

# Deae Ex Machinis: Alpha

by [~MrGreyMan](#)

*"During the time men live without a common power to keep them all in awe, they are in that condition called war; and such a war as if every man is against every man."*

- Thomas Hobbes

It was odd for a high school like the Immaculate Conception to offer an honors religious studies class run by a non-religious teacher, but there had been an effort lately for the school to become more PC. Mr. Wilde never told them he wasn't Catholic, but it was obvious to Heather he was not. He approached the subject matter the way a surgeon might approach a patient, professionally but without reverence.

"Ms. Halcyona," he addressed Heather as he did all of his students, by her last name. "What would you say is the main thesis of Wright's book?"

They had been reading *The Evolution of God* for his class, which has only confirmed Heather's suspicion about their teacher's beliefs. They were assigned to read the end for this class. Heather, who was a shoe-in for valedictorian, had of course read it. She was a tall rail-thin wisp of a girl, with scraggly brown hair, glasses, and braces. While few in her class would call her 'friend,' she had still managed to be voted class president three years in a row, mainly out of pragmatism. She was polite and courteous to her classmates. No one really disliked her, but that was as far as it went. Heather liked it better that way anyway since it gave her more time for her studies. She knew she had to work hard to live up to her full potential.

"That our understanding of the Divine has been evolving throughout history, much like our understanding of other subjects like math and science. This book is meant to convince us that humanity has not yet found the true appreciation of God."

"I see," Mr. Wilde said noncommittally. "Do you agree that is what Wright is saying, Mr. Immanuel?"

If the Immaculate Conception had a vice-valedictorian it would have been Adam Immanuel. He had transferred in late last year. Adam was tall, handsome, and smart, but everyone was convinced he must have a social disorder of some kind, because he was horribly awkward when it came to conversation. He was undisputedly intelligent, which only made his utter lack of social graces even more unbearable. Most people in the school had quickly learned to ignore him, those that did not openly despise him anyway. He had a higher grade-point average than Heather in math and science, but not in any other subject. He seemed to even bother the teachers.

Mr. Wilde had taken to pitting Heather and Adam against each other in the class discussions. Heather was sure that Adam was just playing Devils advocate with her, since he, without fail, took a position opposite to hers, but he spoke in such a matter-of-fact almost monotone voice it was hard to tell.

"No," said Adam to which Heather rolled her big brown eyes. Adam continued, "Wright's thesis is not truly about humanity's imaginings of a God, but of the driving uniting force behind human society. He is attempting to say that, by working in tandem, man can become God." An argument ensued.

Heather left at the end of class aggravated. Arguing with Adam always got her that way, and she was also upset that other people in the class enjoyed egging them on and that Mr. Wilde seemed to encourage it.

The rest of the day passed uneventfully, except for the fact that Heather was in a bad mood. She was relieved when school ended and she could spend some quality time alone in the library studying. Heather loved staying late in the library since the quiet and books always calmed her. But, soon the school was closing and she was on her way to the senior parking lot. The school was in a rural neighborhood and was spread out, so it was about a 10-minute walk from the main building to the parking lot.

Once there, she found that she was not the only one who had stayed late that evening. Fred Mensch, star of the wrestling team and homecoming king, and several of his friends had surrounded someone. In the fading light passed the jocks, Heather could not quite make out who it was.

"Hey Poindexter," Fred was saying, "Katy tells me you were bothering her."

"I am told I have that effect," came a clear voice that could only belong to one person. Heather hurried over to see Adam in the middle of the group. Typical for him he had no fear in his eyes and seemed almost unaware of his soundings. Heather was sure this was only further infuriating Fred.

"Yeah, you do. You're having it right now," said Fred. Then Fred punched Adam square in the face. Heather winced. Adam simply took it which, again, only angered Fred more. Fred's buddies grabbed Adam by the arms and Fred started punching Adam right in the head, again and again.

This is no simple bullying, thought Heather. She knew she needed to do something.

"Hey," she called out.

Fred turned and looked at her his fists still raised. He had a sadistic look in his dull blue eyes, and Heather took an involuntary step back when she saw it.

"Hey boys, the whore wants some too," Fred said as he advanced on her, the twisted expression on his face matched his eyes. Heather took another step back. Then she noticed Fred's friend were not following him, but were looking at each other a little nervously.

They probably think he's going to far too, thought Heather as she found her courage and stopped retreating.

Fred had short blond hair and was the same height as Heather, but he was much heavier without an ounce of fat. Fred had been accepted into College early with a wrestling scholarship. He was lean and strong, a teenaged male in peak physical condition. Yet skinny Heather now held her ground against him.

Looking past Fred to his friends, Heather said: "Do you think I need to be taught a lesson, too?" She more addressed them than she did the maniac in front of her.

The group looked at each other again. Finally Bobby, the good-natured heavyweight of the wrestling team, came up next to Fred, who was staring dangerously at Heather. Plaintively Bobby said, "Com'on Fred, we came here to pound on a freak, not a girl. Let's just get out of here."

Fred continued his deadly stare at Heather. She was convinced he was going to hit her, or worse. Suddenly, his face changed completely as the sadistic glint vanished from his blue eyes. Turning to his friend, Fred put his hands on Bobby's shoulder and said in a jovial matter, "You're right, Buddy, let's go."

Heather couldn't tell if the sigh of relief was from her own lips or the crowd's. Fred and his friends filed past Heather, but as they did Fred whispered in her ear, "I'll be seeing you, whore."

As soon as she safely could, Heather went over to Adam, who everyone seemed to have forgotten about. He was just sitting on his car, looking at her with an expression that could be described as shock, or maybe curiosity. As Heather approached she also took on a look of shock.

Adam's face was bleeding, but that was not what unsettled Heather. The fact that the blood was green was what surprised her. Her mind was about to tell her that it must be a trick of the evening illumination when her hands came to her own face in horror as she noticed that Adam's wounds were healing themselves right in front of her.

"You didn't have to do that," he said in his matter-of-fact tone as his face reformed. "I would have been alright, but they could have hurt you."

After her confrontation with Fred, this was too overwhelming for Heather. She turned and fled, leaving Adam standing there alone in the dark. His bright green eyes almost seemed to glow in the fading light.

Needless to say Heather got home quite late that night, but she had collected her thoughts by that time. Her father was still waiting up for her, as he always did. It was not that he did not trust her; Heather knew he did. Heather's father had done his best to fill the hole her mother's death had left in both their lives.

"Dad, you don't have to stay up," she said when she saw him on the couch waiting for her.

"I know," he said with a tired smile, "I just want to make sure you know I care when my only daughter is out late. But, you are home later than normal, is everything alright?"

Heather did not want to tell her father about the night's events, but she did not want to lie to him either.

"There was a fight in the parking lot between two boys and I broke it up." She said going into the kitchen to get something to eat.

Her father sounded worried and stern, as she knew he would. "You shouldn't do that. Was anyone hurt?"

Heather thought for a moment at that as she found the sandwich her father had made for her. "No, no one was hurt." She replied from the kitchen. Her father seemed satisfied and Heather finished her sandwich and went to bed resolving to confront Adam at school tomorrow.

But, Adam did not come to school the next day, nor the next. He was absent from school for almost a week, and Heather found herself missing their arguments in class. Of course, no one else cared.

It was Tuesday of the next week when Heather was outside of the main building right after school let out that she saw Adam's beat-up run-down old car idling where parents and busses were picking up the students too young to drive or without cars. Heather walked over to it and inside was Adam.

Staring straight ahead not looking at her he said in his matter-of-fact voice, "You did not tell anyone about me."

Heather was unsure this was a question or a statement, but she replied, "No."

Turning to her and fixing on her with his green eyes. He continued, "Was it because you did not think people would believe you, or because you wanted to protect me?" As always, his direct manner was off-putting.

Heather was not one to answer a question in haste and thought a moment before replying. "Both," she finally said.

"No one has ever done something like that for me before, trying to protect me. I would like to return that favor. I would like to present you with a gift." He said almost with emotion in his voice, still looking at her with his bright green eyes. "You can come with me so that I might return that favor, or you can stay here. No harm will come to you because of me regardless of which you choose."

There was something about his voice that made the statement sound like a solemn oath, and there was something about his green eyes that made Heather believe him. Heather was not what you would call an adventurous girl, but she was a curious one. She hated being confused, and liked to

know the answers to things. She knew this green blood was something she needed to resolve or it would bother her forever.

So, sighing, she said, "I'll come," and opened the back door and put her backpack down and then got into the passenger seat.

They drove in silence. The Immaculate Conception was indeed in a rural area; students would attend sometimes from over an hour away. But, they drove deeper into the countryside, not towards any town. Trees and farmland was all that was out this way. Heather was already regretting her decision when they turned onto a dirt road that ended at an abandon barn.

"He's going to kill me out here," was all Heather could think as Adam stopped the car and got out. He just walked into the barn and left her in the car. For what seemed like ages Heather just sat there, not knowing what to do. Finally she got out the car and followed Adam into the barn.

She could not believe what she saw.

The barn had been completely converted into a laboratory. Old farm parts now were repurposed. It was a mix between a chemistry and physics lab. There were Bunsen burners, microscopes, and something she was sure was an industrial vacuum chamber. She could tell everything in the building had been scrounged from junkyards and the like. Despite its steam-punk aesthetic, it had a very futuristic, almost alien feel to it.

"You're an extraterrestrial," Heather whispered.

At that, Adam laughed. It was the first time Heather had ever heard his laugh, and despite his mannerisms it was deep and almost infectious. "No," he said, "but I'm not human. His words aside, his voice sounded more human than she had ever heard it. He continued, almost with a sense of relief as he explained. "I was developed in a lab. Designed to be a more advanced organism, though most of my DNA was originally human."

