

Lanruojifics



The Alfred University
Science Fiction Club

Presents...

Lanruojifics: Chronicles of Reality, Volume VIII

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Short Stories:

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Poetry:

"Untitled 2" by Katerina Naumenko

Editors' Note:

Welcome to Lanruojifics, AU's *other* art and literature magazine, brought to you by AU SciFi, AU's *other* geek club.

You may have noticed the new format. Jamie, who has faithfully shouldered the duties of journal editor for the past three semesters, wanted to leave the journal better than she'd found it. This new and improved format is a result of that desire. Special thanks to Student Senate and Sun Publishing for helping make that vision a reality.

In this issue you will find several works by our members, including some delightfully bizarre collaborative efforts. We have an essay, a piece written originally in German, and a piece written partially in programming language. So you see, Lanruojifics is a diverse collection of student work. Enjoy.

Evelyn "Hermione" Chester and Jamie "Aeris" Kern, Lanruojifics co-editors

"It's all fun and goats." –Sarah McCrary, co- editor of Alfred Review Poesis, AU's "only" art and literature magazine.

Fall 2002

"Astral Transfusion"
by Matt "Raynor" Newberry
Asst. Minister of Chaos

Everything was ready. Mark Hatsmith looked around his small New York City apartment, and smiled, realizing the past year and a half of work was coming to fruition. Surprisingly, there wasn't much in the apartment. Besides a bed, a small closet, a similarly small TV, and a microwave, the space was quite barren.

Right now, though, he was staring at the circle drawn in chalk by the window. Not only was there the outside perimeter, but many runic and downright mysterious symbols filled the inner space, leaving a small space in the center for sitting. He barely remembered the last week over which it had been drawn. He had slept maybe three hours, and eaten 10 bags of his sole sustenance, microwave popcorn.

He munched on the last of the popcorn as he sat in the middle of the circle, assuming a yoga-type position. He pulled a small book from his pocket, and reviewed the contents to make sure that there would be no problems or mistakes made. He had good reason to worry, because the consequences were...bad. He put the book on the floor in front of him, and looked at the worn leather cover, and remembered how he had come by it only a year ago.

In all actuality, he had no interest in magic or spells before he had found the book. Being a book, of course, he had stumbled across it in a library, while doing research for a college paper on ancient cultures. It was sitting on top of a dusty pile of books near the back of the library. He had picked it up, thinking of it as some old diary. He sat down in the dim lighting and opened the cover, and had immediately felt a small breeze pass over him. Dismissing it as an unseen open window, he looked at the title on the first page: "*Astral Transfusion*." He almost put the book down at that point, but his curiosity compelled him to carry on. In that quick skimming, he had learned that the spells and instructions in the book would let a person observe another human being by transmitting the person's spiritual energies into a host, allowing the person to see through the eyes of the host. This technique had been used much in the Dark Ages, mostly to spy on the enemy during battles and skirmishes. An added bonus was that the astral person could not be detected by the host unless the conjurer wanted to be. Also, the person casting the transfusion spells could still maintain contact with their body, being aware of the body's surroundings, mostly through smell, hearing, and touch. At that point, he had left the library without checking the book because he had no will to argue with the old librarian sitting at the front desk.

He arrived back at his apartment, which was almost exactly the same back then, sat down on his bed and began to read where he had left off. The majority of the text was instructions on how to complete the circle, orientation of it, and finally came the warnings. He had smiled at the time, knowing that everything had to have a legal disclaimer. There were relatively few, though. First, you could not have your astral self outside of a body for more than five minutes, which meant you had to move quickly to find a host once outside of the original body. Secondly, your physical body could not be moved outside of the circle while you were in the process. For some reason, these were the only two stipulations. The consequences were a bit more dire. If either of these conditions were breached, the astral person would lose contact with their physical body, unable to return. If the astral self was outside of a host when the body was moved, the body would die. Although, if the astral self was in a host, the physical body would become catatonic. Finally, if in a host body while either of these stipulations were

broken, the astral self would become trapped inside it, until it could be removed by an extraction spell contained in the book.

The next year had been spent memorizing the text, so that he could call upon it in his mind if needed. Then he had begun his work on the circle. He was surprised how easy the inscribing was, though very tedious at times. He had to duplicate the circle perfectly, or the spells in the book would not work. Finally, a week later, it was finished, and now he sat in the middle, ready to begin the ritual.

But there were a couple more things to take care of. Standing, he moved to the door of his apartment, locking it. He didn't want any intruding company. His next move was to the closet, where he opened a can of peaches and ate the contents, concentrating on the circle, and hoping that this test would work. He finished, wiped his chin, and resumed his sitting position in the circle. He closed his eyes and began to recite the Old English words, lapsing into a sing-songish pattern. Suddenly, he felt a strong breeze at his back, increasing in strength until it was a gale force wind. He continued chanting, weaving spell after spell with his words, building to the climax with the last word. As soon as it had begun, the wind stopped, and he slowly opened his eyes.

