

Excerpt

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Into the Every It was as if a white dwarf had blossomed outside of Dr. Quinn's window. The intense flash seared the darkness, leaving him momentarily blind. The sudden rip in time-space thundered like the footstep of God. As the room faded back into view, his gaze fell upon the painting on the opposite wall. Nara, his late wife, had created it just days before the cancer took her. With her last brushstrokes, she'd created a lasting testimony of her love for their son.

Dr. Marshall Quinn sat with his knees drawn to his chest, sweat drenching his body, his staccato heartbeat deafening inside his head. He knew this was the end, when all he ever loved would be lost. The very science which he once held such passion for had led to his greatest sin.

Dr. Quinn's discovery of a correlation between temporal reality and the frequency of strings, the elemental building blocks of all matter, had rocked the scientific community. He'd won every award imaginable, garnered every honor in existence. He became world renown for his theories, and was compared to the likes of Albert Einstein. He spent 24 months straight touring and lecturing, neglecting his family while basking in his own fame. He'd known that Nara was ill, but had thought little of it at the time.

He stared at the bedroom door. The doorknob jiggled, then turned. A dim light seeped through the widening crack as the door swung inward, banging against the wall. Marshall looked into the face of the intruder. He was tall, reed-like, his flesh bluish-gray. A white aura clung to him like a second skin. He looked nothing like the child he'd last seen 7 months ago.

"Dad?"

"Son?"

Jon's stare was distant, as if fixated upon a horizon far beyond human sight.

"Where were you?" Marshall asked.

"There," Jon said, pointing into nothingness. "In the Every."

"The Every?"

"Yeah 'cause everything's there. Weird looking planets and stars in all sorts of colors. And all kinds of people, some who looked funny, like dinosaurs and dogs and other cool stuff. There were lots of people I've seen on TV, or in school books. Sometimes they were wearing funny clothes though."

The ground rocked. Glass broke. Plaster splintered, raining dust and debris down on Marshall's head. Lightning scarred the night sky, followed by rumblings so loud that it seemed as if the heavens were at war. Screams filled the streets. Ice formed on the windows. Marshall's breath issued from his nose and mouth like steam. He swayed as if with vertigo, visions of a billion other-times rushing through his mind. He turned back to his son, his precious little boy.

"Son, you have to leave."

Jon's gaze fell on his father, as if just seeing him for the first time.

"Why?"

Marshall forced calm into his voice. "You're endangering this world, this whole universe—"

"You're sending me away!"

"No, Pal. It's not like that. It's just—"

"Why are you doing this, Daddy?"

"I'm not, Son. I love you—"

“No you don’t.”

“I do, Jon. I really do.”

“You don’t care about nobody.”

“Yes I do!”

“Then why’d you let Mommy die?”

Marshall’s knees buckled. He felt D’Nara’s weight as he’d held her. Her sour-sweet breath blowing in his face as she fought to speak her last words. Five minutes after he’d come home, she had died in his arms.

“One day when Mommy was mad, she said that you didn’t love nothing but your work!”

“That’s not true, Jon. I loved your moth–”

Another quake shook the house. Like a neon bulb going bad, reality flickered in and out of focus. Lines of fire appeared at the edge of perception. The universe was fracturing at its seams, and soon this would be repeated in an infinity of other universes.

“Jon, listen to me. You’re caught in a temporal nexus.”

“What’s a tempril necksus?”

It’d taken months of study for Marshall to realize what he’d created. He’d merely wanted to see if his sub-nanobots could affect change in the frequency of strings. And his own son had been the perfect candidate because he could observe him 24 hours a day.

“Jon, remember how I explained to you why a cork pops when you pull it out of a bottle?”

“Yeah.”

“Well, you’re kind of like that. You’re the cork in time, stuck between all realities everywhere. Being here, in one single reality, is throwing off the balance, causing the pressure to build everywhere. If you don’t go back into the Every soon–”

“I don’t understand,” Jon wailed.

Marshall ran his fingers through his dreads. It’d been a one in a billion times billion chance that he would happen upon this particular frequency, the only one which could lead to the destruction of all time-space. He’d sought the building blocks to create a new life form, to place himself upon a throne equal to that of God’s. And in a mind-blowing stroke of “luck” he’d hit the motherload.

Why hadn’t he just bought a lottery ticket instead?

“Jon, you can go to other places, right? Beautiful and scary places where everything is different, where stuff that hasn’t happened here has already happened, and where stuff that has happened here hasn’t happened there.”

“Yeah. Is that how come I saw Mommy.”

“What?”

“I saw Mommy and me. She was tucking me into bed. I called her but she couldn’t hear me.”

Lightning flashed just outside the window. The loud crack which followed told Marshall that it’d struck the house.

“Son, you have to go.”

“Go where.”

“Back into the Every.”

"But there's nobody there."

"You have to go, Jon."

"But I'm scared."

"I know, Son. So I'll go with you, okay?"

"You will?"

"Sure."

"But how? Can you go to the Every too?"

"I can if you take me."

"But what're we gonna do there?"

Marshall glanced at Nara's picture on the nightstand.

"How about we go find your Mommy again?"

The bedroom door was on fire. Noxious fumes filled the room. Marshall held his breath as best as he could. Pain shot through his body as if he were slowly being pulled apart from the inside. The fabric of reality was beginning to tear.

He crawled over to the nightstand, opened the top drawer, and pulled out a hypodermic needle and syringe.

"Come here, Jon."

The boy walked over to stand in front of his father.

"I want you to put your arms around my neck and think very hard about the Every, okay?"

Jon nodded. He threw his arms around his father, then scrunched up his eyes.

Marshall lifted his left arm and stuck the needle into Jon's right buttock.

"Ow! Why'd you do that, Dad?"

"Sorry, Son. But that's the last time, I promise."

"You always say that."

"This time I really, really mean it." Marshall jabbed the same needle into his own hip and emptied the remaining contents. Numbness began to spread right away.

"Okay, Jon. Take me into the Every."

Flames swept across the room, passing through them like specters on the wind. The sights and sounds and smells and feelings of an infinity of realities overwhelmed Marshall's consciousness. A cacophony of voices spoke, sang, laughed, screamed, begged, and cried like a schizophrenic choir. He wondered how the boy had maintained his sanity through it all.

Marshall's eyes shone as he stared into the heart of the multiverse, where every place and every time converged into one huge mass of existence, like a brilliant cluster of heavens. He smiled.

Fireworks blossomed from the heart of the multiverse, spreading across the Every like an infection. Soon all was engulfed in this destructive tide. Even as Marshall's eyes grew heavy, horror dug its claws into his heart. He shivered as the lives of every living being in existence died within minutes.

Jon's grip upon his neck loosened. He clung to his precious boy, his innocent baby who he'd turned into the instrument of damnation. Marshall lacked the strength to weep, and didn't dare pray for his own salvation.

After all, how do you seek forgiveness from the one whose kingdom you've just torn down?

