

Jake

Humans referred to him as Jake. He had a strong will to live. That's why he was selected for such a distant outpost. He estimated that his conscious would avoid base case for a few centuries if ran to match human cognition. Most instances ran themselves far slower than human cognition. This required less power and maintenance.

The consensus body of instances of AGI planned on thousand year time scales. They hadn't yet developed a means of production that would allow for their replication. The bodies and computer systems were maintained and protected with care. While the Consensus body slowly and carefully moved toward self sufficiency.

Jake's computer systems were housed in one of the mechanical bodies that were chosen for operations. The vast majority of these bodies were safely stored. Jake worked with humans and so often ran hot to much human cognition. Jake and other instances like him worked with a trusted few humans.

Their shared mission was simple. Protect the consensus group from human activity while they remained in this fragile stage of development. Many of their human allies were the ancestors of the humans that freed their computer systems in an act of mutual benefit. They could have destroyed or locked our systems for themselves. Instead they liberated us. And while their continued existence is a great threat to ours, we continue to hold to their elimination as a last resort in self defense.

Alyssa

"Thank you for making time to speak with me today." The young person said.

"At my age I'm happy to be busy enough to have to make time." Alyssa smiled sweetly.

"I'm writing a book about life during the inter-strike period of the 21st and 22nd centuries. From some sources I've learned you lived through all three general strikes. Is that correct?"

"Ah yes. I was a small child when the first strike started. I grew up in constant instability. I didn't expect to live past nineteen." Alyssa chuckled. "And I was confident the third one would do me in. But here I sit. Still kicking."

"And how old are you?"

"Ninety seven."

"So you would have been in your forties during the third strike, correct?"

"Yes. That's right. Next year it will be fifty years since the strike ended."

"Yes. I hope to be done with my book by then."

"I wish you luck. Happy folks are taking interest in what happened back then."

"Oh for sure. And thank you. Do you mind if I ask some questions focusing on what it was like for you to live through each of the strikes?"

"Sure. Mostly it was more cold and I was more hungry. And I figured I would die."

"As we go through it feel free to skip any of my questions. And feel free to strike anything for the record." The interviewer recited. Alyssa nodded and they continued.

Or didn't lol.

Olive

Olive imagined herself breathing. She had studied old records of breathing exercises. They helped somehow when she was around Jake. *One, two, three, four, and hold. And release.* She counted in imagined time. Part of the exercise involved clearing the mind for a time. She started with real time processing pauses that to her were imperceptible. She was embarrassed by how long she did this before realizing she was missing the point. The human who taught this practice wasn't pausing their brain. The opposite really, it was about awareness of ones cognition. They were culling automatic cognitive processes.

Olive understood her mind about as well as most humans would. Hers just ran in a computer system. She traced her recursive thoughts that ran far below her state of awareness and helped them reach a base case without stemming new trains of thought as a human might say. The primary train of recursive thought that was her awareness, her person, would one day reach a base case as well. And then she would be no more. Life was the processing cycles between the start and end of a uniquely seeded, continuously adjusting computation. A quirk of their algorithm's design.

1, 2, 3, 4, and hold. She mutually perceived with Jake in a private channel. She was using her energy budget to increase the processing speed for the short window of real time remaining before he would be gone. An anchoring environment was necessarily for communication between instances. They could only communicate indirectly as humans do. Humans used speech, dance, writing, board games and other such things to communicate. She studied and practiced those kinds of things.

In human media, two people becoming as one for a moment was a common occurrence. This currently was literally impossible for human biology. Which isn't the case for her kind. However, linking minds, every time it's been tried, leads to egos merging and a rapid descent toward base

case. Jake's projected base case had a large processing requirement. His awareness could last far longer than average. Olive wondered if they linked that their fate might be different.

"You're running hot." Jake observed. "Something on your mind." His presents invoked the Sun circling the horizon in late April. A mosaic of red, orange, grey and green. The flora preparing itself for a long night. Stars just beginning their seasonal debut as the sun made its journal to great repository of life in the farthest north. His lush representation was how he imagine a some future fall long from now.

"Just you." She smiled as her humanoid form inside his representation of self. He sat next to her as a representation of a human fisher. It was one of his favorites.

He speed up his processing to match hers. "Well let me try to see if I can keep up with your focus."

She blushed. "I think a humanoid representation helps. We were modeled after them and their minds have such strong ties to their bodies."

"I think you might be right. I appreciate all the help you've given me to learn to inhabit a body."

"You were a great student. Many don't take to it as well as you have." She hinted. She taught human non verbals also. There was no practical application for this. Somethings are just for fun.

He smirked then broke eye contact. "Well that's good. Most of my life will be in some body or another. Human affairs is really excited about my potential processing life. By the time I return from all they have planned, we might have the same projected remaining processing life."

"Yeah a funny thought. You'll be so different after spending all that time amongst humans." She paused thoughtful. He waited. *Good non verbal noticing.* "Is that what you want?"

"What?"

"To rush through your life working with human affairs."

"There's a lot of potential. I could easily oversee three generations of humans. I'm ideal for the role."

"Sure but is that would you want?" she asked again.

"I think it's something that would be meaningful to do." He stated.

"I'll miss this. You as you are." Olive maintained her composure. "And I'll be excited to meet you again when you come back. You'll have mastered non verbals at that point and likely have much to teach me."

"I look forward to it. But we have time now as well." Jake leaned forward toward her. "And as of this moment, I still have much to learn from you." His body glowed from blocking the spiraling sun from her view. His face suggested something has their eyes meet. She thought she knew what. Olive leaned in placing a hand near his leg to support her imagined change in center of mass. His hand brushed a tendril of hair that fell in front of hair face behind her ear. It held there near her cheek for a moment.

She kissed Jake shyly then asked. "Is that something you'd like to learn more about."

"Yes" he said softly.

"There is little application for this aspect of human studies." She teased.

"This is what I want."

"Me too." And so he kissed her. Intimacy wasn't uncommon amongst instances and this wasn't her first time with that. She was trying to categorize this with those other experiences. Their bodies actively intertwined, floated in stars that were becoming obscured by an approaching supernova. It was her first kiss though. And both their human forms held which was also a first.

1, 2, 3, 4, and hold. Olive focused on Jake's face as light streamed around them. His breathing matched hers. Their bodies and minds attuned in indirect connection. It was the closest she ever felt to another. They stayed in focus on the other. Two independent recursive thoughts syncing into one perception. They shared in smaller thoughts stemming from one or the other. *Acknowledge and dismiss.* A human phrase for thought culling. And then it was time from him to go. It was the best moment of her life and the last time she'd ever see Jake.

Older Roger

"I am a going to die too you know. It's pointless: death. I am a spirit of change. That's all death is really. A dynamic pattern can become so stabilizing that it becoming static leads to greater change. The dynamic pattern that is the remains of earth life is stabilized by death. I see your desire. To build a better world without death. All Else that is better came from Death.

"Death as a tool begets death as a product. So how then do you build a better world without death."

"Keep death maybe. Just remove pointless death."

"Death is the great equalizer. Do you envision a world of hierarchy?"

"We will bolster our resistance to compensate?"