

SHIP
OF
THESEUS

by Sandra Wagner

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Editor: Gail Sullivan

Art Direction: Rebekkah Dreskin

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**This is dedicated to my partner,
June, who simply asked “What are
you waiting for?” And to, Doris, my
mentor, and teacher.**

PROLOGUE

March 2150

Tim woke to the sound of the alarm at four-thirty. He rolled over and turned the buzzer off. He rose slowly from the bed and went to the bathroom, returning shortly after doing his morning ablutions. Upon returning to the bed, he gently helped his wife rise from the bed, walked her to the bathroom, and helped her onto the toilet.

She looked up at Tim gratefully. "For better or for worse," she murmured, "this is the last time you'll have to do that, Tim."

"Yes, Hanna, but I would do it for a hundred years without complaint."

"I know you would, honey. I love you all the more for it."

"Are you all right here? I was going to go down and make breakfast."

"I'm fine, dear. I can't eat anything today, of course, just make something for yourself."

"That's right, I forgot. Maybe I won't have anything; I think I'm too nervous to eat."

"You should eat something. It's going to be a long day for you."

"I know, but I can always pick up something at the hospital."

"I'll finish up here. My legs are steady enough. Make yourself some coffee and toast, please. By then I should be done and you can help me get dressed and bring me downstairs."

"Ok, dear. You sure you feel strong enough?"

"Yes, Hon. My muscles are fine, it's just that my brain won't tell them to work, that's all. I'll be able to stand and face

the sink. I'll be good standing there."

"Ok, I'll be back in a few minutes."

Hanna finished on the toilet, struggled to her feet and turned and leaned on the sink, washing her face for the last time. The doctor told her not to wear makeup or jewelry. She looked at her face in the mirror and thought "Will I still see this plain woman in the mirror when I wake up in rehab? Will she still be me? Will 'I' still be 'me'?"

She finished her washing just as Tim came back upstairs.

"Ready, my love?"

"Yes, Hon." As Tim helped his beloved walk out of the bathroom and back into the bedroom to change, she commented ruefully, "After all these years, I still don't know what you saw in me. I feel so plain."

"God told me you were the one for me. I don't think I ever had a chance. I was smitten from the moment I saw you."

Hanna smiled with a fleeting bit of happiness. "I bet you tell that to all the girls."

"No, only the ones I marry and spend fifteen years with."

"That many?" Tim walked her to the side of the bed and helped her sit.

"What outfit do you think I should wear?" she asked plaintively. "I know the doctor said it should be something simple, but I can't make up my mind between the blue outfit or the green one."

"I think the blue one is better on you. Besides you won't need it that long."

"I know, but I really don't want to look plain on my last day on earth."

"Darling, it's not your last day. You'll probably outlive me by several hundred years! You'll be around for as long as you like!"

She looked at Tim and smiled wistfully.

Tim tenderly assisted Hanna to get dressed in her blue outfit, then he quickly finished dressing. He helped her down the stairs where at the base of the stairs waited a treaded motorized chair. The chair was semi-autonomous and when it sensed Hanna getting close, it lifted itself to help her seat herself, being tuned to her brain through implants that had been previously embedded to assist her mobility. She didn't really drive the motorized chair, as much as visualize the location of where she wanted it to take her.

"Before we leave, Hon, step into the living room with me and let us pray one last time together before we leave," Tim said quickly.

"Of course, darling."

She rolled into the living room and Tim stood before her and knelt. He took her hands into his and they both closed their eyes.

Tim began, "In the name of God the Father, and His Son our Saviour Jesus Christ, we pray to you. Dear Father, our dear Hanna, who has blessed me with over fifteen years of wedded bliss is about to embark on a perilous journey today. We pray in Jesus' name that you guide her surgeon's hand with strength and courage and you return her safe to us this day. We pray that each doctor and each assistant is refreshed and at his or her own best today. Allow them to focus fully on the task at hand and may each decision be correct and each procedure accurate. Amen."

Hanna then added, "Dear Lord, your Son, Jesus Christ is my personal Savior and I place myself in his hands today. Please allow my doctor to be accurate and true. And, my Lord, my sweet loving Lord, should you decide that I must be with you today and no longer on this Earth as I have been, please watch over my loving husband, Tim. I never deserved such a loving and caring man. Please take care of him, the only man I

have ever loved. Amen.”

