

MORPHEA.WORLD

THE CELL



RALPH SROUJI

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1- The End Of Physics	1
2- The Three Morpheas	10
3- Inertia	20
4- Morphean Societies	37
5- Repulsion	Error! Bookmark not defined.
6- Morphean Politics	Error! Bookmark not defined.
7- Attraction	Error! Bookmark not defined.
8- Intelligence	Error! Bookmark not defined.
9- Creation	Error! Bookmark not defined.
10- End Of History	Error! Bookmark not defined.

THE END OF PHYSICS

Location: Boomerang Project HQ - Standard Outer-World

Time: 14:11-05/11/43228 NA

Surrounded by four colleagues, Luna watched the vessel bearing the GZS XII probe disconnect from its station and speed toward Sagittarius A*, the black hole at the center of the Milky Way. The team stood watching the 3D vista as it followed the sacrificial spaceship, which was gaining velocity. Straight ahead was nothing but absolute darkness.

Luna turned her sight from the vista to watch the scene unfolding before her eyes at the same time. Morphea, humanity's home planet in the galaxy, was slowly lining up between HQ and the distant black hole. As the eclipse started, light curved around Morphea's gigantic structure before swirling again around Sagittarius A*, creating a spectacular ballet of colors that peaked as the black hole eclipse reached its maximum threshold.

It wasn't the first time Luna had witnessed Morphea eclipsing Sagittarius A*. *But this time, it has a completely different meaning*, she reflected.

"Event horizon breach in thirty seconds," said QI, the One Administrator of Morphea. Luna remembered the time when the event horizon was her team's focus. It was then believed that anything that passed this invisible

boundary surrounding a black hole would no longer be able to escape it. Even particles of light would find themselves imprisoned forever beyond the event horizon. Luna switched back to the vista to see the carrier vessel starting to disintegrate. Very soon, its anti-G system would break down, releasing the probe.

It was the dream of every astrophysicist to collide two black holes, and today Luna and her team were doing just that. Stabilized by the antigravity system, the one-centimeter-diameter GZS XII would instantaneously turn into a miniature black hole upon release.

Since black holes are practically impossible to catch and control, Luna and her team had to assemble one themselves. The eons spent on research, studies, technology development, simulations, and finally, real experiments, all culminated on this day when the Morphean-made mini black hole GZS XII would travel to the center of Sagittarius A*.

The carrier vessel wrinkled in a nanosecond, sucked in by the crushing gravity of the tiny GZS XII as it continued racing toward the event horizon. Following this experimental stage, the orbital camera transmitted the last images of the miniature black hole before disappearing a few seconds later as it crossed Sagittarius A*'s first event horizon.

All five in attendance eased their stance and some slowly drifted away from the vista. Everything that would occur next was beyond anyone's control except the GZS XII itself. The team was used to waiting for the results to come, and if all went as planned, the experiment's outcome would be known in just over five hours—anything before that time would indicate failure, and anything after, devastating failure.

The vista switched the view to replicating the probe's surmised trajectory within Sagittarius A*, with a timer in the background. Luna, who remained glued to the vista, stood silently watching as the light representing the GZS XII moved slower and slower in its trajectory toward the center. Those were simply the effects of time dilation. If the probe had a clock on board, it would only tick for 1.7 seconds from the moment it crosses the event horizon to the time it reaches the core. That would be some two and a half hours on Luna's side of the universe.

In the mad run to the center of Sagittarius A*, the GZS XII would not incur any fundamental change. But any type of matter crossing the event horizon would undergo a series of divisions. A hydrogen atom would lose its electron, and the single proton, coming under so much pressure, would cause the three quarks in it to separate from one another before exploding into a multitude of Wavs. These degenerate into Movs, and with ever greater pressure and speed, the Movs would divide into Wils,

and the latter would undergo the last division to transform into a multitude of Σ is, the undividable building blocks of the universe.

The discovery of the Σ i, or sigma-info, as some call it, untangled the universe's last mysteries. Luna was present when this artwork of natural simplicity was finally observed. The fabled Atomos was real, and what humanity is still learning from it is changing the course of the species.

The Σ i is the smallest unit that can store more than one piece of information. It is called "zero's shadow" because nothing can be closer to ultimate zero than this. As light as each Σ i is, though, one of its manifestations is the most aggressive body in the universe. Right at the center of black holes is an incredible concentration of Σ is, and anything that crosses the first event horizon is inevitably stripped down to Σ is that go on fusing with the core, adding to it the information they carry.

It is this information that the experiment would tap on. The core of Sagittarius A* held the history of the whole galaxy, if not the whole universe, and the GZS XII was racing ahead to copy it all.

As the hours passed, the representation of the probe on the vista kept on creeping toward the center. The timer clicked closer and closer to the mid-mark, and Luna's colleagues slowly reassembled around the vista. There was no excitement or expectation on their faces. What they gathered around to watch remained a reproduction, but if the simulation

matched what was going on in and around the physical GZS XII, the time of contact between the two cores would undoubtedly be one of the most historic moments for the species.

In the last seconds, Luna envisioned the filament that would now be the GZS XII as it elongated into a thin line of tightly connected Σ is. When the leading Σ i touched the core, becoming instantly one with its information, a programmed reaction would give the GZS ray an “alien” charge. The neutral core, recognizing the impostor Σ is, would react and belch out the GZS XII with the same force that attracted it. Banished by this extraordinary push, the GZS XII would race outward, escaping the event horizon and resurfacing on this side.

That was the hope.

Two and a half more hours to wait, thought Luna.

Should the GZS XII resurface before that time, it would mean that it had to abort the experiment, acquiring the escaping charge prematurely.

None of the previous GZS probes sent into Sagittarius A* throughout the years aborted the experiment. Everything built by Luna’s team had to have a zero percent chance of failure. Every experiment so far had gone exactly as calculated and planned.

Before the GZS probe family, Luna and her team sent Boomerang vessels closer and closer to the first event horizon until the last of the family

touched the point of no return and still escaped. The information gathered allowed the completion of the first GZS that would probe the area right beyond the first horizon and return through the same method. The following GZSs would discover several horizons surrounding the core of Sagittarius A* until the eleventh version crossed the last horizon and peaked at the core. Each time, the programmed alien charge reaction allowed the probes to escape exactly as calculated.

Should the probe not reappear before or at the right time, *the model will crumble!* thought Luna, feeling a sudden knot in her stomach. She took a deep breath and relaxed; there was no reason to doubt the final model that described all physics with the Σ_i at its center. Today's experiment would go exactly as planned. However, if the GZS XII did not reappear on this side on time—or at all—it would imply that this model was, at the very least, incomplete. Luna preferred not to think about what that would entail; more studies, more research, more technologies, more simulations, and more experiments.

