

# Goddamn Those Scientists

Senior Paper

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Foreword: A note left on the floor of Dr. Mehta's apartment, found three feet from his device: *Time: 3.4 seconds. Distance: 26 miles, 932 feet. Medium: Still unknown. Stimuli: some indescribable. A flash of light. Brilliant colors. A starving red, pulling in all the other colors; a fulfilled green and a blue that flushed black. Sounds like screaming and laughter, neither human nor animalistic. Some pain. No fear.*

*Teleportation successful.*

The fugitive's name was Dr. Abednego Mehta. Resident at 805 North Terrace Street, Kartupeli, a man-made island developed for the purpose of internationally funded scientific research. Dr. Mehta was formerly a Quantum Engineer at the Governmental Research and Education Facility, around which the entire community had been developed. Everyone living on the potato-shaped island, Kartupeli, either worked or was related to someone who worked for the International Governmental Union, which funded both the island community and the facility. Some of those employees were at the GREF, and others filled essential roles in the self-sufficient and isolated island community such as health and childcare.

Just before stepping into Dr. Mehta's apartment, Bray paused. The home had already been searched time and again for signs of the fugitive, but they were not there to find him. Bray, an investigator for the Confederated Bureau of Criminal Investigation, and Shaya, his young partner-in-training, were performing a Case-Conclusory Clean-up on the apartment, a nomenclature that made Bray shudder (he hated acronyms and alliteration). Anything indicating where he might have gone was to be sealed up as evidence and turned in to the Confederated Bureau of Criminal Investigation. All other items were to be disposed of appropriately. The building was set to be demolished the following week, and all the tenants had cleared out to avoid association with the fugitive's crimes.

“What's the hold-up?” Shaya asked.

“What's the first thing you'll do when you get in there?” Bray asked him.

“Wait for your orders?”

“Document?” Bray corrected, mimicking Shaya's tone. “Never do anything without documenting first.”

“Right, right,” Shaya said with a sigh. “I'll remember one of these days.”

“You'd better,” said Bray.

“Hey man,” Shaya said, “what for? I mean, you never do it.”

“Because I'm a veteran,” Bray snapped. “Once you've been doing this job for thirty years you can skip your documenting when you feel like it.”

Shaya nodded sheepishly, and Bray opened the door to the apartment and led the way inside.

“I'll start in the study,” said Bray, and Shaya nodded.

“I'll search the kitchen,” he replied.

The men separated. Bray had been in the apartment before briefly, so he knew what to expect when he entered the study. In the corner lay a pile of useless gears and parts, all that remained now of the fugitive's revolutionary device. He apparently rigged it so that it would be damaged beyond anyone's ability to repair it after he used it to make his escape, and then when the apartment was scoured the first time, the device was dismantled and taken piecemeal to the CBCI. Since Bray had Level 10 Clearance, he knew that the pieces were destined for the research lab at the CBCI so that scientists less skilled than the fugitive could scratch their heads and wonder how anyone could make such a device as this man claimed to have done. When they failed to reproduce his device, the pieces would be melted down to use in other construction projects, and the scientists involved would be fired or demoted.

The last time Bray was in the apartment was during the initial investigation. It was he who personally inspected the device and filed the necessary paperwork to have it processed. It was McLellan, his superior, who gave the order for it to be dismantled, an order Bray couldn't quite bring himself to give. Something about the machine had enchanted him, tantalized him from the moment he saw it. When McLellan asked him why he hesitated, he told the man simply that it pained him to cause so much potential to go to waste.

Bray had watched as a group of engineers brought in from the GREF tore the defunct machine to pieces. First they removed the eggshell-white, external silicone-alloy frame that armored the device. It was built for an average-sized adult to be able to stand in comfortably, shaped like a t to make room for the arms. When Bray was left alone in the study briefly, he had stepped inside just to see. Just to feel what the fugitive must have felt before he dissolved into a flood of particulate matter and then disappeared from this world.

Underneath the frame was the true meat of the device. Here was where the scientists would do most of their head-scratching. In the center of the body of the device was what Bray could only assume was the mother-board, or its engineering equivalent. This is what allowed the device to do what it did, and what it did was. . . well, Bray knew, but he couldn't explain it. No one had been able to explain it to him either.

Then on either side of the “mother-board” were calibrators, set to respond exactly to identical calibrators in a twin device. These calibrators each contained a quantum system that was entangled with the other. It was this entanglement that apparently enabled the machine to function. The twin was destroyed before the fugitive escaped, and if only he had left it intact then perhaps someone could have studied the pair extensively enough that they could actually manage to operate the devices. But Bray thought he knew why the fugitive had wanted his work to be lost.

Looking down at the dismantled machine that first day, Bray had been incredulous that this relatively small amalgamation of parts was able to do something so astounding. Now, looking down at where it had sat, Bray remembered why he was there and reluctantly looked away. He turned his attention instead to the stacks of papers and books scattered and piled throughout the room.

Much of what he looked through was incomprehensible, at least to him. Most of the pages were covered in calculations and various designs and blueprints, many for the device just in the corner. In any case, none of the pages indicated anything resembling an escape plan. Amid the sounds of his partner going through pots and pans in the kitchen, Bray sorted through one of the stacks of papers on the desk and prepared to move on to another when he noticed a limp wire lying on the desktop. Aside from the pile of parts in the corner, the office was devoid of any non-theoretical or paper-based work. The wire seemed out of place.

Bray set down the last packet of papers on top of the first stack and took a step towards the desk. Curious, he picked up the wire, only to find it attached to desk. When he pulled it, a compartment in the top of the desk opened and he heard the sound of an audio recording start playing. A man cleared his throat and began to speak in a trembling and hurried voice.

“Hello. My name is Dr. Abednego Mehta. If you are listening to this, then it is quite likely you are looking for me. I've recorded this to convey to you a number of facts, firstly that you will not find me. I say this not to avoid capture, but because the threat of capture no longer exists in my current. . . condition.”

As the man on the recording paused, Bray heard a noise in the doorway and turned to see Shaya standing there watching. His partner opened his mouth, but Bray held up a hand to silence him as the man's voice continued.

“Secondly, I feel personally that you are entitled to know that you have been lied to, to a greater degree than you can likely imagine. The memories and records that you have of the past three weeks' occurrences are incorrect. I don't know what you have been told, but I know that it is not the truth.

“However, I can guess at some of what you think you remember. You likely think that there has been some sort of coordinated terrorist attack or massive digital malfunction. They had to have chosen something significant to explain so much destruction.”

“What is this bullshit?” asked Shaya, but Bray shushed him. The fugitive seemed more unhinged than Bray had expected, and he hoped that, wherever the man was now, he would have no way of getting his mad lies out to the public.

“Thirdly, I am aware that you have been told that a certain woman, Dr. Ramla Moreno, died as a martyr for a noble cause, that of resisting religious persecution. This, more than anything else, is a lie. I knew Dr. Moreno professionally, and I think you should know that it is because of her that everything changed. I will not say that it is her fault, for I feel too much of me has been lost by now to credit anyone with failing. I've done so much wrong. . . .”

The voice paused momentarily, then continued.

“I don't fully remember who I was before all this happened, and I cannot claim to know what could have kept this disaster from happening.”

“Is he talking about the epidemic?” asked Shaya.

“In a moment,” hissed Bray.

“When you triggered this recording, you also triggered the opening of a compartment on my desktop. Inside this compartment you will find a leather-bound manuscript. This is my journal from the past three weeks, and though it is subjective, it is factually accurate. I ask that you take what I have written to the public. The people have a right to know the truth.”

Bray took another step towards the desk and looked into the compartment. As the man had said, there was a book inside. Bray took it out and opened it. The name on the first page was Dr. Abednego Mehta. As he held the journal, he thought he heard the sound of police sirens beginning to wail in the background of the audio recording.

“I don't have much time,” the doctor said, his voice breaking. “Dr. Moreno. . . she hurt so many. .

. I fear that this recording may never be heard. Indeed, it is far more likely that this will be found by someone complicit in the cover-up than by anyone who might be able to garner any sympathy for me. But listen to me when I say that what I have written is true.”

Bray flipped through the pages of the journal.

“One more thing,” the recording went on. “I know that my crime seems inexcusable. I myself do not know if it was the right thing to do. But I ask you to read this journal not as the writings of a criminal, but as those of a scientist. Do not dismiss what I have said because of what I have done.”

The recording stopped then, and Bray looked down at the book in his hand.

“Should we turn it in to headquarters?” asked Shaya.

Bray picked up a photo from the desk and looked at it. It was of the scientist and his wife, Sachi, whom they had learned about in their briefing. Dr. Mehta was tall and extremely fit, his skin a deep coffee-brown, his thick black hair cropped close to his head. In the photo he was hugging his wife tight, and his glasses sat askew on his nose from their romping. His wife, Japanese, was petite and very pretty; she had a face that told of companionship, like the face of a lifelong friend on the first day you meet them, with eyes sharply angled that seemed to suggest gentle mischief.

“What did McLellan say when he gave us this assignment?” Bray said. “What exactly did he say?”

