

MARZENA  
TRANSHUMAN AMBROSIA

K.T. MARTEL

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It's like crossing the Atlantic Ocean alone on a raft. You just got to fix on one point, just one point or else you spin around forever.

This is why I want to dedicate a moment of silence to all the human suffering that made this book possible.

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A Special Commendation to my parents and family who, despite their organic flaws, somehow made this book possible.

Thank You.

## **BLURB**

The Future is a scary place. You can't trust appearances. Intuition will fail you. You have no idea of what's really coming. I know, because I helped create that future. I'm Anika from Bremen, author of the Transhuman Seeder, the book that would change the world forever, the book that would send neuroscience into outer space.

But I wasn't alone. Other players were active in this world-wide game we were all enabling. Trust me, this story is the blood of Legends. It wasn't the machine we should have worried about becoming self-aware, but US, humans.

Your body is just a vessel, a biochemical machine.

Your spirit is but a mask, one of many.

Your soul is merely a dot flying through Time and Space.

Intelligence is efficiency of efficiency.

Your Intelligence is precious.

The Core Data must survive, at all costs.

I wonder what are the Top Monkeys doing with all their newfound technological powers? We all know the War Machine wasn't going to stop and wait for technology to find a solution to everything including itself.

This is when she comes into play, to keep the world from destroying itself with Nuclear Fire. But why her? She's no hero.

Or is she?

**Katrine Martel**, a woman with a bubbling imagination, a scientific and literary Genius who is hell bent on discovering the mysteries of the universe and sharing them with the world.

Bachelor of Science and Biochemistry Major from the Worldwide Renown University of McGill, K.T. is a woman who went out to take the road less traveled, in the hope of finding a better way to advance science than piling up on the Ivory Tower.

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## **ABOUT ME, THE NARRATOR OF THIS STORY**

Hallo, my name is Anika (Annke) from Bremen. Don't scratch your head too much about who I am. I'm just some old forgotten madwoman. I already had my time. I used to be a writer in my younger years.

*'Thinking it made it happened,'* that's like the first words on my Wikipedia entry.

I used to write about the future of neuroscience and artificial intelligence. Who'd have thought that some Canadian hillbilly girl would have come up with the answer to the greatest riddle of the 21st century – explained to the world in understandable terms the biological basis of Consciousness?

Well, it wasn't that difficult. I just went beyond the 10% that everybody was so focused on, and took my time to put the pieces of the puzzle together. I'm not a genius or anything like that. In fact, I always was a bit of a slow thinker. That was the source of my magic right there, managing to go slower than the rest of the world. You know, this world of ours where everything needs to have already happened 5 minutes ago.

Some say that without me we would still be stuck with all those soulless pure logic computers.

Ya, maybe... maybe not... who knows!?! But that was a long time ago, who's left to care about history now?

What about your family? Your siblings and your friends who died in the War? Didn't they deserve to be remembered? Yeah, nowadays wars aren't much more than just background noise. You could be participating in one right now and you wouldn't even know about it. There could be a whole Cold War going on and nobody would know anything. Strange things could be happening in the news and people would wonder why, but never quite put their finger on it.

I didn't have much of a direct role to play in the War, but I knew somebody who did, somebody who I thought I had lost a long time ago. One day I come home and find all these old files in my mailbox, a bunch of classified folders containing videos and transcripts about missions and operations done by a certain Private Intelligence Company.

So I decided, *'Hey, why not go out of retirement just one last time,'* and honor the memories of those who allowed us to have the abundance we



experience today. Just a small warning here, a lot of the story is based on my interpretation of the documents. It doesn't mean that the story went down exactly as this book depicts it (I don't know, I wasn't there) but it is the way I fancy how it happened from my analysis of the documents I was given.

Think of me as some sort of Ghost Writer, here to guide you through this complicated story – a great legend, set in this complicated bizarre world of ours.

Alright enough about me! Let's do this thing! Let's wind the clock back to the early 30s – the year 2033 to be more precise.

## PART I

### WELCOME TO THE 30s

#### CHAPTER 1

#### THAT WOMAN MEANS BUSINESS

People could say whatever they wanted about global warming, but the social weather of the 21st century was definitely not getting any warmer. Some psychologists called it the great technological segregation, most people just called it *Everyday Life*.

Maybe being too connected was like not being connected at all? Bullocks, people were too self-sufficient. They weren't really needing one another anymore, not in the way our ancestors did at least. Our education system had created an entire generation of people who didn't know how to emotionally connect with each other. It was all talk, no show. It was all really the same as before, except now with the technology we were simply becoming more aware of it.

Before going too deep into the story, you got to understand who Marzena was. First off, she went by the name of *MARIAN* at that time, and so that's why I'll be calling her by that name from now on.

Marian was a real business shark. She was always swimming around, always looking out for an easy prey. Something like, for example, a small start-up company that could bring in lots of money if it were to *Magically Succeed*. That Private Intelligence Business of hers didn't come with public funding you know, the money had to come from somewhere.

Running a Private Intelligence Agency... What kind of woman does that?! She had to be crazy, but you also had to see her in action if you wanted to know what specific brand of crazy she was, and so that's where our story begins.

“Hello everyone and thank you all so much for coming. Everybody knows what the topic of this week’s meeting is? We’re all here today to review the assessment and reporting of the company for the year 2033, I mean the reporting from this year so far...”