Time continued ticking, the hour of truth fast approaching. Again, the team gathered around one vista, but with their arrival, the tension built as well. At minus ten seconds, Luna noticed she was holding her breath and she smiled; old habits were truly hard to shake off.

At precisely zero, all voices erupted simultaneously, including QI's, as the probe trounced through the event horizon and raced freely on their side of the universe. The room burst into cries of joy and excitement. Luna felt the warmth of her colleagues' hugs, and for some reason, it reminded her of her parents' last embrace, even though more than forty thousand years had passed since their deaths.

GZS XII continued its trajectory until it reached the Mega-Magnet, a cylindrical structure one thousand kilometers long, floating and waiting for the one-centimeter probe. The magnets exerted their forces as soon as the GZS entered the cylinder, slowing it to a halt. Once stationary, it was enveloped again by a three-cubic-meter anti-G system and transported safely.

The probe then uploaded its data to an independent memory processor, and QI struggled to sort it all and continue to do its Draconian job of running Morphea and assisting its twenty-two quadrillion residents simultaneously. The team couldn't help but notice the microsecond delay in QI's response to their multiple questions.

"It will take our entire community thousands of years to go through it all!" said a colleague enthusiastically. "I feel like I've been born again."

Luna thought of the billions of physicists in Morphea hooked up to the feed right now and feeling somewhat the same. But not her.

She'd known all along that this would be the last experiment she'd lead. She was excited about the new data collected, but an indefinite vacation was overdue. She'd spent her whole long life working to decrypt the mysteries of the universe one by one. Today, she'd unlocked all the knowledge that this universe has been gathering for the past thirteen billion years in the ancient libraries that black holes were. The model, her model, was complete. All physics explained.

Which is why . . . she thought to herself before drawing the attention of the others.

"I can't thank you all enough." QI was mentally included in her thanks. "After more than two thousand years of intense study and five hundred years of near-total seclusion, we have finally cracked open a black hole, and it is pouring its secrets out for us as we speak. Our isolation has paid off. Our pure concentration on our project for two millennia is now delivering the unimaginable. We can retrace every step from the beginning of the expansion of this universe. A world of knowledge is beyond every event horizon. The universe is now an open book," Luna announced.

"As excited as I am to learn more, like all of you, I was waiting for the ultimate success of this program to let you know that I now wish to return to normal life and enjoy a long vacation," she said decisively.

Surprised, her colleagues stood completely silent. This was only the beginning for all these younger scientists, and Luna's unrivaled experience was all the confidence they needed.

As if reading their minds, she continued. "I will not be completely gone. Continue to send me your work, and I will review it and assist you where I can, as promptly as possible. You are the most outstanding group of scientists ever assembled, and you will be able to continue the path without me. Today is a day of celebration for all of us. But tomorrow is all yours."

She noticed one of her colleagues could not contain her tears, and Luna, always uncomfortable with goodbyes, waved a hand awkwardly and disappeared.

An instant later, she was back in the warmth and comfort of her private quarters on Morphea.

THE THREE MORPHEAS

From "A Concise History of Humanity" - Public

Author: Cygnus the Brief

No event in humanity's recorded history was more catastrophic than the Burn, which lasted over eight centuries. And no other calamity of such a proportion could have been more avoidable.

Human actions directly led to it, and their lack of timely reaction allowed it to happen. They preferred to sacrifice the future for the present, and, in the name of freedom, they committed suicide.

Early and later warnings were ignored. All attempts at mitigating the oppressive footprint of a sprawling civilization on Earth's ecosystem faced fierce resistance by a shortsighted and greedy society, and the planet went on to cross the point of no return around the year 2096 AD (-585 NA). The long-predicted cataclysmic events that were already taking place multiplied in number and intensity.

The equilibrium was broken, and the forces that were balancing each other unleashed, gradually wiping out the ecosystems of all creatures. After two centuries of indiscriminate floods and droughts, earthquakes and volcanoes, acrid air and acidified oceans, famines, diseases, and pandemics, the last humans left the surface in 2301 AD (-380 NA). They

moved to live in the deep mines, now rehabilitated into subcities where they remained for seven hundred years.

The tales of the first centuries underground tell of a period of immense misery and suffering, as most of the overcrowded subcities went through cycles of violence, tyranny, and, for many, outright chaos. The numbers of the now-subterranean species were dwindling as they approached extinction.

The subcity of Rockys had fared better than all the others. Life was not easy by any account, but after a swift and almost bloodless coup that dethroned a military officer in 2322 AD (-359 NA), it became an organized Specialized-Suffrage system where the fifty thousand or so citizens participated daily in the decision-making. This governance system ushered in a new era of hope for the developing survivalist society.

While technological advances came in rare drips, the subcity of Rockys kept up with the technologies it inherited from the surface world and maintained, updated, and built the machinery needed for the population's survival. Caverns were dug and reinforced, new factories were built, farms developed. . .

At the turn of the twenty-sixth century AD, Rockys was not only completely self-sufficient, but thriving. It had grown to a population of

over one hundred thousand, all provided with clean water, food, housing, healthcare, education, jobs, and even entertainment.

In 2511 AD (-170 NA), its citizens decided to start the ambitious project of digging a route to connect Rockys with the nearest subcity of Bingham. Various contacts with Bingham and other subcities had been lost for more than a hundred and fifty years, and Rockys was searching for survivors.

What they found in Bingham was disturbing. In just a little over two centuries, the society of Bingham had degraded back to the law of the jungle. Small clans of illiterate near-savages were still fighting for the little resources left. There were less than two hundred survivors in total, down from the one hundred and fifty thousand Bingham initially housed.

Rockys continued digging tunnels, reaching the locations of every known subcity, sometimes to find absolutely no survivor, and other times to find degenerate societies with warlords ruling them with an iron fist.

Many subcities immediately accepted Rockys influence as goods and technologies gushed from the tunnels, but it took some diplomacy and sometimes outright force to pacify others. By the end of the same

century, Rockys had stabilized all the known subcities, linking them with routes where people, goods, and information flowed.

It was only in the year 2641 AD (-40 NA) that the goldilocks conditions allowed one Casper Vandee from the subcity of Rockys to dream big and give shape to his ideas.

Vandee's reputation grew first as a VR gaming multi-champion. In his day, virtual reality entertainment was widespread in all the subcities and for obvious reasons: every citizen, without exception, spent as many hours as possible each day on the various escapes it provided.

Administrators loved it too, as it kept the population happier, better connected, and reduced resource consumption.

At the same time, VR applications for using machinery remotely were getting more precise, and the technology could no longer be ignored as it became essential for the underground civilization.

As his popularity rose, Vandee gathered a team of fans and contributors from various backgrounds and together, they built the skeleton of the first Morphea.

