

# Dragonfly

Prosthetic Goddess  
of an Awkward  
Idealist

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# Praeteritum



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ANIMAL VEGETABLE OR MINERAL  
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*"Fiction has to be plausible, reality doesn't."*  
~ Stewart Brand

In reality, our Dragonfly lady might have been an alien, as in *belonging to another*, or as in *beyond Earth*, or as in *unfamiliar and disturbing or distasteful*. Or, she just might have not been a human, though she certainly looked like one. There was some debate about what she really was.

She was told that she was born at Wright Patterson Air Force Base, in Ohio, where the wreckage of the Area 51 alien spaceship that had crash landed in the 1940's had been rumored to have been taken, to be experimented on by the US military. Young Dragonfly, Fly for short, had a birth certificate (in the form of the rarely seen modern-antique metallic coated paper of early Xerox machines) with the names of two fairly ordinary human parents listed on it — James and Ellen. And the birth date on the certificate was given as May 17, 1969, just a month before humans first landed on the moon, and five months before the Internet's big brother, ARPANET, was born.

There was a documentary once that claimed, somewhat convincingly, that birth certificates are derived from the legalese concept in commercial trade for tracking the origin of a commodity. As in a commercial *certificate of berth*. As in a *statement of ownership*. *Berth* being a nautical term for the dock of a ship, where cargo is loaded and unloaded. Both *birth* and *berth* being words derived from, or otherwise related, to the term *bear*. And *bear*, in the non-animal sense, means to carry, support, or endure.

But who really owned our young lady? Who was really carrying, supporting, and enduring her, as she was borne into this life, on this blue-green marble of a world, or wherever she came from? Was it really James and Ellen? Or was it something far more complex and otherworldly?

What was definitely true was that Dragonfly's brain sometimes lived in the future, usually about 30 years ahead of her body, from what she could decipher. Unfortunately, or perhaps fortunately for her, her brain never showed her what her own future would be, so she spent much of her life being both amazed and confused by everything that happened to her small but sturdy self.

What is also true is that dragonflies were one of the first species to evolve the ability to fly.



-  
TWO WHEELS GOOD  
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*Work*

*noun*

*in physics: energy added into a system*

*Etymology: of Germanic origin; related to Dutch  
werk and German Werk, from an Indo-European  
root shared by Greek ergon*

In accordance with developmental biology, Dragonfly's larval stage had no wings, even metaphorically, so her younger years were entirely spent wandering around gravitationally attached to the surface of the planet, though she often found traveling on two wheels good. A bicycle is as close to flying as one could get, she thought.

While balancing on her bike, waiting patiently for the light to turn green, twenty-something year old Fly stared at the also-twenty-something boy on the bike who was passing her. He was one of those messenger types, she figured. Traffic lights were not made for him. Fly was an almost obsessively law abiding citizen, which meant that she had to wait for the light to stop being red, before she could try to catch up with him. Not that she could, or even wanted to. She watched as he climbed the bit of a hill that was created by the Harvard bridge as it joined the Boston side of Mass Ave with the Cambridge side. The bicycle boy was about the same smallish size as she, so he didn't go too much faster, though he was in much better shape. After he began to descend the hill he picked up speed, and zipped across the intersection, leaving Fly

alone again on her morning commute to school. That's school as in the place she worked, not as in a place where she was a student. There was always some confusion about that because Fly looked like a teenager, even though she was rapidly approaching the thirty year mark (a fact that made her gasp in astonishment). At least she comforted herself with the idea of looking like she was in her twenties when she turned forty, or does it work like that?

She made it to the breakfast portion of her trip. A bagel and a muffin. Fly wasn't one of those coffeeheads who can't function without a cup of coffee in the morning. A fact which amazed her to no end — she never could understand what mystical force actually propelled her out of bed every day. She needed no caffeine. No, she was more of a simple carbohydrate kinda girl. Plant based carbs, please, of course.

(Fly had been mostly ovo-lacto-vegetarian since she was a baby, and went full herbivore and vegan at the same time, during college, after absentmindedly playing with the leather straps on her book bag and then realizing that she was playing with some dead individual's skin, which entirely grossed her out, and she went home and cut those straps off, to be replaced with what she hoped was non-terrorized cotton cloth. She vowed to never again buy or use anything that involved materials that were obtained through cruelty or a non-voluntary manner, or at least not to animals like herself. And she did a pretty good job sticking to that vow. With things like muffins and chocolate being an occasional exception, of course.)

What made getting breakfast on the way to work even better than just simple carbohydrates was that there was a chance that the biker boy would be there too, getting coffee. Apparently he was not exactly a rebel in this aspect. Somehow, he always managed to get there after her, even though he had passed her on the way, so she always took her time ordering and packing up her goodies for the rest of the trip to work.

Every time she saw the biker boy she would silently start a conversation with him. She had talked to him quite a bit this way, but when it came time to form the words for real she was an utter failure. She had even colored her hair purple. She had thought that that would give her a better excuse to talk to him. But the purple faded a few days later. And when next she dyed it blue, she lost all

courage to even look him in the eyes. Blue is apparently not a bold color, maybe she should go green next?

