorts of nurbs. Other companies make knifeplants, floor tongues, live chairs, squidskin screens, dragonfly cameras, message mice and grown homes. Slygro is competing with Maunderwell, who make the old-school uvvies that are rubbery shelf mushrooms that grow hyphae into your spine.

Thanks to her brother Carlo's connections at Slygro, Reba has a contract to designing ads for the Slygro uvvies. The idea is to present the Maunderwell uvvies as being unsafe. But it's going to be hard to distribute the Slygro ads, as the Maunderwell uvvies will be blocking them to protect the Maunderwell market.

Inspired by his feeling of hearing voices from things, Zad teaches some of his father Lennox's inkworms to work in a new style—but Dad doesn't like the style. Well, Zad isn't satisfied with painting anyway—he'd rather work with the web.

Zad is rocking with his new beta-model Slygro uvvy. He dreams up some stunning effects for his mother Reba's

Slygro ads, based on his vision of being able to talk to objects. But that's not his big accomplishment. The big thing is that his new viewpoint leads to a method of sending the Slygro ads in a viral, encrypted form—using a different encryption for each instance. And this way he can circumvent Maunderwell's attempts to interdict the Slygro ads from appearing on the Maunderwell uvvies.

## Turning Into A Platypus

The news is that Carlo has undergone a dangerous gene alteration—the reentrant quantum-activated DNA strands of the Slygro uvvy are infectious. Uncle Carlo is nowhere to be found, and two more of the workers at Slygro are gone as well, including Carlo's boss, Mr. Puffer.

Late that afternoon, Zad finds Carlo in a pond. Carlo's in a terrible state—he's furry and has short legs and a paddle tail like a platypus, and his lips pooch out like a beak. He sadly acknowledges how ridiculous it is to turn into a platypus. Carlo tells Zad about the treatment he's going to try, and he warns that Zad himself might be in some danger from having worn a Slygro uvvy. And possibly the smart dart's quantum space-out union-with-the-universal-wave-function vibes could have an effect.

Two other platypus-like beings hiding are with Carlo as well—feral creatures with needle teeth in their beak-like mouths. Carlo's former co-workers at Slygro. Carlo's former boss Mr. Puffer scuttles out of the wide mouth hole of the pond-side burrow as if to attack Zad. Carlo sends Zad away.

Later Zad watches as the cops raid Carlo's camp. Carlo has just about healed himself by now, using the materials that Zad brought him. But Mr. Puffer charges the cops. The cops go wild and incinerate Carlo and his companions with a napalm drop. At the last minute Carlo's anguished silhouette seems to disappear from the flames. Zad can feel sharp spikes growing out of his heels.

Zad worries that he's poisoned, and in fact one of his toes falls off. And his legs seem to be withering. And his stomach skin is furry. Is he turning into a platypus too?

The venom from the platypus spurs holds a quantum-viral encryption of your knowledge and personality.

### **Big Aha Crew**

They form a Big Aha crew. There's a Kesey's bus vibe in Zad's snail-footed car with Loulou's MRI magnets. They get into quantum demuxing.

The wacky matter shtick emerges.

Someone is about to kill Zad. He uses the Big Aha, and he and Loulou go invisible like Carlo, on the Higher Plane. Finally they connect with Carlo, then come back to Earth. And then there's another crisis. Which they solve.

## **Deleted Passages**

### **First Try At A Start, January, 2012**

"What's the first sentence that comes to mind?" asked Uncle Carlo. He had an overly smooth face. He was about forty and he'd been tweaking his genes for twenty years. By now his face resembled a painting that's been restored too many times.

Carlo was holding a kind of rat, a prototype from the Slygro labs, fully wetware engineered—what they called a nurb. Carlo was pretty much shoving the nurb into Zad's face. He was testing it for one of his friends.

Zad was tall, in his mid-twenties, with dark, floppy hair and a good tan. He wore jeans, a striped shirt, and monkey-paw nurb shoes. A good tan. He spent a lot of time in the treetops—he could hop right into them from his lofty room, located inside the trunk of a hundred-foot tall housetree. Right now Zad was slouched in a slowly-shifting foam chair, eyeing his uncle's rat.

"Give me a quick reaction to it," Carlo urged Zad.  
"Don't think."

“He’s skungy,” said Zad with a shrug. “Scary teeth.”

The nurb’s black-bead eyes twinkled with intelligence. His pink-lined ears made small movements, picking up on Zad’s voice, on the rustling leaves of the housetree, on the faint sounds of Zad’s parents down at the base of the trunk. Hyperalert.

“Skungy,” echoed Carlo. “Old slang. I like that.” He gave the rat a sharp tap on the crown of his head. “Your new name! Bring me good luck, Skungy! Drag home big cheese.”

Skungy glared up at Carlo and emitted a series of rapid, reproving squeaks that were, Zad was starting to realize, actual words. Zad could hear some insults in there. *Asshole*, maybe. And *stupid turd*.

With an abrupt darting motion, Skungy bit the tip of Carlo’s finger. A quick, bright drop of blood welled out, very red. Wriggling free, the rat dropped to the scampered to the top of Zad’s bedpost, which grew right out of this room’s curvy wooden floor.

“Bullies!” shrilled the nurb. “Hands off!” His continually twitching whiskers were like antennae.

“Calm down,” Zad told the excited rat. “Aren’t you’re supposed to be Carlo’s helper?”

“Some helper!” said Carlo, dabbing at his finger. “He’s two days old and he’s running amok. Obviously Slygro needs to tweak this product’s wetware. I told you that my new boyfriend works there. Rick Shriner. We met a nurber convention and things went on from there. We’re living together and we’re testing each other’s products.”

“You’re not worried about security?” said Zad.

“Industrial espionage? Your company has a new product too, aren’t they? What were you calling it? A quantum uvvy based on platypus beaks or some shit?”

“Hush,” admonished Carlo. “Not in front of the rat.” He scowled at Skungy. “Slygro wants to swing into with a whole line of personal rats. Messengers, spies, scavengers, thieves—but, listen to me, Skungy, nobody’s gonna want *biter*s!”

“You bopped me on the head,” said the rat. “You were asking for it.”

Zad laughed, enjoying the rat’s bad attitude. If you mentally dialed up the speed of your ear, Skungy was easy enough to understand.

“You relate to this rat, right?” said Uncle Carlo. “You’re a bad actor, too. My sister, a.k.a. your mother, a.k.a. Reba wants me to have a Talk with you.” Carlo raised and sweetened his voice. “Why won’t Zad go to college? Why doesn’t he get a job outside our house? Will he ever start a family?”

“I’m prematurely disillusioned.” said Zad, flipping back his long hair. “I’m young before my time.”

“Me, I want to start a family!” cried the rat atop the bedpost, bucking his pelvis.

“You’re sterile,” Carlo coldly told the nurb. “If you guys started dropping litters, what would the nurb-makers sell?”

“You’re monsters,” said the rat, working a certain theatrical bitterness into his squeaks. “Greedy tyrants. I’ll breed, I tell you. I’ll multiply my species!” He waved his paws over his head like a tiny prophet.

