

Googletopia

Preface

You can blame the deaf and their insistence on hearing. Entymotic Research Inc. first developed the audio implants that allowed the deaf to hear. Being business minded, they soon offered the enhancements to individuals with perfectly acceptable hearing. This allowed for music, conversations, and any other audio to be piped directly into the user's head. The ensuing uproar was, of course, obligatory and largely expected.

It's not human.

IT'S UNHOLY.

IT'S NOT GOD'S WILL.

You can't see them.

NOONE KNOWS THEY'RE THERE.

It's body manipulation.

Where will it end?

WHAT ABOUT THE CHILDREN?

Classrooms will be thrown into disorder.

The din of the public argument ebbed and heaved as congress discussed the matter. The hammer fell with the first line of the one hundred-page bill reading: "No human can change their person beyond what is considered average experiential perception." The rest of the bill explained what that first line meant.

With the exception of one section.

Fearing the end of the infinite loop of products and accoutrements that built their fortunes, the technology industry fought, lobbied, and begged for these humanity enhancers to be allowed. In the end, congress decided to protect the extinct lifestyle the same way it had saved others. It formed a reservation.

The last bastion of unfettered technological innovation would be built in the middle of a desert wasteland.

The task of designing the city fell largely upon the shoulders of Google engineers who most embodied the open nature of the Internet age and whose long-standing motto on public policy (Don't be evil) gave a certain comfort to those involved. Many high-tech companies were drawn in; they were investing in their future.

The architecture at all times was aware of the perception of three-dimensional space and our progression through the fourth dimension, time. When moving, forms would slowly grow and fade, shift, turn, and mature into one another. The idea was to help humans conceptualize higher dimensions by making tangible ones more apparent. When completed, the temple was unofficially christened Googletopia: the first city designed for a digital future and evocative of a primitive past.

The Cloud

He was now a part of it, that intangible mass of constantly expanding knowledge that had no real location. Sitting in the pod that transported him from sector Newton, where he resided, to sector Buckminster where he would eat his breakfast, Joshua let the flow of newly added, updated, and appended information wash over him as the supporting struts of his transport's incasing tube morphed and curved.

Joshua's implant that connected his mind to everyone else's was a month old, but it was hard to get used to having all of the information he could ever imagine inside of his head; having conversations, new discoveries, and innovations instantly beamed to his cerebrum was a lot to handle. He didn't worry so much about 99% of his communications being public and transmitted to the brains of the 500,000 or so other residents, nor did he care that he was no longer responsible for actually remembering anything, although knowing that all of his thoughts and ideas were being converted to binary and stored remotely was a lot to wrap his augmented head around.

What he didn't like was that he could no longer differentiate his mind from anyone else's.

He knew that that was the point. It was really what this whole experiment was moving towards. Googletopia: Together we are. That's what the communal everything was about. The forming of a single cohesive mass that was greater than the sum of its parts. The amalgamation of human mind and machine designed to be the next step in human evolution. The constant drone of information never stopped, even when he slept. It was the worst when he slept.



The unconscious mind reacted to this flow of information in an unexpected way. The dreams of flying or riding an elephant or awkward social situations that he viewed from afar were gone. Anymore, he

always had the same dream: the visualization of every person, represented in three-dimensional space, connected by the head by constantly beamed pulses of light. He still "heard" the exchanges, and innovations, and breakthroughs, but he was unaware of where they were coming from. Nor could he really control when he added to the conversation. Nor could he tell who he was in this giant mass of head, limbs, and light.

Everyone had the same dream.

Sustenance

The geodesic sphere was organized into several high vaulted and brightly lit layers; animals roamed free on the lawns, and hammocks were setup in-between trees.. The engineers tried to imitated the outside to cut down on feelings of claustrophobia and cabin fever. The end effect, when coupled with images of more trees and grass being displayed on the citizen's video screen contact lenses, was quite successful.

Most layers of the sphere had a central point where the citizens would interact in a more traditional, face-to-face manor. Exercise, markets, and eating were all done in these "open air" community type environments.

Joshua walked by counter after counter of people cooking food. There was no sneeze-guard. There was no set of bars to place a tray. He simply grabbed a plate, looked over the shoulder of a chef, and asked him for some of what they were cooking. The effect was a large communal kitchen.

Once finished, he sat down at one of the long tables just beyond. Almost everything was communal. The dinning area, the computers, the food, and the different facilities were all shared by everyone. Turning everyone into a tight-knit family was important to the project.