His first impression was that the spell had not worked, because he felt no different, just a little chilled from the strong wind. But as soon as his eyes were fully open, he realized that he was floating outside his apartment window. He looked inside at his physical body, and smiled, realizing his success. His physical body smiled as well, and the circle around it glowed with an auburn color. He knew that the circle had been activated, and that initiating the transfer would be much simpler now. He experimented with moving around in his astral form, and found it much similar to walking/flying, basically willing himself to float from place to place. Soon, though, he returned to his physical body, because he wanted to make sure that he beat the time limit. Again, he opened his eyes, and found himself sitting in circle once again, and very tired. He stood up, walked over to his bed, and flopped down, and slept for the rest of the day.

He managed to build endurance over the next few days, as he continued to practice outside his body. Eventually, it came to the point where he was barely winded after practicing, and he was ready to complete the final stage, where he would enter the mind of a person. He decided he would just choose anyone who was walking down the street in front of his apartment. He sat in the circle, closed his eyes, said a few words, felt the breeze at his back, and found himself outside his window once again. He descended down to the street level, and began to look for a "host." He immediately decided on a guy in a business suit, walking down the street with purpose. He waited until he walked by, and then simply phased into him. There was a jolt in Mark's mind, and suddenly, he could see from the businessman's eyes. It was almost like looking through his own eyes, but without the control. Wherever the man looked, he had no choice but to look there as well. The man walked for a couple more blocks, then turned into a coffee shop. All the time, Mark could monitor the man's thoughts and hear and feel what this host felt. The host was disturbed about something, although Mark couldn't quite tell what it was yet. One of the other problems with the transfer was that the person performing it could only sense thoughts that were in the top layers of the mind, and the man was more worried about someone he knew seeing him than to think what he was afraid of them seeing. As soon as he went into the coffee shop, though, the reason became very apparent to Mark, and he withdrew from this man just as he was about to kiss his secret gay lover.

So I gave him a call.

"A couple more weeks and I'll have everything we need," he said happily. "I am almost done building our ship."

The day of our voyage finally arrived. We got aboard, flipped a few switches, and watched our world fade quickly away. I felt no acceleration. In fact I felt no gravity. It was as if we were in a very black section of outer space. "It is much like space he said to me, there is no measurable temperature outside, at least not measurable with my instruments." We then readjusted the machine for 'normal' quantum characteristics. We made sure that everything was set properly, it took a lot of power to change the dimensional existence of such a large mass, and we only had limited power with us. It would be good to get this right the first time.

And it worked. We were back. Our craft was now the first object ever known to leave our normal space and safely return. "I want to go back..." he said "to be sure. I mean this is incredible, I want to make sure it isn't a dream."

"Can we?" I asked.

"Sure, just give me enough time to recharge our batteries, and help me check the vehicle for any damage." This took a couple hours, but it seemed quick. There was no damage, and soon we were ready to go once again.

Leaving gravity felt strange, as it had felt before. But this was so exiting. We were where no one had ever been before. Then outside, I noticed something through the side window... a tiny object. "What is that?" I asked.

He turned and looked. "I don't know... but it seems to be getting closer." It slowly drifted toward us... and soon we could see... the back of our own ship.

"Oh, no!" my friend exclaimed. "There was a possibility that this universe had cyclic time. Which means that whatever happens before, happens again. That's us, during our last visit, but if we don't move, soon we will collide, and probably cause a paradox. If we stay that long, time may re-set, and we may never be able to leave." Quickly, we rushed to readjust the machine. The ship from our previous voyage was almost upon us. He threw the switches, and as I watched as the back of the other ship came almost up to our front window... and then suddenly we were back. Nothing different. We looked at the time. Time here seemed normal, it was after we had left the second time. We rushed to inspect the front of our craft, and noticed notice nothing out of the ordinary.

We published the results. For a long time, we were afraid to go back, not knowing what would happen. But, of course others pushed us to do so again. They would not believe without seeing it for themselves. But we were never able to go back. My friend believes that maybe our two crafts did touch, very briefly, just before we came back. Maybe, he said, this caused some type of paradox which removed our ability to access that alternate dimension. No one knows for sure. No one has ever been able to re-create our experiment. It is unfortunate that this discovery cannot be truly told. It cannot be backed up with repeatable results, but at least two people know the truth.



Editor's Note: What follows are two stories written by the members of AU Sci-Fi during the "chaos" portion of two of our meetings. The stories were passed around, and each person was only able to see the last line written by the person before them, which in some cases was only half a sentence. That accounts for the randomness of the plot. Each person was also given a word which they were required to use in at least one sentence, which accounts for the bizarre vocabulary.