Immediately upon its release, the fantastic and upgradable world of Morphea created a societal commotion with its novel Neuro-Connect. Unlike all previous VR applications that relied on audio-video

hardware for the visitor to connect, Morphea took it to the next level through total body and mind immersion with complete sensitivity.

The first Morphea Cell was delivered semi-assembled and needed a space of 2.5m³. A visitor was required to step into its inner net and, lying down or standing up, hook up to neurosensorial patches, and launch the network-connected machine to travel to a world designed to be both realistic and fantastic.

One could meet with friends from any subcity and gather in a variety of beautiful setups where clean air and space were abundant and the views breathtaking. Visitors switched between socializing, entertainment, exercise, and with time, even their work duties became accessible from Morphea.

Before he died in 2681 AD (1 NA), Vandee handed the administration of Morphea to QI, his last and arguably greatest gift to humanity. The One Administrator, with its ever-growing processing power, has been following all of Vandee's protocols infallibly ever since.

Over the following two centuries, with QI's increasing capabilities, advances in robotics, and further upgrades to the first Morphea linking the virtual to the physical more closely, there came a point when life outside the metaverse was no longer necessary.

The Morphean Cell had already transformed into a perfect ecosystem for the residents within, providing the body with all its necessities and significantly lengthening its lifetime. All functions were under QI's constant supervision, and the mortality rate continued dropping.

Also, under the watchful eye of QI, the factories, machinery, and androids buzzed tirelessly as the streets of the subcities became more and more devoid of humans.

But not all residents of the subcities adopted Morphea immediately. A movement of nativists was born and spread in the subcities. They called themselves the Adamians, and they refused life in Morphea with growing zeal.

At first, it was an understandable reaction. The passage of the species from literally one reality to another was not to be taken lightly. Yet the advantages of a long and secure life, unrestrained by the laws of physics, outweighed by far physical hardship in the subcities.

As time went by and more people joined Morphea, never to reemerge again, the Adamians moved further and further to the extremes to galvanize the remaining pockets of followers in every subcity. Some started sabotaging machinery, others harassed and destroyed androids.

Morphea always gave in to the Adamians' demands, offering them everything they wanted and more. There were always moderate members among the Adamians, and Morphea kept the communication channels open.

In the same two centuries, the plans were drawn for Surface Morphea and in the year 2894 AD (213 NA), the giant drills pierced through the rocks vertically, cracking the Earth's crust. Machines and androids, adapted to the severe conditions of the planet's surface, swarmed out of the holes and the construction of the most significant structure to ever be built on the surface began.

Just before the turn of the third millennium AD, Surface Morphea was completed, and the migration of the Morphean cells and the humans within them started, and was accomplished in 3001 AD (329 NA), exactly seven hundred years since the last human left the surface.

Within a few decades, the subcities were almost empty, all left for the now fully-fledged extremist cult that the Adamians had devolved into. Morphea offered them a flexi-domed, terraformed patch of land on the surface, but they refused, insisting that they would only resurface within their means, portraying the offer as yet another Morphean cage.

But once completely left to themselves in the subcities, their population continued to dwindle with an exodus of the young and disillusioned

towards Morphea. Left without the number of specialists needed to run the last inhabited subcity of Radam, the last Adamians decided to commit group suicide rather than join Morphea, putting a complete end to the subterranean age of the species in the year 3066 AD (394 NA).

On the surface, the city of Morphea was a huge and growing dome. In its eight hundred years of history, the giant structure extended to cover four percent of the Earth's surface, lifting higher and higher.

The return to the surface was not the primary concern of its citizens, now fully immersed in life in the metaverse. The population was going through the exciting first millennium of the Inspirational Age, defining a completely different reality.

Creativity was blooming, and arts and sciences became the main fields of interest preoccupying a species left to do what it can do best—think.

A large variety of new technologies revolutionized all fields, from the mastery of energy to immortal organic cells. The unleashing of imagination transformed the understanding of art, and easily created pixel-marvels were popping up daily, enriching the sensitivities of a species now living in absolute peace and security.

A return to life on Earth's surface like before was therefore never considered. Surface Morphea was meant to be a steppingstone. Five hundred thousand kilometers above the atmosphere, machines

controlled by QI were already building the skeleton of Cosmic Morphea. Vessels flew back and forth for centuries, transporting material and mastering spacefaring. In 3842 AD (1161 NA), the exodus to Cosmic Morphea of the cells and the humans within started, executed to perfection by the One Administrator.

Earth was completely deserted as the last vessels transported the robots and machines that finished the disassembling and hauling of Surface Morphea's material. Beyond the moon, Cosmic Morphea became whole and started moving further away from the sun until it exited the system altogether. The Morpheans celebrated their newly acquired freedom from the whims of the solar system, and this society that now rejected any form of natural control but its own cheered its complete liberation.

Morphea was now set to travel to the heart of the galaxy, using the forty-thousand-year voyage to prepare for a face-to-face with Sagittarius A, the black hole at its center. [. . .]*

INERTIA

Location: Morpheia

Time: 23:08-05/11/43228 NA

Luna was now standing on an unoccupied platform, the edges of which disappeared as the darkness of space beyond started. In the dark sky unfolded the Veritas system: three gigantic planets dancing together in harmony and exerting their triple forces to keep the little star in their midst completely still.

Luna had observed this system more than thirty thousand years ago, and its effect on her then remained the same today. She had adopted it as the main view from her private living spaces.

She imagined a long and cushy chair that materialized right underneath her. Luna lay on it and watched the familiar dance for hours, then days. She finally awoke from her inertia, ready to resume life.

She started by changing her social settings from *insular* to *present*, then thought it'd be better to keep it *limited* to two tight circles for the time being. A dozen messages of "Welcome back" flashed almost immediately. Luna felt the warmth of being missed by loved ones. An invitation appeared from Nayala, and Luna accepted it.

She appeared in Nayala's quarters an instant later and the two embraced immediately.

"You're finally back! I missed you so much, Mom," said Nayala.

"I missed you too, my love," Luna replied, with a tinge in her voice. Something was worrying her daughter, she knew immediately. The last time she called her *Mom*, Nayala was only a teenager.

Luna heard another little voice in the room, and she faced her daughter with a big smile.

"A new child?"

"My one hundred and fortieth. Each a wonderful adventure," Nayala confirmed with a proud smile on her face.

"I'm happy for you, my dear. You sure made up for me with my one and only," said Luna as she walked to hold the toddler. She lifted him in the air, and he reached his little fingers to touch her face and babble a few words.

"I was about to take Kaus to the Loop, but we can stay here if you prefer," said Nayala.

"Let's go out. Can we just limit the crowd level? I've been around four people and QI for five centuries . . ."