“You can multiply all right,” said Carlo. “But it’s gonna be via Slygro labs. And they’ll be getting paid. Selling personal rats for, like, a hundred bucks apiece.”

“Capitalist pigs,” shrilled Skungy.

“You’ll be the last of your line if you keep up with this bullshit,” snapped Carlo. “I can tell my friend Rick that he should cancel production entirely. He’ll listen to me, you bet.”

As if driven to despair by Carlo’s strictness, the rat did a swan dive off the bedpost, landing on Zad’s crumpled pillow and lying there limp and with his eyes closed, pretending to be dead.

Carlo waved his hand dismissively and turned his attention back to Zad. “So you finished high school, you have a girlfriend, and now—what? You’re in your father’s workshop making copies of his freaky live paintings. In

your spare time you swing in the trees and work on your old car.”

“Not just any car,” said Zad. “It’s a fully accurate metal replica of the black convertible wherein JFK got shot, over a hundred years ago. A Lincoln Continental, I got it from a bankrupt car-museum in Santa Cruz. Traded a copy I’d made of Dad’s four-frame live painting, *The Rebellion of the Dinosaurs*. A historic first sale by Zad Plant the Younger.”

“A trade,” said Carlo. “Not a sale.”

“It’s same,” said Zad impatiently. “Will you let me talk, you fatuous perv?”

“Oh, now he’s getting harsh,” said Carlo. “I’m in tears.”

“It’s good to be a perv,” said Zad. “So I’m telling you, uh, the guy was tearing down the museum to put in a grove of redwood housetrees. Fool. He had no idea of how valuable this particular car is. Dates back to 2020. And it even has a working engine, you understand. Obviously I won’t be using it much. But *still*, you know it’s under the hood—and that’s cool. Detroit pig iron. A memento of vanished times.” While he talked, he was running his hand across the fur of the sulky rat on his pillow. Petting it.

“Nobody cares about cars, Zad. In case you haven’t noticed. Flydinos are where it’s at. There goes Reba.” Carlo gestured at one of the room’s round knothole windows.

Zad’s mother was indeed taking off, lying on her stomach on the back of the oversized leather-winged nurb that the family used for transportation. She glanced in at them and gave an encouraging wave. Zad didn’t wave back. He was a little annoyed at Reba for siccing Carlo on him.

“Rhonda and her rhamphorhyncus,” said Zad. “The savage, toothy, beak. The incredibly tiny brain.”

“No way to talk about your Mom,” said Carlo. “We all just want the best for you. I mean, look at that fly-dino, Zad. A nurb. And the uvvies on our necks that let us see into the web. More nurbs. And this humanoid talking rat. The greatest tech products ever, emerging in the last five years. Prehistoric transportation, futuristic neck leeches, and the

cloning of the human mind. What's next? Up to you to find it. Instead of tinkering with some stupid-ass car."

"I'm retrofitting it in this very cool way," said Zad, playing dumb. "I'm putting a giant nurb snail foot on the bottom instead of the wheels. The snail foot runs off the sun and whatever garbage it happens to eat."

"Is something wrong with your brain?" said Carlo, growing impatient. "That slug foot is a Slygro product. And if you let, the slug-foot grows seats for the riders. Christ! No need for a metal car."

"Unless you're building a totally bitchin' presidential assassination memorial slug-foot car."

"Zad, there's no reason to go screwing around with physical objects anymore. We grow whatever we need. Join in, boy. Be a wetware engineer. Make living appliances that think and talk."

"Maybe," said Zad. "But I like banging on something with a hammer. My girlfriend Jane thinks it's fun, too. Maybe we're sick of progress."

"You don't like this talking rat? I notice you keep petting him."

Zad looked down at Skungy, fully relaxed, snuggling against Zad's hand. He'd rolled onto his back to expose his white underbelly.

"Did I hear you say that Skungy's only two days old? He was born with so much personality in place?"

"A preloaded brain," said Uncle Carlo. "It's the new thing. You use quantum fields to guide the fetal growth. The nerve cells get entangled just so. You start with a human personality model and you can compress it down to fit into a rat's skull. Not all that much gets lost. People aren't so very different from rats."

"So where did they get the personality model that went into Skungy?" asked Zad.

"I am Joe Moon," intoned Skungy. His little voice was raspy.

“Moon was a guy back east,” said Carlo. “A cabbie in New York City. You know, Manhattan does that theme park thing with actual gas-powered cars.”

“I’d like to go there,” said Zad. “The honking cars below, the flying dinosaurs above. The skyscrapers and towers. An old-school city of the future.”

“Yeah,” said Carlo. “You’d like it. Like I’m telling you, this cabbie Joe Moon died young and he left a big lifeblog file—sound, video, quantum fields—fully eidetic. Optimal clarity. And to ice the cake, Joe Moon sells his physical body to an organ house and they take him apart. Call it suicide. All this to make a buck for his wife and kids. Sad story, in a way.”

“He died for his litter of pink baby ratties,” put in Skungy. He sat up, twitching his nose. “Your room smells like an alley, Zad. Nice.”

“A kitchen midden,” said Zad. “A future archaeological dig.”

The unspoken agreement was that, as long as Zad was working in his father’s studio, his parents would stay out of his room. To some extent the housetree itself kept the floor clean, absorbing any organic material that actually began to rot.

“What’s ripe today?” asked the rat, idly flicking one of his droppings off of Zad’s soiled pillow.

“We have a regional specialty,” said Zad, pointing to a greasy crust of pizza on the floor beside his bed. “Nummy num.”

Amusing himself with some rat-brained routine of being world-weary, Skungy dragged himself across the pillow, moving like a parched traveler in a desert. But now, spotting the prize, the nurb sprang nimbly to the floor and began to gnaw, lashing his long, bare tail as he demolished the crap of pizza.

“So let me finish filling you i,” said Carlo. “Slygro made the winning bid for Joe Moon’s head, with the spinal cord thrown in. They did a nano-dissection to get Joe’s neural geometries, and they fractionated his cortex to he recipe for



brain chemicals—tachykinins, serotoninins, secretins—like that. They ended up with a very clean model of our nowhere man, our Joe Moon. Wetware tech is better all the time, Zad. Easy to use. You could do this job, too. I could help you get a job.”

“If I wanted to go to college.”

“Nobody gives a fuck about degrees. You’re out of touch, Zad, lost in the treetops like a howler monkey. These days people pull what they need off the web as they go. Who knows the latest on fucking *anything* anymore? All you need is an uvvy and a good mind. And on that front, I can vouch for you. You were beating me at chess when you were four years old. It was still fun when you were three. But after that—forget it.”

A branch swung wildly, and now a young woman swung in through the big round window.

“Hi Jane,” said Zad.

### **Jane’s brother Kenny**

“Who’s coming?”

“The Rollers. Didn’t I tell you that it’s Dick Roller who got me these spores? They’re sort of experimental. I’m sure you’ll be happy to see your little friend Jane from school. And her brother Kenny?”

“I hate Kenny.”

An hour later, the Rollers arrived. The grown-ups stood around having drinks. Kenny wanted to wrestle with me, but I refused. I untruthfully told him that my Dad had a sex-nurb in the barn, and Kenny dashed off to look for it.

