



Continuation

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So I died, and to be totally honest with you it was a lot more painful than I had expected. A hell of a lot more painful. But then again I am fairly sure that you are not supposed to remember the actual death part, if you know what I mean.

No, you don't, do you?

You're aware of Life Extension Technologies Inc.?

No?

Okay, I think I had better explain a little.

Actually, I had better go back to the very beginning.

It was in the mid twentieth century that the writer of a television show had a problem he couldn't solve. How was he going to get the characters in his new space show from their spaceship to the planets they visited, without a lot of new sets, a lot of wasted air time and yet more money? He had to come up with a simple but believable solution. What he came up with was the concept of a 'Matter Transporter', a device that took a person or object apart at the subatomic level, and sent them over a radio beam, or some such link. Back when he came up with the idea there hadn't even been a man on the moon, so it was seen just as a useful ploy on a television show with a tight budget, but the idea struck a chord with so many people. How cool would it be to be able to travel to places in an instant, to be able to "beam" objects from one place to another with your transporter? The answer was very cool, but, alas, somewhat unlikely.

The show became a household name, and many of the gadgets from the show became reality. So by the late 20th century the personal communicator had arrived in the form of the mobile phones, and medical diagnostics equipment similar to the medical bed in the show were being developed. They even named a reusable space craft after the ship in the show. The future was arriving but still no hope of a transporter.

By the late 20th century, and early part of the 21st, scientists were revisiting much of Einstein's work, and the work of his peers such as Bohr and Planck. The grail of a unified theory for everything was beckoning and 'Quantum Physics' was seen as the righteous path. Colossal projects were undertaken costing billions of Dollars, Euros and Yen. International collaborations on particle accelerators, Einstein/Rosen bridge theory and every aspect of quantum mechanics, including detailed investigations of

the theory of quantum entanglement. Quantum entanglement is just a small part of quantum mechanics but was the part that was seen to hold the hope of both desktop supercomputing and matter transportation. So what was this quantum entanglement?

In a nutshell, quantum entanglement says that you cannot describe one object without reference to its quantum partner even if that quantum partner is spatially removed from the original object. Now what that means, in reality, is that the properties of one object are linked to another object. Now if we can read the properties of an object, say a vase. Transfer that property data to a remote location and apply the properties to another object, we have created a matter transporter. I have greatly simplified this, primarily because I don't understand it in any detail. Its all mathematics and 4 dimensional physics and things that go so far over my head I can barely see them. What I do know is that there was a problem. Initially the idea was for a device that would be a matter replicator, where it would read the properties of an object and transmit the data to a receiver. The receiver would encode the properties on a 'blank' object and we would have two things that were identical. Put in a coffee mug at this end, get out another coffee mug out at the other end. Seemed pretty useful for things like relief aid operations and alike. From one reference piece an infinite number of replicas could be created, and if the scan data was stored then no physical input object would be required, just replay the stored data to create a new object. A bit like printing lots of copies of your favourite digital picture from one copy stored on a memory stick. All the theory looked good but how do you read the quantum properties of an object?

That was the challenge that took some years to surmount. Numerous approaches were tried during the 2010's and early 2020's but the only successful approach ever developed required the original object to be destroyed as the quantum properties were read. In 2026 the scientific community made two announcements:

1. There was no way to read quantum properties without destroying the original object.
2. They had successfully replicated a single atom of hydrogen.

Further experiments and academic papers followed detailing the theories and practices of matter replication, until someone, history doesn't record who, pointed out that the receiver was across the other side of the laboratory. Some 7 metres from the quantum property reader, and there were no wires...

The age of the matter transporter had arrived.

Of course, like all discoveries it took a lot of work to move on from a single atom to a real thing, but by 2031 the transportation of inanimate objects was up and running within the laboratory. There were, however, a couple of caveats:

1. The original object could not contain anything living. Cut flowers worked fine but a plant would always fail with serious data transcription errors and deformities.
2. Only a single instance of the object could be created from the read property data. If a second replica was created it would, again, suffer from serious transcription errors

No-one really understood why either of these situations should exist but they did. There was much speculation based around a constant level of matter in the universe, not being able to create energy, and the balance between matter and dark matter but, basically, not a single scientist had a clue as to the cause of the errors.

Now, the amount of data produced when scanning even the most simple objects was colossal. Whole research teams were created to investigate the datasets and mine the knowledge believed to be locked within them. During these investigations many new discoveries were made but none caught the public's attention quite like 'Quantum Music', as the media named it. It was discovered that if you took the scan dataset of a simple object and compressed it to a sound of around 10 seconds in length, each had a distinct and descriptive sound. A metal object's dataset would produce a ringing sound, a soft object, like cloth, would create a flat 'umphft' type sound, a wooden object a more muted sound and so on and so on. Speculation abounded about the symmetry of the universe and unifying properties of this new discovery. A new push towards the unified theory for everything began and encompassed not just the traditional sciences of physics, chemistry and biology, but called upon the arts with the mathematics of music and composition analysis of the visual arts. In the midst of the second global economic collapse in 30 years a beacon of hope in the new scientific world had engaged the populace. At the height of this euphoria, a British team of scientists announced they had captured the music of a human being.

