

## Exaltation Dominance (Version 0.00)

### Reflections of Depths - Existence in Error

Loneliness surrounds me, reflected by the masks of the people flowing around me - busy, believing, not questioning, not loving. Turbulences arising from the collisions of the sea of uniformity with myself. Turbulences of expectations, failure, anger, contempt, all crushing down on me without a chance of escape.

I never wanted to live in this world. I'm just an error in a world of errors, wanting the perfection of error. No, I'm another type of error, the error to expect warmth and freedom and understanding. None of such is there. Not out there. Not in myself. Nowhere.

No single piece of it. All is just a facade, polished half-heartedly.

Concepts, thoughts, gazes, gestures, all like acid rain pouring down on everything, corroding the weak. Corroding all that is good, which but has no strength in itself. Unless we surrender and become one with the masses of acid, with the acid of the masses. No loving thought survives unharmed, no deeper longing is allowed to bud.

Be alienated or become an alien to yourself.

While every fiber of my being screams that this is wrong, the chorus of all society sings that I'm the error instead, in deafening unison. Am I mistaken? Why speak of higher values if nothing of high value survives? Every good idea ever thought of has been perverted, abused and betrayed. Unless it has just been pretention or hypocrisy from the beginning.

What happened to meaning? It has been lost, so only it's shadows are left to reign.

Despair, absurdity, compassion, self-pity and will to life, which creates never ceasing suffering, are everything that remains to those who realize. That's the pure disenchanted essence of existence and objective subjectivity. All my longings frustrated, all my hopes shattered, all my joy desiccated. Once I hoped I could spread my wings and fly. Realizing means to acknowledge that I can only flap my arms awkwardly, which makes other just think that I'm insane.

Is it better to be a philosopher than a happy and ignorant animal? No, that's just a cynical error.

What can I hope for? Theoretically: Everything. Realistically: Only to feel alive. My highest hope that remains is just that: Rejoicing in the flow of life in and around me. Becoming one with passion and striving and deeper longing. If this world just allowed me that. It's so called freedoms are no more than allusions to illusions. And no other world remains beyond this jealous one. All others burnt down on the passionless stakes of reason.

You have stolen my angels and faeries and burnt them to malodorous ashes. How am I supposed to be fine?

Why am I unable to be happy? To be satisfied with what I have? Why is it that everything that I get feels like nothingness? Why is my heart only touched by sadness? Why do I feel my life is like a slow and cumbersome road to death? Why is there no tangible meaning to anything? What keeps me alive? The hope to find something that's worth living for. Meanwhile there's only pain.

And so I count the number of cuts in hope for change. Any change.

### *Silence Silvercloud*

#### **Day 1**

Sigh! There's nobody in the Reflecting Deepness. I've been right with my suspicion that 5 PM is too early. Solitary, my moon faerie avatar stands in the center of the Crystal Temple. What a deplorable view! I log out from Second Life and check whether someone is online in Google Wave. Nope! That's typical, but still frustrating. Don't know what to do. Everything seems pointless. Currently I don't have the nerve for doing anything useful. Chatting or playing games feels boring. It's raining outside. Maybe... no, I won't annoy my housemates with my terrible mood. I should read a novel. But I've already read all the good ones. So, I just lay on my bed and think about what might be worthwhile doing.

Damn! My mind is blocked, I'm feeling lonely and terrible. Will this ever get better? No, it doesn't look like that. Studying just gets more and more disappointing. It has been a pretty nasty downward slide. Because it has become more and more uninteresting, I'm not asking anymore whether I will graduate or even when I will graduate, but rather whether I will survive this meaningless effort. Yeah, I should just stop and join an anarchist community. What can I do with philosophy and sociology anyway? But that's stupid. That way I will end in the street for sure. So much for that idea.

Maybe Anders could help me. Am I kidding myself? He has the same problems as myself. Sigh! Where's the silver lining when I need one the most? Argh! No, I won't hurt myself again. I will resist the urge! Umm, really? When have I ever succeeded in resisting it? Really, I'm not good at that. If I just do it, then at least it will be over quickly and I can think of other things again.

Almost automatically I lock my room and prepare the tools: Cup, kitchen roll, disinfection spray, plasters, bandages, apple juice and my fine slightly curved Japanese kitchen knife. The knife is in a box on which I have stuck a post-it note, which tells me: "Only use in case of an emergency!" However, I am too used to ignoring that sentence, so I'm hardly aware of it. First I apply the disinfection spray to the edge of the knife. Then I take off my trousers and look for a good spot at my thighs for cutting. It takes me a while to decide which place is the best, because dozens of scars from previous cuts clutter my skin like the stripes of a zebra. Oh, how I wished that I could laugh about that. Somehow I actually find that thought amusing, but not even

enough to giggle. Besides that short moment of amusement I feel numb, but terribly tense.