“He said Dr. Abednego Mehta is a murderer and a maniac,” Shaya answered, using McLellan's exact words. “He engineered a disease that spread across the planet in a week, killing thousands of people. He murdered Dr. Ramla Moreno when she came close to engineering a cure. Her work survived, and thanks to her so have we. Dr. Abednego Mehta is a murderer, a dangerous fugitive. His work must be analyzed, and any documentation that might indicate how to recreate the disease must be destroyed forever.”

“Good,” said Bray. “So what exactly is our job here?”

“To keep potentially volatile information under wraps, and McLellan says he respects our judgment on how to deal with such information. He trusts us.”

“Specifically, he trusts me,” said Bray. “Now you heard most of that recording. Do you think this qualifies as potentially volatile?”

He waved the journal in front of Shaya's face.

"Probably," he said.

"Without a doubt," corrected Bray. "This thing isn't leaving this building till I've read every word."

"What about me?"

"Do your job. Search the apartment, and let me know if you find anything."

Shaya gave the journal a brief, longing glance, then nodded. He went back to the kitchen.

Bray moved behind the desk, shoved a stack of papers off the chair, and sat down to read.

November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2056

I'm not exactly comfortable with this. I mean I'm not very comfortable keeping a journal, specifically. I've never done it before, and it has always seemed artificial to me. But Sachi has been encouraging me to start keeping one. She says she has been doing it and that it will be a great way for our child to one day learn as much about us as possible. I'm not sure what this will teach anyone about me, but I'm willing to give it a shot for Sachi.

So, if you are reading this, I suppose I should tell you a little about what I have done so far in life. ~~As you know I am your father~~ Your mother and I decided to have you last year. She is getting worried about the fact that you haven't come along yet, but I've told her it's nothing to worry about, and that many couples have difficulty conceiving when they first begin.

I'm sorry about that, perhaps I shouldn't have used the word "conceiving." I'm sure you don't want to hear about that sort of thing. I don't even know when you'll be reading this; am I writing to my young kid, to a teen, or to my adult child? I guess we'll decide that later, and if I need to I can change some of what I've written. I wish I had asked Sachi how she writes her journal, but she's at the store right now and I want to go ahead and get this entry written. Perhaps it's better anyway if she doesn't tell me; then my journal might match hers too well, and I'm sure you don't want to have to read the same journal twice.

And I didn't mean to imply that I'm not worried about conceiving you as well. Or, I guess worried isn't the right word. Perhaps eager. But that's likely obvious. I'm sorry this is unfocused, I'll try to figure out exactly what it is I want to say.

Your mother has taken off from her job at the community center because she wants to prepare for when you get here. I am still working at the GREF, which I can tell you all about when you get here, or take you to see it for yourself. It's a great big beautiful building right in the center of our island, and it's where most of the people who live here work. It was established through an international treaty in 2032 and is funded by the International Governmental Union, the first world-wide governing body.

I'll go ahead and tell you that once you get here, you'll have to make up your mind about the IGU, because that will affect the way many people in this world view your character. The IGU faces controversy because it was established without the consent of all the nations it governs and it continues to operate without their consent. There have also been a few scandals involving citizens of various countries. These citizens claim that the IGU performed some type of testing or procedure on them that affected them mentally. They claim to have poorer memories and suffer blackouts after encounters with the IGU. The IGU denied association with all of the individuals involved, and for the most part these scandals have been swept under the rug.

On the other hand, the IGU has propelled science to its highest point in human history. Just after the great recession of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, national governments were pulling more and more funding from all areas of scientific study and research. Though I hate to excuse the reduction of funds for the pursuit of knowledge, I understand why such actions were necessary; the world was essentially bankrupt, and basic human needs simply take priority over research and study (as well they should). However, about a decade later, the world's most powerful governments met and decided that, given the global nature of each country's individual problems, a united governmental body was necessary. They signed a treaty to form the IGU, and fortunately, the woman they appointed as the leader of this union had a great deal of faith in the scientific studies. She redistributed funds to give us the chance we needed, and in the last 30 years the GREF has made more ground-breaking discoveries than were made in the two preceding centuries combined. The import of academic research is now cemented, and it would take not only a total overhaul of the governmental personnel to change this, but also a mass brainwashing of the populace, who have learned to put their faith in the bounds and leaps we have made.

Your uncle Yasuo and I were actually discussing the IGU today at lunch. He has a much lower opinion of it than me, though he acknowledges how much it has contributed to improving the world. But

he resents the idea of bureaucracy by its very nature, and he feels that an international government is overkill, in a sense.

Again, I'm sorry. I didn't mean to give you a history lesson. I think I'll have to wait till Sachi comes home to ask her how she writes her journal. I feel like I'm messing it up somehow.

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Bray placed the journal on the desk in front of him and closed his eyes. This wasn't at all what he had been expecting. This was not written by the sociopath the CBCI had warned him of; this was a normal man trying to have children with his wife. He opened his eyes again and flipped through the pages of the journal to the final entry. It was dated exactly one week ago, November 22<sup>nd</sup>: the day the doctor disappeared. Something must have happened during the nine days that the journal spanned to explain his crimes and change his opinion of the government, because what he wrote about the IGU sounded nothing like the anarchist ravings they'd found in his office at the GREF. Confident that an explanation would be found soon, Bray picked up the journal again and continued reading.

November 12<sup>th</sup>, 2056

Sachi advises that I tell you about my job. I have a project that I'm working on right now, but I will have to tell you about that in a different entry, for I saw something today that has left my mind reeling and has rendered me incapable of thinking of anything else for the present.

Today I attended a meeting for the project of a colleague, Dr. Ramla Moreno. I had heard little about her project prior to today, but I think from now on I will be hearing of little else at the office. When I arrived at the facility, Dr. Moreno met me in person. She is tall and fair-complexioned, with fine black hair that was pulled into a ponytail. She has a broad, genuine smile that endeared me to her immediately. We shook hands and introduced ourselves and then began to chat.

"I've heard a great deal about you," she told me as we waited for the other members of the meeting to arrive. "I understand you've made a great number of accomplishments in quantum physics. Incredible that you were able to identify a separate medium of travel for matter."

"I didn't really identify it," I clarified, though I knew this was the rumor that had been spreading.

“I can't really even theorize about it, but I suspect one must exist. That's really all I've done.”

She shook her head graciously.

“You're far too modest,” she said, and I felt myself blush. “If I'd been the one doing that experiment of yours, I wouldn't have let anyone forget that it was me. I'm hoping to do something like that with my current project.” She took a deep breath, and I could sense her nervousness. “Today I'll be able to gauge how it's going to be received.”

“Can I ask what we'll be seeing today?” I said, but she shook her head.

“I'm afraid that if I try to preface the project in any way, I will merely succeed in detracting from it. I'm simply going to show people what I've discovered and see what they say.”

“I think that's a good idea,” I said. I found myself wanting to comfort her. “Let the work speak for itself.”

She smiled and nodded in agreement. At that point another observer entered and she stood to greet him, leaving me to my thoughts briefly. I found myself drawn to this colleague of mine, and I realized I even felt nervous for her. She had an air of self-assuredness about her that impressed me greatly. At that moment, the last person arrived and Dr. Moreno stood to address us all.

“Thank you all for coming today. As I have mentioned to some of you already, I will not be explaining any part of my project until after we have viewed it. At that point you may ask me whatever questions you like and I encourage you to share your views on the project as well. If that is agreeable to everyone, I suggest we head upstairs.”

No one objected, so we stood and filed singly out of the lobby and into the stairwell. We climbed one flight of stairs to the third floor and walked down the hallway until we reached the lab that housed her project. At this point, she stopped us. She looked at us all for a moment, a look that was almost fearful, as if she thought we might dismiss her project before we even saw it. When she spoke, her voice trembled ever so slightly.

“I said I wasn't going to preface this, but I find that I must say something before you enter,” she said. She wrapped her arms around herself as she spoke. “What you're about to see is unlike anything you've ever encountered before. I understand that many people may find this disturbing, even life-changing. I just want you to be prepared and understand that, once you see it, there's no going back.”

Though I had liked Dr. Moreno as soon as we met, I had a difficult time here not rolling my eyes. I'd heard dozens of young scientists warn me that their work would change me forever, and I'd never been anything more than underwhelmed. Dr. Moreno was at least as experienced as I was, and so I had thought she would be beyond such indirect showboating. I supposed at the time that I had been wrong about her, but I know now that I was simply underestimating the scope of her project.

She ushered us into the room and we seated ourselves at a circular table. There was a packet of papers in front of each of us, and following the lead of my colleagues, I picked up my pages and began to read. The work was very extensive. It began with proofs simple enough that even the science historian in the room would understand them. I read through these parts with some impatience, thinking that this was a waste of my time. But I stopped short when I reached the midway point. Here the proofs began to apply on a macro scale, and by the time I was 3/4s of the way through the document I had slowed down considerably and was verifying each proof by hand in my notebook. When I read the final series (and I do not admit this easily) I grew lightheaded. I looked around and noticed that most of the others were still reading. Then I looked across the table at Dr. Moreno, who was watching me closely.

"I . . . I don't understand," I stammered, at a loss for words. Dr. Moreno said nothing back. She continued to look at me steadily until the next person laid down their packet, and her eyes flitted to him instead. She observed each person with thorough intention as they reacted to her work, and her expression never changed from one of silent but intense interest. There was nothing menacing in her gaze, but it made me shudder nonetheless.

"What is this?" someone finally asked.