So Fly watched the biker boy and simply enjoyed the experience of observation.

Dragonfly was not one of the beautiful people. And when she felt herself acting like one she would quickly remind herself of her position in life, lest she be taken for a fool. Sometimes when she looked at her reflection in the mirror she could catch a glimpse of the pretty girl that was lurking inside her body. But when she was depressed she never seemed to be able to find that certain angle.

Actually she was not really depressed much these days. This was another thing that amazed her. But she figured that she should leave well enough alone and not even try to figure it out. She had gone through enough melancholy, a few years earlier, for a couple of life times, and maybe she had simply gotten it all out of her system. Watching daytime talk shows always brightened her up and she had been doing a lot of that lately, after work, so she was in an even better mood than normal.

But she was bored. Her best and only friend, Dan, had just moved across the country, to — where else? — San Francisco. Land of the beautiful, hip, and intelligent people. Fly hadn't been hanging around with him much lately, but still the prospect of not being able to even call him (due to prohibitively expensive long distance phone call rates) was more than daunting. Now there was no one to call when she had tired of entertaining herself. Except her parents.

So now, to keep herself busy, and to prevent herself from going insane, she would invent little adventures to go on. Or create intricate tasks to accomplish. She cut her hair at least once a week. Colored it about as often. If she had some extra money she would go to the video store. She made a game out of deciding what movies to rent. This could kill an hour or so if she played the game right. Then actually watching the movies would kill most of the rest of the evening. The whole month of March was spent systematically renting all the movies of a certain, particularly prolific, young, attractive, movie star.

Fly even took up writing fiction for a while, but the results proved to be boring and plotless. She decided that her writing was merely a cataloging of her meandering thoughts. But when she

thought about it she couldn't really figure out what the real writers wrote instead.

The idea of taking Prozac was briefly on her mind but it quickly loosened its grip and flew off in the direction of someone else who might have the finances to realize such a concept (medical care still being a luxury, and a private affair, in the US). Anyway, she wasn't really depressed, as was noted before. So she really wanted to save that drastic a step for the real thing, in case she needed it.

Basically Fly lived out her twenties mostly vicariously, through anyone she might have chance to encounter. She observed more than anything else, as if she were simply passing the time until... well, until something she was entirely unaware of, consciously, happened.

She thoroughly enjoyed simply sitting in some strategic location and surveying the people who walked by. It was so much easier than trying to interact with another person. There was something about trying to get her mind in synch with someone else's that made it almost impossible for her to communicate on a social level with the teeming masses out there. Maybe her brain was really different than all those other people's brains, some sort of space-time anomaly. That was one of the reasons that she had gotten a nose ring. The metal thing that hung on the side of her nostril gave folks the impression that there was something not quite right about this young lady. Actually that was a bit grand, she had really gotten the nose ring because two of her most pined for ex-boyfriends were in love with the same woman, a woman who happened to have piercings all over body, and Fly thought that that was the secret to being cool. (Years later, Fly discovered this man-magnet of a woman's profile on a social networking site and she had apparently become a lesbian minister. Something Fly didn't bother to try to emulate.) But Fly would never admit that she'd gotten pierced to try to be cool, because even she knew that trying to be cool was definitely not cool. And she had become obsessed with trying to be cool as of late, after having been painfully dumped by both of the aforementioned two favorite guys.

Trying to be cool was one more thing she did to relieve the boredom, and loneliness. It worked only slightly.

The two things in Fly's life that truly gave her happiness, and fairly effectively, albeit temporarily, relieved her ever intensifying boredom and loneliness were her cats and the kids she taught at school.

Kid's brains were so much more in synch with Fly's that she was in heaven when around them. Children are the future, literally, and that's where Fly's brain seemed to live, unlike the brains of nearly all adults in the world. Children must know far more than most adults could ever imagine. Fly figured that as people aged their wisdom got covered up with the ridiculousness of competition, money, keeping score, and other bizarre and irrational inventions of so called "modern" humans. What could children tell us about where we're headed, if we only let them speak their minds? she thought.

And cats? Cats were simply infinitely wise beings, obviously. The feline mind is a lot like a meditating Buddha: content and friendly no matter when or where someone else's mind was located, as long as their overall environment is warm and comfortable.

One day, during this middling twenty-something life, Fly woke up in her usual manner, and after much deliberation, decided not to call in sick. She rolled out of bed and spent twenty minutes getting herself moderately presentable. She climbed on her transportation. Which was, specifically, her department-store-brand, hundred-dollar, assembly-included, crossbreed bicycle. The cross was between a mountain bike and a really, really cheap mountain bike, apparently. But it was her bike, and it worked, and it was called Beetlejuice. If you saw it, and were anything like Fly, you would know why she called it that.

