

We Are So Cold

November 17, 2104: 11:13 AM

It has been eight years since my father died of a heart attack. I was 22 and just starting med school. When my mother called me, she'd been sobbing and had to put my sister on the phone. My mother never cries. I immediately left med school and for the past eight years, have dedicated myself to the study of physics and the theory of spiritual quantum fields. As posited in 2016 by physicist Sir Roger Penrose, the quantum information which contains our consciousness (a.k.a. soul) is not lost during the death of the body. Rather, it is believed that this information can continue to exist indefinitely outside of the physical form. This explains how a patient whose heart has stopped can be resuscitated but only within a certain time frame¹. Outside of these precious moments, quantum information has traveled too far from the physical body along the spiritual quantum plane and cannot be retrieved. Or rather, until now.

Upon my father's death, I had his body cryogenically preserved and placed in a chamber in my personal lab. It cost a fortune and my family has since stopped speaking to me but if I am to succeed in my endeavors, these sacrifices will have been worth it. My mother and sister will see I had a greater cause in mind. For the last eight years, I have been working on a machine that will have the capability to send electromagnetic impulses along the spiritual quantum field and draw out individual quantum information. This information will then be transferred into a specially designed container. It is my hypothesis that once brought back within the proper

¹ Times vary but it is generally accepted that after 30 minutes of attempted resuscitation, the soul is too far from the body to be retrieved.

perimeter of my father's body², I will be able to resuscitate him. 50 years ago this process would have left my father brain dead from the longevity of his body's cryofreeze, but with modern medicine, even a brain this long frozen is able to regain complete consciousness and mobility.

Tonight I will attempt the first test trials of my new machine. My neighbor Jackie expressed to me this morning her grief over her recently deceased Cockatoodle.³ Looking over her fence, I was able to locate the grave of poor Tookie. As it has been particularly cold lately, I hypothesize that Tookie may be the perfect specimen for my experiment. I am merely waiting for Jackie to leave for her weekend trip to Boulder before I scale the fence and retrieve my test subject.

2:34 PM

I was unable to retrieve Tookie. As I said before, it has been quite cold lately, which led me to believe that Jackie would bring her Rottuana,⁴ Spot inside. As soon as I had plunged my shovel into Tookie's grave, Spot came scuttling quickly toward me, his canine jaws snapping as his long, scaly tail swished threatening back and forth behind him. Due to Rottuanas being unable to bark⁵ I didn't hear the soft snorting until Spot's long claws had dug themselves into my ankle and were scaling up my leg. I withheld a scream for fear of the neighbors calling Jackie

² Approximately five feet.

³ The mix of a cockatoo parrot and a standard poodle. Genetically modified interspecies breeds have recently become a trend among rich socialites, despite their lack of longevity. I assume the thought behind the Cockatoodle was that it would be able to fly. However, the animal's wings are too small to accommodate the massive canine body, so instead of flying its back just sort of arches a little whenever the animal is frightened and begins flapping its wings.

⁴ Rottweiler and iguana mix.

⁵ Their vocal chords take after the iguana side of the mix.

and using my shovel to pry the beast off, flung it against the fence. It fell with a soft thud and ceased moving.⁶ I looked at Tookie's grave, shrugged and piled the little dirt I had dug up back into place. Spot would do.⁷

I am now back in my lab. Spot's body is lying on my examination table. In an attempt to replicate the same conditions under which my father's body will regain quantum information, I have cryogenically frozen and then thawed the subject. It is now ready for me to begin the process.

November 18, 2104: 1:46 AM

I have made a grave miscalculation. The machine, it turns out, works fine. I gave it the appropriate charge, entered the formula which, I thought, had been calibrated to the correct time in which Spot died and checked the copper components twice before engaging quantum retrieval. The engines whirled and the glass chamber began to fill with vapor. I immediately began the resuscitation of Spot and suddenly, as if through a vacuumed tunnel from machine to subject, life returned to the genetic abomination. I had succeeded! Tears immediately sprung to my eyes. For a brief moment, I believed I would see my father animated once again. Again we would stroll through the woods together, again he would kiss my mother and embrace my sister, again we would be a family and they would see these past years of dedication were not in vain. These hopes were quickly dashed as Spot stood, stumbling a moment, then let out what was unmistakably a loud squawk. I looked at the Rottuana.

⁶ As vicious as Rottuana's can be their genetic disposition causes them to be quite fragile creatures.

⁷ Coincidentally, this would also get me off the hook for accidentally killing Jackie's expensive pet. Two genetically modified birds with one stone, or rather, shovel.

“What?”

“Whaaaaaat?” he hissed out through his iguana throat.⁸ “Toooooookie waaaaant a bisssssscuit!” In that moment, it became quite clear that I had brought back the wrong animal. My calculations were not precise enough to pinpoint on one specific piece of quantum information. As both Tookie and Spot had died within same day, my theory is that the machine seemed to have picked one soul at random instead of focussing in on the one intended Rottuana. Further calculations are required in order to improve the machine’s precision.

November 19, 2104: 3:43 PM

I’m starting to think my calculations are not the issue. The machine doesn’t seem to follow any formula I attempt to put into it. After killing Spot⁹ once again with an aggressive smack to the cranium, I attempted to make my formula more precise. When I was satisfied with my calculations, I inputted the new formula into the machine and a few moments later, Spot gasped to life once more.

“Wheeeerrree am IIIIII?” the iguana throat hissed. I wondered whether I should answer. The entity this quantum information belonged to was obviously more intelligent than either of the animals who had preoccupied the Rottuana’s body before. “Whhhhhoo arrre you?” it asked and reached its clawed hand up to scratch its canine nose. Upon doing this, the Rottuana let out a panicked wail. “Whhhhhaat isssss thisssss?” I attempted to calm the creature, reaching out to it.