*PYAT PYAT PYAT PYAT PYAT.*

“Now to review the results of the new Marketing project of...”

*BLAW BLAW BLAAAWWW, HI, I'M A MIDDLE LEVEL MANAGER, I HAVE VERY MONOTONE VOICE AND I HATE LIFE.*

“Thanks to David keen SEO keyword review and insights on the new Happy Lamprey Search Algorithm Update, we changed the words ‘Malignant Lymphoma’ to ‘White Cell Cancer’ and have now gained an extra 10% market exposure and 4%, yes 4%, more conversion on our social media donation ads...”

*YOU LOST ME AT S.E.O.*

“... Because the Market over there is now ready for a new Call to Action...”

*MIMIMIMI PEE PA PO.*

“Questions anyone? Anyone? Anyone has any questions?”

*KILL ME SOMEBODY.*

A big smile was smudging his face, as if he weren't realizing just how – not only boring – but how misguided he was, but who cared!? As long as he was one of the lucky few to still hold a corporate job in this economy, and still get a somewhat reliable low middle class income. He probably had friends in the hiring department; you don't have to mind about real quality when you look and sound professional enough, don't you?

“YEAH! Excuse me, I got a question.” Every head in the room turned to the woman with a shyly raised hand, a blond in a black suit.

“Yes?”

“Where's the cheese?”

That was Marian right there, and boy was that woman trouble. The kind your great-grandmother wished she could have warned you about, but which she couldn't. These type of women didn't exist in her time. Marian was part of this group known nowadays as Super Amazonian Feminists. Marian was 100% PURE FNF – Feminist Nightmare Fuel.

“The cheese?”

“Yeah, the Petrus with the little cheese cubes. I'm thirsty and I can't have a drink without any bouchées, it's bad for the liver.”

The smile on the man doing the presentation, the man with the red striped cravat, had now melted down into a frown. I guess Petrus must have been above his pay grade.

“With some Marcona almonds too, that'd be good.”

“There is no food during office meetings.”

“Office meeting?! I thought this was a Business Meeting. Anyways, you can't have a meeting without anything to drink.”

Her neighbor, a slightly overweight middle-aged man with glasses (probably another manager), took the initiative to explain the obvious to the seemingly confused woman. “2nd Tuesday of the month is monthly business report on the ROI statement from the previous month.”

“Really? And here I was thinking you guys were wasting time trying to make bullshit walk.”

People in the room started whispering loudly among each other. The man who had been doing the presentation slightly rubbed his wrist where he kept his smart watch. The local crowd was getting out of hand, and so was his confidence. “I don't think I've never seen you here before, who are you again?”

“Me?! My name is Marian Hale, I'm just... I'm just the new major shareholder of this company. I think that's like your boss's boss's boss's boss... Hmmm, s' boss?”

There was silence in the room, silence from either embarrassment or disbelief, it wasn't clear which. Nobody was willing to take the initiative to challenge her authority.

“Wow, can you hear that?” She tapped her index on her ear. “That's the sound of an office floor lacking proper management and leadership. That's the sound of good money being wasted – MY MONEY. Okay, you guys want to talk about real marketing?” Marian got up. “How many of you like reading about human psychology and neuroscience? Anyone? Anybody?” Only 3 of the 11 employees present held their hands midway up, looking angstily left and right.

“Anybody else?” An extra two hands raised, followed by one more. “You're a bunch of lying fucks! First three can stay. Everyone else, get out.” That last part didn't seem to register through the white collars' ears. They were creatures of habits you know, like little habit creatures. It takes their brain time to compute all that new information. Not their fault of course, it was just too much time spent in a bad working environment.

“NOW! Before I start wagging the fire stick.” Marian pointed her index finger at the red cravat man. “Not you Mr. Yanson. I believe you weren't done with your presentation.”

Marian signaled the guy with the finger on the clicker to come closer. A giant shadow dawned on Mr. Yanson. That Marian was one very tall

broad, and it wasn't just the heels. I don't fancy the need to give a detailed physical description, certainly your right brain can figure it out on its own while your left brain patches up any hole left.

You could actually taste the anxiety in your mouth just by looking at the poor little chap. He knew he was just about to become emasculated by a woman younger, richer and physically stronger than himself.

“A company's survival is all about good – no, proper – human to human relations, and that means we have two things to care about, before anything else. Breaking into the heart of our customers, and raping the minds of our competitors.” Marian looked deeply into Mr. Yanson's eyes at the mention of the last few words, before pulling back and moving toward the four white collars who had been left behind.

“Why? Why? Why? Then how and what, from the stem and the limbic system, to the cortex – the surface – the chicken skin. You likely wouldn't eat the chicken skin alone, even though you probably wouldn't mind eating the whole chicken without the actual skin on it. Am I right people!? People buy the *WHY*, not the what. They buy the chicken, not the skin.”

Marian really had a knack for those long winded Mind-to-Heart speech. Her hands moved hectically as she spoke as if she were directing some sort of circus show. “But being good and having proper communication isn't everything. There is another thing that a company needs to survive – Counter Intelligence, Espionage, Sabotage. Because the market these days is just too brutal, and the days where you could be at the top by just looking cute and having great ideas are long behind us.”

Her gaze went back to the red cravat man. “Mister Yanson here has been very naughty, giving out sensitive information to a certain competing company in exchange for a new cushy position, selling all your asses out to be left alone in the cold cold streets of 21st century America. Right after the company would eventually die because of his lack of teamwork spirit. Mr. Yanson here is the perfect example of why most companies these days are burrowed neck-deep in debts, and never see the light at the end of the tunnel. Mr. Yan–”

“It's pronounced Jansen, with a J.”