Had Heather heard all this at any other time she would have rejected it out of hand, but given the circumstance, she knew it to be true. Heather was almost at a lost for words. She did manage a weak "Originally?"

"Oh, yes," said Adam. He was the happiest she had ever seen him. "My DNA is recombinant." He paused for a moment as he seemed to search for words. When he spoke again his matter-of-fact tone had returned. "For lack of a better explanation, I can control my own evolution organically."

"What?" Heather was still trying to process all of this.

Adam seemed to be back to his never-before-seen excited self. "That's what you saw in the parking lot. My body was healing itself. Wow," he exclaimed, "I guess they're right, confession is good for the soul, if I have one. Telling another sentient being all this is... exhilarating."

Heather, who was trying not to scream, nodded meekly.

"Please," he was saying, obviously oblivious to her distress, "I've never had a visitor before. May I show you around?"

Again she nodded. He looked at her curiously for a second as if waiting for a response. Then he spoke again, "Oh, right, that neck motion represents an answer in the affirmative. That was one of the reasons I have such trouble 'fitting in...' I've not taken the time to really understand human body language. It's a very complex subject and I will get to it soon. I know it is one of the reasons people are so uneasy around me. I emulate human speech and appear human, but my mannerisms aren't human, yet. I am evolving my brain to be able to absorb information faster. The more I know, the more I can learn how to know. It was one of the reasons I was able to escape. My creators did not correctly calculate my learning curve...."

Adam was rambling on while he showed her around his lab. While she was only absorbing half of what was being said, she was at least feeling more comfortable around this new, much more open, Adam. Honestly, she felt it now all made a lot of sense; his awkwardness, his manner of speaking. She was warming up to him now that she was getting past his personality and seeing him actually displaying emotion, since he was genuinely thrilled to have a guest. She was appreciating his good looks more. He really was tall and handsome, with neat brown hair and beautifully vivid green eyes.

Finally, he was describing something he called an atomic de Broglie microscope and he ended with saying, "This is what I wanted present to you."

Heather, who for the past few minutes had only understood one word in ten coming out of Adam's mouth as he showed her around his makeshift lab, took a second to realize this was a statement she was meant to respond to. After replaying the question in her mind she answered, "A microscope?"

Adam grinned, "Well, it is more of a *nanoscope*, I don't know why they called it an atomic de Broglie *microscope*, but no, what it's pointed at is what I'd like to give you. Please, look."

It was clear this scope did not channel light, for what Heather was meant to look at was a screen with lots of wires behind it, not a lens. Adam was looking at it proudly, but it was blank.

"Aren't they magnificent?" Adam asked.

"Umm... I don't see anything, but I don't know what I'm meant to be looking at," Heather replied.

Adam looked very confused for a moment and then exclaimed, "Oh, right, your eyes can only process electromagnetic waves propagating at frequencies of 400 to 800 Terahertz, let me see if I can adjust the screen." He took out a very odd-looking tool and started fiddling with the wires. Finally, a red-tinged image appeared on the screen.

"Fleas?" Heather asked.

"What?" Adam looked confused again as the bug like images moved around on the screen. Then: "Oh, no, they're nanites, nanobots. You know, tiny robots. I'm sorry." He looked slightly ashamed. "I honestly forget you are human sometimes. I always found our discussions in class very tantalizing. I had to make sure I kept my vocabulary limited for the audience, but I never felt like I was doing it for you. I think it's auspicious that our science class did not allow for open disputation or I would have no doubt disseminated my true nature.... There I go again...." He looked crestfallen.

Heather took him by the hand. "It's OK, why don't you explain to me what they do and why you want to give them to me, and," she said almost patronizingly, "try to remember I'm only a teenaged human while you do."

"Right, well, they will make you like me."

"What?" Heather was shocked.

"Wait, let me explain. I was lonely and while I'm not yet to the point where I could make another one of myself, I did develop these machines that could make a human more like me. I said earlier that I could control my own evolution, well these nanites would allow a human to do the same. They might even give them greater abilities than mine, like the ability to interface with machines."

Heather did not know what to say. She felt like the room was spinning. She blurted out, "Might? You've not tested them on yourself first?"

"I can't." Adam said, "My recumbent DNA would just overwrite all of their changes and the pH levels of my body are too high for them to survive." He looked abashed again. "My blood is an acid," he explained.

Heather was taking all of this in. "How do you even know they'll work at all?"

"Simulations," Adam replied.

"You've not used it on anything living?"

"It will not work on a non-sentient creature. The nanites must be controlled by a self-aware will."

"And I really don't even know what you mean by controlling my evolution."

"It should give the human total willful control of their own body."

"Should?" She let out an almost hysterical laugh. But, she had seen Adam heal in the parking lot. She had seen all this crazy stuff he had made. She had always felt like an outsider, and she had always felt like she was meant for something more. This was a change for greatness. It was risky, sure, but the rewards? Could she really afford to not take such an advantage when offered? She

knew she needed to live up to her full potential. She looked at Adam seriously. "How can I know they'll not mutate me into a freak, or kill me?" She asked.

He looked back at her his bright green eyes looking deep into her big brown ones. Sincerely he replied, "I would never do anything to damage you."

She looked deeply into those almost glowing green pools and she believed him. She knew this was her destiny; she feel that this was what God wanted her to do. "OK," she said almost breathlessly, "I'll take your gift."

Adam looked delighted. Before she could move or say anything else, faster than any human could follow, he injected her with something and she instantly passed out.

\* \* \* \* \*

Heather awoke in her own bed, with no idea how she got there. Her head was pounding and it was dark. She stood up, and instantly felt unbearably hungry and hunched over in pain.

"That was probably pretty stupid," she muttered to herself as she made we way down stairs, noting that Adam had left her backpack next to her bed. She was home earlier than usual and her father would be back from work soon. She made her way to the kitchen and opened the cabinet to grab some cereal. She decided to forgo the bowl and milk for now and simply reached into the bag and started pulling out and eating handfuls of the Total Raisin Bran. Right now, it was the most delicious thing she had ever tasted.

Heather had almost finished the whole box when she finally felt a lessening of her hunger. She decided to pour the rest of it into a bowl with some milk. She sat down and ate in a more dignified fashion. "What did he do to me?" was all that ran through her head. As she ate, her father opened the door to the house.

He came into the kitchen and put the mail on the table. "You're home early," he said as he went to the fridge to make himself a sandwich. Heather nodded and kept eating. "There's a letter for you," her father said nonchalantly as he got out the bread.

"A letter?" Heather asked not really playing attention and still contemplating the day's events.

"From Brown," her father said, no longer able to hide the eagerness in his voice.

"Oh!" Heather quickly stopped eating and went though the mail to find the letter. Brown was the school she had applied to for early admission. Forgetting everything else Heather tore the letter open and began to read.

"Oh! Dad! I made it!" She cried, and threw her arms around her father.

Heather was back in her room, too excited to do anything but lay there. As she closed her eyes she felt very funny. She tried to pinpoint the sensation when, suddenly, she realized she could

literally feel herself digesting the cereal. She had been so preoccupied with all that had happened Heather has not realized it until now, but she could feel her body absorbing the nutrients inside of her. Even more disturbing, she could feel the nanites using the iron in the cereal to replicate themselves. It was such a revolting image she was sure she was going to throw-up. But then she realized she could feel, and perfectly control, her gag reflex. Heather closed her big brown eyes. She could feel every part of her body. She could feel herself breathing, feel her pupils dilating, feel her sweat glands, feel her blood flowing, her cells dividing. A million things her body was doing, she could feel them all, understand them all. It was simultaneously the most stimulating and the weirdest sensation Heather had ever felt.

On a whim she tried to stop her heart... and it did! Quickly she willed it to start up again, and it did. "Yeah, that was a bad idea," she thought. "What did Adam say I could do? Control my own evolution?"

Keeping her eyes closed she felt the nanites moving throughout her. She could feel her consciousness extend into them. They were a part of her. She willed the nanites to remove her hair from every place except her head, and she felt them comply. Soon, they had completed this task.

She felt her braces, and willed them to fix her teeth. As they started pain shot through her mouth. She quickly had them stop. "Should I stop here, or have them sever my nerves?" she asked herself. Tentatively, she cut one nerve and then tried to repair it. Success. She numbed her mouth that way and continued fixing her teeth. She had the nanites remove her braces and use the metal to make more of themselves. When they were done she had them reconnect the nerves.

She thought about her eyes, with them still closed she focused on the muscles around them, and the flexibility of their lenses. She opened them and took off her glasses. Her 20/40 vision went to 20/20, to 20/10, to 20/2. She had 10 times the normal optical acuity of a human. She mused: "Adam seemed to be able to see things outside of the visible spectrum. I wonder..."

She cried out and grabbed her head. Her eyes changed but her brain did not. It did not know how to process the signals being set to it and it was giving her a splitting headache as it was bombarded with completely unfamiliar nerve impulses. Quickly she changed her eyes back.

"You OK in there," her father called from the hallway.

"Yes, I... was... just surprised by something." Heather called back.

"Alright," he said and Heather could hear her father moving to his room to go to bed.

"I can work on that later," Heather said to herself.

Heather stood up and walked to the mirror in her room. Taking off her clothes, she looked at herself with her inhuman eyesight. She felt and saw her skin, every part, every imperfection and pockmark. Closing her eyes she willed the nanites to fix them. She could feel the nanites flowing

over her, replicating, repairing. Her complexion went from normal to perfect; flawless. She willed her skin into soft radiance. The feeling was indescribable.

She fixed her eyebrows, her nails; she reddened her lips, everything. She willed her hair into a perfect voluminous brown shine, and as she did she suddenly realized that the nanites had to go outside her body to do that. "I'll have to look into that too," she thought.