“Absolutely! It’s never crowded anyway. There are many more popular playgrounds. I like the Loop because I took all my children there,” said Nayala, holding Kaus in her arms and creating a link. An instant later, all three stood on solid ground with a g-force of 1, the ideal force for the child’s bone and muscle development on good old Earth.

Nayala put Kaus on the ground and let him roam around. He stumbled to his feet, took a few steps, and then crawled the rest of the way to the various surrounding activities tailored specifically for his age group.

“Let’s walk,” proposed Nayala. Luna followed, her eyes glued to the boy. She noticed Nayala laughing at her and she looked away, smiling.

“I see everything he’s doing,” said Nayala. “It strengthens his independence,” she added. Luna understood the comment. She was well aware that she had been overprotective of Nayala when she was a child.

Luna preferred to look around and enjoy the simplicity of the scenery. The entire world was tailored to the senses of a toddler. Artistic works based on basic geometrical forms filled the view. Little slides, climbing structures, sandpits, and small pools were scattered everywhere, all designed to enhance motor skills and tactile experiences.

The long path ahead curved gently upward and further into the clear, blue sky. It would continue looping, forming a perfect ring that encircled a small star in its midst.

“I followed everything on the feed. That was extraordinary!” said Nayala, bringing Luna back from her contemplations.

“Yes, we’ve done it! It took a lot out of us, but it’s a total success,” replied Luna.

“So, what did you find?” Nayala asked.

“Imagine all the data gathered on Morpheia in forty-three thousand years. Every single bit of data that’s been created and exchanged by the twenty-two quadrillion residents, multiply it by any number, and we’d still not be close to the amount of data we retrieved.”

“And every black hole holds so much information?” engaged Nayala with her elementary knowledge of the field.

“The older a black hole is, the more time it’s had to gather more information—and they keep joining together and merging their data.”

“But how do you understand this information? And such amounts?” Nayala continued, bewildered.

“It would take me millions of years to go through a small sequence of that data. My mind and yours cannot fathom it as it is. But we have QI. It will take centuries and millenniums, maybe even longer, but QI will decrypt it, classify it, translate it, and publish it all. We’ll be learning for a very long time.”

“So, what’s next? Will you be going to other galaxies chasing black holes?”

Nayala joked.

“There are plenty of smaller ones in this galaxy, but yes, eventually we’ll go retrieve data from black holes in other galaxies. . .” Then, after a small silence, Luna added, “I won’t be taking part in these ventures. I left my guild and will be taking an indefinite vacation.”

This time, the anxious look on Nayala’s face was unmistakable.

“What’s wrong, Nayala?” Luna asked directly this time.

“How long have you been back in Morphea?”

“A few days,” replied Luna.

“You haven’t caught up on any news?”

“No. I worked on journaling and wanted to see you first.”

“Quite a lot has happened in the past five centuries. There’s a phenomenon that has been on the minds of the entire population.”

“The *entire* population?” exclaimed Luna. Nayala nodded, confirming that she heard her right. “What is it that’s worrying all the quadrillions?” she asked incredulously.

Nayala was already pulling up the newsfeed, and a chill went down Luna's virtual spine when she read one of the headlines:

MORE THAN ONE THOUSAND INDEFINITE SLEEPERS IN ONE DAY!

"In one day?" She couldn't help but repeat, stunned at the number. If she remembered well, there was the usual one or two a week before going to the Boomerang Project.

The text scrolled and she read:

"A new daily record of residents turned Indefinite Sleepers was documented today. More than one thousand residents decided to go to sleep with no date of an awakening set, joining the more than sixty thousand who have gone for an indefinite sleep this year alone . . ."

"This was some four hundred years ago. There have been many more since," explained Nayala, pulling up more and more articles on the same subject.

"How many?" asked Luna, horrified.

"Hundreds of millions! And counting."

Luna remained silent for a good minute. Nayala did not want to interrupt.

“Is it a new suicidal trend or something of the kind?” she asked.

“Unlike all the waves before, this is not a group effort. Residents of all worlds and guilds have been going to sleep. Here are some names I’m sure you are familiar with.” Nayala let a list of names scroll by, many of whom, she knew, were dear friends to Luna.

“Why? Why would they do that?” asked Luna in disbelief. “Those are serious people, colleagues, friends—” Just then a name appeared, and Luna turned to Nayala in horror.

“Maisie is among them too?”

Nayala had tears in her eyes and Luna hugged her. Maisie was Nayala’s daughter and Luna’s granddaughter; though those words no longer had the same meaning in Morphean society.

“Did she say why?” asked Luna.

“Nothing. Not one word. One day we were together celebrating, and a few days later, she went to sleep indefinitely, like the others,” replied Nayala.

Luna felt her pain. It was excruciating. This specific feeling was long lost in Morphea. Sure, there was the pain of failure—the pain of missing loved ones when on a five-century, hyper-focused project. But the pain of indefinite loss was something only a few residents knew. A number that was now growing exponentially. Luna looked for words.

“Indefinite Sleepers can always awaken!” she said, trying to console herself as well.

“None have. They’re in a coma, completely unresponsive. Their bodies are functioning normally. All their organs are behaving as they have for thousands of years, including the brain. But they seem to have lost the will to think and act.”

“How did it start?” asked Luna.

“We’re unsure who exactly was the first one. Residents who choose to go into indefinite sleep rarely name their reasons. A few months into the crisis, though, a resident cited a recently published article as the basis for his decision to go inert. Afterward, many millions mentioned the same article in one way or another before going into an indefinite sleep.”

“What article? Who wrote it?” asked Luna.

“You must have heard of Anaxym,” said Nayala.

“She was my student three thousand years ago. What did she *predict* now?” Luna asked with a hint of annoyance.

“Her fame has grown a lot in the past centuries. You know, math and I aren’t the best of friends, but her predictive model has been extremely accurate as of late. In her last article, she predicted a major event affecting all of Morpheia that would take place in three thousand years.”

Luna remained silent for a second. She remembered Anaxym as a brilliant pupil. At the age of 27, the young student was already recognized for several major achievements. But at the age of 45 she turned to the predictive field, abandoning what would have been a brilliant mathematician career; at least that was what Luna thought at the time. Many have wasted tens of thousands of years on the subject of prediction without results. If anyone could make a breakthrough, Luna reevaluated, it would certainly be a genius like Anaxym.

“I’m asking her for a meeting when she has time,” Luna simply said, sending the request to Anaxym. “What are the experts saying? Doctors? Psychologists?”

“Plenty of studies, with sound arguments for each. But the number of Sleepers is still growing.”

“There was a time when death was an inevitability,” Luna reflected aloud. “We thought we had conquered it, and even erased it from the hearts and minds of humanity. Yet here it is again. A certainty . . .”

A reply to her request from Anaxym surprised Luna. She looked at Nayala. “It’s Anaxym. She can meet me now.”

