



CONTEMPORARY

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Dear Ben!

It's been a very, very long time, hasn't it? You still remember me, don't you? Things have gotten a bit out of control here, and I hope this message finds you happy, healthy, safe and sound!

You guys on Mars have it pretty great, even though you are quite a few versions behind with everything (is that okay to say? I'm not up-to-date with what's considered planetist nowadays). Recently, the company has made it mandatory that we install a brain app to keep working while we're asleep (no more time for Napflix). I mean, it adds quite a few hours to the output that our company needs to thrive (as you may remember, I work for an art department that churns out advertisements for helping other companies attract more employees, something our neural network still can't do authentically), but we're not even using the latest version (because it would be too expensive), and so whenever I wake up I have this weird feeling in my head, a mix between my regular night job and whatever else my brain needed to process at the time.

And ever since people stopped working for money (they don't have time to spend money anyhow), they just accept anything the company throws at them.

Thankfully, a year ago our government let us add an additional two jobs to our roster. Which means, I finally got to spend work-time for the creators of the new Intel brain cores, so I can work even faster.

Either way, the reason I write to you is - today has been a weird day and I was hoping to reach out to someone, who could try to understand what I'm going through (you are the last remaining acquaintance I can trust, and I have no friends because that would take too much time).

I was waking up after another weird sleep cycle, and I was - again - feeling dizzy. I had completed several of my tasks in my dream, but my brain core extension was warmer than usual. I had to throw several glasses of water in my face for it to finally cool down, and - believe it or not - it hissed every time the water hit my skin (the parts that aren't artificial).

My body put on clothes by itself (the new muscle memory chips are amazing, they actually store memory in muscles now!) and afterwards, I put the new power pills into the stomach socket.

When I left the apartment, my right leg shook from an internal error and suddenly decided to walk backwards instead of forward. It had never done that before, and I had trusted in the results of my last maintenance, which showed that I

was in good shape. But alas, a second later my whole right side hit the floor and I broke my arm.

It hadn't been my real arm - thank our current God - because I only use my real arm for special occasions, but I still don't like seeing the innards, you know? All those cables, sparks everywhere, and that weird fluid slowly crawling across the floor - yuck. I got a quick damage report displayed in my view, telling me that - yup - it was broken, and it showed me the next best doctor on the map. My system stopped the fluid from flowing and sent a message to my company: I would be two hours and thirty-five minutes late and work double time today to make up for it. (That's what I set it up to do.)

I suppose you don't have to worry that much, do you, Ben? How I envy you!

Anyway, I shut my dysfunctional leg off and jumped down the stairs and outwards onto the street on my good one.

My brain suggested that I, instead of hopping on one of the running robot taxis, take the next INSTANT teleporter, and I did. Of course, I was a bit shy at first, after remembering their new charity program. Did you hear about that, Ben? It was pretty sensational. Every time you teleport, there's a 5% chance that you get dismantled and free up a place in the living space. I think that's cool because if you wanted to do that on purpose, the doctors charge seven thousand work hours for that (and nobody likes working for a doctor).

I appeared in the doctor's waiting area, and I was relieved to see that I was already in line on the projected writings on the wall.

Still only on one leg, I jumped to a free seat and sat down. Ben, let me tell you, the new function that recognizes your seating position and automatically starts the most urgent task to work on (and can be completed remotely) is pretty convenient. Exactly that happened - when suddenly the guy next to me started talking to me and interrupted my work flow.

"Hi, my name's Kylarixio Seventy-Three," he said and sent me a friend request.

After the last company meeting I had forgotten to turn off the automatic acceptance of those requests, so my brain immediately added him to my list and shared my profile. Awkward.

I closed my eyes real quick to turn that function off, because I could see the other people in the room eyeing me. They probably saw our new friend zone popping up on their feed.

I also immediately knew that Kylarixio73 wasn't his real name, but the tagname that he was given by his employer. He had no remaining family (who did), no pets

(and I'm talking virtual, of course), he had been male and worked for a - let's just say his company churns out questionable imagery. Some images were automatically blocked from my eye, thankfully. (I don't like naked robots and forcibly exposed electronics that much.)

We continued talking in direct thought-to-text mode, which sped up the discussion immensely. I learned that he was here due to a strange disorder. All of his parts were mostly artificial, even his heart, and he had been gender swapping for the past decade, only to now completely remove his sex organ (including his sex drivers) and replace it with a high quality receiver extension (for more gigahertz and an improved working connection). He joked that he had become more binary than non-binary, to which I just rolled my eyes (both virtually and IRL). But do you know what was strange? He suddenly had an immense craving for *pizza*.

Do you remember pizza? I had to look it up and saw an ancient video. It was food that you had to actually put in your mouth and chew and swallow - it was probably quite an ordeal. You actually needed *teeth* for that (talk about a blast from the past).

So anyway, he was here to have that looked at. Apparently it couldn't be patched remotely, and there was no other reported similar incident in the whole universe, not even on freaking Jupiter-6. He said he might have to just restart from the beginning if it couldn't be fixed. No big deal, anyhow. He would be able to keep his accumulated work-time from all the companies he'd been with in the past and retain selected memories (if he selected the premium package).