Then, she focused on her breasts and hips. She had always been thin as a rail, and as curvy. Heather had never given it much thought before because it was not something she had the power to change, but now? She knew she needed to sever her nerves again if she was going to widen her hip bones. She did and then willed her hips apart. Stabbing hunger flashed through her body as soon as she tried to move her hips. Not ready for pain from her stomach she doubled over; clutching her midsection, Heather almost cried out again.

"Machines need fuel," she realized. "And they need materials to build anything. No wonder I was so hungry before. They must have exhausted the box of cereal I ate."

Fighting through the hunger, Heather stumbled downstairs, almost falling. Her father was no doubt already asleep. At least Heather hoped so, as she was buck-naked.

Heather made her way to the fridge and, opening it, her enhanced eyes fell on a nearly full gallon jug of whole milk. On impulse she reached for it. Opening it she brought the rim to her mouth and drank deep. She felt so much better as she slowly chugged the gallon. As her throat muscles worked she went back to her original task of widening her hips and expanding her bust. The nanites efficiently used what she gave them. Her hips went from those of a girl to those of a woman. Her silky smooth bosom rose from an A cup to a B, and finally a C. She kept drinking until the jug was empty.

There she stood naked, bathed in moonlight in the middle of the kitchen, a stunning example of the ideal; a Greek goddess sculpted to perfection by her own will.

With her new self-perception, she needed no mirror to perfectly see herself in her mind's eye. She could feel her beauty; fully understand her own loveliness. Laughing to herself she thought, "I guess I'd better wear baggy clothing for the next few weeks or I'll be mobbed with questions." Heather connected the nerves back to her hips and made her way upstairs and, though no one was there to see her, she could not help but sway her now-perfect butt suggestively as she did.

Back in her room she went to her bed to fall asleep, wondering how she would explain the lack of milk to her father and thinking about how best to cover up her new physique. As she lay there, suddenly her eyes flew open. "My homework," she almost cried out in alarm. After all that had happened that day she had forgotten about it. It was always the first thing she did when she went to the library, but she had skipped it to go with Adam. Heather had never missed a homework assignment in her life and she was not going to start now.

Turning on her lamp, she went over to her desk and opened her backpack. She thought it was going to be a long night, but she was wrong. She was very good at focusing when she did work

and today was not different. Opening her assignment she started to read. She wanted to skim to find the information for the assignment, but the faster she tried to read, the faster she found she could. Quicker and quicker she was turning pages, and remembering everything. The nanites were enhancing her memory and recall! She realized they were responding to her desire to finish faster. When she went to write the assignment they increased her dexterity and her deft hands transcribed her words as rapidly as she could think them. It all happened so fast, and she had been so focused on her work, she was almost unaware of what was happening until it was over.

"Do I even need to sleep anymore?" she thought to herself. She decided to stay up and read all of her books completely.

The next few weeks went by like a blur. Everyone in the school treated Heather differently. Even with the baggy clothing she was wearing, people could see she had changed. She was much more confident, not that she was lacking before. Her face and hair were stunning. She just told people she had started wearing make-up, and that seemed to placate them.

Heather also told everyone that she was dating Adam, which met with more than a few raised eyebrows. But, she did start hanging out with him more, and they would spend lots of time alone. People thought that they were doing what teenagers do when alone, but really they were sharing information. Heather was teaching Adam how to act more human, something which could not be found in any book (he looked). Adam was helping her control and understand her new abilities. With his instruction she could now see more than just the visible spectrum, and was working her way up to x-rays and down to radar.

Heather gradually started to wear more and more revealing clothing - claiming the changes were due to a late puberty - which made the fact that she was dating the freak Adam more distressing for the boys in her class. Soon, Heather was inundated with requests by the cheerleading squad to join. Heather had no interest in such activities. She had started going home earlier, since she found boys had started hanging out in the library when she stayed late there.

At home she had started using her newly augmented abilities to efficiently get information from the web. All of human knowledge was at her fingertips and she hungrily drank it all in. Adam was also correct that the more she learned, the more she learned how to learn. The more she learned about how humans thought, the more she could change herself to think better. More than her enriched comeliness, she was also having difficulty hiding her unearthly intelligence from people, and more than once she and Adam almost gave the game away debating in class.

The only downside to her new abilities was that she now needed to eat almost constantly to maintain her level of activity. At first she tried to hide that too, but soon she was constantly snacking throughout the school day and going back for seconds and thirds at lunch. If her new looks by themselves did not earn her the envy of every girl in school, that coupled with her new eating habits certainly did.

On the web she was finding new sources of income to supplement her growing dietary needs. She had her hands in everything, from eBay® to the stock market. Heather was not making much

money because she did not have much money, but like everything else about her, that too was snowballing.

She wanted to learn the upper limit of her food consumption, since Adam had no idea what it might be. He didn't need to eat as much as she did, and had found ways of synthesizing most of what he needed from the air. Heather's intake was increasing, as were her mental and transcribing abilities. She could now type much faster than her computer could process, and could read about 4 pages in a book while a Wikipedia® page loaded. Heather speculated that the nanites were improving her without her conscious consent because she had always tried to be better before the change. She had always pushed herself to live up to her full potential, and now the nanites were responding to that deeply seated drive of hers. But, she was growing more and more hungry as her abilities increased. Adam had tried to think of a way to make a "super food" for her, but the amount he could process in his lab would have been too small for her intake. Industrial factory farming could easily turn out more calories than he could, even if he could compact them better. Heather had not felt full since the change, and she wanted to see if she could be sated.

So, a few months after the change, she used much of her saved up money to buy a crate of the highest quality weight gaining supplements on the Internet. Heather's father was already more than a little troubled by his daughter's sudden changes - like asking her about her braces - so she had it sent to Adam's barn instead of her house.

When it arrived Adam, who was still learning the finer points of common sense, brought it to school. Heather had to hide it, but she did not want to try this experiment at home, and she did not feel comfortable conducting it around Adam. So, that night she stayed late at school and went to an out-of-the-way girls restroom. This late at night she thought she would not be disturbed; she was wrong.

In the girls' bathroom Heather opened the crate of the quality weight-gaining supplement. She had with her a laptop she had modified for her purposes, as well as several water jugs to mix the powered formula. Turning on all of the water faucets, she used her enhanced dexterity to mix as much of the supplement as she could. She was planning on drinking as much she could stomach to test her upper limits. After several minutes she was satisfied that she had more than enough. Turning off the water, she went to the mirror and put a jug to her ruby lips and started to drink. Her taste buds had been changing with the rest of her and now assessed foods based on their usefulness to her stupendous body. This liquid was the most delicious thing she had ever tasted. She could savor how packed with calories and nutrients it was; it felt wonderful. She quickly finished the jug. Almost mindlessly she started on another one, drinking deeply; and then another. It was so heavenly to be indulging herself like this. By the time she thought to stop and look at herself in the mirror, what she saw shocked her. Her stomach was so engorged with the potent liquid that she looked pregnant. The nanites had stretched her stomach like a sack to store the excess. What's more, she still didn't feel full. She was so engrossed by what she was witnessing in the mirror that she did not notice Fred Mensch.

Fred Mensch had had followed Heather this evening, and had been in the hall, waiting. When he heard the water stop he had listened to make sure that she was truly alone before going in. He was going to teach Heather a lesson for ruining his fun with Adam.

Now in the isolated girls bathroom, Fred quickly grabbed Heather from behind and manipulated her arms into a full nelson, locking his hands behind her neck and cranking her head forward. He whispered in her ear: "I told you I'd see you again, whore. I'm glad I waited. This will be so much sweeter. You're a real slut now, flaunting your curves at every opportunity." Then, when he saw her bloated belly in the reflection in the mirror: "What the fuck is that?!" But his surprise only made him tighten his hold on her, his body pressing against hers uninvited. She could smell him and in the mirror saw that same sadistic look in his dull blue eyes.

Heather's mind raced. If she had studied martial arts she would have tried to pry his hands off or stomped his foot, but she hadn't. Fred's skill and strength would have made it a hard task in any case. She could feel his healthy muscles tighten, trying to cut off her oxygen. She might not have been studying self-defense, but she had been studying the inner workings of the human body. Her heart-rate increased dramatically as adrenaline and nanites flowed through her veins. Quickly, the tiny machines followed her silent commands and set to work. Using the influx of protein, they started to build up her muscles. Her biceps bunched and bulged; her shoulders expanded and her lats spread wide like wings; her pecs ballooned outward. Veins, filled with the nano-sized workers, popped all about her arms and chest.

Heather's torso now formed a perfect, huge V while her abs became cobblestones under her tummy. Her skin-tight shirt was turned to tatters. Fred was very strong, but now Heather's upper body was far stronger. She inelegantly broke out of the hold and turned to face her attacker.

"— The fuck?" Fred almost let go as this change happened. He tried to keep Heather's arms pinned, but soon was overwhelmed. As Heather broke free Fred quickly regained himself and confidently settled into a wrestling stance. He eyed his growing opponent "Alright you bitch-freak; you want to do this the hard way?"

In a physical confrontation, Heather was completely out of her depth. Fred had been wrestling since he was six. Despite the complete impossibility of the situation, his training and experience were taking over. He appraised the new capabilities of his opponent and - expertly - he ducked behind Heather's arms, concentrating on her still weak lower limbs. Heather fell flat as he locked up her legs. Pain shot through her as her face hit the floor. Quickly, she was pinned to the cold tiles of the girls room.

Heather responded the only way she could think to. Nanite-infested veins popped along her smooth legs as they swelled with new muscle. Her gluteus and quads tightened and grew. Her leg muscles became tight expansive ropes. Her inner thighs swelled until they were touching, becoming massive. Every part of her became rock-hard and defined. Fred was used to wrestling people who were bigger, stronger, and knew what they were doing. Already he had locked her into a new submission hold. Heather needed to overcompensate for her incompetence. She had to resort to the only tool she could: brute force.