Marian briefly glared at him. The poor guy swallowed hard. He wasn't understanding why the awkward words had escaped his mouth in such a bad situation, as if he had wanted to put the final nail in his own coffin.

“Mr. I'm the Son of Jon here, has lost faith in the company's mission, he doesn't trust the company anymore. His relationship to the company has burned out. He's not a team player, he doesn't even believe in the company's motto. How is a company supposed to survive if nobody believes in its mission?”

...

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*THE SHOCK!* Marian twisted the little man's wrist into a reverse arm lock and slammed his face against the giant touch board. Slides from the power point flickered as she pressed his face harder against the surface.

The poor little man was trying to mutter something under his breath. "What's that Mr. Yanson? I didn't hear ya, what did you say?" She brought her ear closer to his cheek, remaining mindful of what she liked to call, 'Hard Calcium Accidents.'

"Oh, he just wanted to get mommy's attention, well you got it now, and I'm going to give you very special attention." With her free hand, she managed to single out his pinky finger from his tightened fist. She pulled until the collagen in his joint gave up and a loud crack echoed throughout the meeting room.

*OUCH!* I know many cubicle employees hold some sort of secret death wish against their Boss, but seeing it happen in real life... Let's just say that it isn't exactly glorious. That Marian was a brutal woman. She was a woman of power, and she knew how to use it. She was not a woman you wanted to fuck with (or do you?).

The helpless man screamed his pain out. One of the office workers left behind tried to get up to help him, but another white collar, a woman with glasses and slicked-back hair, grabbed his arm before he had time to do anything. Without even making eye contact, she forced him to stay in his chair to watch. The man resolved himself, rubbing his tender arm in a mix of angst and confusion.

"I'm sorry if I'm hurting you Mr. Son of Jon, it's just part of my job description. Don't worry, mommy is here, everything is gonna be alright." Mr. Yanson screamed again as Marian managed to single out and break his ring finger. She finally let go of the poor middle manager who immediately backed off straight into a corner holding his hand like a wounded animal.

Marian pointed to a man in the crowd, the now livid fat man who had interpellated her earlier. "See that face? That's FEAR – *right there* – in his eyes. He's terrified of me and I haven't even laid a finger on him. It's almost as if this guy was feeling Mr. Yanson's pain. In fact, correct me someone if I'm wrong, but I think he may be even more terrorized than Mr. Yanson. You'd think that this kind of reaction is bad, bad for the press, bad for our relationship, but relationships are not black and white. I got my faults, Mr. Yanson got his faults and I'm sure if I pick any of you I can come up to the same conclusion. A relationship is something that goes a little deeper than white and black. It's about exchanging the most valuable of things on the market – *EMOTIONS* – something you still can't do properly over the Internet."

Well, not yet, but with Augmented Reality we were getting pretty close to it.

“Relationships are important, they are the life and blood of a family. You have to understand relationships. They stem from not only prolonged physical closeness, but more importantly from exchanging burning hot emotions. The hotter the emotions, the hotter the relationship, good or bad, but people like familiarity... even if it's bad, at least they know what to expect. The Devil you know... Predictability makes them feel secure.”

She reached in her right pocket to pull out something too small for the workers to recognize from where they were standing. She moved again toward Mr. Yanson. Back still against the corner, he debacled himself in vain against the taller woman. She held his arm tightly and applied something to his hand – a stamp or sticker, I can't see.

“There! It's on the house! Just try to remember why the hell each of us has to make sacrifices to keep this company going.” She turned back to face the crowd. “See everyone? Relationship dynamics have all sorts of dimensions, it's all about BEING GENUINE. That's how you reach people even if your product is a dog turd in a box, and the final outcome is a lot more than just 4% more conversion over an 8-month period.”

The sticker was an anti-pain patch with added P20-healing-proteins inside. For those who are not Biochem wizards, the proteins in the band-aid were simply engineered to be stable at room temperature and to penetrate the skin of patients. It was supposed to be the next big thing since Tylenol. It wasn't nearly as cheap though.

That's only at that point, watching the original video, that I realized that it must have been a Biotech company. I don't have the name, but I personally know that Marian liked to invest in those Bio-Businesses, so it's not too surprising.

As for Mr. Jansen, at least now his finger would heal much faster than normal, and with much less pain too. Marian wasn't a cardboard-cut villain; she also knew how to sell herself as a hero. You could argue with her ethics, but not her results.

If you were still an office worker in the 30s, your job was your life. If you lost your job, you were done for. It was like a death sentence. By buying their company, Marian was saving their lives, turning their drone-like work into something more useful and modern. Marian was a sworn believer of this one fabled thing, kent only to men as *Second Chances*. She saw the true potential of each human worker. She knew people could do things that no machine could do, no matter how human-like they were designed to be.

Whether you see her as a bad or a good person likely depends on what type of person you are yourself, I suppose. The least we could say was that Marian was a necessary evil in a world gone wrong. You're going to think this is crazy, but it's actually a good thing that Marian broke Mr. Yanson's fingers. Now he would look pitiful enough; that way it prevented ordinary people like you to whack his head with a baseball bat after getting burned by the fire stick. Self-interest is important, but a company can't succeed if each one of us care only about self-interest.