The school was about four miles away. And there was the bridge in the middle. On windy days the bridge was a grueling half-mile-long, uphill battle. But this day was relatively mild so the bridge was only a comfortable hundred and eighty Smoots or so. She imagined that the biker boy sped past her and called her an asshole. She imagined what she might call out as a retort. "Oh, because I wear a bike helmet?" Why did she imagine him being rude? Low self-esteem, one might say. Or defensiveness bred from years of being treated as someone slightly *less than*. But the

imaginary conversation ended there anyway because he was already too far ahead of her. And in reality there was no real biker boy today. She was sure he was avoiding her. And she decided that it was because he had correctly determined that she wasn't cool.

Fly made her way into the school where she worked. She amused the kids by drawing their portraits for a while. Then she read them a book about a baby dinosaur who is blue. She wondered if this was merely an artistic liberty, or if dinosaurs really might have been blue. No one had ever really seen dinosaur skin, because animal packaging is one of the most readily biodegradable structures known to humans. And apparently mummification wasn't all the rage back then. (This was, of course, back in the mid-90's, before DNA sequencing and all the fancy science stuff happened, to allow dinosaurologists to actually figure out that some dinosaurs might have had at least some blue on them, just like some birds do.) Not knowing any better, Fly decided that the blue coloring was probably not a natural one for lizards. Too bad the kids didn't ask her about it, she thought. The questions that kids ask was one of her favorite parts of her job. One time two little boys came up to her needing to settle a bet. They needed to know whether bricks would melt. What a cool question, she had assessed, while she channeled all her experiences with the substance that make up bricks, trying to come up with a plausible answer. She decided to tell them that under normal circumstances, no, bricks did not melt. But they might crack and break if they got very hot. Going into the idea of molten earth was probably too much for them, maybe another time she would tell them all about that.

Recently, Fly had gotten a raise at her school — whoopee! — but before she even had a chance to make plans for all that extra money, they decided to cut her hours. So the net effect was that she lost a large hunk of desperately important income. So Fly had taken on another job. This job was as a substitute in the public school's afterschool program. It was a decent job and they only called her sometimes. This was fine by her because she really hated having to work in restricting positions with so many random rules and schedules and such, and tried to do it as little as possible.

But today she got a call asking her to work for some afterschool where someone had called in sick. She needed the money so she said yes. So when she got out of work number one she left right

away, grabbed some arbitrary food at the market, and headed on over to work number two. Because the school system was so large (something like one school every three blocks it seemed), the subbing assignments she got were almost never in the same place. And she always felt a bit weird when she first arrived. This time was no exception. In fact no one else even bothered to show up for about forty-five minutes, leaving Fly to decide that she was definitely in the wrong place. But she wasn't, at least not technically. But this afterschool classroom turned out to be the worst she had been to, in a more personal sense. The teacher, when he eventually decided to show up, didn't seem to have anything constructive to offer the kids, so they all had to amuse themselves. Fly was bored too, and was amusing herself by watching one boy who was trying to play some sort of catapult war with some blocks. It reminded her of the impromptu Dungeons & Dragons games that she used to play in study hall as a kid. This mildly interesting young person seemed quite intent on getting the trajectory of the catapulted block just right so that it would crash right into a tower that he had constructed out of more blocks on the opposite end of the table. He went on and on, bombing the tower and then rebuilding it, only to bomb it all over again.

Eventually even the teacher got bored and decided to take everyone on over to the community park to wander around. When Fly got to the park the first thing she noticed was that there seemed to be a giant, metallic potato in the very center of the playground. Very odd thing to be in a playground. Once, though, Fly had seen a park in Belgium or thereabouts in which the slide/climbing structure was in the shape of a giant human skull. But a potato, in Cambridge, Massachusetts? And to top it off the potato was being supported by four, perfectly arranged, metal tree limbs. It was, she discovered after reading the plaque, some sort of statue, someone's idea of art. None of the other people populating the park seemed to notice it, but Fly was sure that there had been much public debate over the sculpture when it first arrived.

After being at this now-dubbed Giant Potato Park for quite a while, one of the boys in the class convinced Fly to go on a quest to find his "magic stick", which would release the boy from the spell that apparently caused his butt to be glued permanently to a swing. (And yes, remember this was in the mid 90's, when Harry

Potter was only a quiet glimmer emerging out of Rowling's typewriter.) Now this was something different! So Fly graciously accepted the challenge and off she went, with another bored kid who had elected himself as Fly's sidekick. A few minutes later Fly and her sidekick returned triumphantly with a stick. However, the magic boy deemed it to be the wrong stick and sent Fly off once again on the quest. This time the magic boy decided to come with her, having recently been freed from the swing-glued-to-butt spell by some unknown *non-stick* force. The two, abandoned by the sidekick, spent the rest of the afternoon in search of magical objects. They even chanced upon some magic mushrooms, but the boy warned her not to eat them because she might turn into a giant fungus monster if she did.

When magic boy's mother came to pick him up Fly's was forced to return back to reality.