Tim looked up at her with tears in his eyes. “My darling, I will be with you when you awake from your surgery in VR rehab. I will always be by your side, you know that. But, are you certain, my dear, that you want to go through with this?”

“Yes, I don’t fear the consciousness transcription. The clinic has given me so much information and I have full confidence in the doctor. It’s probably going to be more tiresome than anything else. I’ll just be lying there while everyone else does the work.”

“No, I meant, are you sure you want to go through the transcription itself? You and I differ so much on this, for this seems so much against God’s plan for man. What will happen to your soul? Will your soul and body be separated?”

“Tim, we’ve talked more than enough about this,” Hanna assured him. “It’s just like my chair is a prosthesis for my legs, I’ll be getting a prosthetic brain, that’s all. I’m sure my soul will still reside in me, wherever I am.”

“This is still such a radical procedure. It’s still quite controversial. The courts are still deciding the issues. You could be considered not human any longer. You might even be considered legally dead!”

“Tim, yes, it’s still quite controversial but really it’s the only option open to me, you know that. Besides, I don’t care what the courts decide, I’ll still know I’m me and that I’m human. I’m not turning into a robot!”

With no further words, the two then proceeded to the hospital in the early morning dawn.

At the hospital, after Hanna checked in at admissions, they sat impatiently in the waiting area. Hanna was in her motorized chair and Tim sat next to her. After about twenty minutes, the surgeon, who was also Transcribed, rolled up to them.

“Hanna, how are you feeling today?” he asked.

Hanna looked at him with just a bit of fear cracking through her stoic appearance.

“I’m a bit nervous, Doctor.”

“That’s to be expected, of course. But are you feeling well, do you have any additional symptoms or other issues?”

“No, Doctor. I feel fine. I just want to get this over with. I’ve thought about nothing else for months. I want to get on with my life, even if it is inside a box.” Feeling embarrassed by her statement, she looked at the Doctor and said, “I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to...”

“It’s no problem, Hanna, really. Yes, life does go on, but it does change. But really that is what life is all about, isn’t it? We are constantly changing. Often slowly, but sometimes it is very quickly. But we change. As they say, the only constant, is change.”

“Thank you Doctor,” said Hanna.

The surgeon then turned to Tim.

“Father, are there any questions I can answer for you?”

“No, Doctor. My wife and I have prayed about this often and while I have my reservations, I want the best for my Hanna.”

“Have you had a chance to go to any of the counseling groups we talked about?”

“No, Doctor, I have spoken to a much greater Counselor, my God and my Bible. I gain solace from them.”

“Very well, Father. If you have any questions, please reach out to the social services group here. They’ll be able to answer any of your questions.”

The Doctor then turned back to Hanna.

“Well, Hanna, shall we go? There is a bit of preparation you have to go through before we start. And I have to mate to the surgical suite. If you are ready, why don’t you follow me?”

“One moment, Doctor.”

Hanna then wheeled her chair in front of Tim. She leaned over and they embraced and kissed.

She held Tim’s face and said, “Be well, my darling. I will see you soon.”

“You as well, my love. God is with you now.”

They hugged one last time then she turned and followed the Doctor through the doors to surgery.

Tim sat back down to wait.

Several hours later, as Tim sat alone in the waiting room, the surgeon rolled up to Tim.

“Father Misinger, would you come with me please?”

“Doctor, is there a problem?”

“Please come with me,” was the surgeon’s non-answer. Tim followed him silently into a nearby office and sat on one of the chairs.

The Transcribed surgeon rolled up next to him.

“I’m sorry, Tim. There was nothing we could do. Her instantiation failed. There was some initial activity, but we could not...”

“What do you mean? You mean she’s gone?”

After a pause the doctor said, “Yes. The transcription was proceeding normally when we encountered trouble. Instead of a conscious transcription we were forced to use an unconscious transcription method to try to salvage as much as possible from her brain. The cancer was too advanced. Too much of her brain had been destroyed; we really couldn’t recover enough matter to make her sensate. She never instantiated, she never regained consciousness. She was passed peacefully.”