"Do you understand it?" Dr. Moreno asked.

"I'm not sure," he replied. The man who spoke was Dr. Bahar, a researcher in the neurology department. "Am I supposed to?"

"Really," chimed in one woman. "Is this some kind of trick?"

"Of course not," said Dr. Moreno. "I do not in any way mean to deceive you. I respect you all deeply and appreciate your being here to discuss my project. Dr. Mehta, I'm sure you could make sense of it. Would you be willing to share with the rest of us what you were able to conclude?"

"Willing, yes," I said. "But I fear I'll be unable to phrase it correctly. I don't. . . I don't know."

“What does it say?” Dr. Moreno prompted.

“God. . . cannot be,” I said. “God's existence is impossible.” As I looked around I saw that nearly everyone else in the room had come to the same conclusion, though no one had said it.

“How did you do this?” asked Dr. Bahar.

“I actually just started from the Standard Model of Particle Physics,” she said. “But I quickly discarded that once I reached the proof at the top of page two.”

“This. . . this is brilliant,” said a lanky, red-headed doctor from the Electronics and Magnetics department. I remembered watching him as he read the document and seeing no understanding in his face until I summarized the findings. He hadn't understood them at first, but he now seemed quite enthusiastic about the discovery. “This is going to change the world.”

I felt numb, and when he said this I nodded in agreement, but I believe now that I had a different kind of change in mind. I'm very worried about what this means for the world. Even after millenia of speculation, spiritual exploration, and philosophical justification, God cannot exist. Not only that, but there never was or will be any entity that we would know as a god, nor could one ever even exist in our reality. It is probably pointless for me to explain this to you, as by the time you are able to understand the import of what I saw today, it will be common knowledge. But perhaps it will interest you to know my thoughts when I first heard the news, news that will leave humanity forever altered.

Dr. Moreno expects the news of her discovery to be released within the year. I overheard her and a number of colleagues discussing this just minutes after we saw the proof, and I know that is their ultimate goal. I expect that they will proceed with caution in this endeavor though, as there are many people in our world today who would not be able, psychologically, to cope with such a certainty without assistance. The truth must be made available to all, eventually. But first we must be certain that the information will not do harm to anyone, or at the very least, will do more good than harm. This, above all else, is our responsibility as those whose duty it is to inform the public of scientific matters.

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Bray dropped the journal onto the desktop. It landed on the edge with a fluid thud and then tipped over onto the floor. Bray put his face in his hands.

“What the hell,” he muttered. “What the hell, what the hell.”

Bray was trying to get a grasp on what he had just read. Ramla Moreno had been found murdered in her office just one week ago, and no evidence of this wild discovery had been found.

According to Bray's superiors, Dr. Moreno was indeed a mathematician, but her work was in chemistry, it had nothing to do with God or anything of a religious nature. And Dr. Mehta. . . the man who had written these journals was supposed to be a sociopath. Bray supposed it was still possible the man was a maniac, but he seemed so. . . normal. The journal did not in the least sound like the ravings of a diseased mind.

Bray stood and walked out of the study. He needed to clear his head.

He found Shaya in the living room going through files of videos on the home screen. It was a device most middle class families could afford, and incorporated PC, television, gaming console, and video recorder into a single device. Shaya was going through each video file, watching it at double speed, and deleting it.

"Following my example, I see," said Bray, startling Shaya.

"Oh, hey sir, I didn't know you were there. Yeah, I guess I just figured we'll be here awhile, so we should be as thorough as possible."

Bray nodded absently, then something on the screen caught his eye.

"Wait, slow it down," he told Shaya.

Shaya did as he said. The video was of Mehta and his wife talking to the camera.

"And your daddy's writing to you too, see?" Mehta's wife stood in front of the camera, and as she spoke she grabbed a manuscript from her husband's hands and held it up in the camera's view. Bray recognized the journal entry he'd just read.

"Maybe if you're lucky, part of it won't put you to sleep," she continued, sticking her tongue out at Mehta. Her husband laughed and grabbed the journal back from her, then wrapped her up in a hug.

"They're cute," said Shaya.

"What's the date on that video?" Bray asked, taking the remote from Shaya, rewinding it to when the journal was pressed against the screen, and reading to confirm that it was the same as the one he'd just read.

"November 14<sup>th</sup>," Shaya said. Bray clenched his jaw and took a deep breath.

“What is it, sir?” Shaya asked, watching Bray carefully. “Was that the journal you're reading?”

Bray nodded.

“Well what does that mean?”

“It means it's true,” said Bray. “It means Mehta didn't alter it after the epidemic to take the blame off himself.”

“Are you saying that Dr. Mehta didn't cause the plague?” asked Shaya. “Does McLellan know?”

Bray shook his head.

“I don't know yet.” He started walking back towards the study. “Keep it up,” he told Shaya, then he returned to his reading.

November 13<sup>th</sup>, 2056

I can't get my mind off of what happened yesterday, and Sachi has left to go shopping, so I thought I would write more in here to distract myself. My job is a bit difficult to explain, but I will do my best. I'll just tell you that I am an engineer and, in between my teaching, I have begun work on a project that I have dreamt of since I was a child. This is an even more difficult thing to explain, but I'll do the best I can: there are things in the universe called quantum systems. From a perspective of a large enough scale, any known mass or energy system could be considered a quantum system, as it refers to anything that the laws of quantum physics applies to, and this, for all intents and purposes, is everything in the universe.

Quantum systems interact with each other in a very specific, coordinated fashion. If two quantum systems are entangled with each other, it is impossible to describe one of the two said systems without considering the other. In other words, their states are both shared and interdependent. Any change in one of the systems will correspond to an equivalent and opposite change in the other.

In order to illustrate this effect, I invite you to consider my quantum calibrator, a device I designed in order to regulate the behavior of my larger project. The quantum calibrator contains a measured and closed quantum system, consisting of two equally small quartz stones. Both stones are perpetually spinning, and they are spinning at the same speed, but the quartz in the left-hand side of the calibrator is spinning counter-clockwise and will always, so long as the device continues to function, spin counter-clockwise, while the quartz in the right-hand side of the device is spinning, and will always spin, clockwise.

What is most fascinating, and for many, most troubling, about quantum entanglement is that systems can become entangled without ever having had any physical interaction, direct or indirect. Indeed, two objects can, theoretically, become entangled from any distance, and the entanglement process is instantaneous, quite literally so. To date, quantum entanglement represents the most rapid form of energy or data transfer known to the scientific community.

What my project dealt in specifically was something called quantum teleportation. It has long been thought that, despite the term teleportation, quantum teleportation does not actually involve the transportation of matter from one place to another. Rather, it was seen as only being capable of transferring data, as experiments up until 2049 in the field yielded no actual physical transference, but merely the transference of information. However, the Briggs and Okoro project of 2049 demonstrated that physical transference could be accomplished with the coordination of multiple entangled systems. The lead researchers, Rachel Briggs and Ada-afo Okoro, managed to teleport objects as large as a cantaloupe. At the time it was unclear whether the particles were being transferred physically from one location to another, or if particles in the second location were simply repositioning themselves to recreate the original object, which, if the latter theory proved true, must be destroyed in the process.

But three years later, in a recreation of the Briggs and Okoro experiment, I managed to prove that the particles were indeed physically moving from one location to another without actually traveling through what we know as space. Given this information, I also concluded that without the medium of space to travel through, the particles must have been transported through some other medium that is not currently, and may never be, observable by humans, at least not as a medium of travel. It is my suspicion that this medium may in fact be the temporal medium, but currently I have no means of testing, or even accurately hypothesizing about, such an occurrence.

But what I do have right now is a nearly-completed device capable of performing quantum teleportation on any object up to the size of a human adult. Throughout my testing I have successfully teleported dozens of objects, and I have also teleported a number of insects. Unfortunately, I have yet to complete a successful teleportation on a living insect that did not result in the creature's death.

My goal at the moment is to make the teleportation process completely safe, so that the device can be used by humans and, eventually, become commercially available. As you, unfortunately, will likely not

be taught in school, our society has yet to develop an effective, quick, safe, and energy efficient mode of travel to replace our now-ancient electric car technology (despite promises of hovercrafts dating back nearly a century). With my invention, no human or animal will ever be injured by one of those barreling loads of metal again.

The project is going well at the moment, but I'm having trouble making some of the first finishing touches before we begin testing it on live creatures larger than insects. I'll be attending a meeting tomorrow to discuss with my team our next steps and options.

I'll have to stop writing now, my hand is beginning to cramp. Sachi uses a computer, and perhaps I should too, but this seems more personal. And even in the most difficult aspects of my work, I have always preferred the manipulability of paper and pen over the convenience of a screen.

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2056

I'm not sure if there's any point in me keeping this journal anymore, but it helps me organize my thoughts, so I believe I'll keep using it. It's become enough of a habit that I think I would miss it dearly. However, it will no longer be an account of my life to be read by my child someday, for Sachi and I found out yesterday that there is no chance of us ever having a child. My wife is infertile.

I didn't even know she got the test. She went yesterday when she said she was going shopping, then she ran by the store and speed-shopped so she would have some bags to bring home. I suppose I don't blame her. She was far more worried about the fact that we had yet to conceive than I was, and she didn't want me to share in her worry. She is always, above all else, a kind woman.