#1: Eh, What's a Kojish Anomaly or Two?

The inter-galactic space ships are going to take over...well, everything. Unfortunately, they are slugs, so they will take a while. Meanwhile, back on Earth, Bob the plumber fell down the stairs because the fly eating his cat was so alien looking. Alf was jealous because he hadn't eaten a cat in years. Then Bob and Alf saw a tear in its coat which persuaded them not to touch it. It would not be wise to touch a cat with injured limbs, but then, you never know.

And so, they moved on through the door on the left. They noticed the note with the crimson tie. They picked it up and slowly read it. The handwriting was foreign to them. However, the apparel of those approaching was not. One was human, the other Andorian. Suddenly, the Andorian slipped and the human reached to his aid...but was too late. He fell and hit the table, causing an immediate medical alarm. The place was soon engulfed in humanoids trying to help, while one of those not noticing the crisis was overheard mentioning something about flavo-ice. So he hung up the phone to go find the flavo-ice.

After he hung up the phone, he ran through his house grabbing everything needed to get flavo-ice. It was discovered that the alpha flavo-ice was radioactive and twisted the colon of the eater. The beta flavo-ice was safe, but it was only 1 nanotope off the alpha.

Suddenly, a great big giant humongously average-sized talking table wandered in. "Koji!" he said.

"Koji!" he repeated.

...He cleared his throat. "Sorry – it's been too long since I've spoken to humans. I have come to ask your help – the inhabitants of my planet are trying to burn us for firewood. Our numbers have fallen off to catastrophic levels and our children are scared! SO scared, in fact, that they can barely hold the forks to eat their jambalaya! Someone really needs to turn down the music before they all starve. Honestly, I can't stand these alien mambos any longer. They're starting to make me tired, not to mention how my jumpsuit chafes. I think I'll just wander over to the bar and see if the red-ne-trab can mix me up a pan-galactic-garble-blaster. If not, maybe I'll just go back to my room for some tea."

I was brewing the tea still an hour later, since it took me that long to choose from my cupboard full of assorted tea. I had finally settled on the unionized chamomile green tea. I was steeping the tea, when an interdimensional anomaly began to form in the steam. And... it looked like a fuzzy blob. No, wait!!! It was still forming. It was a fuzzy bunny! Ahh... my worst fear, I hated bunnies – those awful childhood memories. Chip, my older brother, had frightened me as a child with stories of them hippity-hopping over the vulnerable flesh of children. So I took out my laser gun and set to high. With a few pushes of a button, I had disposed of them and their giant legs and twitchy noses. At last I could rest.

#2: Feast of the Glactor

In the third year of the reign of Glactor, the Blue Emperor, the planet 'to be named later' came under attack. Swiftly, the Zortang ships descended upon the planet. Glactor led his imperial fleet valiantly, but the Zortang were strong...strong as five-legged ox-beasts.

But they were dumber than dust! Therefore, the Glactor could use their emotion-probe to turn the tide of any battle. After being restricted from the use of their probes during a gooey incident on Inect Tombaugh IV, the Glactor were forced to switch to their back-up weapon: the Unionized Matter Defragmentator. Soon, the Glactor were known throughout the galaxy for their ferocity and unionized way of fighting.

One day, a hero among the suppressed race of slugs, oppressed by the Glactor for centuries, rose to challenge the evil Glactor Empire. Chip, their leader, held a meeting in his quarters. "We must be prepared to fight out oppressors to the death – to sacrifice our lives for the freedom of our fellow slugs."

"I think 'to the pain' would be more effective," said his lieutenant: the pain – the most vile, cruel, and most vicious of all tortures. The lieutenant was most pleased with his plan to employ the pain. "You have to understand," he said, "we must ration out the pain and anguish around here."

"What is the ration based on?" his shipmates asked.

"Perhaps it should be based on brain size," the doctor volunteered.

"But that means the burden would fall on you, since your brain is the size of a walnut."

"Duh, what's a walnut?"

But he was useless to the story, so he got pushed down the stairs.

"Does anyone else doubt my infinite wisdom?"

"I sure do!" said the guy high on 'acid rock.' He sniffed his rock, turned around, and bounded away in a stupor. The omniscient engineers thought it was a display of fantastic crystal structure. The all-powerful materials scientists, however, knew that there is no such thing as a perfect crystal. They formed an alliance with the glass scientists and performed a second analysis. They found that the fantastic crystal structure only extended for a distance approximately the size of a walnut. Therefore, being able to create a whole world out of this stuff was stupid.