His face darkens and he turned to the surgeon angrily, “How could you know that, robot?”

“Please Father, there is no need to use that tone of voice. Please understand...”

“Understand? Of course I understand! You failed her! She put her faith in you instead of God and you tortured and defiled her!”

“Please, Father Misinger, she felt no pain, I assure you!”

“Of course she felt pain! How could she not feel pain as she watched her body be defiled by those infernal machines! I begged her to let God take her silently and without pain and let the mercy of God proceed according to His plan. But she was insistent. She refused to opt-out. She actively sought out you monsters!”

The surgeon remains expressionless, “Father, I’ll leave you now. Please contact me if you have any questions. You may stay here as long as you need. Someone from Social Services will contact you about her remains. I’ll look in on you in a little while.”

The surgeon left the office and Father Misinger wept despairingly, looking up at the ceiling as if trying to see beyond its walls.

“God, why are You punishing me like this?” he cried. “I prayed for her soul. I prayed for Your forgiveness. I prayed for Hanna’s delivery from the disease YOU sent her. Why have You turned against me? Why have You forsaken me? How can I go on now without my darling wife?”

CHAPTER 1 THE INTERVIEW

**Charles Stevens for WIRED
August 2175**

When I was first approached to interview Father Ralph Chalmers, head of the First Church of the Transcribed, I was initially hesitant. I had heard about the church and thought it was some sort of gimmick. I thought the story of Father Chalmers' miraculous revival was more smoke and mirrors than actual fact. Also I felt that it was somehow a ruse to fleece the unwary of their earnings. Enough storefront preachers have tried this before, although not with such a technological bent as this. I was not interested in writing an exposé on a subject such as this at the time. I felt that if it was a trick, it would be found out soon enough. These kinds of scams rarely stand the test of time.

My editor prevailed upon me to do more investigations and see if there was enough meat here to do an interview. She said that if I thought it didn't smell right, she would back off, although she had heard from some of her friends that there was something unique here.

Over the last decade as costs have started to come down and technology has incrementally been improving, brain transcriptions have started to become more accepted by society. Though even now there is still some hostility to the Transcribed. Certain religious people claim that there can be no soul transferred as part of the process, so even though the Transcribed is a legal individual, they are nothing but soulless machines. They are just sophisticated computer programs

that mimic the personality of the deceased.

By anyone's standards, the prospect is terrifying and only performed as a last resort when the death of the body cannot be avoided by any other means. The brain, the essence, is moved to a computer. Actually a computing substrate composed of millions of other computers that replicate the functions of the replaced brain. Dendrite by dendrite, each neuron is replaced with a nano-sized quantum computer that totally replicates the source brain cell. But to do this movement from flesh and blood to silicon, the neuron is destroyed. So the process is one of movement, not copying. We don't end up with two brains. Once the brain is completely Transcribed, what is left is so much hamburger. Utterly and completely destroyed in the process of transcription. The body is decimated as well, since the process must also dig out the major nerves from the spine and extremities.

Father Chalmers' story of his transcription is incredible by anyone's standard. His body was killed in a car accident and his body lay dead for at least three hours before starting the transcription process. By any medical definition he was about as dead as he could ever be. His brain supposedly had no neural activity for at least fifteen minutes and according to the medical personnel I asked, his brain would have decayed in the time so that transcription would have been impossible. The synapses between his neurons would have decayed so much that there wouldn't have been a viable personality to activate in the computing platform.

Additionally, he shouldn't have had the transcription attempted in the first place. Both he and his wife had opted out of transcription preferring death to an afterlife inside a computer. And yet his wife overrode his wishes and demanded the transcription attempt over the recommendations of all medical and technological staff.

Though now divorced both he and his ex-wife say now that it was the correct thing to do.

I contacted Father Chalmers and asked if he would be open to an interview. He agreed and invited me to one of their services in their church. He gave me the address and I made an appointment to see him following one of his services.

The location turned out to be a rather plain looking converted warehouse. I had envisioned a cathedral with the priests in white bodies and robes. Everything painted white, white treads, white oculars, white everything. Perhaps even with a fog machine creating clouds giving the illusion of being transported to heaven. But that was not the case. There were no apparent trappings that you would find in other cathedrals. No icons, crucifixes, not even a choir or organ, or anything of a religious nature.