Remember, we were still talking in text. And he suddenly went completely off-topic and said:

"you know that they plan on rolling out time travel for everyone today?"

Up until that point I had only heard rumors and seen some advertisements pop up during my sleep-working schedule which were protesting against the "Time Traveller's Coming of Age".

I sent back: *"I didn't think it was official."*

He responded: *"i have reliable intel, trust me, it's happening"*

Our bodies just sat there and a patient came out, signalling the next one to get in.

Kylarixio73 continued: *"the companies put pressure behind the legislation to improve work performance, everyone will finally stop making mistakes"*

“Won’t there be people using it for malicious intent?” is what I asked him followed by a worried smiley face.

My chat window continued flickering with new text, here let me paste this real quick:

<kylarixio73> nah man :D everyone’s afraid of losing their job, of course nobody would do anything nasty

<LarryB9820> Why have there been no news about it though? I’ve seen no press releases or company notifications or anything.

<kylarixio73> they like to leave the rumor mill unattended, it’s good to have some mystery, you know, also they don’t want to distract us from our tasks ^_^

<kylarixio73> it’s just the people that are for some reasons not able to work who can sniff around and see things nobody should see

<kylarixio73> i’m really excited man, everyone will have the absolute perfect life, perfect career, perfect everything, no more mistakes, just hit revert D:

<LarryB9820> But if everybody keeps reverting, won’t we all end up in a slideshow?

<kylarixio73> that’s the thing, you won’t realize that it’s happening, you just do your thing for a living, and if you mess up, revert, everyone can do it so there is nobody being left behind, in a day or two we’ll all be living like kings and queens, nobody can get hurt anymore, it will all even itself out

<LarryB9820> And it comes with the next BODY patch?

<kylarixio73> yeah, people on the beta twig spilled the beans and - get this - they got away with it, and you know why XD

*<kylarixio73> oh man, i’m so excited *_**

At this point the doctor shouted from inside his office to call for the next patient. Kylarixio73 nodded at me and went inside. He sent me a final message:

<kylarixio73> i’ma cut us off now, don’t want the doctor measure any wrong signals, see you in a bit

<LarryB9820> Understood, see you!

(Sorry about the copy/paste.)

No more mistakes! It sounds so glorious, right, Ben? I’m sure you guys will have time travel as well soon, dare I say it’s only a matter of...

Anyway, I got my arm and leg fixed and removed kylarixio73 from my friends list (I like to keep it empty, it fills me with inner peace). Back at work, I sat on my chair next to the other ones and leaned back to resume my work.

But then the weirdest stuff happened.

One guy threw a bottle into the air and caught it standing upside-down on his nose. Another just stood up and told me he was my new boss and I got his new profile card. I saw one person with long hair open up the window and jump out of the building. The buffet, where the company provides us with drinks and snacks, just blew up when someone shot his shoe at it, hitting the coffee pills extractor exactly at the power button.

A hundred people were doing the craziest things all at once around me, but they all did it *perfectly*, with the finesse of an ancient tradition, upheld for several generations.

My brain updated and I instantly knew I had one new ability.

I punched the guy next to me in his face (he had it coming) and rewinded.

Everything that just happened, all the things flying through the air, the guy leaping gracefully out of the window, my co-worker becoming the owner of the company - it played backwards. I stopped a second earlier, right before sending off my fist, and I sent my foot instead, but then he hit me first. That went on for a few replays, until we both grew tired of it and we just sat down and talked for a few seconds and repeating that.

Our brains just went on living through the ages and, I mean it sounds like fun, but eventually I got a headache from all the information that accumulated and I wanted to sleep. So I turned on auto-replay and took a nap right there on the floor for a few seconds of the same time span.

You know, I'm scared to live beyond second number ten. My coworker, who has grown weary of throwing his shoe in perfect angles at random things, has told me that he once tried and was lucky to be able to rewind.

It's true that some people have been doing the same stuff over and over, like at one point the guy who jumped out of the window stopped trying to do alternate positions in the air and is now always going out butt-first, so I assume that's the one he went out with for good.

I've been sending, rewinding and rewriting this letter a hundred times now because I didn't know how to start it. I've used an old computer system that hopefully doesn't get hacked beyond Second Ten, so that maybe it arrives safely (and yes, writing this all only took about 0.296862 seconds).

Don't get me wrong, this is a blast, I'm basically invincible, even if only to a certain point. One might say I've definitely learned to enjoy the present more than the future.

My version number says 771.46, so if you're anywhere close to it, maybe you can still jump ship. Or I mean, planet.

Cheers,

Larry

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This message has been marked as spam.

Please restart your brain to apply the new filters.

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www.muddasheep.com

Thank you:

Auri, Khimitsu, Florian, H4ndy, Actine, Alexander, Kim, Jazz, Moonlyer, Pao, Szaladin, Lexi