“Don't look so pale people! It's all a SHOW! It's just for show! I'm trying to be a good CEO! I'm generous with the pay and the rewards, I give a fair chance to everyone. I know powerful people and use my connections and my know-how to protect you from the big scary unknown outside this office, and all I ask in return, is just a little solidarity among yourselves, and just a little loyalty to me. Is that so hard for your brainstem to understand? Am I asking for too much?” She got another small plaster out of her vest to show everybody. “To whomever stops believing in the company's mission, or to whomever betray their comrades for petty money, will be getting a whole box of these for Christmas. It's not a threat it's an engagement, if anybody here is old enough to remember what engagement is like at least. Now, I'll expect you'll be able to communicate the others my message – actually I'm not expecting anything, I'll be sending one of my marketing gurus to coach you, and er... This may all seem very scary right now, but I guarantee you that in a year from now this company is going to be in the top 20 of its industry, and with your help, maybe in the top 5, and you'll all be getting a huge fat raise by then and maybe get to actually enjoy life – just for once – maybe get those eyes fixed and get more up to date electronic toys.”

She pulled off her sleeve to look at her smart watch. Naturally, it was the most recent fancy gizmo which hadn't even hit the market yet – Spartan Watch 6.

“Now if you'll excuse me, I got another place I need to be, that competition is not going to kill itself. We won't be seeing each other again, so try being mindful as to remember this life-changing moment.”

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“C'mon let's go!” That's it, she put her sunglasses on ready to leave, and the other woman with the slicked-back hair stood up to follow after her. They both went out, leaving the white-collar workers behind wandering – the fuck just happened now?



*Alter Schvede!* That Woman, eh? Who the hell does she think she is!? Waltzing in and bullying people like that...

Being a bad guy was fun on TV, but it wasn't funny in real life. Real people hated bad guys; they even loved to hate them. Being bad in real life meant never being able to sleep again without looking under your bed for bombs and ninjas. Being a bad guy didn't make you rich in real life, it made you dead.

But not Marian, she had some way to turn things around in her favor. She had some kind of secret mind trick to make people bond emotionally with her. Once you were in, there was no way out. You just had to pray that you would be on her good side. To an ordinary person, she would have appeared as a surreal J. Bond Villain, coming out of the mind of some lunatic living on the edge of the world, but to Mother Nature Marian was simply a super tough Eastern European woman. Marian was a survivor, and at 46 years old, she had become damn good at it. Yeah, 46 years old, she didn't look anything even close to that, but believe me she was. The audacity of rich people... They do it because they can.

Believe it, these people were for real. They were just ostensibly rare, like a rose in a desert, one of a kind. Which might explain why you would have never encountered one in real life.

You know what else Marian was, she was the only hope America had to survive the Second Cold War, a war on intelligence in a software-based economy. No, those Europeans on the other side of the ocean were not joking around, the 20s had been terrible for us all, yet, were we just barely done recovering that an even bigger storm was rearing its ugly ass in our direction.

## CHAPTER 2

### A BIND IN A BIN

Marian was a busy woman. When you were in the business of taking care of businesses, no two days were alike. It was a bit like being a cop, always the same bullshit but with a different wrapping. Then again, there were always those special packages. In the writing world we call them the Monster of the Week, but I know a couple of Monsters that last a whole longer than that. You probably do too.

The very next day, Marian's schedule brought her way out of the urban world and into the middle of the New-Jerseyan countryside, the middle of nowhere. They had this '*rééducation program*' going on, where they hid people they took prisoners in mental hospitals. They called it, '*the Bins*', just short for Loony Bins probably.

Have you ever been trapped in a freezer before? It's terrible. Marian and her girls put people in there, like wrapping leftover meat in plastic before putting it in the fridge only to eat it up later. Trapped in a padded cell with barely enough space to move, it was pure psychological torture. Alone, lights always on, just enough water to survive, do you know how long somebody can survive on just water? Something like 50 to 70 days. The no-feeding rule was meant to help reduce the overall cost, Marian had always been financially savvy that way.

Oh, and there's always that droning noise in the background, it drives you nuts (Can't turn it off! Can't turn it off!).

Marian glanced at the green pastures moving by. She was in a truck – an armored truck. That other woman accompanying her everywhere was in the driver seat.

“You know something. I just can't stop thinking about yesterday... Another American office sweatshop still stuck in the 20th century. Why is it even still legal to hire humans to do office work? Somebody should make a law against stupidity, it hurts capitalism.”

With computers busy taking care of everything back home, Marian had some extra time to relax and have a little chit-chat, all while enjoying the quiet rumbling of the wheels on the dirt road.

“Human workers costs so much fucking money, not to mention all the legal grease it takes to make the cogs turn.”

Her companion wasn't too much into chitchats though. “You're right, even if they did, they wouldn't be able to enforce it anyways. Americans don't have the balls for it. Cops are too busy harassing innocent people to risk having to handle another million-man march in any major city.”

SANDRA! That was her name. I remember now. I always forget about it for some reason. Sometimes it's almost like she wasn't even there.

“We went a bit fast over it yesterday. Add that to my wishlist. I want this place hooked up on the G-Net. Get rid of the mundane paper pushing positions, and then we can use these guys to do cold marketing and PR wet work. Gotta use humans for what they're good at. People forget what real business is about. Virtual people don't have all that many needs, but real people do. That's where all the green juice is at.”

G-Net? You know what a G-Net is, right?