I came home from work to find her crying in our bedroom, clutching a doll to her breast. It was a doll from her childhood, one she'd planned to give to our child. Before I could even ask, she told me about the test, and what the doctors said. She said they think it's just a congenital defect, though it could have been the result of a stomach injury she sustained in college. They can't be sure.

I'm still reeling from the news. My first instinct was to break down, but when I saw her crying still I knew it wasn't the time. She needed to be my priority.

"I haven't told my mother yet," she told me, wiping her eyes with the corner of the pillow she held. "I don't know what I'll say. She's wanted a grandchild so badly, ever since we got married. She'll be

devastated.”

I sat down on the bed beside her and put my arms around her. She dropped the doll and embraced me, burying her head in my chest.

“Let's not worry about your mother right now,” I said, willing myself not to cry. “She can wait. What matters right now is how you feel.”

Sachi let out a noise that was either a sob or a throaty “ha.” I couldn't tell which.

“What you need to remember is that this isn't the end of the line for us,” I said. “There are other options.”

Sachi breathed quietly for a moment, then brought her head up slightly.

“You mean in vitro?” she asked. “A surrogate mother?”

“No,” I said quickly. “I mean, that's not what I want. I don't want a child that's got my DNA without any of yours.”

Sachi smiled a little at this before another tear slipped out and she put her head back down.

“Then what?” she asked, her voice muffled by my shirt. “Adoption?”

“Sure,” I said, picking up the doll she had dropped, “why not?”

“So we'll both be surrogates,” she said.

“It wouldn't be like that,” I said, petting her hair. “When you adopt a child it becomes yours. Just as much as any child that you physically created.”

“But with your own child you know where everything came from. That's why you do it, right? That's why we reproduce instead of just adopting all the time. We want to know where it came from.”

“What do you mean?” I asked. “We would know where an adopted child came from.”

She shook her head.

“He could grow up to be an addict or to have some other horrible disease, or he could be a sociopath. We could never know.”

“We could meet the parents. Get to know them.”

“It's not the same,” she said, wriggling out of my arms. She stood up. “Nothing's ever going to be the same.”

I looked away so she couldn't see the tears forming in my eyes. I tried to think of something else

to say to comfort her, but I was at a loss. I hadn't realized until now how much stock she put in having our own, genetically similar child. She went into the kitchen, and I sat on the bed trying to decide whether or not I should follow her. Over the years I'd become rather adept at noticing when Sachi needed comfort and when she needed space. But right now I was noticing signs for both.

Before I could make up my mind, Sachi came back in with a glass of milk. She gulped down half of the glass, then placed it on the bedside table and crawled under the covers. I lay down too and held her, and since she didn't pull away I stayed there until I felt her breathing change into the gentle sighs of what I knew would be a troubled sleep. Then I got up and began an internet search for adoption agencies and options. I think I hoped I would find some great solution, but there is no solution for what Sachi is feeling right now. Nothing I looked at gave me any hope of consoling her, so I turned off my computer and recorded the day's events. I'm going to go lie back down with my wife now. I think tomorrow I will call Yasuo and ask his advice.

November 16<sup>th</sup>, 2056, Continued

I'm feeling rather frazzled at the moment, so this entry may not be entirely coherent. I had just lain down with Sachi, prepared for an evening nap or simply to sleep through the night, when I was called back into work for an emergency meeting. The meeting was called by the Chair of the Engineering Department, though it is unclear whether this really falls into her domain.

I don't think it's really anyone's field, but if I had to categorize it I would probably say it's a combination of Engineering, religious studies, and, for lack of a better term, advertisement. This latter area was the one most focused on in the meeting, and for good reason.

When I arrived at the meeting, I saw a number of my upper-level colleagues, many of whose fields of study were more irrelevant than my own. I think we were there simply because of the status we have achieved in the scientific community. It comforts me to know they trust me this much, and makes me hopeful that they will follow the advice I gave today.

To open up the meeting, the Chair of the Engineering Department, Dr. Petrov, addressed all the attendees:

“Thank you all for coming in this evening. I know these are not scheduled work hours for any of

you, but I think the gravity of the situation more than warrants such an imposition.”

Dr. Bahar, as usual, was impatient, and interrupted the Chair.

“I hope I'm not the only one in the dark about why the imposition was necessary,” he said, looking around the room meaningfully. “Why don't we get to the point.”

“Yes, well,” said Dr. Petrov, “If Dr. Moreno could please explain the situation.”

Dr. Moreno gave her a petulant look, then stood somewhat reluctantly.

“I am very sorry to have pulled you all away from your families at such an hour,” she said. “Unfortunately this could have been avoided quite easily. I think some of you may agree with me that this is the simple result of an overreaction to a bit of news I shared with Dr. Petrov earlier today. Since we have called you here already, I hope to use this opportunity to gain your support for our next step forward.”

“What step might that be?” asked a doctor I didn't recognize. “Dr. Petrov was extremely worried about something today, is this what it was? Because I should tell you I trust Dr. Petrov very much, and if something makes her nervous then it's going to make me nervous. Is this what was worrying her?”

“I suppose it probably is,” said Dr. Moreno. “But as I said before, I'm quite confident that it was a mere overreaction, and that no concern is really warranted.”

“Well what is it then?” asked Dr. Bahar.

Dr. Moreno took a deep breath, whether to steel herself or us, I couldn't tell.

“My researchers and I plan to go public with our discovery,” she said.

For a moment the room was silent. Then the doctor from the Electronics and Magnetics Department jumped to his feet.

“Fantastic,” he said with a grin. He grabbed Dr. Moreno's hand and began to shake it, and she smiled. “You'll bring newfound respect and credibility to all of science. This could really pave the way for an entirely new scientific revolution.”

“Are you crazy?” jumped in the doctor I didn't recognize. “The public isn't ready for this information, they'll go mad!”

“Give the people some credit, doctor,” said the E&M doctor. “Did riots start when they were told the world revolves around the sun?”

“No,” said Dr. Bahar. “But you may remember that Galileo was imprisoned for life for arguing

that point.”

“We have nothing to fear of arrest,” said Dr. Electronics. “This is a government-funded facility, this is the kind of thing we’re here to prove!”

“It’s not likely that there will be any government backlash from this,” said Dr. Bahar. “But that’s not the real danger. This is a completely unprecedented discovery, what could be more controversial?”

“This really isn’t anything new,” said a chemist. “People are bombarded daily with the extreme probability that God is scientifically unfeasible. It’s just one more step to reveal concrete proof.”

“That’s absurd,” I said, almost without meaning to. I’d been so wrapped up in the conversation I’d somewhat forgotten that I was a part of it. “We’re not talking about people who follow scientific developments. If you go public with this information it will reach every corner of the world in minutes. Do you understand how radically this will change some people’s worldviews?”

“So what?” asked Dr. Electronics. “Narrow worldviews need to be changed.”

“Why?” I asked. “To send the faithful into spiraling depressions? What will the public gain from this knowledge? And what gives you the authority to prioritize people’s beliefs?”

“What makes you think that we have the right to withhold this information?” jumped in Dr. Moreno, speaking for the first time since she’d made the announcement. “We don’t own this knowledge simply because we happened to stumble upon it. This information belongs to all of humanity, and if we were to deny them it we would be abusing our power as scientific authorities and violating the right of the people to free access to knowledge.”

“So our duty is to inform the public no matter the harm that could occur?” the unknown doctor objected. “Should a parent introduce her child to the ways of the world before they can even understand them?”

“The people aren’t children,” said Dr. Moreno, “they’re people. They’re grown adults who can make their own decisions about life and who deserve to be well-informed.”

“I think you’re overestimating humanity,” I told her, but the look she gave me made it clear she thought I was underestimating it. I sighed. “Look,” I said. “I know it’s gratifying to idealize the human race and view them as a society of studious, spiritually and mentally open people. But some of those people out there base their entire identities on their faith.

“Although I was shown Dr. Moreno's project several days ago, I have not yet shared the discovery with my wife. She just found out we can't have children, and she's in an extremely vulnerable condition.”

“Your wife believes in God?” asked Dr. Electronics with a snort.

“My wife has always been quietly faithful,” I said. “She has never taken offense from someone for their lack of belief, nor has she ever tried to convince another person that her belief system is the correct one. But yes, she worships God.”

There was another silent moment, and in it I thought of Sachi, hopefully still lying asleep at home. I also remembered what I had done just before lying down with her. I didn't record it in my last entry, but somehow now it seems appropriate: I knelt down beside her, kissed her brow, and prayed that she would be alright. The prayer was short. I said only this: “If there is someone up there, or out there, please look after my wife.” I felt little when I did, and it's not likely something I would do again. But I have done it once now. I have tried it.

I sighed again.

“It is entirely possible that you will advertise this information to the entire world, and nothing will come of it. You may be written off, you may not be interesting enough to be heard, you may meet a mass of minds as capable as those gathered here. But if there is a chance- and I can guarantee you that there is- that someone might be hurt by this information, then it is your responsibility to secure against that risk before going public. If you don't, and something happens, the blood will be on your hands.”

Dr. Moreno's face paled slightly. Her expression looked aggressive, as if she might contradict me at any moment, but she stayed silent and wrung her hands.