Meanwhile little mushrooms were sprouting up in a circle, growing so fast that we could see them moving. Bunches of the stalks fused together, making nine columns around the edge. The columns opened into red parasols at the top. Wobbling and feeling around in the air, the mushroom caps fused to make a smooth and undulating red tabletop. Kenny Roller returned from the barn and raced around the table, pounding on it like he wanted to break it, idiot that he was.

## **Idi Did Intro**

That summer, Dad set me up with a show downtown at Idi Did's gallery. Idi was a fairly standard-issue Louisville white woman who'd gone to school with Dad—back in the prehistoric dawn of time. I never understood exactly why she'd changed her name.

"Idi is Did inside-out," she told me. But what did that actually mean? Didn't matter. Idi was slick and a little intimidating, a doyenne of the culture vultures, not only locally, but even up and down the East coast.

## **Joey Moon As Dead Cabbie**

"Where did Gaven get Skungy's particular human personality?" I asked.

"Joey Moon," squeaked Skungy. His rough little voice was warm. "I am Joey Moon."

"Moon was a cabbie from New York City," said Carlo. "Twenty-five, wife and three kids, no money. Driving a big metal car for that theme park thing. He'd made a huge lifeblog file—sound, video, touch—fully eidetic. Optimal clarity. Said it was his hobby. But then he flips and sells his body to an organ house, and the lifebox too."

"Joey died for his litter of pink baby ratties," put in Skungy, loading the pathos into his grainy voice.

Carlo pressed on. "So Slygro makes the winning bid for Joey Moon's brain and his lifebox. Gaven does a nano-dissection and this geek-girl I was telling you about, Junko Shriner, she fractionates Moon's cortex to get his brain chemicals—tachykinins, serotoninins, secretins—all like that. We grow a rat-brain copy and load Joey's lifebox into the quantum wetware. A very clean model of our nowhere man. Joey Moon."

## **Joey Goes Chimera**

"How I feel about reading minds!" cried Joey, aiming the geener at himself. "I'll show you!" The geener hissed, and now Joey had a long rat's tail. Hiss again, and flydino

wings sprouted from his back. Another hiss—and his hips were those of a woman's.

The security guard was almost upon Joey.

"*Oink*," said Joey, whirling around just in time to zap the man.

Artie the guard dropped to all fours—and became a spotted Gloucestershire pig, which was a breed the Trasks had been fond of farming. Pink with black spots. Calmly the pig rubbed his snout across the ground, maybe sniffing for acorns. Meanwhile Skungy, frightened by the chaos, had clambered back onto my shoulder.

Moving slowly, regally, as if fascinated by his own magnificence, Joey unfurled his leathery wings and made as if to flap into the sky—

## **Qwet Shapeshifting**

"Something I just remembered," I said. "Those cattails—they look like hotdogs on sticks, right? And when we came here when I was five, I was sure that if I could manage to yank one of those things out of the pond, it would roast up just as good."

"I can make that happen for you," said Gaven, feeling at the gizmo he wore dangling from his belt. "With my qwetter and a little teep."

"You can turn a cattail into a hotdog right now?"

"You have no idea how easily I can do realtime wetware engineering now. Thanks to the qwet teep techniques. I invented this qwetter gizmo last month by the way. It sends a thicket of branching quantum vortex fields into the target organism's cells. Makes it qwet. I used it on Joey and, yes, on Junko and me. We'll be running it on walk-in customers before too long."

"What does this have to do with the cattails?"

"Okay, I'm qwet already. I have teep. And if the cattails are qwet, I can wreak my will on them. I can look at them and tweak their internal biocomputations. Change the genes, the enzymes, the works. And their tissues reorganize immediately."

The qwetter device had the rough outline of a pistol—but cobbled together from a hundred little parts. Fins, tubes, chips, condensers, magnets, mirrors, a tiny helium tank—like that. Gaven held out his arm and aimed. Unnerved by his gesture, the flydino and my giant slug splashed to the other end of the pond.

The qwetter hissed, and the air around the cattails got wiggly. And then Gaven stared at the cattails for a very long time. His lips were slowly moving. He made some mystic passes with his hands. It was like he was hypnotizing to the cattails. And then he snapped out of it.

“I rule!” he crowed. “I’m the ascended master of qwet teep tweaks. Harvest time, Zad.”

“Here, Reba,” I said. “Hold my hotdog sticks for a sec.”

“I think not. Let Loulou do it. Could you, dear? At this point, I think you owe me a favor.”

Wordlessly, moving in slow motion, Loulou took over my sticks. Her hand brushed against mine, and I felt a slight thrill—followed by guilt at thinking about her that way with her poor husband all screwed up and lying on the ground conked out by the bodyguard’s nod mist—followed by a weird sense that Loulou knew everything I was thinking.

Oh well. By now I was pretty drunk. Drunk enough to wade into the pond with my shoes on, and to yank up three of the transformed cattails by their roots. And, sure enough the cattail bulges at the tips had turned to meat. Or something resembling meat. Pale, a bit like veal or chicken.

“No way am I eating that crap,” said Carlo. “I know better than to sample every single batch of the Slygro moonshine. Bad enough that I’m infected by that fucking rat.”

“Feed Joey Moon a cattail!” whooped Reba. She’d always had a bit of a mean streak.

As if roused by the sound of his name, Joey jumped to his feet and, moving unbelievably fast, pinwheeled over and snatched the qwetter from Gaven’s hand.

“No!” roared Gaven. “Don’t start spraying everyone! Guard! Artie! Stop him!”

“I’m already qwet!” cried Joey, brandishing the qwetter. “I’ll show you how it feels!” He was teeping into his own body, doing something to his wetware, warping his body’s configuration.

Slowly, and then faster, Joey took on the look of a child’s awkward drawing. He had conical legs, an oval body and a dome of a head with thick bristly lines for his hair. His mouth was a crooked slash, his eyes were wobbly, scribbled dots. His sausage arms waved frenetically, with the qwetter still clenched in one of his three-fingered hands.

Tall Artie was almost upon Joey.

“*Wheenk*,” whooped Joey, whirling around just in time to spray the agent with the qwetter. Narrowing his eyes, Joey fixed the guard with the full force of his will.

Artie dropped to all fours—and became a crude cartoon of a pig—bulky, wobbly, pale pink with dark spots. The sketchy, long-bodied pig rubbed his snout across the ground, as if sniffing for acorns. He was crapping from his other end. My rat Skungy, frightened by the chaos, clambered onto my shoulder.

Moving slowly, regally, as if fascinated by his wobbly magnificence, Joey tumbled the contents of the horn-of-plenty nurb into his gaping maw of a mouth. As the food sank in, Joey grew in size—he was a saggy blob of perhaps three hundred pounds. He scowled at us, a sour meat mountain with waving spikes of hair, preparing to—

Cuing on some unseen signal of Gaven’s, one of the big cooling frogs flipped his thirty-foot tongue and glommed the qwetter tool from Joey Moon’s great paw of a hand. And then, in a flash, Gaven had retrieved the qwetter from the frog’s mouth. Rushing forward, he fixed his eyes on Joey and the rooting pig, *thinking* at them, teeping into their bodies to restore the former states of their genetic codes.