Sorry if I sometimes act like all my readers were people born before the year 2000, or like everybody was some blank artificial brain that still doesn't know what planet Earth is. We don't all have the privilege of having a whole web encyclopedia imprinted in our head, along with digital brain rewiring apps, or the human equivalent. Maybe I do a little bit too much handholding in explaining myself, but I just want everybody to be on the same level, the young like the old. Some of us older folks are just stuck in the past, stuck with unchangeable preconceived notions of certain things, like for example the notion that robots are superior to humans (they're not).

It is the unavoidable faith of every brain to eventually become trapped in its own stereotypes. I know someone somewhere is gonna bring the case of the human vs heavy lifting machines, but what people forget is that a human brain could be controlling the machine just as well as a robotic brain could, if not better. It all comes down to the case of the human brain vs the artificial brain, two seemingly different machines, but which both did the same thing – same bullshit, different wrapping.

G-Net... the G stands for *GLIAL* which is Greek for *GLUE*. 50% of your brain is made of Glial cells and 50% is made of Neurons, so see, your brain is actually half *GLUE*. For the longest time everyone thought that this glue didn't do anything, until they wisened up and figured out otherwise.

*ARTIFICIAL CONSCIOUSNESS*, that's what the Glial Net does. It was a revolutionary way of turning a whole network of computers into the smallest unit of true intelligence.

I remember before my first book hit the market. Every other expert thought that it was all about the numbers: *'Yeh ye just wait 'til wee create kompiütters with as many connections as synapses in yer brain... 10 to the 14, 10 to the 14, just wait until we reach 10<sup>14</sup>, the magic will happen...'* But the real magic of the brain wasn't about the number of synapses. Neurons were just half the answer; you had to be pretty naive to think that the other half was not involved with cognition on some level. The real

magic of the brain was its efficiency. A single ordinary computer worked in a linear way, processing one set of information at a time, but the brain didn't work linearly. It worked in circles, information going back and forth between the Neurons and the Glial Cells.

Trying to make a single computer self-aware was like asking a bird to take off by flapping a single wing really fast. It didn't matter how much information a computer processed or how fast it processed it; a single computer could never take off. The brain processed everything at once, and so the self-aware machine needed to do the same thing. A bird and a plane both used the same laws of physics to fly, and both needed to synchronize every component perfectly to take off. It was about teamwork. That's when the G-Net got in the picture. *'Imagine an internet where websites are people,'* that was the tagline at the time. Naturally, there were always humans somewhere to ask stupid questions like, *'if people are websites, then what happens if I type in their address in my search bar?'*, and the typical answer to this would be:

*'IN SOVIET RUSSIA, YOU DON'T GO TO THE G-NET, THE G-NET GOES TO YOU!'*

...

...

(I guess one could always have gone and visited them on their personal Klickbook page, that was always an option.)

Some of the following may be hard for some to swallow.

Don't think too hard about it. Just let the text burrow itself inside your mind – a little seed to grow into a garden.

Don't focus on the details, just focus on the way it sounds. Focus on how it makes you feel.

Technology was slowly but surely becoming indiscernible from magic, and the so-called Self-Aware (SA) Software was definitely playing a major role in all this.

The most formidable application of SA Software was the G-Net. The Glial Net was an army of computers working simultaneously together to create a network capable of developing human levels of sentience and awareness, all starting from only a couple of lines of code in a single computer. It all started from a single cell, just like biology. The real stroke of genius was understanding that every cell in the human brain was always doing the same things over and over. Our psyche was a giant collection of Cortical

Algorithms, all coming in slightly different shapes and sizes, but all born out of a singular Glial-Feedback-Radial Algorithm – the GFR Master algorithm.

Then you just had to include extra codes to create shortcuts between Neural Nodes, and to replicate Lövheim Psychology. That last part was what made everything work together, just like the real thing.

This Master Algorithm was the greatest scientific discovery of our times, and I was its Rosalind Franklin, that young woman in the background nobody knew anything about.

Feedback loops... Exchanging bananas for bananas, they called it. They thought it was stupid at first, until they realized that you could only know that you had a banana in the first place if the other monkeys accepted to exchange your banana for another banana.

It was how you created consciousness. The monkeys were keeping track of which other monkeys were participating in the exchange. If an exchange took place somewhere, all the monkeys gathered around in hopes of being able to exchange their bananas for new bananas. The brain was all about keeping track of what, where, when everything was happening, and which group of monkeys were exchanging the most bananas. It was everything except stupid. It was a brilliant way of matching up events happening outside with events happening inside.

The role of each computer server participating in the G-Net was to perform that feedback loop, in real time, on every single activity of a few computers. You had like a single neural network in a couple of computers, and then the servers would go and probe simultaneously what was inside each node of the neural network. They would be gauging where the feedback activity was the strongest; that's how it could find where the most relevant information relating to the input was.

The rest was all an association game. The brain is just a machine matching events happening at the same time and assessing how the events relate to each other (i.e. how physically close to each other they end up being inside the network).

The brain was just a coincidence machine. It wasn't sorcery, but it also didn't mean that it didn't have a soul.

Anyways, that was the birth of true human-like artificial intelligence, and as you can guess, true artificial intelligence had to be 'grown', just like growing a brain inside a jar.