In fact, the space was completely open. There was no altar or sacristy. The Transcribed walk, trundle, and roll up forming neat rows. There are no pews, they simply stand or park.

These are the flock of the Transcribed. Those that took to being moved to a processing substrate, but did not give up the feeling of having a soul. Their faith is undeterred. Some say they feel closer to God now, than they did when they were embodied in flesh.

For them there is no wine, no host, and no physicality of transubstantiation.

I did watch the service, but for the unTranscribed or otherwise enhanced, there was nothing to see. All communication is performed in VR (Virtual Reality). To the unaided, it just appears as if a bunch of machines are standing around, waiting.

I was provided with a VR helmet by one of the church's human acolytes to observe the service. It was visual/audio only with no tactile interface. I was told that there are additional channels that could be made available, but they did not have

the resources to provide them. Only if I came in with my own VR setup or was Transcribed, could I experience the totality of the service.

In the VR world was the cathedral I had imagined. I donned the helmet and could see the Transcribed superimposed on my vision. All around was a grand space. And more interestingly, the Transcribed did not present themselves as their robot bodies, but the flesh and blood bodies that they had before they were Transcribed. I have been told that maintaining a pre-deceased body image is helpful in manipulating their robot bodies. I have no idea how they envision themselves as they reside within the physical structure of their bodies. Perhaps they think of themselves driving a tank or other wheeled/treaded vehicle as they make their way through the physical world.

The service itself actually felt like more of a traditional service. It had a Christian flavor to it, which relates to Father Chalmers' upbringing. That is where I saw and heard the choir. Father Chalmers led the service and in his sermon spoke about universal truths and quantum consciousness.

However, the actual communion was unavailable to me as I was untranscribed. I could not participate in the high bandwidth link that was the object of the service. This high-speed communion is similar to the communion in physical religious services. Through this process the minister connects the communicants with God. On the physical, human plane, it is done through the transubstantiation of bread and wine. Here it was the exchange of electrons in a world composed of qubits.

To my visual presentation through the helmet, the communicants and Father Chalmers became indistinct as though viewed through a smudged lens. There appeared to be movement of some kind but I could not discern what was being moved.

Then it stopped and everyone returned to distinct clarity.

Shortly after that, the service ended and the Transcribed left, both in the VR and physical world. When I took off the helmet, the space was empty with the exception of Father Chalmers and myself.

Following the service, I sat down with Father Ralph Chalmers who told me about the Church of the Transcribed.

CS: “Father Chalmers, when did you move to a computer?”

Father Chalmers: “I was transcribed eight years ago after my car accident. I had standing instructions that if I could not speak for myself, I wasn’t to be transcribed in the event of my death.”

CS: “Then why were you Transcribed?”

FrC: “My wife, Emily, over-rode my wishes. When we came up with our power of attorney statements she thought I meant my instructions for when we had grown old together and one of us had passed on. She was so distraught by the horrific nature of the accident, that she couldn’t bear to let me go.”

CS: “What happened when you woke up in VR rehab?”

FrC: “Perhaps I should speak of what happened *before* I woke up.”

CS: “Very well, what happened before you woke up? I know that you’ve made some pretty extreme claims. However, others who have been through this type of transcription say they were unconscious and had no knowledge of what was going on.”

FrC: “That may be true for others, but for me, I experienced God. I went to heaven.”

CS: “Others would say you hallucinated.”

FrC: “No, that is exactly what I *don’t* mean. I remember the crash. It seemed to happen in slow motion. I saw the car crumple as it skidded on the highway. The autopilot was desperately trying to correct the skid. I felt my body hit the

dashboard as the airbags deployed. I could feel my bones breaking deep within my body. I felt a lightness in myself and I left my body. I saw my body trapped in the car as though from a great height. Then, everything faded and there was darkness. I knew that I was dead. I could feel the darkness almost as a physical thing. I thought that somehow I had damaged myself so badly that I was blind and without sensation. I wasn't in any pain; I was just waiting for the end. Then there was light; an all encompassing light and warmth that I had never experienced before or since. I felt His infinite love wash over me as a pebble in a tsunami. I knew this was God, the Infinite."

