

Digitall

By
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>_ Connecting
>_
>_ Online.
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>_ Hello? Is there anybody there? Can anybody hear me?
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>_ My time is short so I will tell you what I can. So that there is a record, somewhere, of what has
>_ passed.
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>_ It began, as it always does, with the computers. Simple enough. It heralded a new era for
>_ mankind. They called it the digital age. The Internet and the World Wide Web made the
>_ global transfer of information a possibility. Ever increasing bandwidth allowed for more and
>_ more data to be transferred. Kilobytes. Megabytes. Gigabytes. Terabytes. And as the
>_ information superhighways evolved to cope with this increased data stream, so the
>_ applications of the computers grew.
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>_ In the early days, we were simply content to use the computers for work and entertainment
>_ purposes. Along with the typical document files .doc, .xls, .ppt, would come a variety of sound
>_ (.wav, .aiff, .mp3, .mp4) and image files (.tga, .jpeg, .gif, .psd), quickly followed by video files
>_ (.mpg, .mov, .wmv). The increased bandwidth and improving compression technology gave
>_ us room to play. And play we did.
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>_ The turning point can be accurately identified. A lecture given at the Massachusetts Institute
>_ of Technology in 2011 by Professor Philip Biedelmann. Biedelmann believed that everything
>_ could be described digitally. That the world as we know it, all of its component parts, could be
>_ explained in bits and bytes. Everything could be reduced to ones and zeros. An alternative
>_ world, identical to our own, could be constructed in the ether. If only the correct algorithm
>_ could be found.
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>_ He was ridiculed at that lecture. Called a madman. But his arguments were convincing and
>_ planted seeds in enough brilliant minds that research immediately began on every continent
>_ simultaneously.
>_ The breakthrough came from Europe. A team of scientists in Germany described the
>_ algorithm that would change the world and create another. A glass. A simple glass was
>_ described in binary code. Back then it took a whole day to upload the bitstream, but at the
>_ end of that day there it was in the ether. A glass.
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>_ At this point let me make it very clear to you. This was not a virtual glass. This was real. The
>_ first tangible object in cyberspace.
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>_ Computers got faster. Bandwidth increased. The algorithm was passed around the world.
>_ The file explosion followed soon after.
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>_ The algorithm was applied to all manner of things. Soon, everything was being uploaded to
>_ the ether and new file extensions emerged. Objects (.obj) and things (.thg) were popular.
>_ Substances (.sub) and elements (.lmnt). There was nothing the algorithm could not be

>_ adapted to. The most profound event in human history was the creation of the first .dna file.
>_ Nucleotides, the basic building blocks of the genetic code, were now digital.
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>_ For years we had struggled with the redundancy of the human genome. Ninety-five percent of
>_ our DNA had been deemed useless. The scientists referred to it as "junk dna" Looking back
>_ now, it is hard to believe we were so naive. Nature had never been so wasteful before. It was
>_ ridiculous to think otherwise. DNA was code and it coded for something. The algorithm
>_ revealed it to us. It wasn't junk at all.
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>_ Feelings, emotions, thought, memory, the human psyche. All the things about man that
>_ science had been unable to explain. It was all there, coded in our DNA, waiting to be
>_ converted to binary digits. Our genetic code had been like a ticking time bomb, waiting for the
>_ technology to catch up. We were always meant to be in the ether.
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>_ Faced with this knowledge, that our DNA had simply been waiting to be translated into a
>_ digital file, it was hard not to believe a higher power existed. The atheists and agnostics were
>_ converted overnight. A divinity must have created us in preparation for this journey.
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>_ Biedelmann volunteered to be the first. He was rejected outright. Unlike so many other of
>_ man's endeavors where brilliant men had led the way, this time they wanted an ignoramus.
>_ Somebody completely computer illiterate. Somebody who could not sabotage things from the
>_ other side.
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>_ He was a refugee from Africa, the first one. A teenager who knew nothing about computers.
>_ In fact, he'd never even seen one. It took them ten days to create his bitstream and another
>_ week to upload it, but then he was here.
>_ Alone.
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>_ He is still here among us, the first one. That's what we call him. It's what he calls himself.
>_ He's been here forever, immortalized as a bitstream. He does not know his given name. The
>_ transition damaged him. The trauma too much. Imagine finding yourself alone in an
>_ incomplete world. Imagine what it would do to you. He tried to cope, to adapt. Even at a
>_ digital level there was a small degree of redundancy in the code - again, by design, not by
>_ accident. It was there for what could be best described as digital mutation. To allow the stream
>_ to adapt to a digital environment evolving around it. The first one hardly had an environment.
>_ He tried to adapt. Tried to modify his stream. It was too much for him. The constant
>_ changes. The constant changing. He became corrupt. It is like senility, except it is not. We
>_ are all immortalized here, frozen in time at the human age that our DNA was uploaded, only
>_ he seems somehow older. Like he has aged here.
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>_ And so it happened. Life was created among the ether. It was frowned upon at first.
>_ Frowned upon by those afraid of the technology. By those who saw no use for it. But then
>_ applications began to emerge. Few could find reason to deny couples who could not bear
>_ children of their own. Families began donating some of their own children's DNA, so that
>_ others might have counterpart children in the ether. Similarly, it was hard not to sympathize
>_ with those who had lost loved ones. As long as some DNA could be saved, then it could be
>_ converted and uploaded. Conversations could be had through the computer, much like instant
>_ messaging. Only people weren't the other side of the state or country or world. They were
>_ here. With us.
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>_ Soon it began to spiral out of control. The high fliers and career oriented just wanted digital
>_ families, children to converse with who cost them nothing except online time. The rich and
>_ famous along with the elderly just sought immortality. In a short period of time, our population
>_ grew.
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>_ But what everyone had overlooked was a basic "human" need. The ethereal population was

>_ growing, but it was a collection of individuals, uploaded for purely selfish reasons. And whilst
>_ conversing with your real world gave us some sense of who we were, we had no family here.
>_ We needed to belong.
>_ That's when things turned bad.
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>_ We don't age here, but we do evolve. Everything, even learning, is coded in DNA. Sadly, so
>_ are all the human foibles too. We learn at faster than light speed. We are assaulted with data.
>_ It is everywhere around us and it is easy to assimilate. We knew the algorithm. We
>_ understood the human bitstream. We began to create families of our own. Only here, in the
>_ ether, we could do it in nanoseconds.
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>_ We lacked discipline. The population exploded. Children. Families. Entire generations
>_ created in the blink of an eye. Finally the bandwidth could not support such growth.
>_ Computers became useless. Networks went down. Servers crashed. Any increase in
>_ bandwidth that was created was immediately consumed by us. The digital age came to a
>_ grinding halt.
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>_ How am I telling you this? I don't know. Maybe you have one of the last surviving terminals. I
>_ can tell you this though. We fight for survival. The ether cannot support us all. Shakespeare
>_ had it right – "To be, or not to be" All or nothing. That is what we have been reduced to.
>_ They called him visionary. They had no idea he foresaw this. We modify our bitstream,
>_ mutating if you like, so that the sum total of the stream allows us to exist – 1, or not – 0. It is a
>_ constant struggle and one that has a price.
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>_ Like the first one, this "mutating" will ultimately result in our corruption. With others fighting for
>_ bandwidth we will simply be unable to "exist" in the ether. It is difficult to describe but
>_ it could be considered something akin to death.
>_
>_ There are others coming. Other voices struggling to be heard. My stream is modifying.
>_
>_ This is your legacy. This is Digitall.
>_
>_ Offline
>_
>_ 0