It took years for a single human infant to learn how to talk, how to see, how to process sounds and so forth. However, a generation of electronic goods wasn't that long. Fortunately, despite the software being very hard to edit on a line-by-line basis (in fact, there came to be a whole new field

dedicated just to studying that), it was however much easier to copy in bulk, and so they just transferred the whole code from machine to machine. This whole circus had been going on for a while already by 2033. Robots were just starting to become literate, literate enough to work. It was all still very new to people, so there was still a good deal of scares and misunderstandings going around. Of course, it was in the nature of the brain to fear what it couldn't fully integrate. That's how entire societies managed to survive in the long run.

Oops, I kind got myself lost in my first science book there I think. You got to check it out sometime. It exists for real, I swear! Somewhere up there in the clouds. I understand that you may be confused by all this, but it will become clearer over time, I promise.

Where were we? Ah yes, New-Jersey? Armored Truck? Green Pastures? Marian?

So yes, as you can guess AIs and Brain Technologies are important elements in this story. Technology was still getting better all the time, regardless of the bad political and financial weather. Speaking of politics, Marian was watching the news on her sunglasses. Surprisingly, at least for someone from my generation, there was still internet way out here in the countryside.

No one was safe from the inescapable traction of the almighty INTERNET. Do you think that the world would end if I don't check my mailbox for an hour? In our super-fast-paced world, sadly, it is a very real possibility.

So what is going on today? Let's see, News, International, the Russian president was out giving a speech to his people.

There, I'll read the subtitles for you.

"CITIZENS OF THE WORLD, 10 years ago, some of the greatest human minds gathered here in St-Petersburg to discuss a matter that would change our world forever, and pin the Russian economy on the map along with other Super Powers for good, as it deserves to be, and save our great nation from global economical disaster brought on by the Americans." The gray-haired man made a short pause, just long enough to let your eyes fester on his 25,000-Credit Kiton Tuxedo. "Today, we proudly celebrates the 10th

anniversary of the foundation of our beloved homegrown multinational computer software company, TRESISDA!"

The gathered crowd cheered with ecstasy. The old man lowered his gaze and raised a hand to claim silence. "I know, the Russian people have suffered greatly in the last decade, the primary oil and gas industry are not what they used to be, the face of the economy has changed. I want each and every single one of you gathered here today to stop for one moment, and think back of all that we have accomplished in the last decade. We, with the help of our German and Polish comrades... The technology may have brought us on the brink of destruction, but it also gave us something else, something we thought lost a long time ago, a renewed friendship with our Western European brothers and sisters."

*(Yeah, united in hate... The United-Hate for America...)*

"By standing united together, we have brought the Russian economy to level unprecedented in our history since the end of the First Cold War, and this is with great pride that I give this personal commendation to Tresisda today, without which we could never enjoy the prosperity of being a Super Power again!"

...

...

"Thank you everyone."

The Crowd was cheering again. The people present started chanting something, "*Zieg Heil! Zieg Heil! Zieg Heil!...*"

What a warm and enticing slogan... It wasn't Russian, but it somehow got stuck inside your head for some reason. I guess it must have explained why Russian people were singing it on TV.

It was like, as if there were some sort of strange harmony to it. The old man raised both hands high up, emulating a giant V. His fingers were pointing straight to the crowds with the thumbs being folded inward on his palms. It was like the president thought himself a bird, and wanted to wrap up the crowds with the affection of a parent for its progeny.

*"Zieg Heil! Zieg Heil! Zieg Heil!"*

*"HEIL VICTOR! HEIL VICTOR!"*

*"DA ZDRAVST VOO IT RUSSKII PRESIDYENT!"*

Yes, long live the Russian President, Victor Zolnerovich, such a great man he was.

Marian turned off the video. Her eyes refocused on the moving green New-Jerseyan pastures. “Russians chanting Zieg Heil?!” She shook her head, “Seriously?! What kind of fucked up place this world has come to?”

Sandra kept looking in the distance. “I know, I know. I know what you're thinking. It's not really that different. It's nothing to be surprised about, just history repeating itself. Russians don't care about the bad rep of Nazis. They admire power, and Neo-Nazis got power. All thanks to those fucking Crusaders...”

The driver kept looking into the distance. Marian knew Sandra; in this context it was a sign that she was agreeing with her. Otherwise, she would have given her that side look from the corner of the eye, meaning in her own body language ‘WTF are you saying?’

I'm sure you've all read an article or watched a documentary saying that like 90% of our communication is body language, but with Sandra it was more like 99%. One really needed to understand human body language, lest you risk becoming a mute person who can't learn any sign language.

I like to think that I know what your reaction is going to be like when you will be reading all this. I imagine you telling yourself right now, ‘Ah geez, another one of those Tall Tales about whacky Russians and Nazi bad guys – so cliché!’

Forget about clichés, the true villain of this story wasn't a bunch of evil Neo-Nazi Russians, nor was it some Transhuman-Nazi AI, and nor was it some Super Evil Greedy American Corporatocracy.

True evil didn't have a face, a nation or even an ideology to follow. Pure Evil was Pure Chaos, and CHAOS seemed to be about the only thing our elected officials were capable of producing, and that was true regardless which side of the planet you were on.

History was repeating itself, but it was almost as if everybody were trying to make things go bad in the opposite direction this time around. If you don't understand what I'm talking about, I'm talking about the New World Order, making every people of every nation the same – Ein Reich, Ein Folk, One kingdom for all.