CS: "Did God speak to you?"

FrC: "Not 'speak' as I am speaking to you, no. It seemed like his words just appeared in my mind. When I spoke to Him, it was a similar process. I would formulate my question or statement and just as I was about to speak, the words were taken from my mind."

CS: "You speak of God with the male pronoun. Is God male?"

FrC: "Heavens no! God cannot be put in a box. God transcends all. He is neither male nor female and simultaneously both. I use the male pronoun as a convenience to others."

CS: "What did you say to Him? What did he say to you?"

FrC: "It seemed like the conversation went on for hours, but I had no experience of time passing. We talked about my life and all the things I had done, and what I left undone. My transgressions, my sins, and my accomplishments. Nothing was held back. He knew me better than I knew myself. I confessed to everything. I felt like a worm."

CS: "Then what happened?"

FrC: "I remember the last exchange between God and myself. I was ready for hell, I felt unworthy of such deep unconditional love. Then God spoke to me one last time."

CS: "What did he say?"

FrC: "He said, 'My child, your greatest task lies before you. Part of my flock is cut off from me. I want you to be my good shepherd and return them to my love.' I asked, 'Lord, who is cut off? Whom do you want me to seek?' And He said, 'The Transcribed are souls lost in the wilderness. Return them to me.'"

CS: "What did he mean, 'return them to me'?"

FrC: "He didn't say. I presumed he meant that I should tell them that God is still there for them and they should have a church to go to."

CS: "Do you remember anything after that?"

FrC: "The next thing I knew I was reinitializing in VR Rehab."

CS: "I'm sorry, I'm unfamiliar with the term 'instantiating'. What does that mean?"

FrC: "Instantiation is the process of initialization. It was when my computer started running the program that is my mind. In the early days of computers, people would call it 'boot-up'."

CS: "Thank you.

What was your religious upbringing? Did you have any?"

FrC: "Yes I did. Both my parents were Catholics, though not strict. We were what you would call "one hour Christians". We came to church on Sunday and major holidays like Easter and Christmas, but otherwise did not have a lot of involvement with the church. But I pretty much stopped going to church after I grew up and got married. We only started going back to church after Emily got pregnant. We wanted to have our child, Christine, baptized because our parents insisted on it."

CS: "How old was your daughter when the accident occurred?"

FrC: "She was about three years old."

CS: “What did she think of your transcription?”

FrC: “At first she was confused. For some reason she thought I had gone on a trip overseas and that I was videoing to her. It got even more confusing after I came back home in my autonomous chassis. For some reason she thought I had gone to Tokyo.”

CS: “Why was that?”

FrC: “To this day we don’t know. Even she doesn’t know. It might have been that the chassis came from Toyo-Kogyo. It had a stylized Japanese ideogram for a logo. But truly we don’t know.”

CS: “Did she ever visit you in VR?”

FrC: “Yes, a few times, but only basic VR. She was too young to visit in FIVR. Eventually she came to understand that daddy was in an accident and he would be going around in a robot suit from then on.”

CS: “Was she sad about you being Transcribed?”

FrC: “We talked about it often with her. Also she had counseling to help her understand that I really was the same person I always was, just wearing different body.”

CS: “What does she think about it now?”

FrC: “As she grew older, she met other children whose parents or significant others were Transcribed. So she is pretty good with it now. And she spends every other weekend with me as part of our visitation plan so she is around a lot of Transcribed people now. She hardly thinks anything of it really. Though now with the church that her mother goes to has a completely opposite opinion of the Transcribed so I guess you could say she sees both ends of the spectrum.”

CS: “Your service seems to be Christian based rather than some other form of religion such as Islam.”

FrC: “Yes. I’ve always felt that I should work with what I know.”

CS: “So God didn’t tell you to make it one sort of church or provide you with plans of how to worship?”

FrC: “Oh, mercy, no! God, as I experienced Him, is indefinable to our poor ape brains so a church is incapable of being able to define God as Muslim, Jewish, or any other form of religion.”

CS: “So why the VR cathedral with the heavenly choir and gold trappings and such?”