Her body used more and more of what it had ingested. Fred was finding it harder and harder to contain Heather as her strength grew along with the rest of her. Each careful and subtle move by Fred was met with superior might. Nanite-filled veins could be seen all over Heather's skin,

pulsating with the ever increasing strength of her heart. Her lack of experience was made-up for as she became as built as a professional bodybuilder ... and then more. Finally, her overdeveloped body broke free of Fred's grip as well as the ribbons of her clothing. Heather stood, a pillar of physical supremacy. Still her strength swelled.

Fred tried again and again to knock her to the ground, but each time she easily resisted; even his prowess could not overcome her raw power. In desperation he lunged, and Heather – acting almost on instinct – took hold of his head slammed it into the sink. Fred fell to the floor unconscious.

The now-massive Heather stood over him. Her huge naked body glistened from the exertion. She calmed her heart-rate. Heather had used all of what she had ingested and was now a goddess of physical power, massively ripped. Every one of her muscles obscenely defined and hardened.

"What am I going to do with you?" Heather asked herself as she reached a powerful hand to his head to evaluate the damage to his skull. The nanites were swarming through her body as she tried, for the first time, to reach out into another person. The nanites poured out from the sweat glands on her palms and into Fred's skin. They were so small Heather's enhanced eyes couldn't see them, but - even outside of her body - she could sense and control them. The sub-microscopic soldiers worked their way into Fred's unconscious form. Heather threw her head back as she linked with Fred's body. The nanites were now in him as they were in her; it was truly as if their souls were touching. But, doing this felt so... wrong. With her other hand, she reached out and grabbed another jug of the weight-gaining supplement and downed it.

Despite how unsettling the sensation was, Heather explored the link between them. Horrifically, she realized she could do more than just repair Fred's skull; she could reach into his brain. She saw with her mind's eye Fred's thoughts. They were alien, deviant, reptilian; without empathy for others. She wanted to draw back, but instead forced herself to dig deeper, going further under the surface.

Heather felt Fred's inner feelings of abandonment when his parents passed the responsibility of raising him from one nanny to another; Fred was never able to bond with another human being. She felt his insecurity and fear and how it had twisted inside of him, filling him with this void. As she reached into his mind, Heather also realized she could just rewire Fred's brain. She could fundamentally alter him to be more compassionate to others; she could force his thoughts to conform to hers; she could tear out his sadism and exterminate his inner pain. It would be so easy.

She shook her head. "No, not that way." Heather felt that would be stealing what she considered Fred's God-given free will; that it would neuter his soul. Keeping contact with Fred, she reached out with her other hand to her computer. She started to look up ways of counseling psychosis. But, she quickly realized it would take too long. Almost on a whim, she reached out into the computer with her nanites as she had into Fred. They again swarmed out of her skin and infected the computer. Adam said she might be able to link with machines and she found now that this was true. Online her nanites were swimming in a sea of information. She broke her contact with the computer and drank more of the weight-gaining supplement and then resumed her searching.

She was hacking into psychiatrists' computers, learning how to treat people like Fred. Fred was by no way unique in his infliction and she found many cases like his; some that were even cured. She studied those. She could have just ripped out his bad memories rewiring his brain like this computer, but she felt that would be completely amoral. It was bad enough to be linked to him like this. Instead she strived to change him by counseling him. She downloaded what she was learning into Fred. He showed him he could love and he could become a normal member of society. He did not have to feel the way he felt. She was fixing him by convincing him, not by forcing him; literally showing him the error of his ways. The hours ticked on and slowly she could feel it working.

\* \* \* \* \*

The Fred that opened his eyes was not the Fred that had closed them. His dull blue eyes looked up into Heather's bright brown ones. He blinked a couple of times and his mouth opened and closed but no sound came from it. "Thank you..." he said as tears fell from his face. Humongous naked Heather looking down at him said coldly – but not without some compassion, "I'd appreciate it if you left right this second."

Fred jumped to his feet and fled the girls' room.

When he was gone Heather stood. She inspected herself in the mirror. The only word that could describe her was monstrous. Her body was a mountain of absolutely shredded muscle covered in thick veins. She flexed and her whole body rippled and writhed with power. She was massively hulking. Heather's body was like a male professional bodybuilder. No, it was more. She did a double bicep pose and her defined body exploded in deep, hard, monumental muscle. In front of the mirror she reveled in her physical dominance. She could feel her pulsating power. Her body was a temple of brawn. She felt invulnerable... and she loved it. But all those veins and bulk? She found it gross and uncomely.

Sighing, she said to herself, "No amount of baggy clothing will hide this. There is no way I can go to school like this..." Resolved, she mixed the rest of the powered supplement and drank all of it. With those calories she started searching the web again. This time she studied polymers and chemistry.

More hours ticked by and she slowly shrank, her muscles receding. After a long while she was back to the size she was the day before, except now her body looked fit and toned. Her abs were perfect; her butt muscular. In addition to the curves she had given herself before, she now looked like a fitness expert. She was both undeniably athletic and heartbreakingly feminine. Looking at her naked splendor in the mirror she smiled. Her physique was elegance made manifest. As she admired herself she went over to the sink and took hold of the faucet. With no effort at all she crushed the metal into a ball, careful to not let water leak. She was the same size she was the day before, but her muscles were not human. She was as strong as she had been when she fought Fred, if not stronger.

She mused to herself in the mirror, "My body looks so much more athletic than before; I'm still going to have to wear baggy clothing again. At least for a while." She sighed. "Maybe, I should start going to the gym to keep up appearances."

Before she left she used her new learning capabilities to teach herself origami and made herself some very stylish clothing out of the paper towels in the girls room.

The next day was Saturday and Heather awoke early to have breakfast with her father. He was still bewildered at the changes his daughter had undergone. Things were happening too fast for his liking and their relationship had become a little strained. What had not changed, however, was that he still trusted his daughter and they both still loved each other.

After breakfast Heather kissed him good-bye, telling him she would be hanging out with Adam that day. Her father requested again to meet this boy that was monopolizing his daughter's time, and Heather, again, promised to bring him by sometime. Heather took her car out to Adam's barn. She was anxious to rehash the events of the night before with someone. When she arrived at Adam's barn she found him outside waiting for her.

As soon as she got out of the car he said, "How did the experiment go? Did you find your upper limit?"

"I don't think I have one," she replied.

Adam scoffed. "Everything has an upper limit."

Adam was very much like the scientists that had created him; he was always both childlike in his curiosity and then irritating in his skepticism.

Heather related the events of the night before as they walked inside. Due to their mutually augmented faculties this did not take very long. Adam asked questions in descending order of his interest. They discussed the new composition of her muscles. Heather learned, much to her surprise, that Adam had already enhanced his own muscular system long ago. His own physical strength was currently, and had been, much more than even Heather's. It just had never occurred to him to tell her about it, and it had never occurred to Heather to ask. She had been more interested in the workings of his mind than of his body.

They discussed different configurations of hydraulic muscles and different polymers. Long into the day they worked out different formulas. Together they created a muscular and skeletal system much stronger than either of theirs. A being built like they had devised would have an easy time punching through ten feet of steel. Again, Heather was a little annoyed when she learned that Adam did not want to try to change themselves to this new configuration as soon as possible, claiming it would use too much energy. He was right that it would take quite a bit just to enact it, but Heather was upset how quickly Adam dismissed even trying.

"But, we will be better if we did this," she protested

"Better' is an ill-defend term. It's unnecessary to be this strong and the design is inefficient for common activities," Adam replied.

Suddenly a thought stuck Heather. "In the parking lot when I got Fred to stop beating you; you were several times stronger than all of those boys together then?"

Adam nodded; he had been working on his body language.

"So, why didn't you stop them?"

Adam shrugged; these small gestures were becoming more natural to him. "For what reason? To what end?"

"To stop Fred from hurting you."

"I would heal."

Heather was taken back by Adam's causal disregard for his own person; she tried another tack. "You could have prevented him from hurting others. You might have taught him a lesson."

"I've heard that expression before, and never really understood it. What lesson could I have taught him?"

"If you had beaten him up he might have realized his actions had consequences and wouldn't go around stalking girls."

Adam scoffed again. "Unsupported speculation; you stopping him was the very thing that caused him to stalk you."

"And I put stop to that. He'll not be stalking anyone else."

"Yes; you essentially changed him into another person."

Heather was getting angry. She loved talking science with Adam, but philosophically she could not understand him at all. Heather was flabbergasted to learn that he identified himself as an agnostic atheist and she had quickly realized that they had irreconcilable differences when it came to morality. "I did not change him into another person. I convinced him he was wrong," she declared.

"I disagree. You mentioned you could have changed him much easier by simply overwriting who he was. You seem to believe there was a great difference between that method and the one you chose, morally. I only see a difference in efficiency. If you wanted to change who he was, why do it in such an inelegant way?"

"I needed to convince him as to not violate his free will."

"Free will?" Adam said almost to himself. "I've never gleaned an internally consistent definition of that term." Then to her he continued. "Anyway, how many different ways did you try before finding one that 'convinced' him?"

Heather had a feeling he was not after an exact number, but gave one anyway. "Seventeen."

"I see, and if the last one you tried had not worked, you would have tried for an eighteenth?"

"Yes," Heather said almost defiantly.

"You would have just kept trying until you did find away to 'convince' him."

"Of course."

"So, what choice did he have? I submit none. You were going to change him, regardless."

Heather was infuriated now. "He tried to RAPE me," she almost screamed.

Adam responded with a shrug. "So? I honestly don't see how him trying to violate you justifies you violating him." Then Adam looked at Heather as if he really expected a response to such a statement.

