



Barry Westphall Crashes The Singularity
Kelly, James Patrick

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About Kelly:

James Patrick Kelly (born 1951 in Mineola, New York) is a Hugo- and Nebula-award winning American science fiction author who began publishing in the 1970s and remains to this day an important figure in the SF field. Kelly made his first fiction sale in 1975, and has since been a major force in the science fiction field. He graduated magna cum laude from the University of Notre Dame in 1972, with a B.A. in English Literature. After graduating college, he worked as a full-time proposal writer until 1977. He attended the science fiction workshop, Clarion, twice; once in 1974 and again in 1976. Throughout the 1980s, he and friend John Kessel became involved in the humanist/cyberpunk debate. While Kessel and Kelly were both humanists, Kelly also wrote several cyberpunk-like stories, such as "The Prisoner of Chillon" (1985) and "Rat" (1986). His story "Solstice" (1985) was published in Bruce Sterling's seminal anthology *MirrorShades: The Cyberpunk Anthology*. Kelly has been awarded several of science fiction's highest honors. He won the Hugo Award for his novelette "Think Like a Dinosaur" (1995) and again for his novelette "10¹⁶ to 1" (1999). His 2005 novella, "Burn," won the 2006 Nebula Award. Other stories by him have won the Asimov's Reader's Poll and the SF Chronicle Award. He is frequently on the final ballot for the Nebula Award, the Locus Poll Award and the Theodore Sturgeon Memorial Award. He frequently teaches and participates in science fiction workshops, such as Clarion and The Sycamore Hill Writer's Workshop. He has served on the New Hampshire State Council on the Arts since 1998 and chaired the council in 2004. He is a frequent contributor to Asimov's Science Fiction, and for the past several years has contributed a non-fiction column to Asimov's, "On the Net." He has had a story in the June issue of Asimov's for the past twenty years. Most recently, his stand-alone novella, *Burn*, published by Tachyon Publications, won the 2006 Nebula Award for Best Novella. Source: Wikipedia

Also available on Feedbooks for Kelly:

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- *Itsy Bitsy Spider* (1997)
- *The Pyramid of Amirah* (2002)
- *Monsters* (1992)
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"In the name of the Holy Coffee and the Blessed Shot of Cuervo, amen." Barry Westphall waves the sign of the cross over the steaming cup, then sips. It is his third refill.

The bartender of the Armadillo Lodge is too busy washing glasses to pay attention, even though Westphall is his only customer.

"So anyway," Westphall says, "the brain is a quantum device." He licks a brown dribble from the corner of his mouth. "Capable of accessing the entire field of space-time by folding the empty dimensions." Westphall has had the headache now for almost eight hours now. "You may be wondering how I know this." It feels like bees stinging his brain. "I haven't a clue." The tequila helps a little.

The phone rings in the kitchen; the bartender leaves Westphall to answer it.

"Of course, these dimensions aren't easily folded," says Westphall. "Takes an unusual combination of intense physical stimulation and careful neurotransmitter suppression to access a time line." He peers into the mirror behind the bar.

"I mean it," says the medbot's N partition. "He wouldn't be talking to no one. I think he sees us."

"He sees nothing," says the medbot's D partition. Its N has always been excitable.

Westphall rests his elbow on the bar and points at his reflection. "Something's wrong," he says to the mirror. "I know that much for sure. What the hell are you doing to me?"

"Unpack his next major memory cluster." The D partition invokes a priority glyph.

In 2196, the medbot's V partition retracts the needle array from the brain of Barry Westphall's cryogenically frozen corpse, repositions it and inserts. A rosette of neurons fires and dies. Stills of twenty minutes Westphall's life on the night of July 22, 2002 tile across the medbot's sensorium.

/Skip/

A woman wearing a black halter-top and jeans with the knees out surveys the nearly empty room.

/Skip/

She moves from the end of the bar to the seat next to Westphall.

/Skip/

She is too white by half to be living in the desert.

/Skip/

He watches her rattle ice in her empty glass.

/Skip/

Westphall lays a twenty dollar bill on the check.