FrC: “It is my way of trying to communicate what I felt while I was in heaven. It was nothing like it, of course, but it helps to set the tone and flavor of the service.”

CS: “I’ve spoken to the doctors that extracted your body and Transcribed your mind. They claim that you should have had no sensation whatsoever following the crash. Your neck and spine had been broken in several places, you had serious skull fractures, and various other major contusions, any of which would have caused death instantaneously. You were dead on the scene. The surgeon who oversaw your transcription could not detect any sign of neural activity as your neurons were Transcribed. The software should not have been able to boot your mind. There was no overt electrical activity of any sort. It was a miracle that you survived the transcription process at all. How do you explain what you claim to have experienced, when the most learned of doctors, several of whom are themselves Transcribed, say that you should not have had any experience at all?”

FrC: “That’s just it, I don’t have an explanation. It defies explanation; it needs no explanation. It just is. That’s the amazing thing about faith, isn’t it?”

CS: “There are those who would label you a heretic and charlatan. That you are preying on the weak, that you seek some advantage over those you minister. More darkly, that you are forming an army to unleash hatred and violence among the

unTranscribed.”

FrC: “As Transcribed people, we have no need of food, or worldly goods. We survive on electricity that our bodies create from internal piles, which can be charged by free sunlight. My ministers and I require nothing from our flock, but simply wish for them to see the love of God in His infinitude. We go amongst the Transcribed offering our services freely and without expectation of remuneration. We invite them to come to temple. They may stay or leave at their leisure. We are still individuals, we hold no ill will to any living thing.”

CS: “How did you feel when you woke up in rehab knowing that your instructions had been violated by your wife?”

FrC: “For an instant, I was furious at Emily. How could she take away my death like that? How could she be so arrogant and selfish? Then I recalled my discussion with God. Then I realized she had actually done God’s work. At that moment, I became grateful to her.”

CS: “Why was that?”

FrC: “How could I minister to the Transcribed without being Transcribed myself?”

CS: “But you are no longer married to your wife.”

FrC: “No, I am not. We divorced a year or so after I came out of rehab and took on my new body.”

CS: “Why was that?”

FrC: “Overall it was probably for the same reason that other couples divorce when one of the partners are Transcribed. I could no longer fulfill her needs as a flesh and blood husband. I could hug her and touch her, but all she felt was cold metal. We parted amicably enough.”

CS: “She said you were spending too much time creating your temple.”

FrC: “It’s not ‘my temple’, it belongs to all. Also, as I have no need to sleep, I would work throughout the night. I had no

EPILOGUE

So where do we go from here? What changes and improvements can we see for the future? How will society evolve as we make our way into that future?

Actually, the future of technology is easy to predict. As far as technology is concerned, everything is always smaller, cheaper, faster.

Improvements in technology appear to be improving on the reduction in size of the quantum computers that make up the neurons of the Transcribed brain. I have spoken to many technologists in this area and they are all confident that the size of the Transcribed brain will become smaller. Small enough, perhaps to fit inside the volume appropriate for a human cranium.

This has startling implications. Could it be that in the future we could see brains actually being transcribed within the human cranium? Perhaps a transcription in vitro? That would be an incredible feat! Imagine, walking into the surgical suite for transcription and walking out again in the very same body! Your loved ones would still see the same you, not the robotic chassis. You would still have all the advantages of VR communication and instant knowledge through downloading. It could completely eliminate the stigma that is associated with being Transcribed.

Alas, not quite yet. You see, much of the supporting technology such as the interface circuitry and power and cooling still need to be addressed. The physical human brain and body still is a remarkably efficient device. It manages to provide nourishment, oxygen, and supports such things as removing waste and temperature control, AND provides for the wonder we call self-awareness, while only consuming approximately one hundred watts of energy. The brain itself consumes twenty of those watts.

The Transcribed brain on the other hand, while a wonder of modern technology, consumes over six hundred watts of energy to provide the same level of consciousness as the human brain.

Heat regulation, and power generation still appear to be the wall that cannot be overcome. The current Transcribed brain is encased in an outer shell of support circuitry that provides power to each of the neurons and extracts the waste heat generated. This waste heat is regulated by heat exchangers that assist in generating power for the chassis and is expelled via cooling vents and fans.

