

# In the blink of an eye

It is the mind that matters

## Victor Thijssen

Peter stepped into the hallway and had to blink his eyes a few times. This was exactly why he disliked travelling by probilivators. For a yet unknown reason the current generation of teleportation de-vices was unable to transfer surface fluids. If you forgot to close your eyes and mouth you were bound to arrive at your destination with painfully dry eyes and an enormous craving for a glass of water. Not being an experienced user of probilivators Peter had gotten quite experienced in undergoing these annoying side-effects. And while blinking helped his sore eyes, his mouth and mind were definitely beyond the aid of a simple glass of water. He put away his nicely dried coat -every downside has an upside- and walked to the kitchen to pour himself a glass of Scotch.

“Honey, I’m home. Wen....are you online?”

Peter took his Scotch and went to the living room to take a look at the main screen. Fortytwo inches of blackness looked back at him, except for the blinking message in the upper left corner.

```
> NNN SERVER FAILURE  
> PLEASE REBOOT SYSTEM
```

Peter sighed. Poor Wendy, they were really getting to old for this kind of nonsense. He pushed the designer reset button and wondered why Alphabet Inc. paid an expensive design team to develop the most hated button of the universe rather than investing in reliable software that would prevent the need for such a button in the first place? He was quite sure that the probilivators of ConCERN did not have a ‘reset’ button. But then again, there would not be much to reset in case an unlucky traveller got ‘teleported’ over all possible locations in the entire universe. While the operating system was doing its magical rebooting thingy Peter went back to the kitchen to pre-

pare himself a sandwich. An excellent combination, he thought, a Montegu sandwich and a glass of Scotch to flush it down. He just took his first bite when a familiar voice came from the living room. “Peter, is that you?” “Yep, I’m home. Nice to hear that you are also back. What happened?”

“I think I caught a virus again,” Wendy replied. Peter grinned, she might have lost her physical appearance, she certainly had not lost her sense of humor. “Trouble in the nationwide neural network?” he asked, “That is what you get when you put your life in the hands of the Dutch.”

“Don’t complain about the Dutch,” Wendy said. “We would not be together if it had not been for the Dutch.” Well, Peter could not argue with that. About twenty years ago a team of Dutch scientist had found a way to upload the entire human mind into the new generation of optical super-computers. They had set up a network within the Netherlands that allowed scientists to share thoughts and knowledge without having to meet in person. It was a great success and other countries applied for access. In no time there was global coverage and the ‘Netherlands Neural Network’ was renamed into the ‘Nationwide Neural Network’. Peter had always found it a bit ironic that the country that was the first to legalize euthanasia was also the first to succeed in making people immortal.

“I have a message from Ting,” Wendy said. “Do you want me to forward it to the screen or will you join me?”

“Just give me ten minutes to eat and jump under the shower and then I will join you.” Peter quickly finished his

sandwich, emptied his glass, cleaned the kitchen and went to the bathroom, the only place where he could still feel the presence of Wendy. Her toothbrush, the shelves full of bottles, tubes and jars, her bathing pearls and scented candles, even her hairpins and hairbrush with some of her long hairs, Peter had not moved a thing. To his opinion he was allowed to have one obscure shrine to remember the physical Wendy. Peter took off his clothes and stepped into the shower. As always, the combination of the warm water and the bathroom scents brought him back a decade ago. It was during the long predicted pandemic and that was exactly what the world got, a global pandemonium. Like almost half of the population in the developed countries Peter’s wife got infected. But Wendy had been lucky, at least in the sense that she had received a cerebral implant a few weeks before the virus got her. So when the infection became uncon-trollable and her bodily functions were shutting down one by one, her mind was uploaded to the NNN. A few weeks after her physical death they applied for a permanent residency in the NNN. Wendy, being a Nobel laureate like Peter, was obviously accepted without further discussion. So now she was one of the few thousands residents of the first human virtual colony.

Peter stepped out of the shower cabin and took a towel from the rack. A probilivator would come in handy now, he thought. Although, while it would be an easy way to get dry, the people on the other end would probably not appreciate to see a buck naked man stepping out of a transporter. Quickly, he slipped into his pyjamas and went to the bedroom. He laid down, took the connector from the night stand and placed it over his cerebral implant just above his right ear. When he went online he never forgot to close his eyes. He waited a few seconds for the connection to be established before he opened his virtual eyes.

“Hi honey, welcome home.”