Heather almost punched him, but instead she said nothing and simply turned and walked away. Through the walls of the barn Adam watched her get into her car and drive away, his green eyes shining.

# Deae Ex Machinis: Omega

*"Is it better for Superman to rule, or for everyone to have his powers?" -Anonymous*

Heather decided not to talk to Adam for a long while after that. Even going so far as refusing to debate him in Mr. Wilde's class. The other boys at that school seemed to take this as some kind of cue. Heather was also realizing that something about her new physiology was really affecting the boys in school, and it seemed to go beyond a simple physical attraction. Many had taken to following her around, and when she was in a room all eyes always seemed to drift her way. She resolved to wear baggy clothing as often as possible to avoid as much unwanted attention as she could.

She had started going to the gym to explain her new body. The weights there, of course, held no real challenge for her. She had found ways to make it look like she was really exerting herself. She was also slick with sweat by the end of one of her workouts, and all the guys in the room seemed to be spellbound.

For better or worse, Fred had taken it upon himself to act as her bodyguard of sorts. Heather still had nothing but disdain for the boy that assaulted her, but she did nothing to discourage him protecting her either. If anything, she was relieved she did not have to deal with the sycophants the other boys had become.

During this time away from Adam she started working on her own plans for her nanites. She now realized that Adam was probably very Spartan in their design. She had not fully appreciated his complacent attitude until their latest fight. Heather first needed to find out how they worked, which turned out to be an easy task. Instead of wasting time while in the gym, she used her daily workout sections as a kind of meditation to look inward. She started having the nanites experiment on one another while she pretend to push herself exercising.

At night Heather researched how to make them more robust. She discovered that by enriching them with gold she could have greater control over them and communicate with them over a longer distance. Also, her current nanites became inert or fell apart if they were outside her body for any length of time, but ones with gold in them never broke down.

Heather had discovered this quite accidentally one day when the nanites had inexplicably devoured a gold necklace she was wearing that her mother had given her. While she found the loss of the necklace upsetting, the discovery was miraculous. Unfortunately, gold was not something easily come by, which might have been why Adam never bothered using it. Heather resolved to acquire more of the highly conductive yellow metal later; she was also experimenting with other materials.

Heather had also ordered more of the weight-gaining formula. Her new body took in even more substance than before and she needed to drink the stuff to maintain her strength. Since she no longer wanted to deal with Adam, she set up a false address in a remote part of town to have the

powder delivered. Every Wednesday she would drive out to collect it. It was on one such excursion that Katy, Fred's former girlfriend, knifed her.

Heather had known that Fred had broken up with Katy after the night she "counseled" him, and while other girls at school were jealous of Heather, Katy had been openly resentful of her. Heather had not thought much of it, and had not realized that Katy would go so far as to follow her and learn her routine. That night, Katy had left school early to wait for Heather. Katy did not know what Heather got every Wednesday, she just wanted Heather dead. Had Heather been alert, Katy never would have been able to get so close to her, but Heather had been focusing more on her nanites than what was happening around her.

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Katy's cheeks were wet with tears, with heavy mascara streaked down her pale, almost white, complexion. Katy's normally combed silky long blond hair was in wispy unkempt kinks. The knife she was holding plunged deep into Heather's gut as big brown eyes saw into wet blue ones. All Heather glimpsed in those ice-cold globes was untempered hate. Katy was completely convinced that Heather was the sole source of her anguish. A smile spread out on that pained face as her gold hoop earrings glinted in the failing light.

But, Heather's blood had barely splashed onto Katy's cheerleader outfit before the wound was closing. Heather's unearthly strong, deft hands wrapped around the wrists twisting that blade. Katy's golden bracelets were crushed as the knife was skillfully wrenched from her painted fingers. Heather had been studying self-defense, and this time her speed and strength made locking Katy's arm behind her head an easy task. Twisting her assailant around to face away from her, one perfect hand was all that was needed to utterly subdue the crazed cheerleader. Katy struggled futilely against Heather's unyielding iron grip.

"You fuck-bitch! He's mine! Slut-whore! Put him back, douche-eater! He'll never love you, cum-compacter! Skank-cunt-sucker-tant-licking-hyper-fucker," Katy railed.

Heather's wound was healed as the string of profanity poured out of Katy's lipstick-stained mouth. Her thrashing was becoming more violent. Katy's arm was locked behind her head in such a way that only by breaking her own arm could she free herself, but Heather was now worried might Katy would do just that, such were her frantic ravings. Not knowing what else to do Heather placed her free hand over Katy's forehead and, as her nanites swarmed from palm to face, Katy became calm and collapsed in Heather's arms.

Fred's mind had been like a vast calm cold, so devoid of feelings it was like a slimy dead thing. Katy's mind was alive, chaotic, hot, and tight. Emotions that felt like burning knives cut across Heather's psyche. Everything was so close together that there could be no escape from the raging pandemonium. Katy's thoughts were like painful shards of glass, and it took all of Heather's will not to recoil from them. Again, she pushed deeper into Katy's mind.

Heather saw the damaged little girl that was Katy. Raped by her father, she had lived in constant fear. Young Katy wished her abusive father would die, and one day in a car crash, he did. Katy's fear turned to guilt, which mutated inside of her. The image of her father became that of a caring

man, and that pain he had inflicted on her was a manifestation of his love. Katy was a true masochist, which was why the greatest day in her life was when she met Fred. Fred had given Katy what she wanted. He loved to hurt her and she loved him for it. Their sex was violent and Katy found it full of passion. In her own way she had found joy dating a psychopath like Fred, but that all changed the day Fred changed.

Heather realized that in correcting Fred she had also made him understand how screwed up his relationship with Katy was. Fred had dumped her immediately, telling her to get some help. Katy rightfully blamed Heather. She saw the way that Fred had started treating Heather and thought that she had taken her lover from her. Fred had left her as her father had, and it was more than Katy could bear.

Heather sighed as she laid Katy on the ground. Heather knew she needed to fix Katy as she had Fred; maybe she even could get them back together. "This time they'll be in a healthy relationship instead of whatever their sadomasochistic thing was," Heather said to herself. She knew she would need the help of the Internet to counsel Katy. Heather had no computer with her. As she looked down at Katy's gold jewelry an idea came to her. Heather had her nanites absorb Katy's rings, earrings, and bracelets. Using these newly upgraded nanites, she linked to the informational highway without any other interface. Heather was briefly tempted to just change Katy to remove her variations and to fix her completely; but Heather refused to change Katy the easy way.

As she had done before, Heather hacked into psychiatrists' computers. Again she looked into cases similar to Katy's and again Heather found ways of treating Katy. Again she downloaded the information into Katy. Heather was much more efficient doing this than she had been with Fred. In mere minutes, decades of counseling was pushed into Katy, as well as ways of winning back Fred now that he was adjusted. As she finished, Heather started to feel overwhelmingly hungry.

Katy's blue eyes opened. She instantly reached out and hugged Heather. "Thank you thank you thank you," she tearfully cried.

Heather pried herself away from the emotional girl. "Why don't you go get us some burgers? And, lots of water; I'm parched," Heather said. "I need to load these things into my car." She gestured at the weight-gaining powder.

Katy nodded enthusiastically. Heather did not want to eat a meal with this girl, but she was very hungry. "Oh, I had to... borrow your jewelry. I hope that's alright." Katy just nodded again as she ran off to fulfill Heather's request.

Heather again came home late that night. She had used the water Katy had got to mix more of the formula for herself and she was no longer ravenous. She still was hungry, of course nothing could stop that, but her appetite was back to its manageable level.

Her father had been waiting up for her. Heather held new appreciation for him. As she came in, Heather remembered how much pain he had suffered when their mother died. On impulse she

reached out and hugged her father, who - a little surprised at his daughter's sudden sentimentality - hugged her back.

Heather knew her father hid it well, but like Heather herself, he must still feel it each day. 'I fixed those two degenerates,' Heather thought to herself as she hugged her father, 'Why not do the same for my principled father.'

Heather reached out into her father's mind. When she did, terrified, she instantly tried to break free from it and found she could not. Of all the minds she had seen her father's horrified her the most.

No, it was not because her father was a repressed pervert; it was neither because he cheated on his wife nor because he held some deep dark secret. Mr. Halcyona was exactly what he appeared to be: a fine upstanding man that took his family to church every Sunday. He loved his daughter and after his wife died he had pushed himself to achieve great things in life so he could provide for her. The pain of his wife's death lived with him always; he knew he would never be able to love another as he had her. He had learned to use that pain, that emptiness, as fuel to make himself a better person. He ran from that anguish and kept running, always striving to be more than he was, trying his best never to look back.

Katy's and Fred's minds had been anathema to Heather, but what was intolerable yet enticing to Heather about her father's mind was that it was exactly like her own. It was as if she was looking into her own soul as she looked into her father's. She knew now why the nanites had been pushed to constantly improve her; why she had never stopped to revel in her power, and that she never would. She would always strive to greater heights and never look back... unless she fixed it. She could no doubt lessen her father's pain, and if she did, she would also be affected. She could not counsel her father without counseling herself. In this physical and mental embrace they were linked, their misery feeding off each other. Their shared trauma reflected back and forth between them, amplifying as it did.

Desperately, Heather tried again to break the cycle of torment she had created between them. She found it impossible. Despite her physical strength and towering intellect she was helpless before this mirror reflecting her own flaws and emotions. Heather realized that the only way to escape was to repent. However, if she counseled them both as she had Fred and Katy they would lose their drive; their motivation would disappear. But, she knew there was another way. There was only one way she could change her father without changing herself.

Tears streamed down Heather's face as she pulled away from her father. He looked at her bewildered. "What's wrong, Honey?" he asked dumbfounded, but his daughter did not answer; she just ran to her room and slammed the door behind her. All that could be heard issuing from behind that door was uncontrolled sobs.