“Undo, undo, undo,” cried Gaven, his voice shrill with the joy of winning. I remembered that tone of his from our schooldays—when he’d gloat about his perfect grades.

## Universal Teep (Drafts)

(1) It was more than Loulou pinging me now—I was blending with her thoughts, and the thoughts of the passing drivers on River Road, and the thoughts of the rabbits and the field mice and even the ants. Nothing specific, everything loose and impressionistic. Like paints running together on a wet palette. All the walls were down.

(2) I was with Loulou, with the poplar trees, with the blackberry brambles, with the boulder by the car, with the snake beneath the boulder, with the old man sleeping in the house up the road, and even with the people we'd left at Gaven's farm. All their little voices in my head, blurred and unclear, like conversations overheard in my sleep.

## Vampire Accent

"Loulou told me she might use it on him. In case he tried to rip her off. I had a blank all ready in our room. I'd programmed it to make the viewer see themselves as *wery wery ugly*." For reasons of his own, Joey had switched to a sinister East-European-vampire-type accent. "An ugliness regress that rushes the *wictim* towards an Infinite Ugly Point. Gaven Graber's final face."

## Jane's Curio Ball

*[The first version was like a paperweight rather than then being the 4D eyeball that it later became.]*

Loulou was pointing at a crystalline object that sat upon a carved wooden shelf. It was the size of an egg, with calligraphic scratches and a swoopy depression on one side. Reflected light danced within it.

Jane liked to say that the glassy curio had called to her with a musical chirp. If it *was* a stone. We'd never fully decided. It could have been a hunk of etched silicon, a cracked gout of epoxy, or perhaps something grown by a nurb. In any case—a curio.

My mind was wandering. I centered myself and took the curio in my hand. It nestled against my palm, and I seemed to feel a faint glow of teep from it. Not something I'd ever

noticed before. Was the curio somehow mirroring my qwet mind? No time to ponder this now.

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The curio is a third eye with a protruding stub that once was part of a connector stalk. Suppose that you can use the stub like a handle. You get hold of the curio handle and twist the eyeball up into 4D, and you can knock against your third eye with it, knocking from the kata underside, and you send your third eye across the maximum energy line between the worlds, and then you third eye settles towards the other side and you can let it pull you after.

### **Loulou's Former Job**

“Okay.” Another recovered memory emerged. “You were raped by a cuttlefish from a UFO?”

Loulou guffawed. “Actually that was a heavy date with the boss when I worked for a political action group. We were against nurbs. The boss had his way with me. Jerk. It could have been okay, but he posted a video of us, and it gave me a bad reputation. Especially with Mom.” Speaking of her mother, she put both hands to her throat, as if choking herself.

“And then you stole the UFO!”

“The boss's luxor nurb scorpion. He'd embezzled our No Nurbs funds to buy it. I rode the scorpion to Louisville. I wanted to see your thoroughbred horses. The trip took awhile. I kept having to stop and scam more nurb chow for the scorpion. Shoplifting, chores, sob stories. I got very fond of that scorpion. Even though, as a general policy, I hate the idea of nurbs.” Vomiting expression.

### **Kenny Rejects Qwetness**

We had a heavy moment of silence while the change sank in. And then Kenny spoke up. “Don't like it. Don't want everyone's feelings in my face. Change me back.”

“Can't,” said Junko. “It's a one-way transform. You'll get to like it.”

“No I won’t,” said Kenny. “I want to get away from all of you.”

“Fly off in your balloon,” suggested Joey.

“The balloon is too dumb,” said Kristo. “We don’t trust it.”

## First Take on Fairyland

*[Initially I was going to run the “fairyland” idea as real, but later I decided it was just an illusion of Loulou’s. When I wrote this part, I was calling Jane’s thingie a “curio” instead of an “oddball.”]*

“Where are you?” I shouted, not sure how loud to pitch my voice.

“Call it Gubland? Or, no, fairyland is a better name. Fairyland is the same as our world, but it isn’t.”

“How did you get there?” I asked.

“I stretched out the stalk of my third eye,” said Loulou. “Gaven showed me how.”

“Third eye?”

“That Jane’s curio thingie? That used to be Gaven’s third eye. It got torn off in the Ice Day flood in New York—all those years ago. Everyone has a third eye, seems like. That’s what lets you go cosmic. Gaven grew himself a new eye, but he wanted to study the old one. He told me how to use my third eye to get to fairyland. He’d been there, back in the day. What it is—you get more cosmic than cosmic, and your eyestalk reaches all the way over, and it settles into fairyland, and you flow yourself out across your stalk.”

“Can you come back the same way?” asked Joey, keeping it country simple.

“I should be able to,” said Loulou. “But I have to push my eye back in the direction I came from. Back towards you guys. But I’m having trouble with that.”

“Could the magic curio help?” I asked. “Gaven’s third eye. You took that with you, right?”

“I brought it to fairyland, yeah, but I doubt it would help. Anyway, as soon as I got here a goddamn fucking gub vacuumed up the eyeball with his trunk. I’ve been chasing



the little bastard through the woods. I followed him from Gaven's house to here. It's the same geography in fairyland—all the plants and objects are the same. But different animals live here. Centipedes, crows, starfish. Things with beaks and tentacles in Gaven's front porch rockers."

"When I was crazy this week, I got so was teeping things beyond the beyond," said Joey. "Rats on stilts and toothless pigs."

"The gubs," said Loulou. "Dozens of them. Hundreds. All around me like beggars. They're snorting up my vibes. And now, after that long chase through the woods, the gub I caught is the wrong one. This one's tail is purple, and it should be orange. I'm scared of the hunters. They're blowing a horn and crashing through the bushes and they're getting close. A fox-hunt—and I'm the fox. I'm think they want more than my vibes. I think they want to eat me. I hate them. *And I hate gubs!*"

A solid thud—like someone punting a ball—and that same green pig sailed past me. He caromed off the wall, eyes glittering, snorting up deep inhalations of our mundane air, managing some gubs and squeals on the exhales. He had stained ivory trotters. And then he was gone again. Back to fairyland.

"I need to keep moving," said Loulou her voice tight with fear. "I'll head towards your father's barn. Meet me there in a minute. If I can focus on you guys, it might help me stretch my third eye back to the mundane."

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"Those regress points you were talking about," I said. "You think we could use one to get Loulou? Make some kind of grapple or magnetic hook?"

Joey shrugged. "I don't understand what fairyland even is."

We'd reached the barn. Dad was moving around in there, talking to himself, rehashing his argument with Mom, banging into furniture. For sure he was drunk now. No rush

to go inside. For all I knew, Loulou might be as likely to find us out here.

“Let’s say fairyland is like in the old tales,” I said, groping for a way to understand. “A hidden reality that overlaps the mundane. The same furniture as our world, but with different creatures in it.”

“A parallel world?” said Joey. “Like two sheets of paper?”

“Like a room with a low ceiling,” I said. “We slide around on the floor. The fairylanders slide on the ceiling. We’re all thin. We sidle past each other. But the furniture is thick. It runs from the bottom to the top.”