“And I mean that literally, too,” I went on. “People will come after you. They will come after you because you have challenged everything they know of the world. Because you have driven their loved ones to sin because religion once inspired them to behave. Because you have not protected them from the truth.”

Dr. Moreno looked at me levelly. I felt I was getting through to her, until the doctor from E&M spoke up again.

“This is absurd,” he said. “Anytime new information comes out there is a risk it will hurt someone. Securing against that risk is impossible. Should we keep our society in the dark simply because change is frightening?”

“It's not just frightening,” I said. “It's dangerous. People don't react well when you debunk all that they think they know of the world.”

“Everything's dangerous,” he shot back. “This information will come out someday. It might as well be today. Should Ford have waited until his invention was completely harmless before he revolutionized transportation? If he had he would have set us decades behind. You think our duty is to protect society, but you're wrong. Our duty is to propel society forward, and that means telling them what we've learned.”

Dr. Moreno nodded.

“He's right,” she said, placing her palms down on the table before her. “This is the most significant and wide-ranging scientific discovery in decades. It would be selfish at best to keep it to ourselves, and at worst it would be morally reprehensible.”

I fell silent then. It seemed Dr. Moreno was determined to let this information get out, no matter what I said.

“Have you even gotten permission from the IGU yet?” asked Dr. Bahar. “I find it hard to believe they would approve such a drastic move so rashly.”

“Permission from the International Governmental Union is pending,” said Dr. Moreno. “We hope to have it within the next two days at the latest.”

“And how exactly do you plan to spread the information anyway?” Dr. Bahar continued. “A breaking news report that God isn't real probably won't be taken very seriously.”

“We are working on a distributable version of the project,” said Dr. Moreno. “Something the average citizen would be able to comprehend. I believe what we have come up with will be both understandable and thoroughly clear. We want no room for misunderstanding.”

Dr. Moreno levelled her gaze back at me, and I stared at her in return.

“You're really set on going through with this, aren't you?” I asked. “Permission pending, of course.”

“We don't feel there's any need to worry about the government denying our request,” she said. “And I don't feel any legitimate argument still stands against such action.”

“Maybe you're right,” I said, shaking my head. “Then let me ask you for a personal favor,

colleague to colleague. Just give me three days to come up with some data. I think you should at least have some idea of the scope of what you're dealing with, don't you? How many people you'll be affecting, how strongly they value their beliefs. . . things like that.”

Dr. Electronics started to protest, but Dr. Moreno nodded briskly and interrupted him.

“I think that's a good idea,” she said. “I'm all for being more informed. I just hope you don't expect it to change my mind.”

I shook my head.

“I just think it's something you should see.”

A decision had been made, though it was one for postponement of action, and the meeting ended. I thanked Dr. Moreno before leaving, and when I came home Sachi was still asleep. I have lain back down and set my clock for noon, several hours past my working time, but my boss was at the meeting too so I knew he would understand. That way I'll get eight hours of sleep, but only if I stop writing now.

\* \* \* \* \*

Once again, Bray had to force himself to stop reading and gather his thoughts. This was too much. Something wasn't right; either everything the doctor had written was a fabrication, or everything Bray had been told was. And what was worse, he knew the latter was far more probable.

He knew full well that the government had the means to wipe or alter the memories of citizens, and that ironically that technology had been developed at the GREF just eleven years ago. Moreover, he knew that the government had implemented memory alteration procedures for at least some portions of the population, those who were supposedly too scarred emotionally to move past the plague. The plague that Dr. Mehta spread.

Was it so hard to imagine that they might have changed his memories too? They told him that they hadn't, that they wouldn't, that he was trusted with the secrets of society. The memory wipes were for helping people cope, not to make people forget history. The doctor must be lying.

“Dr. Abednego Mehta is a murderer and a maniac,” he said to himself. As he spoke, he heard his supervisor's voice speaking with him in his head. “He engineered a disease that spread across the planet in

a week, killing thousands of people. He murdered Dr. Ramla Moreno when she came close to engineering a cure. Her work survived, and thanks to her so have we. Dr. Abednego Mehta is a murderer, a dangerous fugitive. His work must be analyzed, and any documentation that might indicate how to recreate the disease must be destroyed forever.”

He was repeating to himself the speech that McLellan had given him and Shaya before sending them to clear out the apartment. Saying it now though, he found himself remembering the meaningful look his supervisor had given him as he spoke of destroying the doctor's work. Bray had taken it as a look of trust, and he still felt that was what it was, but he wondered if McLellan knew what Bray would find in the apartment. Had he meant for him to understand that he would find something like this? Something that contradicted all that he knew of the disaster that killed so many?

But if that was the case, why keep it quiet? Why expect Bray to extract meaning from a look, instead of just saying it outright? Bray knew the answer to these questions, but he wouldn't let his consciousness give voice to them. It was too much to think that everyone above him was lying, that he and all his colleagues were all mistaken in their understandings of the past few weeks' events. There were too many holes; how could they be certain the memory wipes were effective on so many people? How could they have fabricated information like this, information that was so revolutionary?

Bray shook his head. He was letting himself fall victim to the ravings of a madman. He couldn't trust anything that was written in this journal, for the man who wrote it was unhinged. It was both better and easier to just trust in his government.

November 17<sup>th</sup>, 2056

I should have known better than to trust that Dr. Moreno would give me three days. I am writing this from the office now, as I had to rush here as soon as I woke up. I was pouring myself a cup of coffee when I heard the news anchor on television, which I hadn't even realized was on:

“And a new government report issued this morning claims that scientists have found actual proof that God doesn't exist. Here with us today is religious leader Ovid Lincoln and philosopher Shep Abrahamson to talk about the government's announcement. Mr. Lincoln, what was your take on the whole situation?”

At this point I was standing stock-still in my kitchen, staring at the screen. I know I should have expected this to happen, but at the time I was simply dumbfounded by the idea of people all over the world waking up that morning and having their entire worldviews shattered so that Dr. Moreno could make her announcement when she pleased.

“It's clearly a hoax,” said Lincoln. “All we've been told is that proof has been found. But when we ask to see it, we are shown a mathematics equation, a series of proofs, as they call it. What is that supposed to mean to us? This “proof” is incomprehensible to all but the government agents who supposedly discovered it! What reason do we even have to take these people the least bit seriously?”

Abrahamson stepped in then.

“You know, I actually have to agree with you,” he said. “Asking us to believe something that, by its very nature, is unbelievable, simply on their word is beyond basic reason and even courtesy. To present us with such a claim and deny us legitimate proof is borderline psychotic.”

“Now wait a minute,” said Lincoln. “That's not what I was getting at, and I don't really appreciate that jab.”

“It wasn't a jab, it was a legitimate analogy,” argued Abrahamson. “If you're offended by this announcement because you believe in God, then you might as well keep your mouth shut, because you're missing the point.”

“No, you're missing the point,” said Lincoln, glaring at the other man with pure hatred in his face. “If you don't believe in God then this announcement doesn't even affect you.”

“Excuse me?” shot back Abrahamson. “I've believed this all along, I've been looking for proof! You just want to deny the proof.”

“You denied it too,” said Lincoln, causing Abrahamson to choke on his glass of water.

“Idiots,” I muttered as I rushed to my room to dress. Sachi was awake, but she wasn't looking at me.

“I have to go in, baby,” I said. “I'm really sorry about this, I wanted to spend more time with you today, but there's a bit of an emergency.”

She was lying on her side facing the wall. She didn't answer me when I spoke, but I thought I heard her let out a gentle sigh.

“I'll be back soon,” I promised. “Don't turn on the television or the radio until I get back, alright?”

Again she didn't answer, but I thought she would listen to me. I unplugged the devices before I left just in case. I wondered briefly if I should tell her about Dr. Moreno's discovery, but I quickly dismissed the thought. There's no chance the news would make her feel better, and it would almost certainly upset her much more.

When I got to the office, it was in an uproar, as I had expected. All throughout the facility, workers were arguing with each other and rushing around trying to write up reports and call supervisors. Some were trying to distance themselves from the fiasco, and others were trying to get in on the action, thinking they could garner some degree of career success simply by association with such a major occurrence.

I made my way through the circus show and upstairs to Dr. Moreno's office, not expecting her to be there. I was surprised, however, to find not only her, but Representative Karik Mao, the official appointed by the International Governmental Union to supervise the GREF.

I had met Representative Mao on his last visit to the facility, which was an evaluation of my project. He gave me his full approval at the time, and during his visit I concluded that he was one of the few politicians left who still cared about the people he was serving. He recognized me when I entered.

“Dr. Mehta,” he greeted me. “I'm glad you are here. Please, come in. We are trying to decide on a course of action.”

“Sorry sir,” I said, taking a seat beside Dr. Moreno's desk, “but I'm not sure what you mean. Is any action warranted yet?”

“The world has just had a bombshell dropped on it,” he replied with a bit of a morbid grin. “We can't just sit back and do nothing.”

“Frankly sir,” cut in Dr. Moreno, “I think the world is handling the news just fine.”

“We don't know how they're handling it,” said Representative Mao sharply. “We've had nothing but a verbal shit-stream from the media, and complete silence from the masses.” He squeezed the bridge of his nose between his thumb and forefinger. “I wish very much that I had been consulted before the news was released.”

“I'm very sorry sir,” said Dr. Moreno, and she didn't sound at all sorry. “I was told that the

approval I received from the IGU was sufficient, and I assumed that it included your approval.”