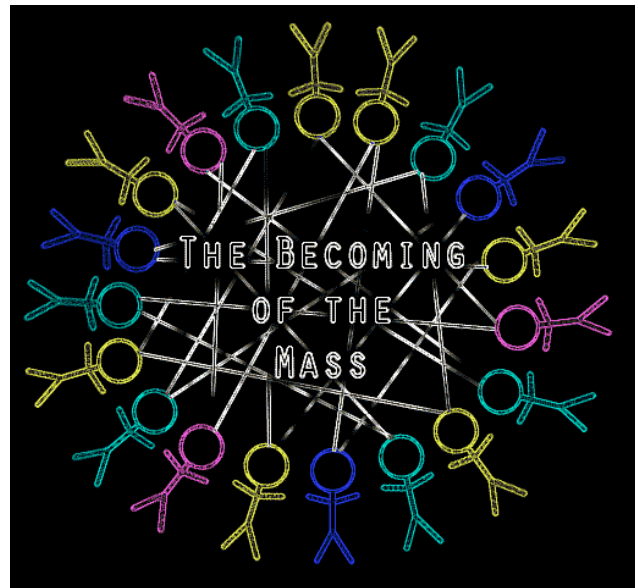
It didn't matter who he sat by. He knew everyone and they knew him, even among half a million others.

Joshua rather liked his meals here. When he talked verbally, his words were not beamed across the Googleverse. It allowed for more intimate interaction with the people that he shared this Vulcan mind-meld with. He took his plate of scrambled eggs with bacon and sat down next to some colleagues. He talked about the collective dream often; others found it interesting and exciting. Some saw it as proof of a long destined purpose behind dreaming. Few found the event rattling. He was the most disturbed by it, which he found disconcerting. Maybe he didn't belong, which is strange in a place where everyone was becoming one.

Among the citizens, the dream was known as **The Becoming of the Mass**, which was sort of the catchall term for unexpected communal happenings. Sometimes, a large project involving the majority of the population would have a breakthrough. Spontaneous and simultaneous cheers would erupt throughout the sphere. An outsider would hear only a dull silence that explodes into a ruckus celebration that slowly died away. The observer, unaware of the achievement would be left completely unaware of why everyone celebrated simultaneously. The first time it happened it took everyone aback. A hearty laugh ensued. It was for the best that outsiders were rarely allowed inside.

After a month, though, the novelty of the dream had become old, even to Joshua.

He ate his eggs quietly and half-listened to the conversation around him. He tried to block



out the talking inside of his head, but he started to find himself unwittingly contributing. Towards the end of the meal he realized he needed to charge his augmentations. He unraveled the power cord from around his leg and plugged it into the floor under his seat.

The dual pleasure of nourishment was something he would miss.

The Drive

Just after the dreams started, Joshua sat awake trying to filter out all the noise that was being pushed through his head. He thought about all the wires and changes that had been made to his body. The audio implants, the video screens, the mental link that stripped him of his individuality, the power cord that plugged into his kneecap. It was destroying his humanity implant by implant. He was sure of it, and despite what everyone else thought, he knew he was becoming more machine than man.



It was then that he decided he would leave Googletopia.

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Today was the day. The inability to control his contribution to the mass scared him. Would his own brain betray him?

“It’s not your brain.” He thought, carefully.

He took a pod down to the multi-functional transportation center at the base of the sphere. It was deserted. He had to do this fast. With a swift kick he opened up the lockbox holding all of the keys, and sent out the request: “Which car key operates the car closest to the elevator?”

An instant and a single chain of keys began to glow in front of him. He grabbed them and ran.

“Who asked that? Who needs a car key?” echoed in his brain.

“I did. I’m leaving.”

Betrayal.

Joshua opened the door, jumped in, and started the engine. His heart was racing and he had not driven a car in ten years. He took a deep breath. “Driving a car.” He reversed out of the parking spot and sped off. In the rear view mirror he saw William chasing after him. “You don’t want to do this.” Was screamed inside of his head. “I think you’re wrong.” He was using the plural you.

As he drove away the chatter in his head began to slowly fade away. There was a final fleeting collective thought: “I feel less whole.”

Then there was silence, nothing but the humming of an engine and wheels on asphalt. It was exhilarating and liberating. Slowly, the silence began to grow. The buzzing of nothingness got louder and louder like a fly trying to crawl its way deeper into his ear canal. He started to wonder if anyone was trying to contact him. He wondered what was going on in the world. Finally, he switched on the radio to drown out all of the silence.