When the teacher later freed her to go home, she climbed on her bike and headed back across the river, towards home. She realized that there probably weren't too many kids like that one. Ones who actually had imaginations. Especially not the older ones. By the time kids are indoctrinated into the school systems these days, they have pretty much lost all of their ability to think for themselves. She saw this magic boy as a ray of hope for the future. Hopefully this kid would grow up to be some sort of artist, so that he could enlighten the rest of his peers. Otherwise Fly would be resigned to watching sitcoms and real cop shows on tv, when she got old.

Anyway, the little trip into the fantasy world of the magic boy had brightened her outlook on life a bit. It reminded her of her childhood in a way that made her feel happy. This was unusual in that most things that she remembered about being a child were unhappy, or at most merely empty. (She had a favored sticker on her bedroom door which said "My family is more dysfunctional than your family".) She had read plenty of fantasy and sci-fi when she was growing up, and that was the main thing which kept her happy as a kid and teen, thinking about the future, and other exceptional possibilities that transcend the banality of her "modern" Western culture. Now that she was older, in her twenties, she had little time to even think of sitting down with some goofy pulp sci-fi book. There was too much stuff that she wanted to learn about



in this reality. Quantum Physics, chaos theory, evolution, and the human brain, these were what Fly spent her time reading. They were similarly about the future and exotic possibilities, but far more realistic and some of them were even close enough for Fly to touch personally, compared to the stuff in most sci-fi stories. The non-fiction science books were more now-ish, than future-ish, perhaps, bringing Fly into the present to connect her brain with everyone around her a bit more intimately.

While she'd been in college Fly had complained that adults had all lost touch with their innocent childlike qualities, and were way too serious. But now Fly, herself, was starting to become her own worst nightmare, an adult. This magic-boy-in-the-Giant-Potato-Park brush with her childhood memories made her realize this. Maybe if she cut her hair again...

For Fly's birthday she had received enough money to finally get a modem for her little old-but-not-yet-antique Mac Plus. Fly believed that computers were cool, well, maybe not quite cool, but really neat, or something like that. She had regretted not getting into computers more fully in school. She thought that she might have had an actual shot at being an important person if she had. Oh, well. Anyway, after a couple of tries the computer mail order company finally got it right and sent out a modem which actually was compatible with her not-quite-archaic little machine, and Fly was in business.

Somewhere along the way Fly had learned that the internet was originally designed by the government, yes the same one that designed the bizarre tax forms she had to fill out yearly, so you can imagine how well organized and self explanatory the internet turned out to be for Fly. (Technically the internet the public uses was actually designed by college professors and their students, but they are almost as scattered organizationally as the government, from what Fly could tell.) It took Fly about a month of keeping her silver studded nose in a pile of guides with names like *The Internet for Imbeciles*, and such, to even be able to get anywhere interesting. (This was back in the days pretty much before the web, when there was mostly just email, BBS, newsgroups, and telnet.) And even then she was completely lost once she got there. But Fly persevered, spurred on by some invisible force, propelling her towards a future she could not possibly have imagined.

She discovered that she too could become one of those computer geeks who ate only prepackaged food and had a permanent blue glow on their faces from the monitor screens. After spending an entire day with that blue glow reflecting into her retinas she decided that she had to get a life, and so she e-mailed an ad to the local weekly paper's personal ad section. This was intended to change her life. More so than most other average and boring changes in life that she experienced all the time, of course.

The name Dragonfly was not our young lady's only name. No, in these times people seemed to be craving some kind of consciousness duality, and so no one ever had just one name. For a while there Fly was living with a bunch of people, none of whom went by their original names, except when their parents came around. It was all very confusing. But Fly's generation seemed to claim it as their right to have an alter ego. Maybe it was a testament to the rampant lostness quality that seemed to plague Fly and the rest of Generation X. Or maybe it was just viewed as a cool thing to do. Fly had picked the name "Dragonfly" for the obvious reasons: beautiful shimmering iridescent wings, reputation for eating mosquitos, and that mysterious quality that the insect conveys. Also the word itself sounded terribly poetic. It was who she dreamed of metamorphosing into, perhaps. (This is a lie. She didn't pick Dragonfly for these reasons, but it sounds good in pretense, doesn't it?) She did love bugs (in the very non-taxonomic meaning of the word, much to the annoyance of her latin-names-for-species-memorizing companions). She loved the idea of bugs as tiny, alien, almost robotic beings, more than the actual creatures, but that was mostly because the real ones she encountered most of the time tended to do obnoxious things like bite, sting, or just generally be gross. She was a bit prejudiced, and tended to favor the non-biting-stinging-gross types of insects, but, being a compassionate soul, she tried to be nice to the less favored ones too, whenever possible. If a mosquito tried to dine on her blood, she would usually apologize to it as she smooshed it into oblivion. She would then go on to explain to the poor dead creature that it had invaded her personal space and that was crossing her line of veganity. And anyway it was part of her job as a dragonfly to rid the world of all the mosquitos, wasn't it?