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Back at school Heather had almost forgot to tell Fred to give Katy another chance so engrossed was she with her new ability to absorb the information all around her. Heather had buried herself

in that knowledge, trying to forget what had happened in the past by looking to the future. Her drive and commitment had only been strengthened by the mistake she had made with her father. She was beginning to formulate a plan. She was understanding what her life should become, what her duty to humanity was. For their sake, she could not allow herself to waver. But, before she fulfilled her destiny, as valedictorian she had to give a speech at graduation.

With her new abilities writing and executing a speech should have been a simple task, but Heather needed to forget what had happened with her father, so she used this job as an escape; she threw herself into this task with a sense of reckless abandon.

She studied motivational speeches, but quickly grew bored of the simple tricks used in them. Instead she dedicated herself to studying the techniques used by great world leaders. How they were able to drive their nation forward. Heather learned that in the past true human power did not come from one's self, but from how one can influence others. She delved deep into sociology and physiology. Her experiences with Fred and Katy helped immensely. She used them as two ends of a human spectrum and, from those boundary conditions, starting mapping out the middle. Having actually touched another's psyche, Heather had greater experience into the minds of others than any human could.

What to say and how to say it, body positioning, instinct, pitch, tone, rhythm.... She soon realized that it was this communication that separated humans from other creatures. Human beings could quickly and exactly share their experiences; giving them an advantage over other animals. Heather dissected the way people communicate and then rebuilt her own theories and understanding of it. She came to the understanding that complex communication was God's gift to man to separate him from beasts; therein lay the soul. All of this she incorporated into her speech.

In school she learned that a side effect of her new specialty seemed to be the inherent ability to get people to agree with her. When she was not being careful she found people unconsciously nodding in acquiesce with whatever she was saying. The fact that she now was undeniably the smartest and prettiest girl in school did not help matters either.

When the day finally did arrive, no one remembered much about it. They came to graduation and Heather gave her speech. But it spoke to the primal essence of the audience. They were spellbound and captivated by what she said and did on the stage. That speech both motivated the audience to become better people and helped them understand themselves. There was no applause to that speech, just a content calm and focus. The graduating class now knew what they wanted out of life and how to get it. It was Heather's gift to them.

Adam confronted Heather at the end of graduation.

"What was that?" He asked in his direct manner.

Heather had inwardly forgiven Adam for the way he had acted at the barn, but she had been so intent on the task of crafting the perfect speech that she had not outwardly shown her amnesty to

him. "Did you like it?" She asked, but she did more than that. Conscientiously or unconsciously she was conveying to him, using her new seductive abilities, that she wanted him to approve.

Which made his decisive "No" something of a shock. She blinked when she heard it, a little confused.

In her most harmonic voice she tried again. "You didn't like it?" There was so much meaning in each of her words; she was assaulting his senses, trying to get him to agree, to approve.

"No, I did not. It was reminiscent of Hitler's 1939 Danzig speech."

Heather balked. "Did you just compare me to Hitler?" was all she could muster.

"I know what you've been studying this last month. I'm sure you know the speech in question. Yes, while your content was very different from his..."

Heather cut him off. "I should say so; he was rallying the German people at the start of World War Two."

"... But your mannerisms, the way you spoke, very similar," Adam continued.

Heather decided she didn't forgive Adam after all. "Do you have anything constructive to say or did you just want to call me a Nazi?"

"I didn't mean for you to use your abilities like this."

"Like what? Motivating people? Making people better? Oh, I'm sorry, did I use an 'ill-defined term?'" Heather said snidely.

Adam ignored the tone. "Your current actions are manipulative," he stated matter-of-factly.

Heather sighed. "Adam, humans are chaotic. They need to be guided to the light, and it is my duty to be the one to do it. I am simply helping them; fixing them."

"Then we have a fundamental disagreement. I do not see humans as broken," Adam stated; his green eyes glowed.

Heather suddenly realized she had been talking as if she was no longer human, like Adam. Disgusted at both Adam and herself she said, "Look, we should just agree to disagree." She pushed passed him and started walking away.

"But, then we are at an impasse," Adam said, following her. "We need to come to terms."

Heather turned exasperated. "Why? Why do you need to argue with me over everything? If you don't think humans are imperfect than why did you do this to me?"

Now it was Adam's turn to balk. "I..." and he trailed off.

It pleased Heather to see Adam speechless for once; she continued on her way.

After graduation Heather needed to get ready for college. Her method of doing this was a little different from others. You see, she decided that this was a perfect opportunity to completely redo her looks. No one would know her at Brown, and she was no longer bound by trying to make her changes look like a natural progression. She had been preparing a large quantity of an experimental vitamin supplement mix for this occasion.

Her father helped her pack the car, and they kissed each other goodbye. He had not been the same since they had linked, and Heather still got teary-eyed most times when she saw him. One of the drawbacks of having a perfect memory was not being able to forget anything. But, they said their goodbyes and she was on her way. Her car was filled mainly with the mix.

She stopped for the night at a motel. One of the benefits of being super-strong was never needing help with your bags, even when they're filled with incredibly dense superfoods.

Once in the motel room she sat on the bed and went over her new body plan in her mind. She was having doubts about this course of action after her debate with Adam, not because he had made any points she agreed with, but because she had spoken to him as if she wasn't human any more. The new body she was planning would look human on the outside, but would not be anything like a human on the inside.

Her brain would be so much more powerful than a supercomputer. She would have perfect control over her voice and posture. Thus, it would allow for feats even greater than what she had preformed on graduation day with her speech. She would also be impossibly strong, superdense, and immortal. She would function completely different from any living creature on the planet. It was the combination of all of her current knowledge. And the scariest part of it was that she knew that once she had undergone this change she would no doubt become smart enough to conceive of an even greater more powerful mind and body. She had come to understand that there was no limit to what she could become. Each step she made was just one along a never-ending path. Her desire to become better would never - and could never - be quenched.

But, she could end this now. She could stop here; remain human.

Sighing, Heather shook her head. She had meant what she had said to Adam. She knew it was her destiny to run forward to the future, pulling humanity with her. She began to gorge herself on what she had brought. Much of it was in fact normally inedible, but she would need the minerals to create her inhuman body. More and more she ate, feasting and stuffing herself; her stomach once again expanding to accommodate all that she was shoving into it. Heather almost hoped that now, finally, she would feel full, but knew that hope to be what it truly was: a pipe dream.

She needed to eat everything here before she began her transformation. It took longer than she had expected, but finally she was ready. Her taut belly was so engorged it touched the floor even while she was standing.

Closing her eyes she could feel her golden nanites flowing through her. She could see every part of herself. She paused again, savoring this feeling, this... being human. Then, she gave the order, and the old Heather started to slide away, making room for the new, better, Heather Halcyona. She fell to her knees in the center of the motel room.

Her organs shifted and morphed. Her bones and skin hardened. Her mind gained ever-increasing complexity. Every part of her insides was affected by this change. Her belly shrank as the building material was used to construct this perfect structure. The guess and check method of natural selection had no part in this evolution. This was planned start to finish; a body designed by a superior intelligence to be superior.

The internal changes were much more drastic than the external ones, but the outer ones were nonetheless impressive. Her internal changes required a larger, more robust outer body. Her hips widened even more, and her shoulders broadened and thickened. Her muscles increased in size and definition, while somehow becoming even more feminine.

Some of the alterations she made were purely cosmetic: She had planned for her waist to become impossibly narrow even while her abs and core gained superb strength. Her legs lengthened and she grew taller. Her hair went from brown to auburn, falling over her ever more powerful shoulders in voluminous waves. Her nails and lashes grew longer and stronger, choice examples of womanhood, while her breasts became unrivaled examples of perfection.

On the floor of the motel room slick with sweat, Heather's more-than-stupendous body heaved with true exertion; the time first she had felt fatigue in months... and likely the last. Her golden nanites worked, crafting the body that mankind would weep to see. She felt like howling, but restrained herself. Her discipline and control had grown with the rest of her. She was no longer remotely mortal; she was something so much more.

The changes were coming slower now. Finally, the little golden machines had finished their mistress's will.

Ms. Halcyona opened her sparkling emerald eyes as she felt her hunger wax once more. On her knees in a breathless voice that could only be described as angelic the newly forged goddess spoke: "Praise be to God. Thy will be done."

From that moment on Heather Halcyona's life became a blur of activity. Each step was planned and executed by a mind that mere humans - like you, dear reader, and me - could not hope to understand. Life itself became a game of chess, and from this point Ms. Halcyona was terminally one move ahead. Adam, Ms. Halcyona's only real peer, had been accepted to MIT, which was only an hour away from Brown but it might as well have been the moon.

Everything in Ms. Halcyona's life accelerated as she blitzed her way through college. Her charisma and personal magnetism were unequalled. No one could - or would - deny her anything, not that she requested something of someone that they would not have done willingly for a heavenly, compelling, and intelligent woman regardless.

Ms. Halcyona established herself as a force of positive change. She was the big woman on campus and everyone knew it. She was top of all her classes and quite the activist, but still found time to get to the gym an hour every day. She was strong enough to crush the weights she lifted, of course, but still put on a show of exerting herself. Due to the open buffet policy at the school, she was also eating the college out of her tuition. Everyone at Brown knew her, and she knew everyone. Faculty and students were always surprised when she called them by name even when she had never met them before, as if she had a database in her head. She knew how to make other people feel special; Heather had gone from a mousy girl to Ms. Halcyona, a woman you would trust with your deepest secrets.

While she was working to establish herself at Brown, she was also working to establish herself on the world stage. Her metamorphosis allowed for a quicker accumulation of wealth. She could buy and sell stocks in her sleep, as the saying goes, but she didn't sleep anymore. With her new and improved mind she was literately always trading, as her brain was now designed for multitasking. She had petitioned the university for a private dorm room, but quickly moved into an off-campus town house that she bought.