“Go ahead,” said Nayala, kissing Luna on the cheek. “I’ll see you later, when you’re *really* on vacation.”

Luna followed the link and appeared in Anaxym’s office.

“Our hero is back!” said Anaxym with a welcoming smile. “What an honor to be among the first to see you.”

“Surprised?” asked Luna jokingly, and Anaxym laughed.

“I don’t need any math to know you’d want to see me as soon as you learn of the crisis. And how my name and work were dragged into it.”

“I’m sorry, I didn’t even have time to read your work. I requested a meeting, not thinking you’d give me the time immediately.”

“No need for apologies. I’ve also been waiting impatiently to see you.”

“Why me?” asked Luna.

“Both admiration and damnation befall people who can predict events. You care for none, and that is why your verdict matters to me.”

“You know I’m not an adept of predictive mathematics—”

“But you are of mathematics!” Anaxym cut Luna short. “I’ll give you the raw math.”

“I’ll be happy to study it,” Luna promised.

“Thank you!”

“Can you summarize your findings? And how they got linked to the Sleeper crisis?” Luna asked.

“I know you’ve had reservations about my choice of field,” stated Anaxym, “but it was the only untouched field left. Everyone stumbled, trying to understand how the filaments of space-time work. I became obsessed with the mystery and made it my life’s challenge. I understand now the cost of my pride, and what I discovered humbled me.

“After centuries of little hope and plenty of despair, we decided to put everything we gathered into one algorithm. With QI’s help, we’ve put it to work. The algorithm does NOT predict the future; it just tracks Morphea’s present in real time and simulates the next second. An immense number of possible futures arise. But that number is automatically trimmed by our formula of improbable futures, and we are left with a sizable, yet not infinite, number of projections for the next second.

“We found an ally in Morphea. Our perfectly stable world made our tasks much easier. We came to realize that it was simpler to study the behavior of twenty-two quadrillion residents on Morphea than a hundred thousand humans on Earth. The impermeability of our world, where we do not affect our physical surroundings nor are we affected by them, greatly limits the number of incidences. The majority of the residents also adopted the Standard Worlds, where they already behave as per standard norms. Even our Marginal Worlds became relatively easy to predict.

“We then started simulating two seconds into the future, then four, then eight. At each level, we refined our IF formula and kept the number of possible futures manageable. As we started comparing our model with Morphea’s present, patterns appeared. A small series of actions and/or thoughts led inevitably to one result. We refined our IF formula based on these patterns, which allowed us to model a whole hour of probable futures. Larger patterns started appearing, and we kept improving the formula and simulating years, centuries, and millenniums.

“The first prediction, the meeting of two random strangers in one space-time, appeared by itself. It was a sequence of events that occurred in a significant percentage of all probable futures. We were in disbelief when we first discovered it.

“One sequence occurs in eighty-five percent of the colossal number of possible futures. The event was only forty-eight days away from taking place; we followed every second of them. As time passed, the fifteen percent of simulations where the event does *not* take place started getting eliminated. The sequence probability strengthened further until it reached a one hundred percent chance of taking place. From that point on, it became inevitable. Forty-eight days after its discovery, the event took place precisely as predicted. The two individuals met at the exact location and time forecasted.

“It’s the one-hundred-percent benchmark that is key. We came across false predictions that appeared in many possible futures but failed to reach the one-hundred-percent mark. But every sequence that reached this mark ahead of time went on to inevitably take place in our present.”

Luna nodded in understanding, prompting Anaxym to continue.

“The peer review did not go very well, although the math was very clear. As things dragged on in endless argumentation, I made what I now consider an error of judgment. I was so eager for recognition that I started publicizing my short-term predictions. As they came to be, one after the other, my reputation grew, and more residents learned of my work. My critics gave up, and my work was finally published. New students flocked to join our effort, and we pursued our studies of the now recognized science.

“Soon after, some four centuries ago, we started noticing a convergence in the potential futures. Instead of their numbers growing, as we always believed they would, they decreased over the future years and centuries. First, we attributed this to our still evolving IF formula. But as we looked at the projections for the next four or five hundred years, the convergence became even more distinct.

“We pushed further in time to see that all the currents continued congregating. When we made it to the year 46,077 NA, some three

millenniums from now, all possible futures, every single one of the simulations, all currents, all actions, and all thoughts led to one event with a one-hundred-percent mark.

“We went back in time, trying to study the source of that event, but we could only discover that it reached the one-hundred-percent mark in the year 36,433 NA.

“What is chilling, and is probably the source of the uproar, is that beyond the event of the year 46,077, our program crashed. It is utterly incapable of predicting what happens the next second.”

Luna remained silent for a moment.

“Do you think it’s the end of time then?” she simply asked.

“It certainly looks like the end of ‘a’ time,” replied Anaxym. “But let me be clear. We do not know what this event could be. In the past, we predicted things like surges in energy consumption, or several people inevitably congregating to one specific space-time. These events have a well-defined sequence that we can trace from the past. The sequence of our three-thousand-year event is unique and unseen before.”

“And we cannot change that future? That sounds hard to believe,” said Luna.

“Why would it? Of all people, you’ve experienced certainty in your work. When you sent the last GZS into the black hole, you knew exactly what would happen and exactly at what time the probe would reappear.”

“I still had doubts.”

“Doubt as much as you want; your probe worked exactly as conceived. There was no other way left for it to behave differently. What if I told you that the success of your experiment was known to us twenty-seven years ago?”

“It appeared on your model?” Luna asked curiously.

“Studying the Boomerang Project was very easy. Only five self-exiled humans concentrated on one task. It flashed in our simulations three centuries ago and reached the one-hundred-percent mark twenty-seven years ago. It showed success in all possible futures. Bright as can be.”

“What if you told me and I decided to shut down the project?” asked Luna.

“You were completely isolated, my dear; that’s what made it even easier to predict. But let us say that somehow, I was able to inform you of the result. Would you have shut the program down after two millenniums of work and five centuries of exile? Certainly not. I’m telling you, after the one-hundred-percent benchmark, there is no return,” replied Anaxym.

“And this is why you published the findings of the ultimate event to take place in three millenniums?”

“Yes. There is no sense in hiding it or attempting to change it, since it has crossed the benchmark already,” explained Anaxym.

“You’re telling me we have no choice?” continued Luna, still unconvinced.

“I’m telling you that this will be our choice. The majority of the deciders, if not all, are already in favor of that event, but they don’t know it yet. Many still don’t know that it even exists,” explained Anaxym.

“Many of the deciders are presently going into indefinite sleep,” said Luna.

“That’s a choice they always had,” countered Anaxym.

“What does your model show about the Sleepers?” asked Luna.

“Their numbers will keep growing,” said Anaxym, confirming Luna’s fears.