The revelation that the sound of a human life had been captured at a quantum level spread like wild fire around the world. Every media outlet in every country played and replayed the sound of humanity. The sound topped the download lists of every interweb site it was uploaded to, in every corner of the world. The team declined to be interviewed but

published papers detailing how they had taken the exponentially larger data set and processed it to produce the sound. The sound was nearly 40 minutes in length and when played, though somehow otherworldly, was beautiful to everyone who heard it, transcending culture background and societal delineations. The 'Music of Man' caused the swell of emotion, that lifted every member of the human races' spirit in joy.

At the height of the media frenzy the British research team were questioned with regards to the source of their data. Closed enquiries were called and, as the speculation from the media grew, the British researchers seemed to be less and less available. After weeks of private enquiry and limited information the story suddenly disappeared from the media, a single reference in an on-line scientific journal to an attempt to transport a human being, then nothing.

By the end of 2034 all research into the matter transportation of living animals had been outlawed by all the major eastern and western governments. Occasional stories of rogue research groups experimenting with matter transportation on living organisms would surface, then be denied and condemned in equal measure. The research into the field stalled with the dream of a cheap matter transporter dashed and limited funding available. It looked like the whole idea of matter transportation was dead and buried, until in 2037 Amazon Life Services Incorporated announced that they had purchased the global rights to all matter transportation research. They proposed to use their technology development arm to refine the technology into the next generation shipping system for their global product sales business. In 2039 the first consumer matter receivers became available and within 4 years were in 90% of homes in the developed world.

Now what, you may ask, has this to do with my death. Well please bear with me just a little longer and it will all become clear. The world had not limited itself to research into these new fields based around quantum physics. Active programs were running across the world in all of the major scientific disciplines. In 2028 a Korean Government funded research group, headed by a Doctor Yun, had announced they had cloned a pig but not just a clone, a clone that could be produced from any undifferentiated living cell, and be brought to full maturity in 36 days. In 2036 the same team announced they had successfully cloned a human female and brought her to the equivalent age of 2 years old. Bo-Bae, as she was named, I believe it's Korean for precious, became the most famous child in the world and everyone around the globe watched her grow and develop. She was the world's child and everybody seemed

to love her. Well everyone except the main religious organisations. As you can imagine, it united the different religious groups like nothing ever had before, bringing them closer together in their condemnation of science than they ever had been in their praise of their Gods. They called upon the United Nations to intervene and for all civilised societies to condemn not just the science but the offspring it had created. No-one but God could create a being with a soul they professed. Of course by then religion had lost a lot of its support and even more of its followers. Their protestations and demonstrations, though loud and long, fell on a planet with deaf ears, and eyes wide open to the promise of a longer life through cloning.

Korea continued to lead the field of human cloning, with research funding coming from all over the world. Multinational teams being formed to work and develop not just human cloning but the ability to clone any type of tissue from any type of cell. Moving from simple skin growths to complex organs until finally working organs could be grown at will. Almost immediately the commercial potential was distilled into the formation of a global business. In 2047 Life Extension Technologies Inc. of Delaware, USA was born, and appointed Doctor Yun as its CEO on his 70th birthday. It was primarily owned and funded by the Korean government but incorporated in Delaware due to the extreme global tax avoidance benefits available there since the economic collapse of 2027. Life Extension Technologies Inc., or L.E.T. as it became known, would grow you any organ or body part you required from a single donated cell in just 36 days. Any organ, that was, except the brain.

The issue with the brain wasn't the ability to grow a correctly structured and functioning organ, that was relatively easy. The issue of the brain was that once grown it was blank, like a new memory cube for your computer. It worked but it had no personality, no memory to support its processes, no learning. Basically, no person within it. Research continued but most of the effort and funding was directed to organ replacement technology with only minimal research into brain dysfunction. Lifespans were extended towards 150 years, with medical and life insurance companies offering 'All Organ' coverage to anyone and everyone. Yet no-one could overcome the gradual degradation of the brain or the onset of multi-organ deterioration based diseases.

In 2070 L.E.T. Announced that Doctor Yun was stepping down as CEO for personal reasons. Although no details were released it was rumoured the 93 year old had been suffering from a particularly voracious form of muscular dystrophy, that not only threatened his health but was

untreatable with any of the techniques and technologies he had pioneered. Within a year Doctor Yun, now a frail shell of his former self, was admitted to the Korean National Hospital. News reports speculated that it was for his final treatments and he was not expected to be seen in public again. Korea prepared to mourn a national hero as the world prepared to mourn the passing of the father of the greatest medical advancement in modern history.