At times she supposed that she wasn't ever intended to be a dragonfly after all, and she really was more like a groundhog, or a pigeon, or a turtle... But Dragonfly was what she had dubbed herself for this version of her story, and so that was what she was sticking with.

-  
BAD DREAMS  
-

*Disbelief in magic can force a poor soul  
into believing in government and business.*

*~ Tom Robbins in  
Even Cowgirls Get the Blues*

One day, on the way home from work, Dragonfly got arrested. It was just like in the movies. Really. You know, a couple of cops burst through some doorway, grab you, and rip the very soul from your being, right before they throw you helplessly down to the pavement, and then twist your arms rather unnaturally behind your back in order to shackle you in their non-fur-lined handcuffs. And then five more police cars and their humans show up to watch while someone reads you your suddenly rather limited “rights”.

Yup that was exactly how it was. Except that no one read her her rights. Fly found out about that later, turns out that they only do that when they are unsure of your guilt. If they are convinced that you are guilty they don’t even bother talking to you. And Fly was guilty of several things. She was guilty of being on a city bus with intentions of doing something other than getting a ride somewhere, and she was guilty of pushing the limits of stupidity. The stupidity part was actually the bit she had an arrest warrant out for. Subconsciously, hell consciously on occasions, Fly had always wanted to get arrested as some kind activism legitimacy. She had *almost* purposely lost that little piece of paper that the probation officer had handed her after she had seen the judge about that unloved little car she had been forced to “abandon” when it died on her and she had no money to get the sad thing fixed, or even

towed anywhere. (Fly, in her goody-two-shoes way, had left the keys in the car, signed the title over, and left a note on the windshield asking the powers that be to donate the car to “a worthy cause”.) She had dutifully served the community service hours that had been her original court fine. But then she had simply neglected to inform the court about it. Of course she had never expected to be arrested for “assaulting” some asshole bus driver.

Of course she hadn’t actually assaulted the asshole bus driver, and certainly never even intended to touch him at all. At most she could have been said to have *intentionally leaned toward* him, and even that was debatable. She wasn’t even sure she had ever even touched him as she tried to read his name on the badge on his shirt so that she could report him to the authorities for malicious driving with a deadly vehicle — trying to terrorize her off the road — before the asshole in question grabbed her wrists, pinning her in place, and then, as if by magic, summoned the two hulking, yet noticeably attractive, police officers who ripped her of her previously mentioned soul. (The cops had been sitting in their car across the street and seen and heard Fly expressing frustration at the bus driver, and had come over to investigate, apparently, when they saw the driver grab her.)

The cops then violently dragged her off the bus and quite literally threw her face down on the sidewalk while they handcuffed her. After coming to their senses, and getting a good look at her, the officers realized that she was rather a harmless little thing, and so they uncuffed her and let her get up. But then they ran a check on her and discovered that she did indeed have a warrant out for her arrest so they once again placed her in the handcuffs, shoved her in the back of one of the many police cars which had come to gawk, and drove her off to the MBTA police station (the MBTA, or T, being the Boston area’s public transportation system), with her bicycle sticking halfway out of their cop-car trunk.

How anticlimactic, Fly thought, they didn’t even have the decency to take her to a real police station. The building they brought her into only had two tiny little jail cells, kinda like on the 70’s sitcom *Barney Miller*, which Fly had watched regularly as a kid. There was already a sort of angry looking wiry guy in one of the cells. Since the cops felt that it might not be the safest thing to put a delicate creature like our Dragonfly within arms reach of an

apparent “real criminal”, they simply cuffed her to a molded plastic chair while they interrogated her. Then she called her dad, with the expectation that he would fume at her for her lack of responsibility or something, but he was more upset at the cops for arresting his little girl. He said he would be right down to bail her out.

While Fly waited for her father, the officer moved her into one of the adjacent offices to get her even further out of the way of the angry guy in the cell. They couldn’t decide where to put her, so they eventually just cuffed her to a filing cabinet. Oh, the humanity, she thought.

Her dad showed up as promised, bailed her out, and even got her and her bike home in time for Fly to watch the latest episode of Beverly Hills 90210, which she had gotten into watching for a few months, along with one of her roommates.

Fly had to go to court in two different cities for the next couple of days, but the assault charge was dropped, once she explained to the judge that she merely wanted to get the driver’s name to report his terrifying and intimidating driving and honking at her that threatened her life and sanity. The public defendant lawyer who had been assigned to her case was all gung ho for a full trial, so she imagined that he might have been a bit disappointed with the case’s dismissal. After closing the case, the judge ignorantly added his advice for her to bike on the sidewalk next time. He was then struck speechless when she informed him that it was actually illegal in Boston to operate a bicycle on the sidewalk, and that she belonged in the street just like all the other vehicle operators.

Later, in the second courtroom, in the second city, she presented her newly obtained official piece of paper which stated that she had indeed completed all the community service work to “repay” the city for having to deal with the fact that she had not been rich enough to get her car towed when it died, for which she had been fined so many months before, so they let her off for the warrant, too, and she was free and clear once again. And, in the process, she’d been given a copy of the police report with the bus driver’s name on it, which was all she’d really ever wanted out of this whole mess.