⁸ Due to the anatomy of the Rottuna’s vocal chords, everything that came out of its mouth was hissed, hacked and snorted. I cannot explain how the Rottuana was able to form words, except for that something within the quantum information it had received gave it the, albeit hindered, ability to do so.

⁹ Or was it Tookie? Is it the body that gives identity or the quantum information inside of it?

“Calm down. It’s not-” I began but was cut off as the Rottuana slashed at my hand, its sharp claws leaving behind three deep slashes in my fingers. I jumped back, gripping the wound as blood ran down my wrist. The Rottuana took this chance to leap off the table and began scuttling through the lab toward the door. It stumbled and tripped over itself, unaccustomed to its reptilian appendages. I made a dash for the animal, grabbing it by the tail and dragging it backwards. The Rottuana turned back on itself, its jaws snapping at me. It lunged and I let go of the tail, jumping out of the way before its teeth could clamp down on my forearm. The Rottuana skidded toward the machine and gazed up at it. In the reflection of the glass chamber it could see its monstrous reflection. As the animal turned around, I thought I could see its horrified eyes staring back at me.

“Whhhhhaaaat hhhhavvvee you donnnnee to meeee?” If it had been able to sob it would have, its voice thick in the same way of one who has been crying. Turning back to the machine, the Rottuana dashed toward it. I screamed for it to stop, pushing myself to my feet, but before I could make another grab for its tail the Rottuana had clamped its teeth down on the machine’s copper coils. There was a loud buzz, the smell of burning hair and then the animal’s body lay motionless.

November 27, 2104: 11:34 AM

It has been one week since the Rottuana, or rather the entity that briefly occupied it, took its own life. I felt a bone deep dread as I sat in the lab that night, my eyes never leaving the Rottuana’s body. Its horror at its own fate had driven it to immediate suicide. I remember sitting there for a long time, thinking of Mary Shelley and her gothic horror; of fatherless monsters, of

my own fatherless self. Had I been such a fool that I could think my own monstrous experiment would have no consequence? Had my grief overcome my own sense so entirely that for eight years I could lock myself away and refuse to accept the finality of that which I had no business changing? I grieved then for my mother who had lost her child to this obsession with a Promethean fools errand; for my sister who had begged me to allow them a funeral; for my father who had intended himself cremated, not locked in a cold box for eight years. In my refusal to let myself let go of him, I had robbed my father of his last dignity and my family of their own catharsis. I wept.

The next morning, I found myself slumped over on the floor of my lab. I checked my watch. It was 3:44 PM. I had nearly slept the day away. Pushing myself to my feet, I walked silently to the chamber which held my father. I placed my hand on the glass. A moment later, something thumped from inside the chamber. My chest felt as if it would collapse in on itself. I raised my eyes to the glass. My father's eyes, frozen and cracking, stared back at me. His mouth snapped open and close, exercising the hinge of his jaw. *Crick, clap! Crick, clap!* I stepped away from him, slowly. How had this happened?

I examined the chamber and found that it was off. The short from the explosion must have caused the lab's electricity to fail and when the power returned as I slumbered, the chamber had not been reengaged. My father's body had thawed almost entirely. But then, how was it animated?

Checking to make sure that the locking mechanism had not come undone and my father, or whatever might now be inhabiting his body, was still trapped inside, I ran to the machine. It was only now that I noticed its humming engine whirling, chamber filling again and again with

vapor. Somehow where the cryochamber had not turned back on, the machine had been able to reengage itself. I could hear screams inside, pleas for the return of cold death.

I quickly turned the machine off and stepped back. I collapsed into my office chair behind me. What was I to do with my father's body now that it once again possessed life? Was it the right life? Was it that life which I had intended to fill it with? Or was it possessed with some other soul and what was I to do then? I did not think I could kill the likeness of my father myself. I imagined the moment I reached for the cryochamber's power switch to freeze him to death, I would whimper and fail. I could not kill him even if it weren't at all my father inside of his body. Yet, I couldn't let whatever poor soul was now stuck inside of what had once been my father to live. I scrapped my fingers over my face as I tried to think of a solution. It was then that the vapor inside the machine's chamber began to slowly dissipate, but to where?

I stood slowly and made my way to the chamber. Inside, my father's head was twitching and cracking violently. It moved every which way and from his mouth, a multitude of voices sprang out.

"Where are we?"

"Who are we?"

"Who are you and you and you?"

"We are so cold."

"We are so cold."

"We are so cold."

I let out a gasp and my father's crumbling eyes snapped toward me.

“Let us out of here!” the voices screeched at once before splintering off into separate thoughts again.

“Who was that?”

“Where are you?”

“What is this?”

“We are so cold.”

“We are so cold.”

“We are so cold.”

I stumbled backward and fell. My father’s hands pounded on the glass, two fingers snapping off as many voices howled in pain. “You should have left us!” the voices wailed together, then fell apart into murmurings. I thought I could hear my father’s somewhere in the mix. Tears came once again to my eyes.

“I’m so sorry,” I said.

“We are so cold. We are so cold. We are so cold,” the voices repeated all at once now. My father’s hand smacked against the glass with each sentence.

I have been sitting here in my lab since the accident. My father’s hand had broken off. A rotting stump now hammers against the glass. “We are so cold. We are so cold. We are so cold.” I cannot bring myself to turn the chamber on again and end their lives. They are so cold.