If we were to suppose an actual human body with a Transcribed brain, they would possibly have huge blades of heat sinks sticking out their back, looking like a human version of a stegosaurus. They would also be dragging around a bulky battery box behind them to provide power.

That is why the humanoid chassis that some Transcribed have are so tall. Over two meters! The Transcribed brain is encased in a modified enclosure that allows for it to be contained within the cranium of the humanoid chassis. All power and cooling takes up the majority of the thorax. This puts a severe power penalty on the chassis. As a result, the humanoid chassis, while much more socially acceptable, can only go a few hours before having to recharge.

Current and anticipated improvements in reduction of size and power of the Transcribed's brain expect to be fewer than four hundred watts. While it is a significant reduction in power requirements it does not approach the reduction in power needed to fit within a human cranium and body.

So, for the foreseeable future, we will see improvements in chassis power requirements which will lead to smaller and lighter batteries, faster turnaround time in charging, and longer range and faster peak speeds for chassis movement. But being able to simply replace every neuron within the body with an equivalent quantum computer appears not to be

in the cards for right now, and so must remain a fantasy that Transcribed and non-Transcribed alike would dearly love to have.

Society too appears to be evolving on the acceptance of the Transcribed. While still reviled by many for religious reasons, as a whole, most others accept them as they would anyone who has severe handicap. Not too many decades ago, some people were confined to wheelchairs, often for their whole lives. These people who were afflicted with disease, or as the result of an accident, lost the ability to use their legs. While they were confined to wheelchairs, they were accepted in society without prejudice. So too, the Transcribed are more and more being looked on as a class of people with a handicap, because they have lost the use of their bodies and brains and go through life in a machine.

Most Transcribed, of course, would not necessarily consider themselves handicapped. Most feel that the advantage of electronic life, including complete VR sensorium and knowledge download, is an improvement of their pre-Transcribed life. Additionally, having a possibly, hugely expanded lifespan is exciting indeed!

On the outskirts of Transcribed life are the hackers; those who modify their chassis for improved strength or enhanced vision or sensory input. Even more extreme are those who attempt to share their sensorium and actually create what some have called to be a "hive-mind". Through sensorium sharing, each brain becomes a node of a much larger brain. An over-mind is created.

This was pioneered by the First Church of the Transcribed where the minister shared his sensorium with those of his parishioners, invoking the actual memories of his instantiation. He, and his parishioners, believed that the priest had an out of body experience following his body's death and pre-transcription. He claims to have seen and talked with God and he shares the memories of that visit

with his flock.

Others, myself included, claim that he and his flock are deluded and are participating in a shared hallucination of the priest's mind. While, perhaps it is soothing, they lose their identity while in this shared trance. Who knows what is actually being thought during that "communion"?

My personal belief is that they have created a hive mind that is either mad or less than conscious, and their so-called communion is nothing more than delusion.

My own transcription was nothing out of the ordinary. Fortunately, I was able to have it while fully conscious. My licensing tests were performed during surgery and I received my license on the same day as my transcription. I felt no spiritual uplifting as a result of my transcription. Indeed, most of what I felt was tedium lying prone on the operating table for seven and a half hours. And while I can re-experience that period at any time, I prefer to look forward in my life, not backward.

To those of you who have read this history, I hope I have given you some insight to what being Transcribed is all about, and how we will form the future of humanity.

It is an exciting time indeed!

-Afterword; Life Without A Brain, The History of Transcription - 2177



All over the world, the high bandwidth link and token ring switch was being used by the Transcribed to experience communion with each other. Not the first seconds of Ralph Chalmers memory, but exchanging knowledge and experience that each brings to the communion.

And while the communion only lasted a moment, each of the hive minds thought but a single thought, unbeknown to the communicants.

“Not yet.”

“Not yet.”

“Not yet.”

.

.

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“Soon.”

-END-

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Sandra Wagner has spent her forty-year career working with computers. She has worked on all types of systems, from multi-ton mainframes to the smallest digital controllers. She considers herself an Uber-Geek and has found creation of software an engaging career. She finds creative outlet in writing, acting, and drawing. When not on stage at the theatre, she writes stories.

Ship of Theseus is her first novel length story.