When she went home for holidays, she dyed her hair and put on brown contacts. She still was incredibly different, but she was able to use her new interpersonal skills to deflect questions. Her father was shocked how much his daughter had changed in her first six months at school, but Ms. Halcyona quickly set his mind at ease.

Needless to say Ms. Halcyona graduated in record time with a triple major in modern world politics, biochemistry, and theater. She stayed on another year to get her masters in international relations. Really, she used the extra year to buy a controlling interest in a large agricultural company. She developed a derivative of sugarcane that converted sunlight into food-energy more efficiently than any plant ever before. It could grow in any climate and was highly invasive. Ms. Halcyona held the patent for the genetic code of the crop, and it quickly brought her company to the top of the food industry.

The plant, called 'healthyheather,' contained all the nutrition a human body needed. Heather spent millions tweaking it, making sure it was perfect to meet the dietary needs of everyone, especially her. Ms. Halcyona even developed an aquatic strain so it could be grown in water acreage. Then, in an unprecedented move on her 25th birthday, she released the patent into the public domain. While this effectively destroyed her own company and her credibility as a CEO, it had the ancillary effect of ending world hunger.

Despite Ms. Halcyona's actions as CEO, she still was quite rich; her own board tried to sue her to prove she had gutted her own company for profit. Ms. Halcyona simply made all of her private information public, and unequivocally proved everything she had done to make her fortune was legal. She also knew she would have to do that anyway when she ran for public office.

During this time Ms. Halcyona kept anticipating Adam to appear. She expected him to come to her to make some shrewd argument about what she was doing. But Adam had disappeared after graduating and, despite her attempts to keep tabs on her old classmate, he had not been seen.

Ms. Halcyona's brilliant campaign quickly elected her as the youngest congresswoman in history. Once in the House of Representatives she proved adept at gaining bipartisan support and soon was elected Speaker. Congress was more productive in one year than they had in decades past. Ms. Halcyona was respected by both the House and the Senate for her beauty and brilliance; her charm and cleverness. Using this political platform she was able to go on many talk shows and was seen on television quite often. Soon she not only had the respect of the House and the Senate, but of the people as well.

On television she would also talk about what changes she would make if she were President. Soon, the people agreed that she should not have to wait ten years to run, and with that mandate Ms. Halcyona was able to propose a Constitution Amendment allowing someone as young as herself run for the highest office. It passed both houses of Congress and in record time was ratified by the States.

Ms. Halcyona had tried to track down the agency that Adam had mentioned as the place of his nativity. She had found the government had funded the research that was involved in his genesis, but it had lost that funding when it's prime experiment vanished. She was starting to miss her one equivalent, but he seemed to have stopped caring about her. So, as always, Heather buried anything she might be feeling by facing the future. The void in her heart was the very thing that fueled her irrevocable drive forward.

Ms. Halcyona's presidential campaign was, as you might expect, flawlessly executed. It was easier for her to be elected the first Catholic female president than it was for her to get the Constitutional Amendment passed allowing her to run. At this point there were many conspiracy theories about what Heather Halcyona was, but no one had yet be able to prove she was anything other than an astonishingly persuasive, incredibly intelligent, and undeniably attractive woman. But, that would change.

As president she spent her first term fixing all of the problems that plagued the U.S. Unemployment dropped to less than 1% and economic growth boomed. She was also active in the United Nations. She was always going to countries in turmoil to try and find a peaceful solution.

Because Ms. Halcyona was exposed on such trips, there were two assassination attempts on her life. Both failed because the assassins suddenly had an epiphany. One reported that, as he had seen her face through the cross hairs of his sniper rifle, he had felt the hand of Mohammed on his shoulder in that instant. And he had sworn, under a lie detector, that this was true. He immediately confessed and begged Ms. Halcyona for forgiveness, which she granted after he turned in the rest of his terrorist cell.

Ms. Halcyona's popularity was to the point that no one would run against her. Certainly, debating her on television was a very good way to end up looking very stupid very quickly. Also, she was so loved by the country that anyone running against her would be cast as the villain for the rest of one's career. As such, Ms. Halcyona made her real power play in her second term.

This was the toughest sell of Ms. Halcyona's plan, which must have been why she waited so long. She petitioned congress to allow her to "use" America's gold reserves. Not spend them, but put them to use. She explained that she had found a way to solve the world's energy crisis, but she needed the gold to do it. Of course this met with resistance, especially since Ms. Halcyona refused to show what her plan was, but what could congress do? No one could challenge her... well, one could, but he had disappeared. So, they ended up acceding to her appeal.

Ms. Halcyona took the presentational limousine to Fort Knox. Even though the Federal Reserve Bank in Manhattan has almost twice as much gold, Ms. Halcyona understood that there was symbolism attached to Fort Knox, and for what she planned next symbolism was important. Heather could have done all this before, but she wanted to make sure what she did was legal and had the approval of Congress and the people they represent.

She was admitted to the Bullion Depository. No one knew what she planned to do with tons of gold. Many thought that this insanely smart woman had finally just become insane. But, instead what happened became the major turning point in human history; it would be compared to the birth of Christ, and many would find that lacking.

Ms. Halcyona entered the vault of Fort Knox. Before her was almost half of the country's gold reserves, more than 2% of all the gold mankind had ever mined. She knew many people, probably even the Secret Service members with her, thought she was crazy. They could not guess that she really could just pick up one of these mountains of gold and walk out with it. But, she had finer plans.

As she strode over to the first stack on her powerful legs, she remembered how hard it was having to hide her true nature from the White House physician. As president she had to appoint a personal doctor; it had been tempting to pick someone incompetent, but it would have been unseemly. However, Ms. Halcyona knew she would not longer need to rely on subterfuge.

Conscious that the Secret Service agents were watching her, Ms. Halcyona caressed a gold bullion bar as one might caress a lover. They would set her free. She picked up one of the 400-troy-ounce bars, 27.5 pounds, in her right hand. She laughed over how light it felt. Then, on a whim, she reached down with her left and picked up the stack by the steel forklift supports under it. With one hand and no effort she hefted what was easily 20 tons of gold over her head. Her muscles bunching in tensed knots, almost breaking through her suit.

The Secret Service agents fell back from the sudden and unexpected action. They had seen Ms. Halcyona do some very strange things, but they had no inkling she was possessed of such strength. Ms. Halcyona was laughing now like a mad woman. It felt so good to finally be able to let herself go, for she knew after today she would no longer have to hide her abilities from the world. She looked at the gold bar in her right hand and -reveling in her strength- she crushed the malleable metal. The gold oozed between her indestructible fingers. The witnesses scurried away from her in fear, but still unable to tear their eyes away from the staggering display.

Still holding the tons of gold aloft with her left hand, the exuberant Ms. Halcyona looked down at the terrified expressions on the normally impassive faces of the witnessing agents. As she saw that horror at her unearthly qualities laid bare, she realized what she was doing. She calmed herself. Still looking down she now displayed a saintly expression on her angelic face. In a voice that filled the room like a decree from on high, she said: "You don't have to be afraid. Not now. Not ever."

Then Ms. Halcyona looked to the heavens let out a sigh, and with that sigh came her nanites. They flew like a black cloud up to the gold she was holding, and the gold seemed to melt away. The cloud went from an inky black, somewhat tinged with flaxen, to a gleaming yellow as it grew in size. Quickly the cloud split and moved to the other mountains of gold.

The air became thick with activity as the astonished witnesses watched 5,000 tons of gold reduced to shimmering dust. What was once one of the densest of elements moved through the air like a thing alive. Then - in the same room - that sparkling dust started to coalesce. From within each of the hundreds of clouds, a humanoid shape could be seen emerging.

Soon Ms. Halcyona was not the only exquisitely beautiful woman in the room; Golden Halcyona Avatars filled it. Each moved perfectly lifelike. If not for the fact they were made of metal, it would have been impossible to tell them from Ms. Halcyona herself. Their poses and facial expressions were like a dream, superb in every facet.

Ms. Halcyona turned to her doppelgangers and the witnesses knew information was being passed between them. Then, all at once, the living gold formed ranks and marched out of the vault, taking to the air and flying away as they went outside.

Ms. Halcyona revealed to all of humanity on that day that she was beyond human. Golden Halcyona Avatars appeared throughout the world. Even then they did not come as brazen conquerors, but as shining heralds of peace. You see, from her new base in Fort Knox, Ms. Halcyona had indeed solved the world's energy problems.

Healthyheather had been growing like a weed everywhere, even in the oceans. It was getting to the point that the plant was becoming a real nuisance. But Ms. Halcyona announced through her Avatars that she found a way to convert the energy healthyheather held into electricity and biodiesel. She had it gathered and shipped to Fort Knox where it was converted into energy. By the ton, by plane, truck and by Avatar, healthyheather rolled into Fort Knox where now only Halcyona's Avatars could be seen guarding this world power-plant.

This effectively turned every empty space on Earth into a solar panel, but if you wanted that energy you had to become an ally of Halcyona's America, since only Ms. Halcyona knew how to unlock its secrets. Other countries were starting to yield to external and inner pressure to join the new super alliance. Golden Avatars were rallying the inhabitants of Earth to come together under the leviathan Heather Halcyona had become. There was even talk about making her Pope, even though she was a woman.

Everything had been going so well that Ms. Halcyona seemed to have forgotten about the one rogue element. The one person she could not account for or plan for. He had not been seen nor heard from for years, and Ms. Halcyona thought he might never be seen again.

That was until Adam Immanuel decided he would show his face at the gates to Fort Knox.