But the whole experience had shaken her up quite a bit.

It took Fly a marathon of violent-cops-against-the-world movies, late at night, to shock her into the reality of what had happened to her. It was far more of a violation of her humanity than she could have imagined. A case of life imitating art (the art part is questionable in the two movies that our young lady saw, but that's another issue entirely). Now, the sight of her kids at school playing cops and robbers and running around with improvised handcuffs on their little wrists caused a discomfort in Fly that she didn't quite like. She wanted to both cry and scream alternately, or maybe even at the same time. She didn't really know why she felt this way either. Maybe it was just misplaced adrenaline. Or maybe it was the overwhelming sense of hatred for the entire world that she felt.

Oh, well whatever.

After a couple of months vacation from the substituting job, where they had apparently completely forgotten about Fly, she was finally called back into service. One of the first places she was called to was the class with the magic boy. When she first scanned the kids she could not find her little friend. But within a few minutes a group of boys began interrogating her about her purple hair, and then one of the boys began to defend Fly and her choice of self expression. When he mentioned that his hair had until recently been a particularly vibrant shade of green, she at once realized that it was indeed her little magic boy, only he had grown up. He was no longer this sweet little lonely child, he had entered the first raging hormonal stage of adolescence. He was now primarily interested in aggressive attacks on his fellow male friends and somewhat less aggressive attacks on his female companions. In the end though the magic boy redeemed himself by proclaiming Dragonfly to be a cool person. She decided that he would survive the tumultuous years of the teenager and go on to become a very important person. (She never found out what kind of awesome man he became, and she didn't even know his last name, so she couldn't look him up in later years, once the internet search engine was invented. But, as compensation from the universe, she did discover one of her now-maturing former preschool students co-starring in a PBS kid's tv program, which delighted Fly to no end.)

The personals ad thing that she'd done a while back that was supposed to change her life was a dud, of course. She had forced herself to pick at least a few of the bazillion guys who had left messages for her, at their own expense, to call back. She dutifully logged all of their names and vital statistics in her little black book. She had poured over the names and little scribbled quotes on the pages labeled "MEN". She had to rule out all the ones who obviously called every ad in the personals. Then she ruled out all the guys with facial hair, though she did like those silly little goatees, and really wasn't that discriminatory, but she felt that anyone who would specifically mention having facial hair was probably too serious about it for her tastes. (Plus, she had to narrow the field down somehow, even if it was arbitrary and overly dismissive.) And, of course, she had to eliminate all the rest of the guys who simply didn't seem to have anything in common with her. This left her with about three prospective men to phone.

The first one she called sounded nice, he had a lot in common with her, and he was even a vegetarian, to boot. They talked on the phone for an hour before they decided on a time and place to meet. Dragonfly got off the phone with a sigh of relief, feeling that she had finally done something to further her place in life. And even if he wasn't Mr. Perfect he probably was decent enough to have as a friend.

Well, a whole twenty-four hours passed before the prospective man called again, just to talk. Now this was definitely a bad sign. Their date was only a couple of days away, and he should have left it at that. But he was already calling her as if they were best friends. Ick. But she always made it a point not to be too quick to seriously judge people, because she had been terribly wrong before, and wanted to always give people a chance. So Fly went out on the date with him.

For some reason Dragonfly tended to get stuck dating guys who would feel completely at home hanging out with professional basketball players, and not in the sense that they know the difference between a three point shot and a field goal. Guys who were over the six foot mark just caused her neck to get stiff, yet over half the guys Fly had ever kissed seemed to tower over her little elfin frame. (And by elf, we're talking about the traditional



fairly tale elf, not the confusingly tall, excessively attractive beings from Tolkein's universe.)

This dude was indeed tall. And goofy looking. And had nothing terribly interesting to say over the entire course of the evening. He departed quite early on in the evening, and told her to give him a call sometime, which she definitely was not planning to in the least. He wasn't horrible, but just not someone her brain could connect with at all. She did end up having a pleasant time after he left, listening to the street performers in Harvard Square working hard to endear themselves to passersby, in order to get a bit of money to pay some of the rent. Most of them were musicians, but there was the occasional weird act, such as the statue lady, who would stand perfectly still until you dropped some cash into her hat, at which point she'd suddenly come alive and offer you a flower. (Dragonfly, herself, had very occasionally been one of the weird acts, too. When she felt really in need of some money, she would roll out a large sheet of black fabric, put a collection of her tiny, framed watercolor paintings on it, and sit there as she used her paints, brushes, and fancy paper to imaginatively document the scenes that appeared around her.)

There were a couple particular performers in the Square who Fly really admired, and she found one of them to listen to that evening. Flathead, as he called himself, tended to babble on and on instead of actually playing any music. And he told the most terrible jokes, repeatedly. But when he did finally get around to singing it was quite beautiful. He should have been famous, and playing in packed houses, but he choose to hang around the streets for some reason. Fly was always grateful for this, and always made it a point to drop a dollar into his gig bag before she left for home.

