

I dreamt a little dream of me

By lance manion

WHY WE LIKE IT: *The elusive nature and symbolic language of what goes on inside our heads when we are asleep is the biggest obstacle the writer faces when trying to recreate the experience as fiction. Manion succeeds brilliantly through a combination of flesh-toned, as opposed to purple, prose and neither explains nor tries to make sense of the action. The emotions at play resonate as they do in waking life and the comfortable, even familiar voice of the astonished narrator makes this dream within a dream all the more human. Surrealism at its most real.*

“At the heart of quantum mechanics is a rule that sometimes governs politicians or CEOs – as long as no one is watching, anything goes.”

— Lawrence M. Krauss

I had a dream where a mathematician came up with a unique solution to the over-crowding issue and I was one of a team of astronauts sent out to prove whether or not it would work.

I could provide you additional details but by the end of this your imagination will be taxed enough without trying to make you picture some nerdy mathematician in the first paragraph. I'll let you know when I want you to expend your finite energies.

The premise was simple, unless you want to look at the seventeen thousand pages of math that proved it was possible, most of that math included squiggly lines that seemed like they were made up on the spot but were instead symbols used in quantum physics as routinely as the numbers zero through nine.

The simple premise?

That if we, the astronauts, were sent off into space on a rocket of unimaginable power, unimaginable until recently anyway, a certain distance and then we returned back home through a small fold in the space/time continuum we would find everything as we left it... except for one small detail.

Every human, along with some hominids (great apes), would be gone. Or shifted or moved on or over or something. It wouldn't be Earth as if no humans had ever been there at all, overgrown with vegetation or run by cockroaches. Nope. It would be Earth just as we left it, just devoid of people. Every building and radio tower and ice cream truck would be sitting right there waiting for us.

Eventually in my dream we blasted off and went hurtling through space for the requisite amount of time until it was time to hang a U-turn, which we did. Soon afterwards we fiddled with some knobs and then slipped through a small tear in the fabric of reality and were suddenly putting down the landing gear back where we started.

I have dreamt many a crazy dream but when I looked out the window as we went through the makeshift wormhole it will always remain the most interesting image my mind has ever created. Really. I'm so happy with my brain. To try and describe it to you in any significant way would be doing it a disservice. Remember when I mentioned your finite energies? This might be a good time to expend a little. But don't get discouraged if you don't come up with anything more than the usual garden-variety *Star Wars* hyperspace or *Star Trek* warp speed visuals. Try it again when you're asleep tonight and see if you don't do better.

Anyway, we touch down and soon some of the crew are out of the vessel and walking around a completely deserted city.

It worked. It worked! Euphoria.

My shipmates are both ecstatic and terrified.

"What now?" they all seem to be asking.

Finally I get out and walk into the street only to find it's full of people. I report this to my associates and they come running back to see approximately a dozen people milling around me confused. Very confused.

In my headset I hear the captain of the mission, a much brighter guy than I am, asking me to come into a small convenience store just around the corner and I do exactly that with all haste.

I stride in to see him standing in the middle of the store and behind the counter there is a young man ringing up items for an old lady while two teenagers are in the back opening a refrigerator to fish out some sodas.

"Oh shit" he says under his breath. "There was nobody in here until you walked in."

"What are you saying?" I ask.

"I'm saying get back to the ship and stay there before you repopulate the whole damn planet."

So I walk back to the ship, all the while seeing people popping into existence from who-knows-where. I wonder quickly if I can find my ex (does she have to be in every damn dream?).

Once back in the ship I sit and listen to the other members of my team debate what to do with me. One of them suggests that it might be necessary to kill me.

The last thing I remember thinking before I wake up is that if I were in their place I might have suggested the same thing.

"As far as the laws of mathematics refer to reality, they are not certain; and as far as they are certain, they do not refer to reality."

— Albert Einstein

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *Comedian Pete Holmes, when trying to explain sleep to an alien that doesn't sleep describes how we shut down for the night but how our brain "plays movies for us". This was one of those movies. I try my best to capture not only the urgency I felt throughout it but the overwhelming sense of "What the fuck?" I can reread it a hundred times and still see some new meaning or metaphor. There's just so much to dig through. The perfect recipe for interesting flash fiction. I include the quotes to make myself appear brighter than I am.*

BIO: Lance Manion has released eight collections of humorous/odd short stories, been published in more than fifty literary publications and has contributed stories to a dozen anthologies. He blogs (almost) daily on his eponymous website and finds the na at the end of banana as annoying as you would if it were bananana.