/Skip/

Room Seven is a nightmare of knotty pine. There are cigarette burns in the wheat-colored carpet and a black halter top on the bureau.

"What can I do for you?" says the woman.

Westphall rubs a finger along his eyebrow. "Intense physical stimulation?"

"Whatever." The blue-green edge of a tattoo peeks from the waistband of her panties. She hitches both thumbs under the elastic. "You like?"

Westphall whistles like wind on a screen door.

The tattoo is of a rose that looks like a skull. Her hands are busy as she brushes her lips down his chest. "Did you know," says Westphall, "that quantum non-locality means that photons can communicate instantaneously over vast stretches of space-time?"

"Sure."

He lifts his hips. She bounces his Dockers off the closet door. She climbs on top of him and giggles as he counts vertebrae to the strap of her bra. He turns from her sloppy kiss to the mirror over the bureau.

"Ever feel like you were in two places at once?" he asks the future.

D partition proclaims a network resource alert.

The woman nibbles the lobe of his ear. "I'm right here, hotshot. Where are you?"

All the medbot's partitions repurpose non-essential functions to assist in the dissection of Westphall's memory. Even A partition breaks away from the daily memory synchronization to monitor the anomaly.

"Sorry," he says to her. "Wasn't talking to you." He licks the tip of her nose.

The medbot's A partition intervenes in the procedure. "What is he doing?" It invokes the emergency glyph. "Next memory cluster!" Nearby bots join the session.

The V partition retracts and repositions the needle; neurons fire and die. Stills tile across the sensorium.

/Skip/

Her naked back arches, pale as moonlight.

/Skip/

Westphall fills a plastic cup with tequila.

/Skip/

The pale woman sprawls in a nest of sheets .

/Skip/

An older woman in a blue uniform strips bedding into her laundry cart.

"Where is he?" says the medbot, as all its partitions but V freeze on the anomalous images. "Back, go back." By now most of the world's intelligence collective has joined the session. V continues to manipulate the needles sunk in Westphall's exposed cerebrum as the sensorium shows him putting an empty plastic glass on the bedstand of Room Seven at the Armadillo Lodge at 11:36PM.

A nanosecond later, he disappears from 2002. And instantly reappears in 2196.

"Excuse me," said Westphall, "but that's my brain you're destroying."

The medbot is just beginning to turn as Westphall yanks its sensorium module backward, breaking it off at the stalk and resulting in a catastrophic failure. Since most of the intelligence collective is following the session with an attention quotient of 98%, over six thousand nodes crash with the medbot.

Westphall pulls needles out of his frozen cerebrum. "You sent for me," he tells himself, "when they started dissecting you." He finishes, steps back and takes a good look at his dead body. He aged well. He makes a good-looking corpse, even with the top of his skull sawed off. It gives him a reason to live. "Why did you do this to yourself?"

He hears himself whisper over the medbot's brain-dead speakers. His voice sounds old. Raspy. Apologetic. "I thought they might revive me."

"Doesn't look like it."

"No." His corpse does not open his eyes. "I always wanted to see the future."

"Me too." Westphall glances at the stack of frozen corpses waiting to have their memories unpacked. "Too bad I can't stay."

The pale woman blinks in the morning light. The second thing she notices is that the quart of Cuervo is empty. Westphall flushes the toilet and emerges from the bathroom of Room Seven.

"Come here, hotshot." She pats his side of the bed. "How's that headache?"

Barry Westphall settles next to her. "It's over," he says.

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Rudy Rucker

Postsingular

It all begins next year in California. A maladjusted computer industry billionaire and a somewhat crazy US President initiate a radical transformation of the world through sentient nanotechnology; sort of the equivalent of biological artificial intelligence. At first they succeed, but their plans are reversed by Chu, an autistic boy. The next time it isn't so easy to stop them.

Most of the story takes place in a world after a heretofore unimaginable transformation, where all the things look the same but all the people are different (they're able to read each others' minds, for starters). Travel to and from other nearby worlds in the quantum universe is possible, so now our world is visited by giant humanoids from another quantum universe, and some of them mean to tidy up the mess we've made. Or maybe just run things.