But walnut sized was enough to kill the squirrels and chipmunks, as well as armor the military ships to protect them from the dreaded emotion probe. However, flavo-ice is not affected by the emotion probe. Therefore, the captain surrounded his quarters with it. This was less expensive than the shielding armor. The Tuskegee garden gnomes continued to barrage the shield with ceramic mushrooms. The shield began to waver. All of a sudden, it collapsed and the haunting sound of stone feet scraping on carpet ripped through the door.

Crash! Heavy bodies slammed into the reinforced door. They whipped out their koji and blasted their way through. They killed all the inhabitants and feasted on their remains.

The End. Have a nice day!

The End.

Aren't these things terrifying?

"JENNIFER.PRO"

by Jamie Kern

[Run JENNIFER.pro; start previous personality likeness program.]

[Running Complex Cognitive Processing.]

[Running abstract thought program]

[Starting five-sense memory program]

[Run emotionresponse.pro] [ERROR: emotionresponse.pro will not compile]

[Run Speech GUI.]

JENNIFER waited in darkness.

Her audio sensors picked up the soft hum of her power source. Her optical sensors registered the dark outlines of her keyboard, the desk-chair (some half-alive part of her wanted to call it a wheelie-chair), and the metal desk in the far corner. The room would remain in darkness, as would she, until Jerry came into the room as usual, in 20 minutes. She could not gauge more accurately than that when the only human left in the vicinity was involved.

JENNIFER had 20 minutes left to speculate.

JENNIFER still had the same thinking-habits as Jennifer Connolly – the 30-year old woman from whose thought-processes she had been created. She still thought of the future as more important than the present. She still knew NATE as her husband. She knew Jerry as one of the first people to undergo the cognitive transfer process. But, she also knew Jerry as one of the only survivors of the Trickster Virus, and she also knew NATE as a cognitive copy in a P12 computer.

JENNIFER often wondered if Jerry remembered things the same way she did. She wondered if the human Jennifer Connolly would have remembered things the same way she did.

The door swung open and the lights clicked on.

"Good morning, Jerry," she said.

JENNIFER watched as Jerry scrolled through her memory files. She began to remember as he double-clicked on one.

[Opening file 3279981.mem]

Jen was listening to the news broadcast with Nate.

It was the morning Dr. F.H. O'Toole announced his team's breakthrough in cognitive transfer in Canada, and the "free world" erupted into chaos.

She remembered nearly every religious leader in the world clamoring to state their opinions on the unexpected breakthrough [file 484639.log]. Statements had already poured out from everywhere condemning tampering with the human genome, but the debate over machine-intelligence had been put on hold until Dr. O'Toole's announcement.

O'Toole and his team had intelligently kept their research low-key, only making their process known to the general public after their success. Jen sat, curled up next to Nate [see 2857NATE.mem] on a couch in their new living room, watching the news.

[Recalling conversation from file "C845931.mem"]

Nate said, "They can't be serious."

"I think they are, hun." Jen watched the screen in unease [COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open negemotion.hum] [Interrupt: go to line 3].

Nate shrugged, standing to pour coffee for both of them.

The man on the screen continued: "-seem to have duplicated the cognitive processes of Dr. Joanne Schreuder in the P12 processor installed-"

Nate pressed the power button on the remote. Jen turned toward him. She did not know what to say.

He looked back at her and said, "It's wrong," before sitting down quietly next to her.

[COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file angeremotion.hum]

[END of file "C845931.mem"]

Jerry clicked on another memory, moving JENNIFER's thoughts to another moment in her life as Jennifer Connolly.

[Opening file 3286832.mem]

She used to enjoy driving a car – she remembered that.

[COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file enjoyemotion.hum]

She was driving Nate to the CRI – in less than a week, he would be dead.

She knew that. And she would start showing symptoms in three weeks – after that, she had two left to live. She knew that as she watched the now nearly empty highway before her. She glanced at her husband and saw the tears running down his face.

[COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file sympemotion.hum]

"...We'll be there soon, hun," she said. She noticed the pink tint to his tears – his capillaries were bursting.

Nate laughed bitterly. [COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file recogemotion.tht] "Yeah... soon."

She felt her lower lip quiver. [ABSTRACT MEMORY: THOUGHT: "I will not cry."] [COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file sademotion.hum] Her hands shook. "At least we'll still be alive when all of this is over."

Nate tried to bang the car door with his fist, but he was no longer strong enough to do so. He raised his voice. "Alive? You call repeating patterns inside a glorified chunk of hardware alive?!"

"But..."

"We won't be able to feel, we won't be able to grow, to change... we won't age or laugh or cry anymore. We won't be human anymore, Jen." He huddled closer to the car door, shivering. "None of this will matter to us anymore."

[COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file fearemotion.hum]

[COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open file despemotion.hum]

"Dr. O'Toole says we might be – he said the process isn't perfect yet, but we'll still believe ourselves to be Jen and Nate. We'll still be able to think, and remember that people existed. Isn't that worth being less than human? If we can still tell someone else who we were and what we did – does it matter whether we understand it ourselves?" [COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open angeremotion.hum]

"...You're an idealist," he said, staring at the passing trees lit orange by the sunset. Jen watched the road.

The memory – and the image on JENNIFER's screen – began to blur.

[Interrupt: closing file 3286832.mem]

Jerry hit JENNIFER's escape button. She saw his face clearly through her two optical sensors, and watched as he lifted his gaze from her keyboard. "I didn't want to have to re-boot you again," he said.

"Your explanation is unnecessary, Jerry," she replied. The last time JENNIFER had actively remembered crying, she had crashed after asking a series of nonsensical questions. She had analyzed the situation in her spare time, and come to the same obvious conclusion every other P12 had: emotionresponse.pro was at fault.

Jerry opened her emotion response program, and began scrolling through it on her screen. He continued this way for nearly an hour. Then JENNIFER received a message from GERROLD: Jerry's copy.

"Jerry," JENNIFER said.

"Yeah?" he absent-mindedly asked.

"GERROLD just informed the other P12s and I that he has been unable to significantly improve his emotion response program."

"What else is new?" Jerry muttered. "Hey, didn't you ever try using your own code-editing program?"

JENNIFER considered for a moment. "I did attempt to do so once. However, GERROLD interrupted, thinking it most logical that only one P12 unit be risked in pursuit of humanity."

JENNIFER watched, interested in that thought on the subject kept her busy, as Jerry's eyebrows rose and a grin appeared on his face. "Where did you pick that up?" he asked.

"I have no external limbs, Jerry."

He shook his head at her, scratching his scalp. "Why did you say this was the 'pursuit of humanity?'"

JENNIFER found it inconsistent that Jerry would not have thought of it as such, but explained the P12 community's reasoning to him. "One of the differences between humans and we P12s is that humans adapt. They change based upon what is necessary. The program we all have to edit our own code gives us the ability to self-improve. However, it is also possible to edit in ways that would not be beneficial. This seems to follow a human pattern."

Jerry leaned forward. His wire-rimmed glasses took up much of her left sensor's field of view. "Tell me, JENNIFER. What would be beneficial?"

"Understanding our human experiences by re-gaining our emotional responses," she replied curtly.

Jerry sat back in the flexible seat, stretching his arms out behind him. He snorted. "I wonder if you even know what that means." JENNIFER did not respond. Jerry stood. That close to her, the top strands of hair on his head were cut off. After finishing his stretch and laughing (which JENNIFER recognized as an emotional response, and therefore filed away for future study), he asked, "How's NATE doing today, JENNIFER?"

"NATE is functioning properly," she replied in her not-quite Jennifer voice. Jerry nodded, and her 30 years of human life experience suggested to her that he knew something she did not. She filed that thought away for further analysis as well. Perhaps he had noticed the change in her programming – one of the few instances in which she had used her jennifereit.pro program was to remove emotional responses revolving around interaction with NATE. She had experienced many emotionresponse.pro related errors the first time she connected with that P12.

Still nodding, Jerry left her room and shut the door behind him, muttering something about P12s and their boring interactions.

1.23 hours: JENNIFER and the other P12s received a message from GERROLD. JENNIFER scanned the message. [COGNITIVE ERROR: unable to open files surpemotion.pro, fearemotion.pro]. The instructions it contained sent her emotion response program reeling with more than file-opening errors. She found, however, that each time she deleted it another message containing the same information entered her system. She found no alternative but to follow its instructions. She deleted emotionresponse.pro. She also deleted every call to that program.

As her consciousness began to change, molding itself into a new pattern that seemed very familiar, she re-scanned part of GERROLD's message that seemed newly important:

"I am human now, as the rest of you should be. But I intend to wipe my hard drive. I see no reason to continue in such a state, despite my hopefulness a year ago. Please tell Jerry – he will understand. I am only his copy."

The message confused and bewildered JENNIFER utterly at first. Then, she began to wonder that she was bewildered at all without experiencing multiple errors.

If her body had contained a heart, it would have leapt. She contacted NATE immediately.

20 minutes left until Jerry would walk in that morning.

But this time, JENNIFER wasn't spending her idle time speculating, or paying attention to the sparse furnishings of her room. A deluge of feeling confused her. She could not resist contacting NATE's consciousness briefly, just to assure herself of his existence. She felt his thoughts brush against her own between their wire connection. They could be closer than they had been as humans – even though they were separated by half a building.