“Technically it is sufficient,” he said. “And unfortunately, you had no way of knowing that I wasn't told. Bureaucracy.”

“Sir,” I said, feeling we'd been drawn off-topic, “if you don't mind my asking, what type of action were you considering, exactly?”

“There have been some suggestions,” he said, somewhat reluctantly. “Personally, I feel that we should redact our announcement and apologize formally to the people of the world.”

I considered this proposal, and as I did I saw Dr. Moreno's jaw drop in my periphery.

“You can't be serious,” she said. “Redact the announcement? It's absolutely true, why would we ever redact it? You can't redact fact, you can't redact proof!”

“The government can redact whatever it likes, Dr. Moreno,” said Representative Mao.

“But it's the truth!”

“It's not about the truth,” I said, shaking my head. “I don't think you understand how truly fragile the human psyche is.”

“Or perhaps you don't understand how resilient the human spirit is,” she retorted. “Why do you have so little trust in the people?”

“Because I care about them,” I said. “I don't think any of us can imagine the way people are reacting to this news right now. Sure, plenty of people will be fine. They will hear the news, say something like “Figures,” or “Well what do you know about that?” and then they will drive to the store to get chicken for dinner and move on with their lives. But there are people out there who aren't capable of doing that.”

“Well it's about time they toughened up and accepted the truth,” said Dr. Moreno firmly.

“It's not your place to decide that,” I snapped. I was getting frustrated with her. “Whatever type of god delusions you have in your mind, you are not the one who gets to decide what people put their faith into.”

Dr. Moreno narrowed her eyes.

“Well since I am the one who disproved the existence of God, I think I do get to decide. People were upset with Galileo too, but that doesn't change the fact that he was right.”

“This is not the same thing!” I shouted at Dr. Moreno.

At that moment the door burst open. An out-of-breath employee entered, and I recognized him as the doctor from E&M who had sided so strongly with Dr. Moreno during the meeting.

He stood in the doorway for a moment, panting and gazing at us, and there was a strange look in his eyes. It was one of disbelief, perhaps of guilt, and as I observed him I got the sense that something had made him sick. As if he'd seen something horrible.

“You three should probably come take a look at this,” he said after a while. We followed him briskly out of the room, and he led us to the lobby, where the television set was on. It was a news program, and once again, the subject was our facility's announcement.

“The death toll continues to rise after this morning's earth-shaking announcement. It is estimated that at least 2,000 people have taken their lives today in the Western Hemisphere alone. This after a great deal of speculation that the announcement was fake. However, top experts and media specialists have personally analyzed the proof, and according to them, this is no hoax. It seems that God truly does not exist, and across the world people are reacting to the news. Along with the unprecedented numbers of suicides, the crime rate has skyrocketed. Bryan?”

“Thanks Jessie,” said the other anchor as the camera centered on him. “In the last hour we've seen literally hundreds of cases of vandalism, breaking and entering, looting, robbery, and arson. Experts suspect that, having been denied the promises of their respective religions, some people are no longer able to identify with any moral code, and so they are taking to the streets and taking whatever they like. Most disturbing is the report that thousands, literally thousands of homicides have been perpetrated since this morning's announcement, and the rate of homicides is still increasing. Citizens are cautioned to stay indoors, as the streets have been deemed unsafe. I advise you all to seek immediate shelter.”

“What's going on?” asked Representative Mao.

“People are going mad,” said Dr. Electronics. He was trembling. “They've destroyed entire cities. It's complete chaos out there.”

“What can we do?” asked Dr. Moreno, her voice shrill and a bit frantic. Representative Mao looked about to answer, but then he received a phone call and stepped away for a moment.

“This can't be happening,” said Dr. Moreno. “How can this be happening?”

I said nothing. Representative Mao returned, his face grave.

“I've been told that, as of now, this island is the safest place on the planet. I want you two to come with me; we're going to meet a number of other representatives at headquarters. We'll decide what to do there.”

We nodded and followed Representative Mao downstairs to the front entrance. We stepped outside and began descending the stone stairs, when suddenly I heard a primal shriek. A split second later the sound of a weapon discharging cracked through the air, and instinctively I threw myself on top of Dr. Moreno, knocking her to the ground. I was vaguely aware of the step just above where she'd been standing exploding as the bullet collided with the stone. The next moment I was on my feet, dragging Dr. Moreno along by the arm. Mao was close behind us, and by the time we heard the weapon discharge again we were inside.

“What the fuck just happened?” cried Dr. Moreno, wrestling free of me. She was trembling.

“If I had to guess, I'd say that was an assassination attempt,” I told her. She looked at me with wild eyes. Mao was on the phone again, talking rapidly in French. He paused for a moment, then began talking in English again, presumably having been transferred to another person. After just a few terse sentences, he snapped his phone shut and turned to face us.

“I should have called headquarters before I decided to move you,” he said disgustedly. “They said they've received hundreds of anonymous tips about death threats towards you. None were from this island, so they didn't find it necessary to alert you in all the chaos.”

Dr. Moreno had a lost expression on her face.

“Please,” she said weakly. “Please, just tell me what to do. What do I do?”

“They're sending a helicopter here to take you to a safehouse,” said Mao. “You'll be surrounded by trained security personnel. Until they get here, we'll just lay low and not leave the building. Dr. Mehta, that was some impressive footwork there. The government currently considers Dr. Moreno somewhat of an international treasure, and I guarantee they will want to recognize you for saving her life.”

Dr. Moreno was still shaking, but she gave me a look of gratitude that I wouldn't have previously guessed she was capable of. We sat down to wait for the helicopter, and in the meantime I have been recording this entry, having had nothing better to do. I just realized I should have used the time to call

Yasuo, as I meant to do this yesterday, but I guess I can do it when I get home.

Mao has just told us that the helicopter is here, and I'm allowed to go home to Sachi.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bray was on his feet, pacing the floor. Shaya stepped inside the room and looked at him curiously.

"I've finished with the videos," he said. "Is there more we need to do here? Have you finished reading?"

Bray shook his head.

"We can't be done yet. It isn't over," he said quietly.

"What should I do then?" Shaya asked.

Bray didn't answer. He kept pacing, occasionally muttering a word or two to himself. He knew Shaya had asked him a question, but at that moment he didn't care and hardly noticed.

"Sir?" ventured Shaya.

Bray stopped walking and took a deep breath.

"Have you ever considered how many times each day you're lied to?" he asked the young man.

"Um, no," Shaya said. "I supposed I haven't. I don't think people lie that often."

"Perhaps people don't," said Bray. "Go do a double check on their screen. You may have missed some videos."

"I'm sure I didn't."

"Do it anyway."

Shaya shrugged and went back out. Bray stood in place another moment, then he kicked the wall, hard. It didn't help, only made his big toe sore. He hoped Shaya hadn't noticed how shaken he was by the last entry he'd read.

It would be just as easy to assume that the journal was all a lie, or that the doctor had believed it to be true due only to his deteriorated mental state. But with each word he read he realized that he'd be lying to himself if he stuck to that assumption.

Representative Karik Mao had disappeared three days into the investigation on the GREF. He'd been making a statement to the public in the GREF auditorium, a statement that had been broadcast to most of the world, and which Bray had watched. The man had seemed extremely agitated. His statement was littered with uncomfortable and untimely pauses, some of which extended for a minute or more. About fifteen minutes into the address, he had paused that way and began looking around at the audience. His face had grown fearful as Bray watched, and then a look of determination set in. He shoved the notes for his speech off of the podium and said: "I don't believe that Dr. Mehta created this plague." Members of the audience gasped, and the gasps turned quickly to shrieks as the auditorium was suddenly plunged into darkness. It was only momentarily, and when the lights came back on Representative Mao was gone. His Secret Service agents set to work immediately, securing the building and letting no one leave for several hours, until it was determined that Mao was nowhere to be found. The President of the IGU released a statement that day lamenting Mao's disappearance and calling for everyone on the island to join in the search, of which nothing ever came. Bray remembered how he had listened to the President's statement with conviction and faith, despising whatever criminal must have kidnapped or murdered Mao. Now he was struck by his own naivete.

"But why?" he said to himself. "They got rid of Mao because he was going to tell the truth, the same truth that Dr. Mehta wanted to tell. Why cover up what really happened? Why send me to investigate if I might find something like this?"

He realized the CBCI must have assumed no other evidence would be turned up at Mehta's apartment, since it had already been searched. In that case, it was likely that Bray was endangering himself by reading the journal instead of disposing of it immediately. If his superiors found out, he'd be completely wiped and placed at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy. Or perhaps they'd just do to him whatever they'd done to Mao.

But how much had he been wiped already? He remembered none of what he was reading about. The entire investigation was a fabrication. What more could they have lied to him about?

Bray felt himself seized by a brief panic. What if all he knew was a lie? What if he was farther gone than any of the others?

"Shaya!" Bray shouted. "Shaya! Get in here, now!"

Shaya appeared in the doorway, looking alarmed.

“What is it, sir?” he asked, stepping inside and reaching for Bray's arm. Bray shoved his arm away.

“Who is Ramla Moreno?” he asked. “Tell me, boy, who is she? Dr. Ramla Moreno?”

“She's that lady that got killed at the GREF, remember?” Shaya answered, bewildered. “A mathematician.”