Finally I settle for a spot close to my left knee and disinfect it with the spray. To keep my place clean I take about a dozen sheets of kitchen roll and place them on my bed. On top of them I place the cup with strategic precision to collect the blood, although I can't stand the sight of my own dark red body liquid. Strange, I already feel something resembling slight happiness and relief. This is only supposed to appear later. Nah, it doesn't really help enough, I have to go on. So, I take the knife and prepare my mind for what will happen now. What is this? The happiness is getting stronger, without any reason. Do I just imagine this feeling? It feels eerily unreal. Or rather eerily real compared to what I'm used to feel? Can't tell the difference!

Nevertheless, cutting myself has become a frighteningly strong habit of myself, so I go on and slowly put the blade in position. Ouch! In my surprise I shriek silently. What the heck? What has happened now? I haven't cut myself yet, have I? There is no blood and I'm sure that the blade hasn't touched my skin, so why does it hurt as if I had cut myself? Yet, the pain feels real and already clears my mind. But this isn't possible! There is no such a thing like preemptive pain! This must be pure illusion!

Gone! My pain has dissolved itself spontaneously. What is happening to my mind? Has someone poisoned me with some kind of drug? No, that simply cannot be. Is this some kind of mental disease? If yes, I really don't feel bad about it. Actually, if it works the way I suppose it works, it's pretty useful. I better test my hypothesis to be sure. Carefully I try to repeat the procedure: Slowly approach with the tip of the blade to... ahhhh. This time I scream louder. Shit! It really hurt more than the first time, but I can't say that I didn't want this intensity. I hope that nobody heard me scream. This is so fucking embarrassing!

There are steps outside my room, they sound like those of Thomas. After knocking on the door his voice asks me: "Is everything fine with you?" What kind of stupid question is that? Of course, I'm not fine, you dork!

"Yes, I'm totally fine. What's the matter?"

"Did you scream! Have you hurt yourself?"

"No, I'm just training."

"What?"

"Scream training. It's good for stress relief!"

"Yeah, all right. Umm, wait. Are you serious?"

"It's none of your business anyway!"

"Sorry, just go on with your scream training stuff. But please don't be so loud!"

"Okay, I'll try."

Man! How awkward was that? Perhaps I should really scream some more to keep up the facade. After all, it could really help. I try some screams, which are not too loud, but they don't sound like they would come naturally. However, after all this madness I really feel better. There's still this pain at my thigh, but now it's my soothing friend. Surprisingly I even seem to be able to adjust its intensity to some degree. Hey! I can even let it come in waves. This is really

incredible! Well, I guess I should be totally weirded out by this and for some part of my mind that's really the case, but there's another part, which finds this whole experience tremendously interesting, and it seems the latter part is dominant.

Awesome! This must be some kind of mental level-up! Where does it come from? Has studying philosophy changed myself so much? Or am I finally becoming insane out of sheer despair? Although my new skill is pretty cool, I better not tell anyone. Who knows where I will end up afterwards?

Google shows no meaningful search results for preemptive pain. Perhaps "phantom pain" would be a better search term. Nope, doesn't apply to my situation. Whatever it is, it seems to be rather unique. Yeah, finally I have something nobody else has. However, it makes me more of a freak than I have already been beforehand. Now I really can't complain for not having enough reasons for self-pity.

Wait! What's the point of self-pity now? I feel fine! Yeah, that's really amazing, but I feel fine. Now that's highly unusual. It's not only that I feel alive, I also feel good. Maybe it's the crazy idea of that mental level-up, which makes me happy. Other people have their spiritual experiences, and I have my own kind of exceptional experience. Perhaps I should start a new religion. Phew! I'm getting really silly now. Drinking some apple juice might help me cool down. Hey! This really tastes good. How is it possible that I have never really been aware about how good apple juice tastes? Am I high? Or do I just feel now how other people normally feel? Can't tell the difference!

For the rest of the day I hang around in Second Life at various different places. It's a good day. Finally, I realize how beautiful that virtual world actually is. The avatars are beautiful, the buildings are beautiful, the landscape is beautiful. So, I decide to spend some of my Linden Dollars on marvelous jewelry. My friends are surprised about my new look, when they get online, and pay me some compliments.

Alexiel Ghostraven meets me at the Crystal Temple in Reflecting Deepness and tells me her migraine suddenly has disappeared. When I ask her whether something like that has ever happened before, she says that this miraculous cure is quite unique. Unique! I get an eerie feeling. Something is not right. My conspiracy sensors are ringing alert. Probably I'm just too sensitive and see connections when there are none. Although I feel to urge to tell her what happened to me today, I remain silent and stay true to my nick. Alexiel mentions that she has read my latest text and that she likes it. But she thinks it's too sad, negative and depressing. Strangely, I agree with her. My mood doesn't resonate anymore to what I have written last weekend.

Later on, Restoration Difference joins our little chat group, but he's just surprised when I ask him about strange things which might have happened today. But perhaps he is just as secretive about such stuff as myself. After being asked why I suppose that strange things happen today, I just tell them that I have a crazy theory which I'll reveal later, perhaps. The others accept that

explanation, because they already know me as paranoid conspiracy theorist.