“I’d like to see fairyland” said Joey. “Suddenly everything would look fresh and new and incredibly strange—but familiar at the same time. Loulou said it’s hooked in with what we’re calling the cosmic mode?”

“Supposedly fairyland is further out than cosmic,” I said. “And Loulou’s physically stuck there. And I have no idea what to do.”

“*Gub-gub-wheenk*,” said Loulou’s voice, trying to sound perky. She was next to us again. “Save your precious vixen, boys. The hunters are on the other side of the barn. They’re like cuttlefish dressed as the Jacks, Queens and Kings in a deck of cards. I still can’t get my third eye to point the right way.”

“Kick yourself in the butt,” suggested Joey out of the blue. “Like you kicked the gub.”

“How am I supposed to bend my leg that far, you idiot?”

“You can do it,” I urged. “You’re qwet. Reach into your wetware. You want the crooked leg of a mule. Do like Joey did when he put his foot onto his shoulder at the pond.”

“But *how*?”

“Use a regress,” said Joey, talking fast. “Push your mind into your leg and let the leg think about a leg thinking about itself, and you’ll get a leg tunnel, and you flatten the tunnel into a bull’s eye that you paint onto your butt!”

“The hunters are bigger than I realized,” said Loulou, increasingly agitated. “More of them. *Get away! I’ll kill you! Stand back!*”

“Kick!” yelled Joey.

I heard a thump and an *eeek*, and here was Loulou, pink-cheeked, curvy, with her sly eyes and her dark curly hair. Her leg was twisted like a pretzel, but quickly she wiggled it into shape.

“Don’t let me drift back to fairyland!” she cried. “I’m still bringing down my eye.”

I locked my teep onto Loulou, and Joey wrapped her in a hug. I seemed to hear a faint horn, and the pounding of hooves. And then all was still.

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“Better than our house on Gaven’s farm,” agreed Joey. “The cops could be looking for us, Loulou. Did you kill Gaven or not?”

“A nurb did it,” said Loulou. “A drone from United Mutations.”

“What did the drone look like?” I asked, not really believing her.

“Like a fat man’s forearm with eyes on it and four dragonfly wings. Whit Heyburn had showed me a couple of drones like that in the UM lab. I’m sure he sent one after me. He knew I was going to be at Gaven’s.”

“Loulou’s web of intrigue,” said Joey.

“Anyway,” said Loulou. “Like I was saying, that little curio ball was really Gaven’s old third eye, but he’d regenerated a new one. Like a crab or a lobster. He said I could stretch out my third eye’s stalk to get to fairyland. He was calling the place something else, I forget what, some gibberish.”

“Skew space?” I suggested, quickly using my teep to comb through the web. “The dual eigenbasis? The Higgs plateau?”

“I don’t know. Let me finish my story. I had the magic mirror with me. The drone yanked it out of my hand and shoved it into Gaven’s face. He keeled over pretty fast. I

grabbed that old eyeball of Gaven's, just to have it, and I reached out for fairyland. The deal is to get more cosmic than cosmic. And you do a weird inner twitch. Gaven had teeped me the secret. And then—*whump*, I was there. Fairyland looks like our world through yellow stoner glasses."

"Like cosmic mode," said Joey.

"Pretty, and scary, and there's animals we don't normally see," continued Loulou. "I'm standing there checking it out, and the trees are singing, and then a gub puts his legs up on me like a begging dog, and he inhales Gaven's eye with his trunk."

"A gub," echoed Joey, smiling. "Eating Gaven's third eye." He enjoyed seeing things go crazy. I did too. We started laughing.

## **Kenny and Kristo Blow Up Tower and Resurrect**

*[Dramatic, but I want to steer clear of human shape-shifting]*

"Kristo and I are going upstairs," interrupted Kenny. "We've got some things to try."

I don't think we ever found out the exact details of what Kristo and Kenny got into. We heard a growing crescendo of yelling upstairs, and then the tower atop the Roller mansion exploded into fragments, leaving a mound of rubble atop the house.

Loulou, Dad, Weezie and I made our way up there, frightened at what we'd find. And there lay Kenny and Kristo beneath a fallen beam—bloody, crushed, twitching. Weezie screamed but, incredibly, Kenny and Kristo seemed to be laughing.

"A disagreement about redecorating," teeped Kenny. He had a hole in his chest and was unable to speak aloud.

"A moment of pique," teeped Kristo, his flattened skull trembling as he tried to move his shattered jaws. "My bad. We can fix this. We have memorized the tower and the third floor and ourselves."

The rubble around them began shifting, slowly at first, then faster. With a giant gasping sound, the wreckage reassembled itself. The third floor was back, and the tower. The bodies of Kenny and Kristo had knit themselves back together.

“Don’t you *ever* do that again,” Weezie told her son.

## Smell as Teep

Let’s just say Skungy is good at picking up people’s vibes. Thing is, as long as you’re physically near a qwet teeper, you’ll get these little brief touches of mind merge with them, no matter what. On account of that rank rat smell. The scent molecules are doing a mini-zap. The nose is right next to the brain.

## The Cattail Transform

“I’m thinking that perhaps I can do realtime wetware engineering, yes,” said Gaven a little stiffly. He’d been stung by Junko’s criticism. “The qwetter is modeled on a standard wetware engineering tool called the vortex wand. The vortex wand is for tweaking genes. But this qwetter is set to tweak the genes only in one particular way. It sends a thicket of branching quantum vortex fields into the target organism’s cells and makes them qwet. I used the qwetter on Joey and Skungy and, yes, on Junko and me. And before too long we’ll be qwetting walk-in customers”

“I don’t really see how qwetting the cattails would turn them into meat,” I said.

“Ah,” said Gaven, holding up a finger. “After I make the cattails qwet, I’ll do telepathy with them. And then I’ll tweak their internal biocomputations to change the cattail fluff into meat. Here we go.”

“This totally isn’t going to work,” Junko told Gaven impatiently. “(a) Quantum telepathy only gives you an oblivious link—meaning that you can’t use qwet teep to send the kind of precise information you’d need for a gene tweak. (b) You have no experience in tweaking genes, so even if you *could* change the cattails beyond making them

qwet, you'd do it wrong." Junko actually said "(a)" and "(b)" out loud. That's the kind of person she was.

## **Using Qwet to Make Axelerate**

"Axelerate buds are free now," said Junko.

"Free buds, Junko?" said Joey, who'd come down from the third floor. "That stuff's expensive. It's you that's gonna pay?"

"Don't you get it yet?" said Junko. "With qwet you can grow axelerate buds in a flower pot. As I'm sure you know, they're from the Tunisian cactus. And the cactus's genetic code is public domain. With qwet, you can nudge a regular prickly pear cactus into turning Tunisian. Not that anyone really needs axelerate—not if they have access to cosmic mode. And that's enough about grubby druggie schemes."

## **Qwetting Flames and Air**

"I can go all of you one better," said Joey, after quietly thinking all this over for a minute. "I can qwet people and things just by thinking at em. Check out the fire."