“Who killed her?” asked Bray.

“Sir, I don't under-”

“Just tell me, dammit!”

“Dr. Mehta killed her, sir,” he said. “That's why we're here. That's what we're investigating. Have you forgotten?”

Bray sat back down in the chair, breathing heavily.

Shaya took a tentative step towards him.

“Sir,” he said. “What is in that journal? What did Dr. Mehta write?”

Bray didn't answer, and Shaya stepped forward again and reached his hand out for the book. Bray grabbed his hand and threw it back at him violently.

“No!” he snapped. “Don't touch it. Don't dare read it. I've put myself in danger already, I won't have you doing the same.”

Shaya's eyes were wide.

“What danger, sir?” he asked. “Please, help me understand.”

Bray shook his head.

“I'm sorry,” he said. “It's better that you don't know. I'll decide what to do about this journal when I've finished reading it, but for now you have to stay out of it. Got that?”

Shaya nodded hesitantly. Bray waved him away, and he stepped out of the room once more. Gathering himself, Bray picked up the journal again, hoping desperately that it would end soon.

November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2056

Not right. Couldn't understand it when I got home. The TV was on and Sachi wasn't in bed. She

was in the living room. Talk show noises blasting through the room.

The strangest thing was the doll. The doll she had saved for our child. It lay face down on the coffee table. Flower petals scattered over it. Petals from the lilies I had picked her last week, they were still in the vase in the kitchen but they were bare.

I put the doll in my pocket first thing. It was the first thing I did and then I didn't do anything for a long time. Or maybe I did and don't remember. Maybe I didn't even put the doll. . . no, I did. It's here now with me. I don't want to write it.

I don't want to write it, but I'm writing now for a different reason than the one I began with. I want so badly not to write it because I don't want it to be true. I want to make it untrue. I would give anything to have the power to re-write it differently, to change what happened with my pen. No. No. It happened.

This journal is becoming a historical account of a major disaster. A disaster of epic proportions, one of the largest in human history. The disaster of God.

I am rambling. If you read this, will you understand my pain? I cannot give thought to form or coherence. Should I even be writing this? Perhaps it would be better if no one ever knows.

And yet I know even as I write this that it is wrong. If no one ever wishes to know, then that is their business. But if anyone should ever pick up my journal, I want them to know the full truth as I have known it. It may very well be new to them.

My wife is dead. I found her when I came home. Her hand dangled off the couch, as if she were still reaching for the doll. But I know she had made her choice. She chose to leave me and the doll behind, and if Dr. Moreno were here perhaps I could finally make her understand, but she never knew my wife. Dr. Moreno assumes that people are going mad over this announcement because they were already mad. That people are taking their lives because those lives are worthless, because they are devoted to a non-existent deity. She doesn't understand the relationship people form with God, or why destroying that relationship might destroy the people too.

She is far more maddening than her discovery. How dare she. I should never have saved her from that psychopath. She killed my wife. And she doesn't care.

November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2056

I've tried calling Yasuo, but there is no answer. I feel I have no one left.

Sachi could never hide what she was feeling from me, and I find it's even true after her death. If Dr. Moreno were here now, I would tell her what is true: she and I are immortal. Our bodies will decay in time, and our consciousnesses will leave our bodies and cease to exist in our known reality. But she and I will live on. We have carved an eternal existence out of this world with our studies, and it's likely that she will be far more well-known than I because of this discovery.

People will say my name after I am dead, after I am in the ground and forgotten by my loved ones. People will know who I am, and I take comfort in this. Anyone who has achieved this and claims to take no comfort in it is a liar or a sociopath. Everyone strives throughout their life to achieve immortality, and I fully believe that without the promise of some sort of immortality, people cannot find a reason to go on. For the vast majority of people, immortality is achieved through procreation, through a furthering of the spread of one's own DNA. Even those who detract from the gene pool, this is comforting, enough to give one purpose in life. I am of the few who have found immortality in my life's work.

Sachi wanted to find immortality in our child, or our children if we chose to have more. She was fully prepared to do so, and she would have made a great mother. But biology denied her that opportunity. In her grief, she turned to God, and then she was told that he didn't exist. It is strange, really, that Dr. Moreno has never met my wife, because Dr. Moreno came to my wife in her weakest hour and savagely pulled away her only crutch. And I wasn't here to catch her.

Instead I caught the monster. I saved my wife's killer on the same day she committed her murder. And in my turn, I am a monster too. I chose to work when my family needed me most. Perhaps it is right that my wife should have been infertile, for I would undoubtedly have been a wretched father.

She used pills. I could even have seen it coming. When I left that morning, I saw her bottle of anti-depressants, prescribed just the day before. It was open on her bedside table. It was open. If I had shared Sachi's craving for resolution, if I had just been curious, I would have closed the bottle, for a bottle not in use need not be open. Sachi knew this. I knew this, but I let it slip past me. I know that bottle was empty when I left for the day, and Sachi must have had just enough energy to stagger to the couch before they brought her down.

Falling, and pushing, and shoving, and pulling. God damn it all.

November 20<sup>th</sup>, 2056

I have been working tirelessly in the days since I found her. The funeral is tomorrow, but I don't want to think about that. It's easier not to let myself think about anything but my project. I find that I am relating more and more to Sachi as each hour passes, for even when I am completely wrapped up in my work, even when I have pushed the thought of her death completely from my mind, still I feel the hole in me that she left. I can only think that this must be what it was like when she discovered she couldn't have a child. It is enough to make me want to give up, just as she did, but by someone's or no one's grace I have my project to engage me. Or I did.

I've just had a breakthrough. I suppose, if I think about it, that's really why I sat down to write this. The project is functional. I've tested it. Personally.

I managed to teleport—yes, teleport—myself to an entirely different room in my house. I was in my workshop, and then in an instant I was in my kitchen. I don't know how to explain what I've done without the help of about half a dozen incomprehensible equations, but I can say that I have transported 220 pounds of living, breathing, functioning matter contained in a single quantum system through not only open space, but through physical objects, through my own kitchen walls.

~~I'm going to~~

I don't know what I'm going to do. I think I will wait. No one needs to know just yet what I've discovered, and it can never hurt to test it a few more times before I tell anyone. I don't want to talk to anyone anyway. I have to, I have to talk tomorrow at the funeral. I have to. But I won't tell them about my project. I'm going to sleep now, and when I wake up I will go to the funeral. And talk.

November 21<sup>st</sup>, 2056

I teleported myself there today. It was a real laugh. It wasn't that hard, either. I woke up in the night and brought my target device, the one you teleport to, I brought it to the funeral home. But really it was a church. It's both, I guess. But a church. That was funny too, and it was hard not to laugh. A church. Dr. Moreno would laugh.

I cried though. I didn't think I would, but I did. ~~She might have~~

~~She would have~~

I brought the device home afterwards, and no one was the wiser. I don't know what to do. Something very bad has happened. That's why I cried, was it. . . .

I did cry. Yasuo wasn't at the funeral, I couldn't figure out why until I saw the news after. He's angry, angrier than me, he tried something awful. He nearly killed Dr. Moreno.

He went to her home with a gun, when she came outside to water her flowers or something like that, he shot at her. He fired at her three times, but he's a bad shot. There were armed guards at her house because someone already tried to kill her. They shot him, and he's dead now, and the funeral is in two days. Two days! I can teleport to that one too. Today a funeral, and another in just two days. He was probably my closest friend besides Sachi. He's dead.

Dead, dead. Dead.

I feel a restlessness that frightens me a little. I can't tell if it's productive or not. I want to take action, but in what way I am completely lost. Dead. I need to do something, and I think I will. I am formulating a plan, and I think some part of me knows the goal. It will tell me, perhaps, if I am lucky.

He's dead. My God.

November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2056

The government is overreacting. They're doing awful things. Martial law has been declared, and raids are happening all over my neighborhood, and I assume all over the world. They've managed to save three lives from what I've seen and heard, three people planning to hang themselves alone in their homes, and I've seen them gun down at least a dozen. It's too much, as it always is, and Dr. Moreno is the reason. I've been selfish, I've been consumed by my work as if what happens out there no longer matters, but it does.

Well today I'm going to do something about it. I will do whatever I can to protect the people. I must do something I know I will regret, because only I can. It will send a message. I cannot fight the entire united world government. But I can send them a message, and perhaps they will take it. I cannot stay here afterwards. I will have to run for the rest of my life. I do not do this lightly. If anyone is to read this after I am gone, please know not to look for me, for I will be beyond your or anyone else's reach.

Please make sure this journal finds its way into the hands of the people, where it belongs.

I have been in a fog these past days, a fog that seemed insurmountable. Perhaps it is, for I cannot tell if I've overcome it or simply assimilated into it and can no longer perceive it. In either case, it's a relief.

I cannot know that if you are reading this, you agree in any way with my convictions. But please heed me when I tell you that the people must know the truth. They have been given the gift of a piece of knowledge, but it is harmful to them because they were not ready to receive it. But we cannot turn back now. The truth has been discovered, it has been shared with the people, and if we try to take it back now we will be directly retarding human progress. We've taken a step forward, certainly. It has been a difficult and painful one, a catastrophic one, but the only option now is to move forward. If we try to take it back, we are dooming ourselves to relive this tragedy, or one far worse. To go back now would be a betrayal of the highest kind.