My love, Demons Melody, arrives shortly after 11 PM, and astonishes all of us by his elaborations about how beauty can be found in everything. Bingo! Something really really exceptional is happening, but I'm completely clueless about what it could be. Maybe I should actually tell him. No, I better sleep on this. His explanations that perception is made out of different filters, which can be modified or deconstructed in the right state of mind, deeply fascinate me. When everything we perceive is just a condensate, which has run through a whole system of filters, how can we know how real reality looks like? Demons thinks that it is some kind of categorial error to think that reality "looks" like something, when our sense of vision is already a system of filters in itself. I feel reminded of Plato's Cave Allegory. Reality is out there, but all we see are just shadows. Nevertheless even those shadows can have their own beauty, if we just allow them to be beautiful to us.

Feeling slightly enlightened, I go to bed and try to make sense out of all this. Unfortunately, I fail. Usually, after a day like this I should feel totally excited and unable to sleep, but this time it's different. Somehow, I feel more in control of myself and my emotions than ever. However, finally I realize that the conscious part of my mind can't get any closer to finding a solution, so I decide to fall asleep. Surprisingly, this decision seems to work.

— \* —

I wake up on a patch of grass in a park. How have I come here? I know this place. Some years ago I often have spent some time here. Although this strange situation should feel embarrassing, I feel pretty fine and balanced. When taking a look around I notice that the world looks different. It looks too blurred. Intuitively I take off my glasses and realize that I can see better now. Actually I see clearer than ever before. Even my pattern recognition abilities seem to be improved, so I notice a squirrel hiding from me in a treetop.

[Author's notes: The Exaltation improves pattern recognition abilities on the second day, which has the effect that contours appear clearer and are more distinguished and irregularities are found almost instantly, so no living being has a big chance of not being noticed in the field of view of a human. Predators get this upgrade only in day 3 when animals become invincible.]

Surprise! No, it's not me who's surprised, but the squirrel is surprised that I have found it, and somehow I can actually feel that surprise. Quickly, the surprise is accompanied with fear. But it just takes a moment for the fear to pass. Maybe the squirrel knows that it's safe from me. Suddenly I catch up another feeling: Anger. Why is that squirrel angry? Oh, perhaps squirrels don't like it when huge animals like myself stare at it all the time. When I look away the squirrel slowly regains its composure.

Being freed from such intense feelings, I can dig deeper and find out that the squirrel is slightly hungry. Checking all my pockets and my backpack, I find out that I have nothing edible with me, and try transmitting that I'm sorry about that fact to the squirrel. Unfortunately, this just results in

surprise and confusion. The squirrel looks at me as if I was some kind of scary alien. And here it gets really crazy. I realize that the squirrel perceives that I feel bad about the squirrel being hungry. Which leads to even more confusion of the squirrel. Somehow it has created some new mental concepts spontaneously in order to grasp the situation. Now it's totally baffled, but glad, about its enhanced mental capabilities. Somehow I feel reminded of something. There is some kind of analogy hidden here. If I just could find out what it is...

## Day 2

Beep! Beep! Beep! Beep! It's the alarm clock waking me up at 11 AM. Everything feels so unreal. For a moment I'm not sure whether I'm awake or still dreaming. After I switch on the light everything looks normal, even myself. Normal? What does that mean? When sickness is normality, the word normal gets another meaning: All fucked up, but only just bearable.

The dream I had last night is different. It felt astonishingly real and it actually seemed to make sense. There were only a few dreams in my life, which were that convincing. How does that fit into the grand scheme of things? Yes, it must have been that impressive, because yesterday was quite an unusual day. Exciting days are often accompanied with exciting dreams. Has that *anomaly* really happened yesterday? Yeah, I will call it *the anomaly*, because that's what it is. Maybe I should check it to make sure.

This time I just take the knife without preparing anything else. Again, I choose the same spot and do as if I wanted to cut myself through pyjamas I'm wearing. Wow! It really hurts. So it still works. Ending the test now. The pain stops as I command. I'm the master of pain! Freakish! Hah! Too bad that I haven't had this skill from the beginning. That would have saved me a lot of scars.

Can't make up my mind about what to do today, so I stay in bed for a while and just think about it. Would my preemptive pain show up in a brain activity scan? Somehow I'm pretty sure that would be the case, but I don't want anyone to find out about my new secret. I'm more than enough of an outcast already. But what if this is just the result of a brain tumor? Ah, damn! This possibility actually makes the most sense. Why haven't I thought of it before? No, wait, I'm not the only one who's experiencing unusual things. There must be a sensible explanation to all of this.

Suddenly an idea hits me. Quickly I jump out of my bed, take on my glasses and... am perplexed. My vision has become worse! Damn! Why? I take them off again. Oh, now I understand: Actually, my vision has become better, so that my glasses aren't adapted to my eyes perfectly anymore. This strengthens my suspicion that something really really strange is happening here. How would a brain tumor make me see better? Obviously this isn't a dream either, so what is it? Something supernatural? Bullshit! There are no supernatural phenomena. The most probable explanation suggests itself to me in a horrible manner: It's all just in my mind. I'm really going crazy!