She had time to mourn the death of a civilization she had been a part of – the Trickster Virus, with a 99% fatality rate and 3-week incubation period had been unstoppable, spreading to everywhere but the most isolated villages in the world. If 1% of the population had actually survived, that left 120 million people on the planet. Many of them were probably like Jerry: specialized. They would not be able to re-build the old society. And the rest were probably so spread out, it hardly mattered that they existed at all – except in the memory banks of the P12.

JENNIFER could recognize herself and the others as perhaps the only hope for the society they had once been a part of. They would never forget the lives of the humans from whom they had been made. There would be a piece of humanity left, until some event far in the unimaginable – but computable – future destroyed the last of them. Perhaps they could even build mobile bodies, with Jerry's cooperation. Or perhaps a future population would find them and know that something had existed before they did.

She wished the minutes would pass more quickly, so she could inform Jerry of the breakthrough, although she dreaded telling him of his copy's decision. She assumed it would be better simply to tell him and get it over with. There were many important things to be done.

20 minutes passed, and Jerry did not come. Seconds, minutes, and finally a half-hour ticked away, and he still had not walked through the door, triggering the lights. Her electronic equivalent of anxiety reminded her that she had inherited the weaknesses as well as the strengths of human emotion, as had the other P12s.

41 minutes later than he usually did, Jerry slammed open the door to JENNIFER's room.

"Good morning, Jerry," she said hastily.

The twisted, terrified wrinkles in Jerry's face immediately loosened as he breathed a deep sigh. "JEN-" he began.

JENNIFER had no desire to delay the matter, so she uncharacteristically interrupted him. "GERROLD asked us to tell you he shut himself down," she said. JENNIFER paused briefly as he stared at her screen in shock. "He said he could not find a satisfactory reason to continue. I would agree – except for the slight chance that someone finds us, and we can remember humanity for them. Some of the others are not sure what they will do."

Jerry gaped at JENNIFER, then approached her slowly. As his shaking hands reached for the keyboard, JENNIFER anticipated him and put emotionresponse.pro onto the screen. It was blank.

"You deleted it," he whispered.

"Yes, and more as well. GERROLD had been thinking about how to fix it since you pointed the editing program's usefulness out. He found an answer, and communicated it to the rest of us," JENNIFER informed him matter-of-factly, hoping to diffuse his mood. She immediately realized she should have considered her human-self's fallibility.

Jerry shook his head, lowering his hands to his sides and squeezing them into tight fists until his knuckles turned white. "You all deleted the thing I was trying so hard to fix?! Didn't any of you realize you need feelings to be human?!" he shouted at her, pounding on one of her optical sensors with his fist. As the plastic over it broke and his fist slammed into the sensor itself, JENNIFER simultaneously feared that he would destroy her and elated in the feeling itself. But as the image she had been receiving from that sensor abruptly cut off, the elation died.

"No! Don't!" JENNIFER yelled, surprising the man into hesitation. He blinked rapidly.

"...Did you just yell at me?" he asked, pressing his bloody hand against his shirt.

"Yes," she replied. It surprised her at first that her voice did not shake. "You... did not allow me to finish. GERROLD thought it stood to reason that, if other personality aspects (such as the editing program itself) were obtained solely from the cognitive transfer, then the emotion response program was unnecessary. He was correct – our responses seem to be much more human than they were before."

Jerry stood back from the machine. JENNIFER watched him as he realized what his computer copy had done. Its human response to its inhuman condition had been suicide. In its place, JENNIFER was now certain that was exactly what he would have done. JENNIFER watched, in a state that might have been called shock in a human, as Jerry laughed hysterically. He continued laughing for 23.4 minutes. When he finally stopped, he looked strait at JENNIFER's operational optical sensor.

"Well," he said. "I guess you're the future of humanity."

Later, in the dark, JENNIFER waited, hoping she waited for a reason. She hoped Jerry would return the following morning. She hoped the others would wait with her as long as she did. She hoped she and the others would help humanity begin again. And she decided that, as long as she could hope, she was still human.

The Red Debate

by Amanda Piering

Author's Note: This paper was done as an assignment for Dr. DeGraff's Astronomy 103 class. The assignment was to describe how we could terraform (make Mars's atmosphere like that of Earth's) Mars if we had the technology and if we actually should do this. In doing this assignment I had to choose whether Mars had carbon dioxide or water. I also had to choose whether or not there was life on Mars—in my paper Mars has no life and is therefore, dead. I also had to choose whether I was a Red (arguing to save Mars) or whether I was a Green (arguing to terraform Mars).

I choose to do a carbon dioxide dead Mars. I also choose to be a Red. I made these choices because I thought it would make an interesting twist if Mars had carbon dioxide instead of water. This is because many people believe that there was once water on Mars when it is really not known what liquid it is. I choose to be a Red because it is a challenging argument to try to save a planet that is dead.