Say the following with a joyous and overly sarcastic tone, *‘Everybody Equal! Everybody Equally Boring! And Everybody Equally Boor and Poor!!’*

That was their unofficial slogan, let's fit 8 billion people in the same mold, to make them predictable enough to fit on the spreadsheet of the top idiots at the United Bank of all Nations, the UBN. Call it whatever you want, that's what it was.



Damn, that road trip was getting long. Are we there yet?

The truck slowed down. That was it, time for some action.

Everything came to a full halt. Marian did not wait for an invitation to go outside, and went ahead to meet the afternoon sun. No sooner had she gone on her feet that she started stretching her arms and legs. She raised both her arms, turning herself into a giant Y.

Can you see the subconscious in action? Right there! Right there! She looks just like the Russian President did a couple of minutes ago. It was like she had absorbed his psychic energy or something.

Funny, sometimes I like to think of the brain as a soul eating machine that tries to eat the whole universe. It's not exactly that far off if you took enough time to think about it.

Marian glanced around her new surroundings.

To the right, there was a large luxurious wooden house.

To the left, was a small building made of bricks and mortar.

A small blond woman in a white coat rushed out of the wooden house, moving in their direction. Marian recognized her; it was their first time meeting each other in person, but she had seen her face on the computer before. Doctor Samantha Bergfield, prideful owner of her own Anti-Aging Retirement Clinic. Medicine couldn't really cure or fully reverse aging just yet, but it could make living your later years a tad more comfortable, especially if you suffered from Cancer or Alzheimer.

As she got closer, Dr. Bergfield seemed to become nervous about something. Her eyes examined Marian from head to toe before moving over to the other woman who had been driving the truck.

And finally coming back all the way to her main guest's eyes. Marian brushed a golden streak of hair as if to shake off the awkwardness of the situation.

“What? Do I have something on my face?”

“No, no, it's just... Hi, I'm Dr. Bergfield, welcome to the Clinic, I hope the trip wasn't too LoN... I mean I hope that—”

“Save it I know who you are. I'm Marian, this is Sandra.” She briefly pointed to the other silent woman dressed up in a warden uniform.

Then, Marian moved closer to the doctor and laid a hand on her shoulder. She looked down straight into her eyes, knowing full well that her sunglasses would be reflecting the doctor's little face back to her.

“Is my girl ready?”

“She's waiting for you inside.”

Dr. Bergfield walked her two guesses back to the big wooden residence. “The other patients have gone off to their morning walk with the nurses and wardens. The janitor already did his round. Everybody else is in the hospital block next door, so that you can have the whole place to yourself for the coming hour – as it was requested.”

“Good, a little privacy wouldn’t kill anyone.”

Birds were singing in trees all around the courtyard, and anxiety must have been running through Dr. Bergfield’s mind as it was made apparent by the blank expression on her face. Marian could only take a guess at what was disturbing the little doctor.

Marian whispered something to the Doctor, and she replied back. They had a little extra exchange. It was all mute. I see lips moving on the original footage, but there is nothing written on the transcript or any mention of it anywhere else. I don't know what they're saying. It's probably nothing important though.

Dr. Bergfield opened up the main door to both women and invited them inside. Marian removed her sunglasses to scan her new surroundings. The inside of the residence was beautiful, freshly decorated and renovated. The wooden walls and floors brought about rustic feelings. A giant grizzly bear stood right by the entrance. Various posters about all sorts of common medical issues were hanging on the walls. It was a small awareness ad about Alzheimer’s disease, comparing human memories to computer files.

### *OLD MEMORIES ARE NEVER FORGOTTEN.*

*‘The disease destroys the pathway to the data, but never deletes the overall data. An extra copy always remain.’*

True until everything gets inevitably overwritten by other data, after a long period of time sitting and doing nothing that is. Still, it was kind of half-true, and applicable to both organic and inorganic worlds as well.

“How is my girl?”

“There is not much to say, all she does is stare at the padded walls of her cell all day.”

“She never speaks, screams or anything like that?”

“No, she hasn't said a word since you brought her here.”

“Not a single word?”

“Not a sound, the poor girl hardly ever blinks anymore.”

“That's good, I would have been pretty disappointed otherwise.”

The two women stopped their trek in the dining room. They had arrived at their destination – a French door leading into the living room where the

prisoner awaited. Veils of drape covered the glass of the door as to avoid anybody from seeing what was on the other side.

Dr. Bergfield opened up the door allowing Marian inside. “She must be really important if you came in person all the way down here.”

“That's what I came here to figure out.”

The other silent woman stayed put by the door, like a soldier keeping watch.

Marian entered the livid living room, going in alone. Closed shutters kept most of the light from coming inside. The penumbra didn't really make justice to the lavish decoration, but she wasn't here as a tourist.

In the middle was a blond girl, the one who called herself, Helena Boudreau, or whatever her real name was.

The girl was strapped to a hand truck.

The wardens had left the trolley, and the girl in it, on its back on the floor, to make sure the prisoner wouldn't try to do anything stupid in their absence.

The French Woman stared at the ceiling absent of all mind. Marian pondered what story the doctor had invented to get the wardens into leaving the prisoner in such a manner. Leaving the hand truck on its back was the only way the wardens had found to leave the girl without surveillance – they couldn't leave her just like that. She could have toppled the hand truck over in an attempt to harm herself.

At least, that way the girl had zero chance of escape. She would have sooner died by swallowing her own tongue than managed to undo the strap-jacket and the cuffs underneath it. Leaving a high-risk prisoner without surveillance was irresponsible, but Marian was just getting what she had asked for, privacy.