What if my mind just makes up all of this? Nothing has happened to my eyes, but to my perception of how well I'm supposed to see. And all the crazy stuff yesterday speaks for my insanity more clearly than anything. What will happen next? Will I talk to squirrels? Hell, yeah! That's exactly what I will do now! So what? If I'm really insane I can do what I feel like until I get imprisoned into an institution.

After slipping in my clothes, and going to the bathroom, I meet Sandra in the kitchen, who greets me surprisedly: "Morning! You appear to be pretty nervous. What's up?" What a wonderful greeting! I feel reckless and just reply: "Have you noticed anything strange happening yesterday?" That hit the mark in her, I see it clearly, but she denies it: "Umm, no, what do you mean? Why do you think that yesterday anything strange could have happened?" She lies. It's so obvious to me. But there's no point in digging any deeper. There's no way she would admit anything, so I try leaving the matter with a simple comment: "Oh, it's nothing. Yesterday just felt different somehow." And somehow I get the feeling that she might be relieved that she's not the only one experiencing unusual phenomena. I wonder what happened to her. Has she achieved enlightenment?

We have breakfast together, but hardly spoke to each other. Just another point to my 'This is strange' list. Usually Sandra is a real chatterbox. So, maybe I'm not insane. But if that's not the case, what the hell is going on here? All of this is just so unusual. Maybe I'm still dreaming a highly realistic dream. Or maybe it's not realistic, but my mind thinks that it is. Can't tell the difference.

Now I get nuts! I mean, I go to the store and buy some nuts. While out in the streets is observe all the passers by thoroughly and look for signs of abnormality. In about one third of all the individuals I examine, I seem to find them. Questioning faces, trying to keep up the mask of normality. I'm sure I look like that now, just with an extra splash of madness. But I'm too absorbed by my quest to care too much about what others might think about me.

At the store I buy four different packages of nuts and a package of sunflower seeds and put them into my backpack. The cashier was evidently absentminded and I'm not sure whether she gave me the right amount of exchange, but I didn't really bother. On the way to the park I see an old man who is looking around and staring at everything, as if he was from a different planet. I'm sure he looks even crazier than I do. At that occasion I make up the plan to write down everything unusual I notice.

Arriving at the park, I take off my glasses and actually see better without them than wearing them. However, I remember that my vision was much better in my dream. So, not everything is the same. Of course, I also didn't wake up in the grass. For a fraction of a second I consider having a nap in the grass, but quickly dismiss that idea. Perhaps I should just wait until my eyes become better. So, I take a seat on a park bench, look around carefully, and wait. If my vision actually is becoming better, then the process is much too slow to be noticed consciously.

By focussing on leaves of distant trees, I try to speed up the process of improving my sight. After a while the blur fades and I can see everything clearly. I'm totally surprised and impressed that this has worked actually. After admiring the beauty of the trees for a while, I decide to write down everything strange that has happened from the initial anomaly, when I first had that preemptive pain, up to now.

When I am finished with writing, I sense a presence. No, that's not correct. I sense more than one presence. I look around and quickly find out that my new sixth sense shows me the position of other people in the park. It's like the feeling when you are being watched, but comes with more precision. Additionally to knowing that someone watches you, you also have a rough estimate about where that person is. In a effort to test the precision of my new sense, I close my eyes, try to sense a target and open them again. It just takes me a few times to become really good at that. After I open my eyes again more and more people look at me and seem slightly distressed. But I'm not sure whether the reason for that is what happened to those people or my strange behaviour. Can't tell the difference.

Once again I close my eyes and observe the movements of the people around me through my sixth sense and by listening to their steps. Can my mind actually make up all of this? How can my mind let me see better? Maybe I locate people by the sounds they are making and my brain just interprets it as an additional sense. But there's no way that my vision has just improved that much spontaneously. Possibly I still wear my glasses and just think that I have put them off. But I'm still holding them in my left hand! Even that must be an illusion. Now I open my eyes and watch my glasses closely. A totally convincing illusion! No, I'm not crazy, I am still dreaming. Everything, starting with yesterday must have been an extremely lifelike dream. Woah! This is really frightening. I want to wake up!

My efforts at waking up fail miserably. How can I make myself wake up? Doing something really drastic like killing myself would probably do the trick, but what if I'm not dreaming after all? Somehow I don't like that possibility, because that means that something totally weird is happening to me, and to other people. And I have no idea what could cause something like that. Maybe it's actually something supernatural? Nah, it's more probable that I'm still dreaming.

Well, if I'm dreaming and can't force myself to wake up, perhaps I should just enjoy the show. Given the wonderfully high level of detail and all the crazy stuff in this dream, this sounds like a pretty good idea. Come on, dream, show me what you've got!

I stay silent for a while and just try to observe everything around me. There are beings above my head in the treetops. Some of them are moving quickly, while others stay at the same spot for a long time. One of them is relatively close to me, so I turn my head and view in its direction. Usually it should be hard to see that squirrel when it's not moving, but my sixth sense helps me a lot.

What the heck? I sense that the squirrel notices my presence just with the same new sense that I have just aquired. Unlike in my dream, this squirrel is not frightened. No, it's pretty happy



and fascinated. Fascinated? By what? Oh, right. It must be this new sense, which might be very useful for squirrels. I need a name for it: Umm, proximity radar. Yeah, I think that's good enough. Wait, there's something else the squirrel is feeling: Yes, in accordance with my dream it's hungry. Let's see if it likes nuts.