All of a sudden, the flames were being drawn into spooky ghost faces. I could even teep into the flames, for as long as they lasted. They had fleeting minds of heat and flow, they mimed mouths and eyeholes, and they leaning over to double back and catch every available bit of fuel in the glowing log. Once they'd cooled into mere air currents, they drifted up the chimney, mindless again, joining the ocean of the indifferent night.

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Kristo produced sparkling, singing snowflakes from the humidity in the air.

"We enter this new age of do it oneself," said Kristo, catching a flake on his tongue.

## **What Is A Golem?**

"Nurb-gel slime molds are made of protozoa," said Junko, in her teacher mode. "A little like tiny animals. Not that you can teep an ordinary amoeba. The United

Mutations nurb gel has a web interface and language parser built into its DNA. Just like with any other nurb.”

## **Invisible Lovers**

That first night, Loulou had an idea.

“I’ll teach you two how to make yourselves invisible,” she suggested. “Then Joey won’t be jealous, and Zad won’t worry about turning queer.”

No point trying to appeal Loulou’s judgments—after all, she was reading our minds.

The invisibility trick had to do with indexes of refraction. Like, looking through air is different from looking through water or through glass. That’s why lenses work, and that’s why a stick in water seems to have a break where it crosses the surface.

I set a steady qwetting process to running in the back of my mind, continuously turning the layer of air around me into wacky matter and quantum-tweaking the air’s index of refraction. The upshot was that I was hidden behind a smooth visual warp. The light rays from our room’s nurb candles flowed around me like water around a rock in a stream, hugging my arms, my legs, my skin. Ditto for Joey. Mr. Modesty and Mr. Shy.

We were more comfortable this way—two unseen incubi ravishing lady Loulou. She laughed and moaned. Another night to remember. But maybe not such a pleasant memory. Loulou was beginning to get on my nerves.

## **Invisible Weezie**

As it happened, old Weezie Roller had used the web to listen in when Loulou was telling Joey and me about imagining each other to be invisible the night before. And she’d teeped into our emotions when we’d gotten down to our sex, but never mind about that. Once you and your friends are telepathic, your old notions of a straight face drift away. And pretty soon you stop bothering to put up mental blocks all the time. If you can teep everyone’s inner feelings, the outsides don’t matter as much.

Weezie was very self conscious about the shape of her chin and the line of her thighs. And now she knew about making herself invisible. So this morning when she'd woken up, Weezie had taken it into her head to make selected parts of her body invisible. Like doing a realtime photo touchup. Only she'd gotten it wrong.

"How are we doing, gang?" called Weezie, bouncing into the kitchen with Dad. She was jazzed about having so many guests.

"What happened?" Kenny demanded. "You look like the Venus de Milo—no legs, no arms, no face. But with a hairdo on top. And a pink sweater. What's the story, Mom?"

"Oh, damn," said Weezie. Her hair swayed as she looked down at herself. She snapped herself back into full visibility, soft chin and all. She glared at Dad. "You should *look* at me in the morning? Why does a woman even bother?"

"I, uh, did notice you were wearing pink," said Dad. "Seems like *you* could notice your missing face on your own."

"I don't like looking in a mirror in the morning," said Weezie. "I figured I was perfect now—with all my ugly parts edited out."

"None of you is ugly," said Dad, finally hitting his stride.

### **Zad's "Everyman" Golem Nurbs**

As I often did, I started with a random web search, looking for a hint from the muse, and there it was—a festival production of a hairball medieval morality play called *Everyman*. It was about an average guy who's confronted by death, and he's, like, "*Oh Death, thou comest when I had thee least in mind.*" And he starts looking around his village for help. And the play trots out these allegorical supporting characters called Good Deeds, Rue, Knowledge, and The Five Wits. Perfect.



I spent a couple of hours crafting myself four golem nurbs, all of them qwet, all of them little men incorporating some aspect of me. Skungy got bored with watching, and he went into the house. I worked like a maniac, right out to the edge of exhaustion.

The Five Wits personified the five senses—"wit" being a medieval turn of speech. I gave The Five Wits a Sherlock Holmes deerstalker hat. He had no arms and a single leg, which resembled a shoulder-high finger hopping around on a sensitive tip. My man The Five Wits had black eyes on short stalks, dish-shaped ears, a slurpy tongue and a big sail of a nose. I endowed him with the more obsessive aspects of my personality. He tended to speak in a rapid monotone, narrating his impressions as they flowed in.

My next golem nurb, Good Deeds, embodied what little empathy towards my fellows that I had. Going heavy on the symbolism, I crafted Good Deeds to look like a doll-house on legs, with nine little rooms, each holding a model of a person whom I might feel compelled to help. The dollhouse was an objective correlative of the crowd of people I carried around in my own head. Like Jane, Dad, Mom, Carlo, Craig Gurky, Loulou, Reba, Joey, and Junko. These were people whom I loved but whom I also resented—for their expectations that I would favor them with good deeds. Whenever the Good Deeds golem was supposed to talk, the nine dollhouse-people would chant words in a chorus. But sometimes the dolls would get out of synch and begin to argue. Just like the people inside my head.

Influenced by Joey's raps about vanishing points and artistic perspective, I gave Knowledge an infinite regress in place of a proper head. That is, Knowledge was a little man, but instead of a head, he had a littler man standing on his shoulders. And the littler man had a still smaller man on his shoulders and so on, with a dwindling centipede of arm-waving figurines converging to single point where I tethered a tiny white light, fueled by a dark-quark reaction, and held in place by an unbreakable nucleonic thread. Knowledge's star of illumination. Yeah, baby. Instead of

speaking aloud, Knowledge communicated via the strobing of his light and the semaphore gestures of his innumerable arms.

“Rue,” is an old word meaning “regret.” My Rue was a doleful gnome carrying a hand-mirror that he stared at. If you wanted to talk to Rue, he turned his back to you and spoke with your reflection, as if positioning you in his lamentable past. Rue’s main staple of conversation a the litany of mistakes that poor, bumbling Zad Plant had made over the years. Being my own creation, Rue spoke of me more in sorrow than in anger.

After all this I was tired. I found a mound of dry straw and fell asleep with my arms around The Five Wits, Good Deeds, Knowledge and Rue.

### **Idea for Blocking the Spread of Qwet**

We’d need a way to block qwet from spreading at least temporarily. Given that qwet’s being spread via web connections, if someone found a way to take down the internet, the spread would stop. Maybe it could be Zad, Joey and Junko who do the take-down, thereby redeeming themselves somewhat. Junko takes advantage of Mr. Normal’s flicker, and uses that to jam the web.

### **Finding the Oddball In Manhattan**

Jane had given me this numinous token for Christmas five years ago. So it was arguably within my rights to bag it. But Jane was very fond of the thing. She called it her amazing oddball. She’d picked it up in Manhattan, on the East Village beach that bordered the now-submerged Alphabet City district. I hadn’t been with Jane on the afternoon when she’d found the strange object—or when it found her. I’d been visiting SoHo galleries, unsuccessfully trying to arrange an NYC show for my *Cold Day In Hell* series.

Jane claimed the oddball had called her by whispering her name, and I half believed that. We’d never fully decided what the oddball actually was. At first we’d taken it for a

glass amulet with an embedded holographic display—but then Jane had run some web image searches for similar objects, and she’d found dozens or even hundreds of things like our oddball scattered across the planet—mostly in online rock and gem shops, for sale at astronomical prices. As if they were precious crystals.

