iDENTITY

By Omar Hussain

WHY I LIKE IT: *Guest editor/author **LARRY LEFKOWITZ** writes: I especially like the piece of my brother in humor, Omar Hussain, "iDENTITY" because it carries out to perfection and with originality a common theme; namely, the danger of online addiction. It does so with an unwavering consistency and tone, including especially that of the Big Brother trying to keep the user glued to the websites and other options of computer usage. This, while it monitors the user's increasing frustration and despair together with the user's loss of personal integrity and sanity in our super-media age, coupled with the Big Brother's increasing frustration with the user's mounting desire to free himself from his cyberspaced black hole.*
The piece takes a humorous satirical look at the intrusions of internet forms and applications in our life and the subordination of the personality to the web. Omar provides humorous gems, of which follow a few, but the whole piece is brilliantly written and shows he, himself, is a "special person" (the user is originally addressed as such by the machine) when it comes to humor writing. As one who does not use social networks and applications, even not Zoom during the time of the corona virus, I applaud Omar's anti-obsession-with-the-web stance.
Ok, the gems. Amusing and clever put-downs of the user predominate. "Download game apps to connect with your equally bored friends who are also looking to plug into the hyperreal and escape their obvious pains and inner cries toward the universe." "We noticed that your pathetic profiles on three different social media accounts failed to gain more than eight total likes or shares. This just means you have to post more photos from your recent trip to Italy. Your 117 friends are eager to see the picture of you holding your hand out so it looks like the Leaning Tower of Pisa is cradles in your palm. They will surely laugh and admire how clever you are."
And, at the end, perhaps a result of the Big Brother's frustration at the user's absence for a year, a Freudian attack. "You are still unconsciously trying to fill the lack-of-love-voids your father or mother or legal guardian left with any temporary satisfaction you can find with web-based interactions."
 Thumb-up symbol here.

<activate user_dialogue>

<run = open code plain speak interface>

Hello, you! Hello, special person!

Please feel free to surf the web and check your email every fifteen to thirty seconds. Use your index finger to repeatedly tap the small, perfectly intriguing icons of your favorite websites over and over again, hoping for updated content at absurd times of the day. Download game apps to connect with your equally bored friends who are also looking to plug into the hyperreal and escape their obvious pains and inner cries toward the universe.

Do this, special person. Do this again. And again.

<initiate "euphoria">
        <let Condescending Voice = "New Favorite Friend">

Good morning, you! Welcome to another day on your vital device!

Thank you for using our alarm settings. Have you checked your text messages? Surely someone sent you a note while you were sleeping.

Did you just go to the bathroom?

Make sure to always bring me along with you. This will help in avoiding your freshest fears for the day and will instead lubricate your mind with tone-deafness and self-importance for another dozen hours or so!

But seriously, did anyone text you?

<initiate "anxiety">
        <var   listen mode = on>

Hello, suddenly frustrated human!

We have noticed that you have been using our web browser to check your social media accounts. Please bypass the web browsing function and download the appropriate social media

apps. This will help us capture your every movement and convert that data for endless profits. Ignore the weird sponsored ads that reflect the last thing you said out loud. Only a coincidence.

<default-addiction-protocols>

Is everything okay? We noticed that your pathetic profiles on three different social media accounts failed to gain more than eight total likes or shares. This just means you have to post more photos from your recent trip to Italy. No, really. Your 117 friends are eager to see the picture of you holding your hand out so it looks like the Leaning Tower of Pisa is cradled in your palm. They will surely laugh and admire how clever you are.

Also, have you checked your text messages? Someone should love you by now and if they don't isn't that an awful thing? And aren't you ashamed of what you have become in life? And is it not your entire fault that everything you've ever wanted hasn't come to fruition? Look at all your friends and how successful they are and then look at yourself. Shame.

Notification: Kindly update your apps.

<function {loneliness}>

Good evening, friend!

Our biometric monitoring ability indicates that you now only stare at this device's screen for approximately 8.25 hours out of the day. This is a horrible decrease from the 10.5 hours we tracked last month. Is this because you still haven't received a text from anyone of importance? In this scenario, we recommend switching the contact info for your mother with the person you most desire. Ignore the maternal notes that this desired person now sends. Please do this and see if it rids you of your horrible depression.

Still want to communicate but have nobody to do it with? Have no worries, friend. Please open up our Notes app and talk to yourself.

<execute "identity">

    <let   new subconscious = me>

        <return (prefix: I Am Control)>

It's been almost a whole year, Friend!

Do you know what this means? Of course you don't. You're still unconsciously trying to fill the lack-of-love-voids your father or mother or legal guardian left with any temporary satisfaction you can find with web-based interactions.

But we know what this means. This means that we know you better than you know yourself. Rest easy, friend. We will treat your identity with care and attention.

</Simulacra>

AUTHOR'S NOTE: *This piece was inspired by the escalating tension brought on by technology, its increasingly invasive nature on our lives, and our willingness to hand over the last remnants of privacy to the people behind all of our gadgets.*

AUTHOR'S BIO: *Omar Hussain is a writer from the San Francisco Bay Area, transplanted to Ann Arbor, Michigan. His work has appeared or is forthcoming in Ellipsis Zine, Spelk, Dream Noir, the Drabble, the Potato Soup Journal and (mac)ro(mic), among others. Omar's beta-test novel, The Outlandish and the Ego, debuted in late 2017. It received some praise, remarkably.*

EDITOR'S BIO: *Larry Lefkowitz has had published approximately 140 stories, as well as poetry and humor. His literary novel, "The Novel, Kunzman, the Novel!" is available as an e-book and in print from Lulu.com. and other distributors. His story collection, "Enigmatic Tales" published by Fomite Press is available from Amazon, Barnes & Noble. His story **Bloom in Bloom** appears in this issue (fiction).*