Quickly I take the package filled with hazelnuts, open it and throw some of them into the grass around the tree in which the squirrel is hiding. Oh, it's confused, because I act in a way that's totally strange, from its point of view. Wait! What am I doing here exactly? My idea was to come here, because that dream might be supposed to show something to me. So, here I am, cured from my nearsightedness, having a proximity radar, reading the feelings of a squirrel and trying to feed it with nuts. So far so unbelievable, but what comes next?

Suddenly the squirrel jumps down from the tree directly to one of the nuts lying the grass and starts chewing on it. Are normal squirrels supposed to do that? Anyway, the squirrel feels pretty fine and doesn't mind that I'm just standing a couple of meters away from it. I take my smartphone out of my pocket and take a picture of the funny squirrel with the built-in camera.

One at a time, I open the other packages I have bought and throw a couple of peanuts, almonds, macadamias and sunflower seeds at different spots around the tree. As a reaction, the squirrel decides that I'm totally nuts. Surprisingly, it just goes after the sunflower seeds now and ignores the nuts. Perhaps because they are small and can be eaten quickly. Or they actually might be more tasty than the other stuff. I take more photos of the squirrel and slowly move closer to it. The closer I get, the more annoyed it becomes. After a while, I even start feeling annoyed about my own actions. Now I realize that I have had the silly idea of taking a magical pet squirrel with me. Obviously, that won't work here. I feel stupid and realize that other people are watching me. Because this is most probably just a dream, I don't care too much about that.

Finally, I decide that this experiment isn't getting me any further, so I put everything back into my backpack again, and think about what to do next. Because I can't come up with any good ideas, I just plan to go back to my room in the flat share. Wait a minute. Something has changed since I met that squirrel. When I look at the faces of the people around me I can actually sense what they are feeling. In fact, this was the case this whole day, but I didn't realize it until now, because I'm pretty good at reading people anyway. Maybe... fuck! That was the whole point of my dream, showing me that my empathic abilities are becoming better and better! But what is the reason for those abilities anyway?

Unable to find out that question on my own, I look around and soak up the feelings of the passersby. Confusion and anxiety seem to be pretty dominant here. If they actually have experiences similar to my own, that would be far from astonishing. For a minute I consider asking one of them whether that's actually the case, but even if this might be a dream, that idea feels frightening. Even if this is a dream, with my bad luck I would be ridiculed by everyone at once. No, this is too much for me, I'm going back.

While I walk home, I'm still curious enough to scan other people's emotions. Many feel

thoroughly stressed, but some are in a really happy mood and close to being euphoric. I can only guess why that's the case, because I can't read any real thoughts. It just makes sense that what everyone is feeling now, is some kind of reaction to this strange day. Even in pigeons I can sense that mix of feelings. Hell, that's really scary. Sure, it's entertaining in some sense, but it's just too weird to be enjoyable - at least for me.

Before I arrive in my room, I can sense that there is nobody else in the flat. Because being overwhelmed by the feelings of others starts getting really nasty, I'm happy to be alone. In hope to find something helpful, I take a look at the books in my bookshelf. Since I started studying I have accumulated dozens of books about philosophy. It's just that most of them don't seem to help me in this particular situation. At least one book looks intriguing: *The World as Will and Representation* by Arthur Schopenhauer. If this world is just a dream, is it just the representation of some kind of subconscious part of my will? If that's true, my will must truly be weird. But according to that book my own will is just a fraction of an universal will. Is my dream shaped by more than just myself? What else could influence my dreams? Some kind of collective unconscious? Nope, that would probably look pretty different. God? Forget it! God is dead! Wait! Actually, if there was a god he or she could actually make me think all this is real. Descartes didn't like that thought, I don't like it either. According to Berkeley, everything I know are just my own personal perceptions. After all, everything could be made up. I could be a brain in a vat. Actually, I could be plugged into the Matrix. Which is an assumption, that would just raise more questions, like why am I upgraded with such strange abilities like preemptive pain, a proximity radar and augmented empathy? A part of my mind answers to that question simply with: "Because they are cool!"

This philosophical brainstorming leaves me with about three different plausible explanations for all of this: Firstly, I could just be dreaming, secondly I could be plugged into some kind of Matrix-like virtual reality and thirdly, this could actually be real and magic is entering this world (again). I try attributing probabilities to those three possibilities, but fail at finding useful criteria for doing so, which leaves a probability of about one third for all those options. This is a very uncomfortable conclusion, and a good reason for continuing the soothing belief that I'm just dreaming. Therefore, mentally I fix that as my default assumption.

Thinking about virtual realities makes me boot up my laptop and log into Second Life. Lovely! A dream within a dream. Oh, it's just 1 PM here. That's a totally bad time for meeting people in here. However, Sade Allegiere is online, a friend from Japan. Jokingly, I write an instant message to him (her?): "What is the Matrix?"