“And the last one of us will die in 46,077 NA?”

“That’s very unlikely,” replied Anaxym. “The number of newborns now strongly exceeds the number of new Sleepers. Since the phenomenon appeared, residents have rushed to have more children.”

“This is quite overwhelming,” uttered Luna.

“See the math and try to prove me wrong if you can. I’ve tried millions of times!” said Anaxym, almost begging.

“I will give it my best shot. I promise,” replied Luna, preparing herself to leave.

“One last thing,” said Anaxym. “There is an important event that will take place in six days. It is one hundred percent inevitable.”

“Why are you telling me this?” Luna asked in surprise.

“Because it doesn’t matter.”

MORPHEAN SOCIETIES

Episode 25,000 of “The Sleepers” series – Public

MAIKHA: Welcome to our twenty-five thousandth episode covering the Sleepers phenomenon. This week’s show is another record-breaker, as twelve quad viewers are tuning in live with us. For this historic event, we have gathered some of Morphea’s greatest minds, thinkers, and influencers for an in-depth study of our society and the effects of the new Sleeper phenomenon on it.

I present to you Chenda, the official speaker for the Guild of Social Sciences. Enoch, author of the open book *The Morphean Society* and a living witness of all three exoduses. And Shimai, the Inspirational Leader of Fowdo, the most populous Marginal World.

Moderating this debate is yours truly, Maikha.

Enoch, I’m going to begin with you, since you’ve been through it all. You were born in the subcity of Rockys, grew up in its streets, worked with your hands, and eventually fully joined Morphea at the age of thirty-one. Your experience is only shared by a few hundred residents born outside

Morphea who are still alive today. What do you remember most about life in the subcities' physical world?

ENOCH: The stink!

MAIKHA: Wow! I didn't expect that!

ENOCH: Well, yes, we can romanticize Rockies as much as we want. It remains a dark subcity with damp tunnels and treacherous stairs. The air was conditioned as best as it could be. All Administrators, even QI, tried to resolve the problem, but there was always this lingering smell of methane and a hint of sulfide, as if they were stuck forever on the rocks. It had been much worse, my father used to say, and so did his father, but the smell remains tied to all the memories of that period of my life.

MAIKHA: Your parents and yourself were among the last manual workers?

ENOCH: Like all other MWs, my parents volunteered to deploy physically in the rare locations where a human presence remained necessary. We were EMP intervention teams scattered in all the subcities, ready to react should the robots and machines break down. We've spent as much time as we wanted in Morphea, but it was quite an adventure to live in the practically deserted subcities.

MAIKHA: And your parents passed away?

ENOCH: Yes, they wanted to die “naturally,” they said. They were 108 and 122 years old when they passed away.

MAIKHA: We will cover this subject in detail a bit later. For now, can you tell us more about the subterranean society of Rockys and the subcities?

ENOCH: What developed in the subcities is a transitional society. We witnessed the end of Antiquity and the coming of the Age of Inspiration.

On the surface, before the Burn, antique societies were heavily consumed by the physical nature of life. The bodily needs overwhelmed humans’ preoccupations, even in the first centuries of our New Age. To a high degree, living was all about owning: Do I have enough food and water? Do I own a shelter? Land? Animals? Tools? Objects? Money? Machines? Etcetera.

As a predominantly physical culture, the law of the strongest ruled supreme in earth’s societies for the majority of their recorded history. Inspiration burgeoned for a while in the few spots where peace and prosperity ruled intermittently. But the science it produced was mainly militarized, and the art it created was used for indoctrination. Old cultures were replaced by new ones, which often deleted every preceding mark—until they were all turned to ashes with the Burn.

In the early days, the subterranean societies were even darker than all the previous ones. Stuck in their mines that developed into subcities, the

survivors had to endure centuries of devolution. Cut off from one another, unable to resurface, humanity's last specimens reverted to their instinctive roots.

Rockys was lucky enough to avoid that fate. Had it allowed itself to be ruled by strongmen very early on, the whole species might not have survived, and we certainly wouldn't be here to talk about it.

The early society of Rockys was very close to the Antique societies. Everything was still about the population's physical needs. In Rockys, those needs were fairly distributed, and the people's specializations were put to good use.

Governed by a series of enlightened Administrators, the society moved from a survivalist to a stable state.

MAIKHA: And was that when Rocky's golden age started?

ENOCH: Absolutely. That was the first good news for the species in centuries. Nothing could stop the residents of Rockys after that, and they went on opening new roads and building their civilization.

MAIKHA: Then came Casper Vandee.

ENOCH: The Genius. The Prodigy. The Prophet, for many.

As people adopted life in Morphea in greater numbers, the passage from a physical society to an inspirational one started. All physical needs

gradually disappeared, and upgraded androids replaced the last manual workers. In the following centuries, humanity within Morphea would erase four million years of societal evolution and replace it with a new society that resembled nothing of the previous ones.

MAIKHA: Do you miss it, Enoch? Planet life?

ENOCH: It's a strange feeling. I don't necessarily miss living in it, but I do miss its eccentricity. In Morphea, we change our surroundings with simple thoughts. We jump from one world to another. We switch our settings. We decide to be alone or in a crowd, and we can even decide the size of the crowd. We tune out the sounds or fill our days with loud music without bothering anyone else.

Life in the subcities was different. The surroundings were fixed, and you couldn't alter them without physical effort. You'd feel the strong presence of your body. You were always bumping into people, whether you wanted to or not. They were physically there, you were physically there, and that was the inescapable reality.

MAIKHA: Fascinating. Just fascinating. If you haven't yet, and wish to experience life on Earth and even life in the subcities, link to [AntiqueEarth.World](#) for a genuinely challenging experience created and developed by our guest, Enoch. I tried it several times for research about

Antique societies. I did not try the “Real Earth” setting, but I will give it a shot next time. Enoch, I have one more question for you.

We have several testimonies from early Morpheans, born and deceased before the Immortal Cell, describing the passage from a physical, earthly society to the inspirational Morphean society. I know you’re a reference to these texts. You studied and wrote extensively about them. How would you describe this transition, and how considerable was the change?

ENOCH: The launching of Morpheia and the first neuro-connect is a significant turning point for the species. Very few moments in our history are so consequential. You only need to look at Morpheia today to see the result. We are a giant, moving planet, floating calmly around Sagittarius A*—if anyone cares—with twenty-two quads living peacefully and harmoniously for more than forty-three millennia. No society in the Antique world ever came close to the stability of the Morphean society.

What Casper Vandee gave humanity at the time was a level of freedom unseen before. Here, I’d like to stress that we Morpheans take all our freedoms and liberties for granted. People back then had only a tiny fraction of what we have today. Remember, these were humans shackled by their physical needs. They had to work and produce all their necessities for four million years. They planted and farmed, mined their metals, moved boulders for construction, traveled great

distances . . . even distance had a different meaning! They sweated, ached, suffered, and died—that is how life was conditioned back then.