This said, I preferred to think of the oddball as biological. That made it more interesting to me. Perhaps it was really a nurb—not it resembled any nurb that had ever gone into production. The Alphabet City beach where Jane had found our oddball fronted onto a district that, before the flood, had been a simmering bazaar of strange shops and loofy design studios. Could be the oddball was a crystal, could be it was a fossil, could be it was a nurb.

But there was no easy way to research this. That district of Manhattan had been abruptly drowned on Ice Day, when western Greenland’s glaciers slid *en masse* into the sea and the Atlantic advanced to thirty feet above its 20th Century level—completely swamping the incomplete system of sea walls that the New Yorkers had managed to build. After Ice Day, we’d set a really serious set of nurb reefs to growing, in hopes of getting our coastal cities out ahead of the curve before the next mass glacier melt.

\*\*\*

“I teeped into the thing behind the oddball,” said Dad. Call it Leviathan? Lives on another level of reality. Like the canvas under the paint. Hard to give you details. I teeped with Leviathan and I fell into the spaces between my thoughts. I saw the cosmic void, dark with light.”

## Original Description of the Oddball

She was pointing at a smooth, glassy object that sat upon a carved wooden shelf. It was a sphere nearly the size of a baseball, with a thin transparent layer surrounding a purplish core. The core was intricately wrinkled, with veils of gold patterning the dark maroon flesh. One side of the core bore a conical indentation that resembled an invertebrate creature’s mouth. A funnel narrowing down to

a dark hole. I'd often studied the object, trying to decipher its origins and its possible significance.

For me, an odd thing about the curio was that I had a persistent impression that its appearance wasn't fixed. The calligraphic scratches on its surface seemed never to be exactly as I'd remembered them. And in certain lights and states of mind, I'd even seem to see the central core begging to wobble and to pulse, with the cone-like mouth flexing as if to swallow something.

When I obsessed on the curio like this, I'd get a feeling it was talking to me. I could never remember exactly it said, but after one of these sessions I'd dream of that funnel-like mouth. If I could shrink down and crawl through the mouth—where might it lead? This remained unknown, even in my dreams.

Jane had given me this numinous token some years ago. So it was arguably within my rights to bag it. But Jane was very fond of the thing. She called it her amazing oddball. She'd found it walking in the woods near her parents' house. I hadn't been with Jane that afternoon. I'd been up in New York, visiting SoHo galleries, unsuccessfully trying to arrange an NYC show of my *Cold Day In Hell* series.

Jane claimed the oddball had called her by whispering her name, and I half believed that. We still hadn't fully decided what the oddball actually was. At first we'd taken it for a glass amulet with an embedded holographic display, and then for awhile we'd thought it might be a crystal that had worked its way up from one of Louisville's limestone caves. And then, since it seemed to be changing, we decided it was biological. Like maybe a mushroom truffle, with a clear outer layer. Or some kind of nurb. Or an alien egg from outer space?

We'd done numerous web image searches for objects resembling the oddball, but we'd never found anything similar. The oddball was one of a kind.

Never mind. I centered myself and took the oddball in my hand. It nestled against my palm, and I seemed to feel a faint glow of thought. Now that I had teep, I was more

sensitive to these things. Was the curio synching with my kwet mind? No time to ponder this now.

## Another Vision of Fairyland

“And what about that gub?” I asked, totally at a loss.

“A few gubs live inside this tunnel, yes. Mostly they’re stuck to the wall like parasites. Or they stick themselves to me. I hate them.”

“What does Fairyland look like?” I probed.

“I saw things with beaks and tentacles sitting in rocking chairs. On a porch. They had a house almost like Gaven’s. They’re like squids and they’re hunters. They walk on crutches and sticks. They remind me of the Queens and Kings in a deck of cards. I don’t want to go out there where they can get me.”

“When I went all batshit this week, I saw squids on stilts and toothless pigs,” said Joey.

“Don’t you try and hog my glory,” said Loulou sternly. “This is *my* adventure, not yours, Joey Moon. There’s three or four gubs inside this tunnel with me. Stuck to the wall like ticks. Their snouts getting juice. When I saw I couldn’t come back out, I went and peeked at Fairyland a second time and I saw that the tunnel had moved. That’s when the oddball was on the way from Gaven’s house to here.”

“Could you still see the squids the second time?” I asked.

“*Oh, yeah,*” said Loulou. “They’re following the tunnel-mouth in case I crawl out. It must be that they can pick up on my teep. They’re acting like it’s a fox hunt, blowing curly horns and crashing through the bushes. I’m the fox. The vixen. The hunters want to dig their beaks into my musky flesh. I hate them. *And I hate gubs!*”

We heard a solid thud—like someone punting a ball—and here came another gub. He gub bounced off a pottery wheel, his black bead-eyes glittering. He was snorting up deep inhalations of air, and squealing on his exhales. His feet were rudimentary blobs with hooks and pads. Really he was more like a louse than like a pig. Fruitlessly he hopped

into the air, trying to get back inside the oddball. He smelled bad, like ammonia.

...

"I don't understand what Fairyland is even supposed to be," said Joey. "I keep thinking it's one of Loulou's weird head trips. Her father was cold and uppity. He was like a squid on stilts, yeah. And she didn't dig her brothers and sisters. So they were like gubs. Being different is important to Loulou. It kind of figures that she'd say she's up the oddball's ass and halfway to Fairyland."

...

"*Gub gub gubby*," said Loulou's voice, trying to sound both brave and perky. A patch of her face was visible again. Her lips were dark, her eye was bright. "Save your foxy vixen, boys. I took a third peek at Fairyland just now. The hunters are right on my trail. Masked cuttlefish on walking-sticks. Bigger than I realized. They know that I'm in here. And this end of the tunnel is pinched tight. It's like the oddball is pursing its lips."

...

"Wait." Loulou's face briefly disappeared and then it was back. "The hunters are coming in here after me! Writhing tentacles and ragged beaks!" She disappeared again, leaving only a dimple in space, but we could hear her muffled voice. "*Get away! No!*"

...

I heard a thump and an *eeek*, and here was Loulou, panting, flushed, her curly hair in disarray, her eyes bright and sly. Our Fairyland fox. Her leg was twisted like a pretzel. Quickly she wriggled it into shape. My pet golem-dog Jericho backed off, his spikes bristling.

The oddball was hovering nearby, its size pulsing from a pinpoint to size of a baseball. It was a maroon glob, marbled with gold lines, and with that same conical mouth. The gub within it gave a piteous squeal. And, now, for a horrible instant, I seemed to see the tip of a hungry tentacle come pushing out of the mouth.

## Professor Wriggle Wears Glasses Bird

One of the other fairies resembled a worm with a pair of spectacles that seemed to be independently alive—and he was wearing a starched collar with a mortar-board hat. I was curious about him.

Professor Wriggle's living glasses were holding onto his head with their legs. But he didn't seem to have eyes. Nor did the glasses have any lenses that I could see.