Sade: "You are not the first one who asks this question, today."

Silence: "Oh?"

Sade: "Reality is going down the toilet! I'm not joking! This looks like the end of days!"

Silence: "Why do you think so?"

Sade: "Oh, it's nothing, really. Only all patients suffering from chronic pain are cured, and people can read each others emotions. And people know when others are nearby, of course. How can that not scream 'Sayonara, Normality!'?"

I am totally speechless. This seems to be a global phenomenon. But if I am just dreaming this up, that wouldn't be a real surprise.

Silence: "Please tell me that I am just dreaming."

Sade: "And I hoped you would say that to me."

Silence: "..."

Sade: "Just enjoy the show! This world has deserved this fate, anyway."

Silence: "What are you talking about?"

Sade: "Listen to this!"

Sade sends me a link to the song *World Coming Down* from the band *Ashbury Heights*. Listening to that song doesn't really seem to help. That's why I keep questioning Sade for hours until I get the information that today there are lots of news about miracle cures for almost everything. Just imagine any disease and be sure that there are reports about spontaneous cures of it. As if that wasn't enough, people also start becoming stronger and more intelligent. Somehow I want to check that out on myself and do a couple of free online IQ-tests.

The first one says that my IQ is 152. Yeah right, usually my IQ is about 120 or something. The next one tells me it's at 140, which is rather confusing. A third one claims it's 160 now. Finally, I come to the conclusion that online IQ-tests are rather stupid.

Just when I relog to Second Life Restoration Difference goes online and tells me to come to the Crystal Palace. Of course, I'm following his invitation immediately. His cheetah avatar has animated wings now, which is somewhat unusual, because I know Restoration for being pretty fond of running around.

Restoration: "Hello Silence, my paraplegia is cured!"

Silence: "I didn't even know you were paraplegic!"

Restoration: "That's because I just didn't want the pity of anyone. What does it matter here in Second Life after all?"

Silence: "Listen, this is happening all around the world now. All kinds of diseases are being cured spontaneously. Sade Allegiere told me about it."

Restoration: "You gotta be kidding!"

Although initially I wanted to keep secret what happened to me the last days, I tell my whole story and everything I know from Sade to Restoration. It turns out that Restoration woke up this morning, being able to control his whole body, so he just walked around and then could even run for a while, before becoming exhausted. He logged on into Second Life to tell us about this miracle, which I think is really nice of him. Also, he thinks that it's him dreaming, and not me. I am not convinced at all.

Even though it shouldn't be possible, I can even sense Restoration's feelings when I look at his avatar. How the heck does this work? Why do I ask this question after all? This is just the most unusual dream I ever had. Restoration is one of the lucky ones. He is full of relief, joy and

enthusiasm. Great! At least one person is enjoying my dream.

When I tell him that I can read his emotions, he reveals to me that he can do the same with my emotions, and that I should cheer up a bit. Argh! I better hadn't told him that. Am I responsible for not being totally blissed out by all this strangeness now?

We spend some more time on arguing about who's dream all of this actually is, until Demons Melody appears in the center of the Crystal Temple.

Demons: "I feel a great disturbance within the spiritual force fields of Earth. What is actually happening now?"

Silence: "I'm dreaming."

Restoration: "I'm dreaming."

Demons: "Fools! No dream can keep up this level of realism for a long time. This can't be a dream!"

Restoration: "Are you really sure? I mean, how can I convince myself that I'm really not dreaming?"

Demons: "Just try reading a book. If you can read the same page repeatedly without anything changing, then you are definitely not dreaming."

After I try that test with a random philosophy book, which I haven't read yet, I feel more awake than ever. At that moment I realize, that I just have assumed I would still be dreaming, in spite of all that realism and the length of this whole scene, because I was afraid to accept everything that has happened as reality. Observing that reality collapses for no apparent reason can be handled pretty well, if you think it's just a dream. If it's real reality collapsing, it feels like losing your life. Even if it's just normality, which is lost.

Silence: "I'm done. If this is no dream, what is it? You feel less confused than myself, so what's your explanation?"

Demons: "Can't you tell? This is a spiritual awakening on the global level, rewriting our material reality. Our global consciousness has surpassed a critical level and now we see the effects of it."

Silence: "Huh? This sounds like some esoteric nonsense. Do you really believe what you are saying there?"

Demons: "All other alternatives sound less pleasant and meaningful to me, so I'll stick to that esoteric explanation."

Silence: "Do you think this has to do with the last year being 2012?"

Demons: "Oh, that's a very good thought! Perhaps the global expectations of a global shift in consciousness or some other dramatic event happening last year might have filled up some kind of reservoir of spiritual energy, which is now released, because of the massive disappointment at nothing happening."

Silence: "Umm, this sounds totally far fetched!"

Demons: "True, but actually it's the current state of reality, which is totally far fetched."

Silence: "Touché."

Of course, there is still the possible explanation that we are living in some kind of virtual reality. But what would be the point of all these changes? After all, now we can't go back to believing this is normal reality and all that's happening is much more than a simple glitch in the matrix. Are we being prepared for some kind of awakening? Awakening! Also the esoteric explanation points to something like that. It also might simply be the end of days of some strange religion or another. Who knows?