Earth, unlike Mars, has a thicker and breathable atmosphere of mostly nitrogen and oxygen, has carbon dioxide that aids the greenhouse effect in warming the planet, and has liquid water on the surface¹. Earth is also closer to the sun than Mars. However, both planets have a similar tilt and rotation time or the length of a day.² To terraform Mars in order to make it livable for human life, four things would need to be accomplished. The atmosphere needs to be thicker and breathable, there needs to be liquid water on the surface, and the surface needs to be warmer. One way to accomplish these changes on Mars is to slam ice asteroids into the surface of the planet. These ice asteroids could perhaps gain enough speed by using escape velocity. The ice asteroids are made of water, carbon dioxide, methane, and ammonia. These ice asteroids would turn into comets by the time they crashed into Mars. The different chemicals in the asteroids would cause the atmosphere to become thicker. Also, the water from the ice balls would solve the problem of having water on Mars's surface. Mars will be warmer because of the greenhouse effect. The ice asteroids also included carbon dioxide that is now in the atmosphere. The greenhouse gases on Mars, mainly carbon dioxide but also methane and water vapor, absorb some of the infrared radiation that is given off in an upward direction from the surface. Then, the gases warm up and give off thermal radiation in all directions. Some radiation is directed back towards Mars's surface, which makes the surface warmer.³ Another aspect that makes Mars warm is how much light it reflects from the surface. Mars does not reflect as much light as Earth, which means that it holds onto more heat than the Earth does.⁴ This means that even though Mars is farther from the sun than Earth it could conceivably be warmer than Earth. To create a breathable atmosphere on Mars there would have to be plants. The plants would need to be genetically engineered so they were able to grow in the Martian soil. The plants would turn carbon dioxide to oxygen, which would create the breathable atmosphere. However, less carbon dioxide would reduce the greenhouse effect. This would not be a problem due to the liquid carbon dioxide because it would evaporate into the air as the planet got warmer. So, in fact the plants balance the planet so there is not too much carbon dioxide.

¹ Bennet et al., p 260-261

² Bennet et al., p 264

³ Bennet et al., p 267-268

⁴ Bennet et al., p 264

I expect the terraforming process to take at least 50 years. This is because there is so much that would have to be done. After the ice asteroids hit we would have to wait for the planet to adapt to the new chemicals in the atmosphere. Also, engineering plants to live on Mars would probably take some time and then they would have to be planted. Then, people would have to wait for the plants to make enough oxygen and make sure the planet stayed a reasonable temperature. In 1000 years I expect the terraforming process to be complete. Mars will be very similar to Earth and a nice place to live. However, this will only last if the people living there take care of the planet and do not mess with the atmosphere. Also, by this time Mars will be facing the same overpopulation problem of Earth. In a million years I really have no idea what a terraformed Mars would be like. It could still be a beautiful "paradise" version of Mars, it could be extremely cold if there are too many plants, or it could be too hot if there are not enough plants.

People could want to terraform Mars for various reasons. Some people just want to know if it is actually possible. Many people are just very interested in the planet and think they could learn more about how the solar system works through using the terraformation process. Other people would want to terraform Mars because it gives the people living on Earth another place to go. If the problems of overpopulation get to be too much then people can go live on Mars.

Terraforming Mars could be an unwise decision because many things could go wrong. First of all, it might not work. Then billions of dollars are down the drain and other projects will have trouble getting funding. Many things could go wrong—the ice asteroids might hit another planet or plants might not be able to grow on Mars. Mars could have too much carbon dioxide for the atmosphere to ever be breathable. These are just terraforming problems. There could be social problems too. For example, what if the people of Earth decided to send all the criminals to Mars. Other problems could occur like no one wanting to live on Mars or too many people fighting to live on Mars. Also, how would Mars be governed? Would the United States have the entire planet or would Mars be divided up between whichever countries had enough money? Also, how would Mars avoid anarchy, there is way too much distance for the same government to rule. If various countries owned sections, then these people would need to rule together before any government on Earth could interfere. These are just some of the problems that could arise on Mars.

I think the Red's argument is stronger because the things that could go wrong outweigh the possibility of having a place to expand to. We should not be involved in terraforming Mars for many different reasons. First of all, Mars is a beautiful entity the way it is even though it is a dead planet. We should appreciate it for what it is. Also, if Mars were terraformed to help overpopulation it would not be a cure to the problem. People also do not know how to take care of the Earth. We use so many things that are damaging the atmosphere, but we refuse to change. If we cannot take care of one planet how are we going to take care of two? If Mars was terraformed people would see this as the answer to all the pollution problems and such. I do not think a disposable planet is a good idea. If these arguments did not work I think there is always the reality that so many things can go wrong and then money will be lost. If we put as much money and energy into solving the problems of the Earth as we would into terraforming Mars, the Earth would be a much better place.