"A glasses bird," said Professor Wriggle, noticing me staring at them. Yes, the glasses were a kind of bird with two round frame holes, a pair of legs, and a tiny beak in the middle of the empty frame. Not I really understood why the big worm bothered with the thing, given his lack of eyes.

"I'm all eye, from head to tail," said Professor Wriggle. "That is, my entire surface is photosensitive. I wear the glasses bird for another purpose. It allows me to see through walls—and beyond space into the plenum as well. At a more basic level, the glasses serve as a focal point for my interlocutors. The gnomes, of course, know about glasses birds, and, to my surprise, they also know that a fairy worm like me can see with skin of his tail."

Not—in a literal sense," said Professor Wriggle. "But I've peeped at it through my glasses bird."

"You might say that," said Professor Wriggle. "But I'd call it a type of tunneling. Similar to what I do underground. But a gnome can tunnel through the plenum—what you bumpfs call, ah, hyperspace. The space outside space. The glasses bird sees through the plenum, the gnomes tunnel through it, and the myoor's wormholes reach through the plenum to Earth and of course the gubs and the mirrorgubs inhabit the plenum as well. Many unseen activities, Zad. Getting back to the matter of Blixxen—"

## Gnomes Can Teleport

"I wouldn't be so sure of that," said the worm. "The gnomes can—*hop*."

"Teleport?" I asked.

“You might say that,” said Professor Wriggle. “I’d call it a type of writhing. Similar to what I do in tunneling through soil. But a gnome can writhe through the plenum—that is, through the space between our worlds. The gnomes take shortcuts through the plenum, the myoor reaches through the plenum to swallow bumps on Earth, and new gubs are hatched into the plenum by the myoor. Esoteric unseen activities abound, Zad. But, getting back to the matter of Blixxen—”

### **Watching Preacher**

“The wrath of God,” crooned a skinny disheveled guy, watching from the shadows of a second floor window. He pointed his finger at me. “Revel not in fond and luxurious ways.”

“Kiss my ass,” I said. There’d been no reason at all for Ned White to get eaten. No reason other than the myoor’s blind instincts.

### **SubZad Finger Spark**

“My turn,” said SubZad. He pointed a finger and a crackling high-energy spark shot out—a chaotic zigzag four feet long. The platypus shriveled into a clot of flame.

“Where’d you learn *that*?” I cried.

“Mr. Normal taught me,” said SubZad, quietly proud. “You want me to kill Gaven and Whit? I’d be cool with that.”

### **Zad’s Valediction for Dad**

Dad and I, we’d been so close—and so far. For the first time it occurred to me how often he’d gone out of his way to go along with me, to indulge my moods, to make me feel loved. He’d always thought of my feelings, no matter how rebellious and in-your-face I’d been. He’d been a father.

### **Mr. Normal With A Regress**

Each Mr. Normal like a lean, strong man over six feet tall, with complicated arches and feelers in place of a head,



and with an insanely bright nurb light bulb at the center of this lacework, with the bulb held in place by nucleonic threads. The bulbs acted as eyeballs too. ... I didn't have much success explaining to my friends about the arches and the feelers atop the Mr. Normals being infinite regresses of smaller and smaller men. Joey would have appreciated the subtlety of my design, but Joey wasn't around just now. He was paralyzed inside a sac within the body of the myoor in Fairyland—stored in case the myoor decided that Joey was the very best person for mutating into a gub.

### **Myoor Flow Like Diarrhea**

[*Ick. Don't use this.*] Yes, huge stinking lava flows of myoor-flesh were pouring through the wormholes unaided, with paralyzed human captives pooting through like corn kernels in diarrhea.

[*Or this? Too purple.*] ...with paralyzed human captives pooting through like preserved fruits in the dough for a ghoulish holiday fruitcake.

### **How High We Were**

[*Show, don't tell*]

Not to be harping on this, I'll mention once again that, thanks to being in cosmic mode, I was, in effect, more stoned than I'd ever been. More stoned than *anyone's* ever been. But without being incapacitated. The others were the same way. And there was no sign of the effects slackening or wearing off. Nice, in a way, but exhausting.

### **Teeping With Fire**

[*I decided not have any hylozoic routines of inanimate objects or processes coming to life. Just to "publish" this fine writing, I broke it into two tweets on August 22, 2013.*]

All of a sudden, the flames were being drawn into spooky ghost faces. I could even teep into the flames, for as long as they lasted. They had fleeting minds of heat and flow, they mimed mouths and eyeholes, and they doubled back to catch the scraps of fuel within the glowing log.

Once they cooled into mere air currents, they drifted up the chimney, mindless again, joining the ocean of indifferent night.

## **Junko Overexplains**

“So the wormholes might not see you if you’re in robotic mode?” I asked. “Or if you’re not even qwet?”

“They’ll see you maybe a little bit. But not nearly as much. While we were measuring stuff, we also noticed that the dirtbubble warps space. Because, yeah, it’s a wormhole to parallel world.”

“I was looking through Gaven’s records last night,” I said. “He and Whit Heyburn thought they’d made a business deal with a thing in Fairyland that might start sending over more wormholes besides the dirtbubble. A thing they called a myoor. But then the oddball killed Gaven. Whoever’s running the oddball is against the dirtbubble and the myoor.”

“You said *myoor*?” asked Loulou. “I heard the Fairylanders use that word. The myoor is this giant, flat, fleshy thing that I saw on the ground up there. Like a manta ray or a slug, only it stretched as far as I could see. Maybe a foot thick.”

I turned back to Junko. “And you’re saying the myoor wanted Gaven and Whit to spread qwet all over the world?”

Junko nodded. “This way everyone’s wearing a nice bright beacon, unless they control themselves and stay robotic. The myoor will find the cosmic-mode people really easily. She wants to pick out two people for—I don’t know what. Gaven and Whit will have good credit with the myoor for helping her.”

“*Credit!*” I exclaimed. “How about being executed for genocide!”

## **Never Mind About Idi Did**

I was speculating that Idi Did would be at the party. She owned the gallery where I’d had my big shows. I’d done better with Idi than with selling my work out of my own

store. Until I hadn't. And then she'd dropped me. But I could still come back.

## Stanky and Jeptha as Ghouls

*[Too much, too distracting, starts a whole extra thread, makes these "lovable bit players" too icky.]*

"Once in awhile my husband and I uses the oddball to drag home a human corpse," said Stanky. "Good eatin. And don't startle up like that. We never killed none of them bumpfs ourselves."

"You're—you're ghouls!" wailed Jane.

"You gettin snippy again," said Stanky, shaking her head. "You eat dead pigs, we eat dead bumpfs. But not so much lately, what with the spotted gub taking control of our oddball. We's been livin on gub juice and—*ugh*—fresh food."

"We ain't never touched no *live* bumpfs before," mused Jeptha. "We was always just in morgues and crypts and such. Give me a feel."

And with that he flicked his wings and skimmed through the air my way. I flinched, but already he was upon me, buttonholing me with his four gloved hands. He smelled spicy and dry. Like cloves. Gently he ran his feathery antennae over my head, exploring the shape of my face.

"You ain't got that ripe, rich smell we likes," he observed.

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