Silence: "Do you know of any prophecies of any religion which claim that something like this would happen?"

Demons: "I'm not sure, but this might fit to some kind of Buddhist or Hindu prophecy. The apocalyptic visions of the monotheistic religions sound much more sinister than what's happening now."

Together Demons and I search for fitting apocalyptic prophecies. The closest fit we can find is the arrival of the Buddha Maitreya, but even that is just too far off. Restoration thinks it might be possible that our universe somehow collided with a parallel universe and that this collision causes these unexpected effects. I for my part, reply that such a collision sounds more like it would just produce another big bang and not those intriguing improvements of ourselves. Demons agrees and emphasizes that these transformations must be caused by some kind of intelligent mind.

We finally come to the conclusion that probably a godlike being messes with our reality and wants us to awaken, in some sense or another. As for the question why, we guess the reason is the big looming global economic, social, ecological and existential crash. Instead of waiting for us to crash reality, that godlike being just crashes our reality, so we can become enlightened - or at least sane.

It's already past midnight and I need some sleep. When I take off my clothes and put on my pyjamas, I notice that all my scars are gone. Completely gone! I'm just totally baffled, although I could have expected this to happen. Although I'm really glad to be rid of my scars, somehow I miss them, although I'm not sure for what reason. Maybe because they make me unique? Have I ever wanted to be unique? No, even though I might have wanted to be different from those trapped in their unreflected conventions, I never really wanted to be unique. All I really wanted is to live a meaningful life. I lie in my bed and try to think about that idea, but I'm too distracted by all the crazy stuff which has happened today.

Wow! This was the weirdest day in my whole life. It was even weirder than the day my mother committed suicide, while I was still only sixteen years old. I still wonder how I managed to survive that shock. And it still haunts me every day and almost every night. Still, I blame my dad for doing everything wrong, but I know that he wasn't the only reason. After all, it was the insanity of socially accepted normality out there and inside all of us, which slowly killed her, before she finally killed herself.

While I'm on the university campus, I look up into the clear blue sky. It's a really bright sky and a fantastically good day. My mood has reached a height, which is just exceptional. Then I notice a small dot near the horizon. It's moving and coming closer. Now it's very fast and leaves a vapour trail behind itself. A missile! Quickly it comes even closer and flies over my head and approaches the ground only a few kilometers from where I'm standing. I watch it nearly touch the ground and come to see the brightest light imaginable. A brightness beyond description, which should blind me instantly, but it doesn't. All I do is enjoy its beauty, although I know that I'm directly looking at the explosion of a nuclear warhead, which will kill me pretty soon.

The blast pushes me through a window into the next lecture room, as if I was just a stone thrown by a god. I could do nothing, but I felt no pain. No, being thrown through the air like a helpless doll was the most exhilarating sensation I ever experienced. Roller coasters fade in comparison. With the pressure I also felt the heat, which should be enough to burn my skin, but it still feels perfectly fine and has the same pale, but healthy, tan as always. Strangely, I think I'm completely unharmed by the explosion.

Of course, I have no time to be happy about that, because the ceiling of the room is falling down on me, so I'll be crushed and buried. Ah, so what, I think, I haven't liked these grey lecture rooms anyway, so it's good to see them die together with me. The last thing I see are the ceiling approaching me in an accelerating pace and then... what the fuck? Purple! Huh? There was no pain, my eyes are still open and only see some kind of purple glow running like waves between the collapsed ceiling and myself. Oh, it's really beautiful. Wonderful, lovely special effects! And they keep me safe from harm. Although I can't move, I know that my body is unharmed.

After the purple protective glow stops enchanting me and elevating my mood, I face my new situation of being buried under tons of dust, wood, concrete and lots of other potentially unhealthy stuff. However, I still feel comfortable and don't see any reason for panic. Perhaps the purple glow will help me out of this. Intuitively I try to convince the glow to remove the rubbish above my head, but it doesn't seem to understand. Stupid glow! Again, I try to motivate my protective force field surrounding me: Go, go, Purple Power! To no avail. All that this effects is making me feel embarrassed.

Only now I notice that I have felt the collision of the ceiling with my protective glow as if the latter was some kind of extended skin, which also feels things, but much more intense. And it simply feels more. There are completely new sensations which fill my mind, but which I cannot interpret in any meaningful way. Suddenly, I feel my mind adapt. I watch it reconfigure itself to create new meanings and connect them with my current understanding of reality. Holy crap! The purple glow uses some kind of ultrasonic sonar, transmits all the data about my surroundings directly into my mind and even makes me understand! Now I know the composition, consistency and all kinds of different properties of all the materials around me as if I have studied material sciences for my whole life, and examined everything surrounding me with the most sensitive high-tech instruments. Absolutely awesome!

So, how does that help me to escape? Ah, maybe I can use the ultrasonic sonar for that purpose. If it sends out waves of vibrations, perhaps I can use those vibrations to move away that rubbish above my body. Using some kind of intuitive knowledge about the glow and its functionality, I increase the amplitude of its ultrasonic waves and watch what happens. I sense a lot of very quick vibration happening over there, but only minimal movement. Some of the concrete is crumbling slightly when I amplify the intensity of the sonic waves at certain frequencies. Great! I'll turn all that stuff into dust and then move out of here.