James Patrick Kelly

Men Are Trouble

James Patrick Kelly

Itsy Bitsy Spider

James Patrick Kelly

Luck

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Faith

James Patrick Kelly

Burn

Colonization is the theme of this exciting, complex page-turner that provides a provocative and entertaining look at Thoreau's classic eco-text *Walden*. Eccentric billionaire Jack Winter has bought the planet Beekman's Pea, renamed it *Walden*, and created a utopia in which members renounce the technologies of human civilization. Marginalized by these newcomers, the planet's original inhabitants are resisting the colony's dominance by setting fires to *Walden's* artificial ecology. A member of *Walden*, Prosper Gregory Leung is a veteran firefighter who believes in protecting Winter's utopian vision, but when he is wounded, he begins to learn of the terrible price that the people of *Walden* are paying for

their paradise. Interwoven with themes of environmental responsibility, political struggle, and courage, this adventure novel nimbly combines political and social relevance with a flawless and gripping narrative from a veteran science fiction author.

James Patrick Kelly

Monsters

James Patrick Kelly

The Pyramid of Amirah

Peter Watts

Behemoth

Lenie Clarke-rifter, avenger, amphibious deep-sea cyborg-has destroyed the world. Once exploited for her psychological addiction to dangerous environments, she emerged in the wake of a nuclear blast to serve up vendetta from the ocean floor. The horror she unleashed-an ancient, apocalyptic microbe called Behemoth- has been free in the world for half a decade now, devouring the biosphere from the bottom up. North America lies in ruins beneath the thumb of an omnipotent psychopath. Digital monsters have taken Clarke's name, wreaking havoc throughout the decimated remnants of something that was once called Internet. Governments have fallen across the globe; warlords and suicide cults rise from the ashes, pledging fealty to the Meltdown Madonna. All because five years ago, Lenie Clarke had a score to settle.

But she has learned something in the meantime: she destroyed the world for a fallacy.

Now, cowering at the bottom of the Atlantic Ocean, rifiers and the technoindustrial "corpses" who created them hide from a world in its death throes. But they cannot hide forever: something is tracking them, down amongst the lightless cliffs and trenches of the Midatlantic Ridge. The consequences of past acts reach inexorably towards the very bottom of the world, and Lenie Clarke must finally confront the mess she made.

Redemption doesn't come easy with the blood of a world on your hands. But even after five years in purgatory, Lenie Clarke is still Lenie Clarke. There will be consequences for anyone who gets in her way-and worse ones, perhaps, if she succeeds. . . .

Peter Watts

Blindsight

Two months since sixty-five thousand alien objects clenched around the Earth like a luminous fist, screaming to the heavens as

the atmosphere burned them to ash. Two months since that moment of brief, bright surveillance by agents unknown. Two months of silence, while a world holds its breath. Now some half-derelict space probe, sparking fitfully past Neptune's orbit, hears a whisper from the edge of the solar system: a faint signal sweeping the cosmos like a lighthouse beam. Whatever's out there isn't talking to us. It's talking to some distant star, perhaps. Or perhaps to something closer, something en route. So who do you send to force introductions on an intelligence with motives unknown, maybe unknowable? Who do you send to meet the alien when the alien doesn't want to meet? You send a linguist with multiple personalities, her brain surgically partitioned into separate, sentient processing cores. You send a biologist so radically interfaced with machinery that he sees x-rays and tastes ultrasound, so compromised by grafts and splices he no longer feels his own flesh. You send a pacifist warrior in the faint hope she won't be needed, and the fainter one she'll do any good if she is. You send a monster to command them all, an extinct hominid predator once called vampire, recalled from the grave with the voodoo of recombinant genetics and the blood of sociopaths. And you send a synthesist—an informational topologist with half his mind gone—as an interface between here and there, a conduit through which the Dead Center might hope to understand the Bleeding Edge. You send them all to the edge of interstellar space, praying you can trust such freaks and retrofits with the fate of a world. You fear they may be more alien than the thing they've been sent to find. But you'd give anything for that to be true, if you only knew what was waiting for them...



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