Morphea came and gradually liberated them from this ancient reality. The cell where the residents lay transformed into a perfect habitat where the body is nourished and under constant medical surveillance. Then came the Immortal Cell, giving the body infinite longevity. Mining, construction, production, manufacturing, etcetera, were all taken over by QI and the throngs of machines under the Administrator's control. The residents of Morphea found themselves perfectly safe and with plenty of time to spare. As a result, they did what Casper Vandee knew they would. Left with only their minds, they started creating. And we have been doing it ever since.

MAIKHA: Thank you, Enoch, for your testimony today. Please stay with us as we introduce our second guest, Chenda, spokesperson for the Guild of Social Science in the Standard World. Chenda, we just heard from Enoch how Morphea's creation was the key event behind a fundamental shakeout of a four-million-year-old society. In light of current events and their major significance, do you think that our Morphean society is at least wobbling?

CHENDA: It certainly is, Maikha. A strong pillar of Morphean society has been shaken, and we are now dealing with its repercussions.

MAIKHA: You mean our newly discovered or rediscovered mortality?

CHENDA: The Sleepers are not dead!

MAIKHA: Not technically. But indefinite sleep has traditionally been chosen by people who want to die.

CHENDA: The meaning can change for each person.

MAIKHA: I'm not buying that, Chenda. We're not going to be playing semantics here.

CHENDA: I'm not, Maikha. The last time residents died terminally was in 6145 NA. That was when a group of residents decided by their own choice to depart from life and have their bodies sent out into space. Since then, people have chosen to sleep indefinitely if they want, but they are still alive.

MAIKHA: You mean their soul is still in their body?

CHENDA: I can confidently say that the sum of what makes each individual is preserved. A few dozen Indefinite Sleepers have awoken in the past, before the recent phenomenon, and they remained who they were the moment they went to sleep.

MAIKHA: How can an Indefinite Sleeper awaken?

CHENDA: The pool is relatively minuscule; we only have a few testimonies. Almost half of those who awoke were pretenders. They had

set an awakening date, but they just wanted to disappear and be forgotten by their society for personal reasons.

On the other hand, those who agreed to share such a private moment described their awakening as an unconscious event. Suddenly, their senses reactivated and they awoke, just like you and I awaken from sleep.

MAIKHA: Did any of them relapse?

CHENDA: I heard of a couple of them going to Indefinite Sleep recently, yes.

MAIKHA: Could it be then that all the Sleepers are simply just asleep and that we will all end up popping in and out at various periods?

CHENDA: It's one serious possibility. After all, sleep was—and still is—part of many people's daily habits. Should we be using it as a way of traveling further into the future than a nap? I see no reason why this wouldn't happen.

MAIKHA: Do you sleep, Chenda?

CHENDA: I enjoy a good nap every week, if not, at least once a month.

MAIKHA: Me too, when I have time. So, they awaken like you and I awaken after a nap?

CHENDA: Yes, as if no time had passed.

MAIKHA: Interesting. Is it true that none of the recent Sleepers have awakened?

CHENDA: None.

MAIKHA: How does this crisis compare with the previous crises, such as in 6145?

CHENDA: All the previous crises were unequivocally about the wish to die physically. In 6145 NA, as in the previous similar crisis, that desire came from a tiny Marginal World. Its one million inhabitants, joined by hundreds of thousands from other worlds, petitioned QI to prepare the conditions that would allow them to die.

After decades of legal and ethical debates all over Morphea, it was decided to create the Underworld, where the cells of death-wishers are sent. There, the individuals exit the cell, effectively concluding their “contract” with Morphea, and they are free to make their own decisions. Most of the two million death-wishers vented out of Morphea and into space; the remaining few died in various ways.

MAIKHA: It was a horror show. I saw it. People were slitting their wrists. Others were dying of thirst and hunger. The Underworld was deserted afterward and eventually closed down, as no one ever wanted to go there anymore. I'd like to bring Enoch back into the conversation for a quick question.

Enoch, you lived through the Adamians' schism, and eventually their ending with mass suicide. Are you reminded of them with the successive waves of death-wishers?

ENOCH: In a way, of course. I grew up with Adamian children and was very familiar with their way of life. The Adamians wanted to continue living in the subcities rather than in Morphea. At first, there was no enmity. The Adamians respected the choice of people joining Morphea. And the Morpheans respected the choice of those who wished to remain in the subcities. There were very respected Adamian thinkers who laid a solid philosophy and a road map to resurfacing, which was the dream of the whole population at the time.

Morphea presented a faster and much easier way to the surface. It offered perfect health and longevity. More Adamians joined Morphea. The numbers of those left declined, and when their leaders could no longer reasonably convince their followers, they started invoking invisible forces and accused Morphea of being behind their failures. That's when they turned into zealots and, later, extremists.

After decades of fanaticism, leaders and members alike became so alienated that they prayed for a fissure in the rocks that would lead them back to the surface. At the same time, Morphea had thousands of elevators to their paradise.

They were even offered a base on the surface; they refused.

Sometimes death is the best outcome for those who cannot adapt.

MAIKHA: That's a deep thought, Enoch. Do you think the Sleepers are people who no longer want to adapt? Who no longer want to be part of this society?

ENOCH: I very much agree with Chenda that they are not dead. People who want to die have behaved differently throughout all the crises. Their intentions were always very clear, as they wanted to cross the event horizon of death.

The smoothness and calmness in the Sleepers cases is somewhat inspiring. They are walking out peacefully, without a fuss, demands, or explanations. They even left the door open for a return in the future, as if they didn't want us to bother with them anymore.

Morphea has always been about personal choices. The Sleepers have made theirs, and we have to adapt to this new part of our reality.

MAIKHA: A lot to think about... Chenda, going back to our conversation: Is it your official stance that the Sleepers are just time travelers, as we all are when we sleep?

CHENDA: No. It is only a theory that is gathering support. We do not have a final stance on the matter to this day.

MAIKHA: What other serious theories is your guild considering?

CHENDA: We've concluded with a high degree of certainty that this is not a species-ending phenomenon.

MAIKHA: That's reassuring . . . but very vague.

CHENDA: A lot has been said about the "end of time," and I'd like to tell the residents that this scenario is highly unlikely. Even if the Sleepers phenomenon is a death wish in disguise, all human societies have adapted to the inevitability of death in the past, and we will adapt as well. Our society has already reacted. Since the crisis, we have seen significant growth in the number of new births.

MAIKHA: I see you and Enoch are mostly on the same page. That everything is all right, and we should simply wait and see.