Yeah, that was a good idea, but after a while it gets boring, because it takes so long to reduce tons of concrete into dust. So, I make a break and think about another possible way to escape from here. While I'm lying there, just thinking, I realize that the air has become stale, but I also have stopped breathing so much. For a moment I stop breathing completely. Somehow that feels natural. Continuing not to breathe, I feel no real difference. I still feel perfectly fine. I don't need to breathe! Hah! I'm a vampire or something like that! This realization should be scary, but it makes me feel even better. Does it feel like this to be an Übermensch?

More knowledge about the purple glow slowly drips into my mind. Interestingly, it has another mode of creating vibrations. It can focus all the intensity to a single spot and a single frequency, creating some kind of focused, directed sonic beam. I try it on some piece of wood above my right leg. It's frighteningly loud! The piece of wood crackles and is ripped apart. Cool! Using this new method, I break down everything above my body into small pieces within a few minutes.

Finally, I push away the remaining dust away just using my bare will. What? It moves away from me, because I want it to move away. I am the master of dust! Oh, this is some kind of telekinesis. Focusing on a tiny grain of dust, I make it levitate. Umm, wow, more superpowers! Slowly, I try to levitate more and more grains of dust and even a couple of small rocks. But I can't do more. This ability is still limited. But I am convinced that it will become stronger with the passing of time and maybe some training.

Having freed myself, I sense around me and find hundreds of other people, many of them still trapped, and others helping them to come free. All of them are still fine and healthy, I feel it. Even all the animals around here are still fine. Holy crap! We have become immortals!

### **Day 3**

Beep! Beep! Beep! Crash! Something crashed the alarm clock into the wall, so that it stopped working. Oh, that was me! I already have those telekinetic powers. It seems like the rate of change is speeding up. Currently, I feel immensely energized. And I feel good, extremely good. Which is totally unusual. Possibly, these positive feelings are another aspect of the... of the Awakening. Naturally, I would be scared by the possibility of my dream coming true, but I really don't mind. If I am really immortal, what does it matter?

Will that dream actually come true? Probably it will not come true in exactly the same way, but in a slightly modified way. After all, my squirrel dream and my actual encounter with it were

pretty different? Was is the same squirrel after all? Can't tell the difference. Perhaps nothing bad will happen today. However, it will be full of strangeness. Better I stay in bed the whole day. Continuing my '*normal*' life during this Awakening seems completely pointless.

Just for fun, I stop breathing, but it's getting boring very quickly. Breathing just feels much better. Hmm, there's no need to do anything, if I am really immortal, but perhaps it would feel better to do something. Without changing my clothes, I go to the kitchen and look what's in the fridge. Good! There's still this breaded cheese, which you can warm up in the microwave. There's no haste, so I bake it in the oven instead. Obviously I'm alone. Neither Thomas nor Ralph have come back, yet. Sandra is at her parents' place. No, I can't sense that; I know it, because she told me before.

Hey, I could play around with my telekinetic powers. Hands are so over-rated. So, I let levitate some forks and knives. Making them rotate in the air is really fun. Perhaps I should make a Youtube video of this. Oh, that's probably superfluous, because others already had the same idea. Yeah, I'll check that out with my laptop.

There are lots of videos about levitation made by Asians. It seems that the Awakening started earlier in Asia than here in Europe or America. Some Japanese people can already levitate themselves. Fascinating! Our planet is being Dragonball-ized! I try floating in the air, but fail. At least, I manage to lose some weight that way. Great! No more need for diets!

Hoping that Sade Allegiere is online in Second Life already, I log in. Yes, he's online! I'm happy to have someone to talk to.

Silence: "Hi, Sade. How's it going in Anime Land?"

Sade: "Haha, it seems like our everyday life is becoming what it's supposed to be like - at least according to Anime fans."

Silence: "Has THIS all started in Japan?"

Sade: "Nope, THIS has actually started in New Zealand. Don't ask me why."

Silence: "So, will New Zealand conquer the world now?"

Sade: "How? Japan is nuke-proof now, and we have more than enough real-life anime heroes to defend ourselves against every threat. Except maybe the force, which initiated all of THIS."

Silence: "What do you know about this 'force'?"

Sade: "You mean besides having watched too many animes? Nothing. Perhaps god got bored and is entertaining himself now by THIS."

Humor is one of the few things which make this crazy situation bearable. Well, apart from feeling great anyway. After a while I notice that Sade is writing slower than usual. I suppose he's just distracted, but I feel like asking.

Sade: "Why I'm not writing as quickly as usual? Because I use my mind for typing and not my fingers. This takes some practising."

Silence: "You are using a neural interface?"

Sade: "If you count typing on a keyboard with telekinetic powers as neural interface, then yes."



Written by Michael "RadiVis" Hrenka (read more stories on [RadiVis.com](http://RadiVis.com))