A couple of days later, Fly, feeling like she couldn't strike out twice in a row, decided to call another of her prospective men. This one she was told could be found at work, no matter what time of day it was. Hmmm. Not a good sign, but his other advertised qualities were impressive, so she tried him. Not really believing the bit about him being at work at all times of the day she phoned him at home, at nine o'clock, p.m., on a Sunday. His answering machine greeted her call politely and informed her once again that he would most likely be at work and to try him there. So on a Sunday night, at nine o'clock, she dialed the guy's work number. He said hello.

They talked for about forty-five minutes and seemed to have quite a bit in common — they were both artists, they both liked computers, they were both vegetarians, and they both liked comic books, the non-superhero types of course. So they agreed to meet a couple of days later. And hey, he had actually turned out to be kinda good looking, even though he was as towering as all the others. He had a nice smile, nice eyes, and a nice deep voice that was so important to Fly. Pictures of naked men did almost nothing for her, but the sound of a deep, slow voice could get her hormones flowing in a second. Even if all it was saying was that the bugs in the latest software were almost all eliminated.

The date went well enough for more to be planned.

Fly and her latest prospective man seemed to have really bad timing. They kept having to end their evenings prematurely for lack of places to go, and ever decreasing outside temperatures, and the fact that they lived nowhere near each other. So during one phone conversation, after a number of shortened dates, they decided on what they agreed would be a foolproof plan. They would rent movies and walk to his place. A good move on her part because it didn't entail her having to do any cleaning in her disaster of a bedroom. The evening started out fine. They rented a couple of Japanimation flicks that he had recommended. One of them turned out to be quite serious and depressing, but it was quickly shaken off. The guy had not made a move on her at all, and didn't show any signs of doing so any time in the near future, and Fly started to get worried. Then when he said that it was getting late, she thought ok, here it comes. But instead of doing anything that he was supposed to, if he were actually a normal guy, he suggested that if she didn't want to bicycle all the way home she was welcome to stay on the couch, there.

Ok, so maybe he was just a bit shy, Fly thought. He didn't really mean that she should stay out on that couch all night, all alone. She had even suggested the same thing to one of her previous men before. She knew what it meant. So she agreed to stay on the couch. And they began, awkwardly, to get ready for bed. He warned Fly that he might be a while in the bathroom, while he flossed his teeth. And he was right. Apparently he had

some form of gum disease, and he was being diligent in trying to get rid of it through proper dental hygiene. Dragonfly simply thought it was cute — the thought of this big, muscular, kinda sexy guy staring in the mirror with a piece of string stuck between his teeth.

They said goodnight and went to their assigned sleeping arrangements. Fly lay there on the fold-out couch-bed and waited. She was waiting for something to happen. This was most unusual, she thought, is this really what he expected? Fly hadn't had sex in ages, probably something like a year or so, and the thought of being in the room next to a handsome young gentleman, who didn't seem to be too averse to at least being around her was a bit too much to take. After about an hour, of what to Fly seemed like years, she decided to make a move. She called softly into his room and asked if she might join him. He said sure and she crawled in next to him.

Now this was something our girl was comfortable with. Just about every guy she had ever kissed for the first time she had been in bed with at the time. Being horizontal and snuggly seemed to give people much more courage to make that all important move to the kissing stage. For some odd reason Fly found it far easier to get into bed with someone, in the more literal sense, than to commit to the radical stage of swapping saliva.

So now that she was in the same bed as her boy things should be able to proceed quite nicely, she thought. And they did.

They made out for a couple of hours. And then Fly lay awake for the rest of the morning. She could never sleep after something like that, for the first time. She would lay next to the guy thinking about his body, what he seemed to have a preference for, and what might happen when he woke up. This particular guy was into martial arts and was in decent shape, his muscles weren't obnoxious, but he wasn't a wimp either. He had dark curly hair, which was always a plus in her book. And he had mentioned that he, at one point, had a mohawk, which was very cool, though she had had a terribly difficult time imagining him with it. He was such a wholesome character, and the mohawk concept just didn't fit in with the rest of him.

At about six o'clock that same day, after Fly had gone home and caught up on some sleep for a few hours, her guy called and

mumbled something about the whole thing being a mistake, and that he had not intended for Fly to become that type of relationship, and couldn't they just be friends?

Oh, well, whatever.

-  
GO WEST YOUNG WOMAN  
-

*Do you have the time  
to listen to me whine  
About nothing and everything  
all at once  
~ Green Day*

Twenty-seven is supposed to be a momentous year for humans. She wasn't really sure why, but Fly believed this wholeheartedly. (She once learned that there was something called "the 27 club" which was a euphemism for the group of famous musicians who committed suicide at age 27, including Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain.) Fly had had friends, who at the age of twenty-seven, had done all sorts of important things, from her not-yet-twenty-seven-year-old perspective. So when she turned that magical age she decided that *something* was bound to happen.