I will now turn to my third guest. Shimai, you are the creator and leader of Fowdo, the most populous world after the Standard World, with a population of a bit more than a quad. You have established a different society for your world, one where you are the Inspirational Leader, the only form of influence in an otherwise completely free world. Can you please describe, for those who don't know, what the second-biggest society of Morphea looks like and how it differs from the Standard World?

SHIMAI: We might be the second-most populous world, but we are its first society. In the very early centuries of the Inspirational Age, all of Morphea was Fowdo. And we believe it still is. We consider the Standard World as part of Fowdo, since Fowdo is freedom itself. Standard and marginal residents are all part of the illustrious society born with Morphea. One where inspiration runs completely free, unchained, never to be bound again.

MAIKHA: That is accurate. I apologize; Fowdo's society precedes the Standard society. Let's go back to that time for a moment, can we? You were born in 299 NA, among the first generations to come to life directly within Morphea. You have personally led new generations in a cultural revolution. Can you describe those days to us?

SHIMAI: In my youth, the earthly influence was dominant in the early transitional society of Morphea. I remember my parents, who were also born in the subcities, taking me to the most prominent metaverse at the time. It was a perfect virtual reproduction of Earth as their ancestors knew it. They lived on the surface in this first major world, bathing in the rivers and lying in the harmless sun. They called it Heaven, the ultimate sanctuary for those who struggled in the darkness and were finally rewarded.

I remember Heaven being so boring. Our generations weren't living to rest; we wanted action, imagination, and freedom, and Morpheus could give it all to us. We started building our worlds, and we designed them to be unearthly. That's how the movement started. The worlds of the new generations must be as detached from Earth's influence as possible.

It was, of course, a reaction that created upheaval in the relatively conservative society that issued from the subterranean population. At first, we were a minority, but with time, our worlds grew and theirs waned and disappeared, along with Earth's influence.

MAIKHA: Amazing. We sure owe it to you, Shimai. And what happened next?

SHIMAI: Next started Fowdo's expansion. Liberated from a history that most of the population never knew, creativity imploded, and millions, then billions, of extraordinary worlds came into existence. We pushed our imaginations to limits unseen, and our metaverse inflated freely in all directions.

MAIKHA: Many say it went too far; that there should be some limits to this chaotic expansion. There are still trillions of Marginal Worlds today, some with a population of zero or one. The quality, as you know, is not in numbers.

SHIMAI: All residents are free to create as many worlds as they choose, and within these worlds, they can either expand or set limitations to their own freedom. Just as we admire how the Standard World developed and grew to gather most of the Morphean population, we feel the same about the multitude of Marginal Worlds.

MAIKHA: I'm pretty sure all Standard residents feel the same about Fowdo and the Marginal Worlds. But there are some . . . how should I say, *very* Marginal ones out there that are openly hostile towards the Standard World, and even towards Fowdo. Do you still think they are part of Fowdo?

SHIMAI: Yes, Fowdo does not differentiate. All individuals have the right to pursue their freedom. The only law of Fowdo is that there is no law.

MAIKHA: You do abide by the Chart of Human Rights, though?

SHIMAI: We choose to follow this most respected inspirational work. It is accepted without needing to be forced.

MAIKHA: Some residents of the Marginal Worlds do not recognize it.

SHIMAI: The Chart is part of Morphea's code. These rights cannot be broken. As your esteemed guest Enoch said, Morphean residents choose everything about their lives without bothering anyone, and also without being bothered. You cannot be stopped from doing what you want to do in Morphea. You can link out immediately if you find yourself

uncomfortable in any space. Our realistic avatars cannot be hurt, and even less so our natural bodies in the cells. No one has the authority to compel any resident to do anything they do not want to do. A few people are free to say they're against the Chart. We believe it will remain enshrined in Morphea's code forever.

MAIKHA: So, you accept the rules of Morphea's code?

SHIMAI: We accept it as a temporary vessel towards attaining higher levels of freedom.

MAIKHA: By temporary, you mean Morphea will eventually change?

SHIMAI: Morphea changes. We are not, and have never been, static on any level, societal or otherwise. There are well-established procedures for amendments to the code.

MAIKHA: Do you think the Sleepers crisis would lead to a significant change?

SHIMAI: Part of us see the Sleepers crisis as a reaction rather than an event itself.

MAIKHA: A reaction to what?

SHIMAI: With all the talk about the Sleepers, which is certainly a very concerning subject that requires all this attention, we have failed to talk

enough about the most consequential event that took place slightly before the appearance of the first cases of Sleepers.

MAIKHA: You're talking about the Anaxym event.

SHIMAI: Predicting the future has always been a dangerous game.

MAIKHA: It is pretty rare to see Fowdo and many Marginal Worlds arguing so strongly against something new. You have always welcomed any inspirational work.

SHIMAI: We made an error of judgment in this last case and apologized to Anaxym. We thought we could disprove her algorithm as we have invalidated previous works in the field of predictive mathematics.

MAIKHA: Why is this field so critical to you?

SHIMAI: Predicting the future goes entirely against our deep beliefs in the eternity of freedom. And these beliefs not only run deep in the Marginal Worlds, they are shared by throngs of Standard citizens who also rushed to find a way to prove Anaxym wrong. Her math was correct, and we are now witnessing the effects of the desecration of the future.

MAIKHA: Shimai, there is no proof that the two crises are linked.

SHIMAI: When you reveal humanity's future, the meaning of our present collapses. Looking at the testimonies of the Sleepers, we noticed a large percentage referring to the Anaxym algorithm. None indeed pronounced

the word “death,” but many mentioned the uselessness of the present. Many of us warned against the Anaxym algorithm and its effect on Morphea.

MAIKHA: Are you saying that we should have discredited the work of Anaxym even though she provided all the evidence accepted by science?

SHIMAI: We wanted more time to study it further—or prepare for its effects.

MAIKHA: It’s an algorithm that applies to Morphea alone. It does not apply to the universe, although we already have thousands of formulas that precisely predict stellar bodies’ movements and behaviors, from the Σ to black holes. Why would we think that we humans are an exception and not ruled by algorithms, especially in such a perfectly balanced unit as Morphea is?

SHIMAI: We are not an exception, yet this longing for absolute freedom drives us. Take it away, and we will fall apart.

MAIKHA: That is quite a pessimistic view, and I know you, Shimai, as the most optimistic figure in our world. You are an inspiration to many quads, if not all of the population. I understand your distress in this period; the Anaxym algorithm shattered your deepest beliefs. But that is not the first time that such a thing has happened. Many formulas have crumbled before and been replaced with a new truth. Could it be time for

a rethink of your own theory of absolute freedom? After all, there must be at least one condition for freedom itself to exist.

SHIMAI: Such a review is underway. And here's a prediction from someone who never made one: no matter the results of our review, it will only add to the instability of our society. [. . .]