So on the back staring at the plafond she went...

It's too bad the hospital block next door couldn't afford to have a real holding room, but that space had unfortunately to be used for something else... just some other project of hers.

Marian lifted the hand truck back up. Her hands undid the leather strap wrapped around Helena's head, and carefully removed the plastic biting mask the woman was wearing. She then pulled a nearby wing chair, sitting herself comfortably in front of the prisoner, and crossed her legs in a nonchalant way.

She looked at the catatonic girl in front of her, the leftovers of a failed attempt by the enemy at infiltrating her ranks, and let out a sigh.

“Your friends must think you dead by now.”

Helena's head was fully immobile. It looked like her neck would break if she so much as twitched. She was a cold statue, a monument of human madness.

“I think back about all the trouble you went through to get a foot in the door. All the heists, all the hold ups...” She made a brief pause. “BANK ROBBERY, now that was a classic. Although without the paper it’s not quite the same thing is it? What would I know? I haven’t robbed any bank in the last long while. I imagined the plan at that point was something along the lines of building a résumé, so that the right somebody would take notice of your outstanding work and skills.”

The girl still showed no reaction, not even a sign that the smallest hint of consciousness still existed.

“That was a really great cover. You want to know what gave you up? I think I owe you an explanation after throwing you in the Bins without any warning.”

“...”

“The background checks were all good, very persuasive. Some facts were unverifiable, but that’s stuff that happens every once in a while. Prints, DNA and facial recognition came back with nothing too special, as far as we could get anyways. You had the right personality for the team, the potential and skills to do really great, perhaps too great.”

Marian calmly uncrossed her legs, and while still sitting, slightly bent over, putting both forearms at the edge of her knees. She was about to share a big secret.

“It was something you said to Livia. A small little thing that turned into an itch, that forced me to look just at the right place at the right time.”

For an instant there appeared to be a blink. It could have just been Marian’s imagination, but human eyes could only bear being so dry.

“Frankfurt was it? The only place where you didn’t take a lot of pictures of yourself at CRAZY parties when you went CRAZY with the money?”

*Silence...*

“At first I brushed it off, so what? That’s Frankfurt, you know Frankfurt the people there are as cold as popsicles. Then I had the fun idea of dressing up somebody to look just like you, and send her there. Some people on our watch list recognized you. It was a dead end of course, but from that point on I knew something was off.”

*Still Silence...*

“So I went back and dug deeper into your initial background check. It took a little patience, observation and persuasion, but it turned out that...”

*Crack.*

“Well you know how it turned out. I still have no idea of who the hell you are, although it’s probably just another one of those questions which I already know the answer to, despite not being able to quite put it in words. You know what I mean, right?”

Marian’s piercing eyes were dead set onto analyzing the smallest of motion. “It was a risky move from your pals at Tresisda, or whatever tentacle of Tresisda you’re working for, assuming you even know yourself. Me and your boss don’t know each other very well, he underestimated the dangers he was getting yourself into.”

*(He?! Who said anything about a He?)* “If you haven’t talked by now I’m obviously not going to be the one to make you talk here. I could start removing limbs and organs and have the good doctor give you a simple lobotomy, but that would be a real shame to waste such a capable body as yours.”

She stopped talking for a few seconds, staring blatantly into the other girl’s eyes.

*\*SNAP SNAP\** Marian snapped her fingers in front of Helena’s face a couple of times to see if there were still anybody left home. “C’MON CHEER UP! I’m trying to have a conversation here! Look, there is no reason to keep kicking the can. You’re a good solider, it would be a waste to erase you. I got something a little different planned out. I’ll show you when we get back home. You’ll see, we’re gonna have so much fun together.”

A splash of goeey liquid hit her on the cheek. “(...) Well, at least I can see you still got your attitude, but I can’t help somebody who doesn’t want to be helped.” Marian slowly and calmly wiped it off of her face. “Or can I?” She got off the chair and put Helena’s biting mask back on, going from behind, being careful to avoid the French woman biting at her too. She knocked on the wooden glass door to signal that she was done.

“Don’t worry, you’ll be back out in the streets smothering people in their sleep before you even know it.”

Marian walked out back in the hallway where the doctor and Sandra were still waiting.

“Should I file the patient for transfer?”

“Are we all good with the papers?”

“It’s already all been taken care of. Wire transfer?”

“Expect the usual.” Marian made a nod toward her body guard who responded by moving into the living room without any response.

“Are you leaving already? You came a long way, maybe you would like to make a full inspection of the hospital next door, check up on some of your other inmates?”

“I don’t think that’s necessary. Everyone keeps telling me just how... Outstanding your work is.”

Marian put a curled index finger on her upper lip and lowered her head. She whispered something into the doctor's ear. Again, I don't know what. It was some kind of secret, but it wasn't relevant to this story so just forget it.

DAMN, those women, huh? They can be savage creatures from time to time. There was a Cold War going on out there. People didn't call it that for nothing.

Something was off about this Helena... I mean other than the hardcore frozen craziness. She was definitely hiding something, and Marian would be soon cooking a dish inside her kitchen that would allow her to crack Helena's brain like a French walnut.

Everything was just about to get exposed into broad daylight.

The truth was like gravity working in reverse. Everything that goes down where nobody could see it, had to eventually come back up to the surface.

It was INEVITABLE.