Forty seven days after his admittance to hospital, at a 'by invitation only' press conference, Doctor Yun walked out in front of the worlds media, physically clicked his heals in the air and announced the end of mortality as we knew it. Amid a furore of media activity and speculation the story of the next giant leap in medical treatment was revealed.

On discovering how serious his illness was, Doctor Yun had used his position to assemble the most respected team of biotechnology specialists and quantum physicists in the world. They had one simple issue to overcome. How to program a cloned brain. Spurred on by his own imminent death, and with a cavalier attitude born of his passion for life, Doctor Yun had pushed the very boundaries both of science and morality with his team. Details of the actual events that took place remain to this day very sketchy. Journals remain under lock and key, many believe to protect those involved from the ramifications of their actions as they pushed to outwit death. Finally, a working hypothesis was formed, a hypothesis that was dangerously under-researched but with Doctor Yun so close to death it was put into action regardless. Utilising the ability to clone a complete human body, a genetically modified copy of Doctor Yun was created, identical in every way except for the disease that threatened his life. With the new body ready and waiting, the team assembled in a cross between an advanced operating theatre and a state of the art physics laboratory. Doctor Yun lay on his death bed. His colleagues and friends spoke their brief goodbyes and then administered a fatal dose of muscle relaxant, causing his respiratory system to collapse and fail. At the moment of his death, and utilising the now familiar matter transportation scanner, a full quantum scan of the Doctor's brain was taken.

I think you can probably guess the rest. They used an advanced quantum receiver to replay the Doctor's scan into the brain of the clone, using the brain cells as raw material for the quantum data to shape, and then shocked the new body out of its suspended clone state back into life. Within 24 hours the Doctor was sitting up and conversing with his colleagues as if he had never left them. Immortality had arrived.

The ramifications were quickly felt around the world, and dealt with even faster. After the initial religious backlash, a calm and embracing mood was taken by nearly all religious groups. No doubt this was helped by the Pope announcing his intention to take on the burden of being the final representative of God on Earth by embracing the new Continuation Technology, as it became known. Islamic, Jewish and other faith leaders quickly followed suit. Within 2 years the majority of the world population had insurance policies to cover 'Continuation Technology Treatments'. World governments, realising the potential effect on population, also reacted quickly, enacting laws that ensured new births would be limited to only replacing unforeseen death. State sanctioned compulsory abortion held the global population at a basically constant level. Businesses, keen not to be left behind, tailored whole suites of new products and services to meet the needs of the near immortal. And that is when I arrived.

I was born as a 'Natural'. One of the 10,000 or so people born each year to replenish the population and replace those that had either been unable to be saved, or had chosen to die. I embraced life, and as with all Naturals I was somewhat of a celebrity while I was growing up, really only slipping from the limelight in my early 20s as I took my place in the working masses. I had a good life. I worked hard at a job I enjoyed, I met a woman I loved and I had 2 wonderful children. I wasn't exceptional or famous but I was happy. I was just an average man, in an average life and everything was good. And then, in that almost euphoric state, I died.

I won't go into all the gory detail but let's just say I was lucky there was still enough of me left to have my brain scanned, and I am never using public transport again. Although I am not sure the latter will be much of an issue really. You see, I am not sure that they managed to iron out all of the wrinkles in this 'Continuation Technology' before it went live. I have had the strangest experience since my death, where I seem to be living outside of my body. I can see myself, my 'body' self if you like, as if I am a small kite flying up and behind my own left shoulder. I can even see a thread of silver connecting this 'kite' me to my 'body' self. It's thinner now than it was. It seems to get thinner every time my body dies, every time that mind is reloaded into another shell. I have tried to see through those eyes, to feel what my body feels but it is like I am trying to get inside another person's head, it's just totally closed off to me. I have watched my own death dozens of times. It used to be a burning pain but

the more it happens the less I feel it, or maybe I am just getting used to it. It is almost as if it is happening to someone else.

I can see others floating above their bodies too. Some seem to be asleep, others look lost or bemused and yet more seem to be in pain or anguish. I often wonder if their states are reflective of the lives they lived or the deaths they endured. I've tried to speak to them, to just communicate but it never seems to work. I guess I am starting to think of us as ghosts as it is obvious that the bodies left behind can't see us, or, if they can, they refuse to acknowledge we exist. Maybe we don't for them. Sometimes I see a person without a ghost, who I suppose must be one of the new 'Naturals'. They have a soft, but bright aura around them, like a halo encompassing their whole body. It's really rather beautiful. I wonder if the 'Bodies' perceive anything different about them. I wonder if it hints at the hollowness I sense in the replicated population I watch.

Now I have never been a religious person but with what I have seen, I can't think of any other words to use. It seems to me that our souls are not a quantum thing at all, and in our greed for eternal life we have tethered ourselves to soulless flesh and blood automatons, just going through the motions of living. Tethered ourselves with an ever thinning silver threads that link us to our former selves. I hope my thread breaks soon. I am just so, so very tired.

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