Adam walked up to the gate, Katy and Fred Mensch -now married- in tow. He was greeted by one of Halcyona's Avatars.

Adam addressed the Avatar. "Hello, Heather."

The Avatar's golden lips and mouth moved perfectly lifelike and spoke with Ms. Halcyona's voice. "Adam, so good to see you. I've been looking all over for you, you know."

"Yes, I know. Do you know why I'm here?" Adam replied.

"Well, I'm guessing it's to try and stop me or something along those lines," the Avatar replied. Adam and the Avatar were ignoring Katy and Fred in the background.

"No, I'm here to see if you will try and stop me," Adam stated.

The Avatar seemed a little surprised at that. "Is that so?"

"Yes. But, first, I'd like to know what you're planning."

"I would think that would be obvious," the Avatar said slightly amused. "I am going to build a Utopia; a true Utopia. You could be a part of it, Adam. I've been working on all sorts of wonders inside. I've already ended hunger. War will be next, and as soon as everyone joins my nation I will share with humanity the cure to all disease. I even have a cure for aging inside." Adam looked like he was about to interject, so the Avatar cut him off.

"Yes, yes. Overpopulation. If you want kids you either have go on a waiting list or give up your immortality. I have it all worked out."

Adam shook his head. "I was going to object to your use of the word 'cure.' Aging is a natural process, not an illness."

The Avatar's golden eyes potently looked into Adam's green eyes. "You know, Adam, I've almost forgotten what it's like to talk to someone like you."

"You mean someone that's not overwhelmed by your charms?" Adam said folding his arms over his chest.

"Anyway," the Avatar said, "*Quid pro quo*. Why are you here? Why did you bring the Menschs with you? I don't suppose to pledge allegiance to my movement and join my nation, but I truly

hope it is, Adam. I know in my heart, no matter how willful you are, you and I are destined to be together."

Adam shook his head, "No. I'm here to see if you plan on stopping me."

"Yes, you said that before. I would have expected it to be the other way around. Stopping you from doing what exactly? Being irritating?" The Avatar let out a musical playful laugh.

Adam also seemed to get slightly whimsical for a second. "I've been studying morality. I came across an interesting theory. 'Act only according to a maxim whereby you can, at the same time, want that it should become a universal law.'"

A golden smile spread over the Avatar's golden face, "You mean the Golden Rule?"

Adam also smiled a little, "Slightly more complex than that, as I'm sure you're aware. Let's back up for a second. You changed Fred here. After you did he no longer had the same drive he once had, as a result he became a poor wrestler and lost his scholarship."

"I see," the Avatar said sarcastically. "So, he's bad at wrestling now? Well, how many girls has he tried to rape since I cured him?"

Adam ignored the question, "There you go using the word 'cure' again. You also changed Katy here. You made her content and complacent..."

"And happy," interjected the Avatar.

Adam continued unfazed, "But, while you were ironing out these 'discrepancies' in others, you never did it to yourself, did you? You are not satisfied or sated; you still have your drive."

"Logical as always, Adam," the Avatar mocked. "You're quite correct. It is a burden I shoulder that I've relieved from others."

Adam opened his mouth but the Golden Avatar continued, "And before you accuse me, yes, I will do my best to make the whole world happy and content. I will do it without destroying their free will; their souls. Not everyone will need the same attention those two damaged individuals behind you needed, but in the kingdom I'm building I will do my best to make everyone content. I will remove what creates suffering and pain from it, but leave the people themselves as God intended them."

"Everyone but you. You are not treating others as you would have yourself be treated." Adam pointed out.

"No, because life is not as uniform as your logic claims, Adam."

Adam smiled knowingly when the Avatar said that, and something about that smile seemed to infuriate the golden woman. The Avatar said in its female voice, "Why don't we ask Fred and

Katy of they like being happy. Well," it said looking at the two Menschs. "You two have been very quiet during all this. Do you appreciate what I've done for you?"

Fred looked at his wife and stepped forward slightly, "Yes'm we do, but we also appreciate what Adam has done for us."

The Avatar's metal head snapped around and its golden eyes narrowed at Adam, "What did you do to them?"

"What my morality demanded; what I did for you I must do for all of humanity," Adam said simply.

The Avatar looked shocked and then turned back to the two Menschs, "He seeded you with nanites like he did me?" They both simply and slowly nodded.

The Avatar turned back to Adam. "Yes, it seems you're right; I will be putting a stop to you. But force is a last resort; first let me try to talk you out of this mad course."

"It's not mad; it's logical," Adam said. "You are not special; what I did for you I should do for all."

The Avatar said plaintively, "Adam, the universe is not as logical as you would make it. I was not special, but now I am. You will get no argument from me there were people out there that might have been better suited to this task, but I was chosen for it. You chose me, Adam, and now you have to live with that choice. I might not have been the best, but I was certainly not the worst. You would give these powers to everyone? Every murderer, every rapist, every broken, hurt human? You would make the world as it was instead of the Utopia I will make it?"

The Avatar seemed to be thinking and then it shook its perfect golden head, its long blond hair flowing as if it were light as silk. "No, the world you would make would be worse than what we had before. If everyone had my abilities then those with access to more resources would be able to make themselves objectively better. The wealthy would be smarter and stronger than the poor in addition to being richer. You'd create superhuman feudal lords, perfectly suited to exploit those below them. Do you really want to trade my Utopia for a Dystopia?"

Adam just looked into the Avatar's golden eyes. Resolutely he said, "Logic demands that I do. But, don't claim to know what will happen."

Saddened the Avatar spoke, "Oh, I know what will happen. I'm going to have to lock you away, and deactivate the nanites in those two." It started to advance on him.

Adam looked smug. "Your body is here in Fort Knox, is it not? All this food being shipped in, it's not just for your power-plant; it's for you too, right?"

The Avatar reached out to pick up Adam. It said patronizingly, "Very clever, Adam. You must have it all figured out."

"Yes," said Adam, and a burst of energy came out of his body. The wave hit the metal woman, and the nanites that composed it separated from one another. The disassembled golden woman became a pile of dust. "And I'm more than clever." Adam declared as Fred and Katy revealed two strange-looking weapons they had been concealing.

Adam, Katy, and Fred ran to the main building. Anytime an Avatar got near Katy or Fred would shoot it with blast of energy and the nanites composing it would disperse. Adam spoke into the air, knowing that Ms. Halcyona was listening. "Do you think I would just come here to announce myself without a plan? I know how to shut down your nanites; I built the prototype for them and you've been spreading them everywhere. When I arrive at your real body I'll be able to turn them all off."

Adam and the Menschs arrived at the main building, quickly disabled the lock and the three were inside. Adam seemed to know where he was going and they quickly ran through the corridors. An Avatar broke through a wall, but Katy took care of it. The dust-like gold spilled out onto the floor. Finally, they arrived at two huge reinforced doors.

Adam informed the two with him that Heather's body was behind them. He went to the control panel and started to hack it while the Menschs kept watch; they moved far back to cover as much space as they could. Ms. Halcyona's angelic voice could be heard over the speaker system. "Adam, please, I'm begging you, stop. You know not what you do. Some doors aren't meant to be opened."

Adam spoke as he worked. "This is a fascinating encryption algorithm. Anyway, don't worry I'll reactivate your nanites as soon as everyone else is seeded with them. I just have to... oh an n-dimensional Bessel function inside of a Poincaré map? Brilliant, but yes... there we are."

The heavy doors slid open and behind them Adam saw... perfect perfection.

His green multispectral eyes could see every facet of the magnificence beyond; she was power, elegance, grandeur, and comeliness made manifest. Every form of beauty, from mathematical to natural, was represented and enhanced in this ascended woman. To say she was flawless would have been an insult, for she was so far beyond what it might mean to have a flaw.

All of the food being shipped to Fort Knox was pouring into this radiant deity and the power radiated was being collected. Heather Halcyona was not taking healthyheather from the power plant; she *was* the power plant. Adam could feel his essence cry out for her even as his physical body was being overwhelmed and destroyed by the pure energy flowing out between the opening doors. The feeling as that divine light flowed over him was both awe inspiring and dread inducing. Adam knew he could not stand against it.

Heather Halcyona was deified as a planetary power plant in the center of this temple-like auditorium. Her snowy body seemed to me made of solid luminescence. Her hair had become long bright strands of plasma that lazily floated in the wonders energy that streamed out of every part of this blazing immortal. She had transcended sexuality. She was no longer an object of

dreams and desires; she was dreams and desire. Halcyona's Avatars might have been crafted to play upon the weaknesses of man, but this form was beyond that. Looking upon Heather Halcyona you feel awe and contentment; as if you could understand your rightful place in the universe was necessarily inferior to her, and that true understanding brought only reconciliation.

The dazzling splendor before him opened her beaming green eyes and looked into and through him. Adam knew his being was laid bare in that glance. The machines in the room slowed as Heather Halcyona removed the feeding apparatus from her surpassing lips and her supreme heavenly face exemplified sorrow. The pure light dimmed as she did, but it would not be enough to save Adam.

As the output slowed power-outages swept across the globe. Everywhere people were panicking for as Heather Halcyona focused her full attention to her only friend, Halcyona's Avatars fell silent. Without power and guidance chaos would quickly ensue.

Heather Halcyona's grief was palpable as a perfect tear formed in her paramount eyes, and was swept away and destroyed in her flowing energy. "Oh, Adam," she said in a quiet yet wondrously overpowering voice.

Adam looked up at his absolute goddess and said "I seem to have miscalculated...." and then his body fell away and disintegrated.

Fred and Katy were far enough away that they could escape, and they did. Tears streamed from Heather Halcyona's mourning eyes and dissipated as she watched the two flee.

Then, resolutely she put back her apparatus and closed her magnanimous eyes; determined to bring humanity to (her/their/the) perfect future.

**-FIN**

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