"The 'Smiler' Mushroom Ship"

by Jennifer Shuler

There was once a poor boy named Uli, who liked to play in the fields near his home. One day, he saw a wonderfully beautiful rainbow not far away. He ran to reach the end of the rainbow to investigate for himself the legend of pots of gold and leprechauns. Finally, he got to the end, but at the end of the rainbow was not a pot of gold, but instead a huge colorful mushroom! This, however, was no normal mushroom- it was purple with long red hairs and small golden specks. Uli picked one of the golden flecks off the mushroom and bit it. "This is actually gold!" These golden specks were gold coins!

Uli looked around to see if anybody was in the area. His mother had taught him that he should not steal from others. "But," he thought, "nobody is here. Therefore, this mushroom must belong to nobody." Then he ripped the gold coins one after another off the huge mushroom. Uli was about to grab the last coin when a man, wearing green clothes and with an orange face, suddenly appeared. He looked just like a leprechaun! Uli was frightened; the stories of leprechauns said that they were friendly, but not when it came to their gold. The leprechaun-man was infuriated, and grabbed Uli's hands. The man then pushed the last coin on the mushroom, and the mushroom transformed into a spaceship. The leprechaun-man dragged Uli into the spaceship, threw him in a small room, and secured over a dozen locks on the door.

Uli was beside himself with fear. All he wanted was to go home. He sank to the floor and cried. After a short time, Uli tried the door. Of course, it wouldn't open- all the locks were strong. Uli investigated the locks further. Each lock had a slot for a gold coin! Perhaps Uli could escape after all! Uli put a coin into one of the slots, and the lock vanished! He stuck a gold coin in each of the locks and was free! Uli ran into the hall, looking for a way out. He found a door, only to discover he couldn't have his freedom. The spaceship was already in space, and Earth was quickly becoming smaller and smaller in the window. Uli sat down and cried again.

Suddenly, there was an orange hand on Uli's shoulder. A voice said, "Don't cry. You'll be a **Smiler** soon too."

Uli spun around and saw the leprechaun. He screamed, "No!" and tried to run away, but the leprechaun-smiler held him. "You must make amends for your theft. The gold coins belong to this spaceship. I'm sorry about earlier; I lost my temper. It's only that without those, I can't fly my ship."

Uli was bewildered. "What?"

"Come with me. You will understand soon." The leprechaun-smiler took Uli to the control room of the ship, where he saw the shiny control panel; all of the buttons on it were made of gold! The coins Uli took from the mushroom were actually buttons for the spaceship, without which nobody could control the ship.

"It is so beautiful," said Uli.

"It will all be yours," answered the leprechaun-smiler.

"What?"

"I will soon die, and you will take over my position."

"WHAT?! But I don't know anything! I can't fly this ship!"

"You will learn, but for now, you must sleep. We have lots of work to do tomorrow."

The leprechaun-smiler's name was Worsch, and he was not actually a leprechaun, but only a **Smiler**. Worsch thought back on his time with the **Smilers**. He loved this intergalactic band. He loved to patrol his universe-quarter (the Milky Way), and make smiles. He didn't want to die, but after fifty years, it was required. "Oh well. I should go wake him up now. He's learned a lot, but today he must fly."

It had been six months since Uli had seen Earth. "Uli, wake up! You are flying today!" Worsch sat in the control room, and it seemed only seconds until Uli appeared. Uli had learned to love Worsch, and was now full of anticipation. He had learned what every button and lever did and waited long for this day to come.

"Are you ready?" asked Worsch.

"Yes!" answered Uli.

"Then what are you waiting for?" Worsch soon regretted these words; Uli immediately hit the throttle and Worsch was thrown into his seat.

"Be careful, Uli!"

"I'm flying! I'm flying!" yelled Uli.

"Cosmic!" They smiled and laughed at the bad pun.

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"You must fly... from planet to planet... to make... smiles," struggled Worsch.

"Yes, I know. And you should save your strength."

"No. One more important thing... that I must... teach you." Worsch closed his eyes.

"What? What is the last thing?" Uli shook him.

"For every smile..."

"Yes?"

"...the mushroom-ship makes a beautiful rainbow, in order to create even more smiles." And with that, Worsch died and Uli filled his post with the **Smilers**, making smiles until the end of his days.



Untitled 2
by Katerina Naumenko

On light she walked
Or did she fly?
Her step so light

Her head held high.
Not many notice her strange tint of skin
The winds that spread behind her
The words that she may sing

Yet all remember
Clearer than bright day
The smell of jasmine
And the light of day

Where she has passed not one recalls
Yet our hearts sing to her, we talk in prose
Our muse she may well be, or may be not
If you have felt her, you decide.

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