It will only happen again. Another scientist will make the discovery, or perhaps we'll finally discover the technology to bring people back from the dead and they will tell us, there is nothing, nothing beyond, nothing more. Everything is here, in this life, but we've destroyed it. Even if there were a God I have no doubt she would forsake us now, blinded as we are by our own narcissism. And when it happens again, the world will suffer again, but by next time who knows what weapons will be available to us. If religion must be eradicated from the world it should happen before science goes too far, before we have the power to kill each other with absolute ease. Perhaps it is too late already.

I must go. It is time to set my plan in motion. Trust the people, and give them the truth they deserve. Please.

November 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2056

The project is done. I can do no more with it. Perhaps another could, but I fear I have no one to turn to now to make sure the project stays alive after I'm gone. I believe what I have learned will go with me, but I will leave detailed notes of it in my home in case anyone comes who might remember what has been happening all week.

I expect the government will take a different action very soon. Martial law is effective, but time-consuming. They have a much quicker fix, and I doubt they will be shy to use it. It is a technology

invented by Dr. Bahar about a decade ago. He has told me that they have made use of it before, and that they have kept it on-hand in case of a world-wide disaster. I believe this qualifies. In less than a few days, I think, the government will begin a clean slate initiative, wiping the memory of every member of the public. I do not know if it is this or death that I escape.

I called Dr. Moreno and asked her to meet me. I told her we should meet at the lab because that is the only place I could show her the project. Really it's the only place where I can get her alone, away from all her armed guards.

I left one teleporter at home and brought the other to the office with me to meet her. First I made sure that the calibrator could travel with me through the devices. This frightened me, because if it turned out not to work I would likely be trapped in whatever the medium is through which I travel when I use these devices. It worked out fine, and I set the device up in Dr. Moreno's personal office space.

"You said you've made a breakthrough?" said Dr. Moreno as she entered, gazing reverently at the device.

"I have," I said, not bothering to hide my smugness. I knew she would expect it anyway. "It works."

Dr. Moreno was silent for a moment, eyeing me with uncertainty.

"What do you mean it works?" she asked. "The machine? You mean. . . it teleports?"

"That it does," I said. "One-hundred percent functional."

I watched Dr. Moreno's eyes grow wide with greed. I knew the prospect of my device would be tempting, no, irresistible to her. There are scientists like me and Dr. Bahar, who do their work for the good they see it producing. And then there are scientists like Dr. Moreno. They start from a purer place, perhaps; a natural, insatiable curiosity. A passion for the unknown. No, a passion for dismantling the unknown. When it is at play in the world of true, novel scientific exploration, this curiosity becomes gluttony.

"That's incredible," Dr. Moreno said breathlessly. "How on earth did you test it? You haven't been in the lab, have you?"

"I worked on it at home," I said. "I tested it on myself."

Dr. Moreno gave me a startled look. Self-testing is somewhat anathema to most of the researchers

working at the GREF, and I am no exception. However, I have little enough left to lose that I preferred to test it on myself rather than order a tub of rats from the facility, and besides I'm the one who will be using it. I might as well test it personally.

I watched Dr. Moreno as she examined my device, muttering appreciatively at times.

“Would you like to try it?” I asked.

Her face lit up, her expression equal parts apprehension and almost child-like wonder. She even licked her lips.

“Can I?” she asked. I smiled magnanimously and gestured toward the machine, but she hesitated a moment longer.

“Does it hurt?” she asked.

“You don't feel anything, really,” I told her. “It's like a millisecond-long nap. I even feel a little refreshed afterwards.”

“Is it dangerous?” she asked.

“Not any more than would be expected,” I replied. “As long as both devices are kept running while the transfer is being made, I have yet to see anything go wrong. But of course we should proceed with caution.”

With that, she stepped up to the machine, and my smile grew broader.

“Step on in,” I said, and she did. “The other device is set up at my home. I'll teleport you there and then bring you right back. Sound alright?”

“Sure,” she said, with a quaver in her voice. “Should I just stay in the device when I get there?”

“Yes,” I said. “Be sure to stay still, as too much movement could displace you and make it harder for the device to bring you back.”

She frowned and nodded. I powered on the device and began adjusting the calibrator.

“You know,” I said slowly as I worked, “I really wish we had waited to release the news of your project. Do you?”

Dr. Moreno bit her lip.

“Yes,” she said. “You were right, it was a mistake. I didn't realize people would react that way. I know you tried to warn me. But I will do everything I can to help people come to terms with this

information.”

She paused, then added “as soon as they stop trying to kill me.”

I nodded.

“It was good meeting you,” I said. I activated the calibrator and looked at Dr. Moreno standing in my device. “I wish things had gone better.”

The device began the humming noise that it makes during the transfer. Dr. Moreno looked up at the machinery above her, then looked at me. What I had said seemed to confuse her, and there was a question in her eyes. I pressed the button to begin the matter transfer, then I stepped up to the machine and turned it off.

Dr. Moreno had already begun to travel. Her eyes widened when she saw me press the power button, but it was too late. She was barely there anymore. Her vocal chords no longer existed in the throat that I saw, and so she couldn't cry out. I don't think her lungs were there either. As the hum of the machine quickly died away, Dr. Moreno's half-body crumpled inside the device.

I opened the glass door and pulled her body out. I felt for a pulse, knowing I would feel none, and I was not disappointed. Next I went to the closet, where I had hidden a small explosive. Likely my reader will be wondering where I managed to purchase such a weapon, but I made it myself. I hate chemistry, but I've always been very good at it.

I set the bomb in Dr. Moreno's hand and set it to go off in one minute. Then I turned the device back on, listened to it hum for a few seconds, and stepped inside. I went back home, and waited to see what the explosion would do. I watched my calibrator, on which I had put a light for each active device. The light on the left side flickered for a moment as I watched, then it went out. No other setting on the calibrator changed, and I felt I would still be able to use my remaining device for my escape.

I have been writing this entry because I want people to know what happened, not only to me and to Dr. Moreno, but to the world. I know the government has covered this up, but they truly are wrong in trying to hide the truth from people who already know it.

As a worker at the GREF, I am privy to certain pieces of knowledge that are denied to the general public. One of these pieces of knowledge is of Dr. Bahar's invention; it gives the IGU the ability to erase memories on a very large scale. I have seen this technology used, and it is extremely effective. What I am

writing now will have likely been forgotten by nearly everyone in the world by the time anyone reads this. Please, find a way to get this journal out. Send it to a news station, demand a response from the IGU. Believe me when I say you have been fooled. But the truth is out now, and out it must stay if we wish to avoid another catastrophe like the one that occurred this week.

I'm going now. I cannot be found. I am going to get into my device and I am going to teleport myself, and I have no idea where it will take me. I am confident that it will not be anyplace that any other human can access without the use of this device. But I will be taking the calibrator with me, and without this the machine is useless. I will be beyond all reach, for if I stay I know I will be killed for what I have done. Goodbye.

\* \* \* \* \*

Bray closed the diary, his hands shaking. Of all the things he could have found in the apartment, he never expected something like this.

“But McLellan did,” he muttered to himself. McLellan must have expected something like this: the look he'd given Bray before they went out on assignment at the time had been enigmatic, but its meaning was now unmistakable. But what did McLellan expect Bray to do now?

Bray knew that the doctor was right. If this was successfully covered up, it was only a matter of time before someone else discovered this same strange proof that Ramla Moreno had found, and then what? Another disaster?

“But isn't it already too late?” he asked himself. “The memories have already been wiped. The events recorded in this journal would be unbelievable now, and how would people react?”

Bray thought of the arguments he'd read through in the journal, how the scientists at the GREF had had the same qualms as he was now struggling with. But he couldn't shake the suspicion that whatever decision he made now would have much farther reaching repercussions than the decision the scientists had made.

“If this journal is true,” he said to himself, slowly, “if there is no god, and there's proof out there, what right do I have to hide it?”

Bray sat at the desk staring down at the closed journal for a long time. A few times he started to reach for it, paused, and withdrew his hand. Eventually he took a deep breath and stood up, grabbing the journal with resolve. At that moment Shaya entered.

“What's going on?” Bray asked. The young man looked shaken.

“I just got a call from headquarters,” he said. “It's McLellan. He's just been found dead in his home.”

Bray took a step back, alarmed. As if it had burned him, he flung the journal away from him, back onto the desktop.

“What is it?” Shaya asked. “Did that journal have something to do with McLellan?”

Bray sat down at the desk, defeated. For a few moments, he forgot that Shaya was there with him. He took several deep breaths, then suddenly he jumped to his feet and slammed his fist into the wall behind him, letting out a brief shout as he did. He rested his head against the wall, vaguely aware that Shaya was at his side now.

“Sir? What's the matter? Are you alright?”

“It doesn't matter,” Bray said softly. “None of it fucking matters.”

“Sir?”

Turning back towards the desk, Bray pulled an Insta-Light from his jacket. He flicked the small stick, igniting it, and dropped it onto the cover of the journal.

“What are you doing?” Shaya cried, moving towards the kitchen for water.

“Stop,” Bray ordered. “Let it burn.”

Shaya did as he was told, and together they watched as the pages became exposed, one by one, before blackening and dissolving in the tongues of flame.