For the first few months of her twenty-seventh year life went on while Dragonfly wasn't really paying attention. Her life seemed to consist of tiny capsules of activity followed by vast expanses of complete monotony. Like the short personal stories your teachers tell you in the middle of lecturing about annoying things like the battle of Gettysburg or B.F. Skinner's experiments on drooling dogs, as the teachers try to keep your attention. Fly had her own stories piled up in her cerebral cortex and amygdala like CDs on the typical college student's floor, right next to the futon and boom box. Fly had tales like the Jef in a Box story. And The Night She Accidentally Got Her First Tattoo and Then Her Bike Got Into an Accident story. These would emerge sometimes when she met a

new victim to tell them to. Most were fairly willing victims, for she was not all that much into torture, really.

Fly quit her job as a teacher during the late summer. There was more to life than preschool, and she wanted to find it. It was a good decision, she suspected. And within a week she was on the phone to her guy-next-door-best-buddy-sometimes-sex-partner friend Dan, telling him about her situation. Dan was the one who had moved out to San Francisco a year earlier (as all twenty-something Bostonians were required to do by law at some point in the 90s) who Fly later decided was best described as a fairly attractive rock-musician-cum-lifeguard-cum-biology-major with a uniquely quiet depth and longing to discover the hidden beauty in everyone he met. Dan was something of an angry Buddha, with both darkness and peace contained within a black leather jacket, sitting on an old school motorcycle, smiling mischievously. Fly had visited him in San Francisco the previous year and was impressed by the freedom the place seemed to provide women and their bikes. And the fact that it was quite legal to get a tattoo, as opposed to Puritanical Massachusetts in the 90's. She had gotten her second, much more intentional, tattoo while in San Francisco from a guy who worked in a shop on the historically hip Haight Street, and who had golf ball sized holes in his ears with florescent plastic things keeping them open. She also bought her first bong and matching turquoise pipe across the street from the tattoo shop. She had been terrified to bring them with her on the plane, and didn't get anything to smoke in them for almost a year because of her previously mentioned near-obsessive law abiding ways. Fly had also spent most of her first two decades of life looking at adults who were drunk or stoned and thinking that they were lame, at best. But at one point in her early 20's a wizened coworker had handed her a book called *The Natural Mind*, by Dr. Andrew Weil, who wrote about the tradition of using natural drugs as a ritual for exploring a different way of thinking, philosophically, and that framing had given her a more open minded and respectful view of at least some forms of drug use. But that's all aside from the point, which was that San Francisco had struck her as being pretty cool.

Fly told Dan that she didn't have a job. And she said that the landlord of her apartment had decided to sell the place and turn it into condos, so she didn't have a home anymore either. And she

added the kicker which was that she had also been invited to a wedding celebration for one of the guys from Green Day. (You know, the three adorable, scruffy guys who play pretty decent pop music, often about drugs but in a way that innocent types like Fly would never know, while insisting that the music really is punk, not pop.) This wedding invitation was a complete fluke, but Dragonfly was related, via a stepparent, so no real blood connection was involved, to the woman who married the base player of the band. Anyway, Fly was invited and she couldn't imagine passing up the opportunity to consort with some of the "important people", even if they didn't say a word to her at all (she could be a fly on the wall, so to speak!). And she really did have fond memories of hanging out with her not-actually-related cousin when they were in junior high school, during summer vacation. But Fly had only just enough money to buy a plane ticket out there. So after telling her buddy Dan all this, he suggested that she move out to his side of the continent. She felt like she had nothing to lose, and figured that she might as well give in and obey that strange trans-coastal law, and pack up and move out to beautiful California.

So pack she did. An entire week of non-stop packing and organizing the likes of which she had never before experienced. At the end of that week the sidewalk in front of Fly's apartment was stacked several feet high for half a (very small) block with all the excess stuff she couldn't either take with her or stash in her dad's garage. If she hadn't been so completely inebriated from adrenaline it would have been one of the most traumatic events in her young life, parting with all that much appreciated cruff, but as it was, it was just something she had to do. (After a few months she was able to more properly mourn the passing on of so many of her less precious, though nonetheless close to her heart, possessions.)

Fly had to really sort out her priorities as she packed. She was only able to take a few things with her on the plane. And her bike and her babies (those being the small and furry feline ones, of course) were obviously on the short list. The vcr, a week's worth of multipurpose clothes, a few videos to go with the vcr, and a very small pile of trinkets would accompany her on the plane itself. The tv would have to wait, as would her books and the rest of her toys. The computer went to her mom's. And, the more important art supplies would be shipped out via UPS so that she would have

something reassuring to do when she got out there, to balance out the insanity of looking for a job and a place to live. She was all set to stay with Dan for a few weeks, but was expected to move into her own place asap. So after breaking, or at least tying, the world record for most productive ten days in the history of Generation X slackdom, Fly slunk her weary body into a borrowed car and drove her luggage, her kitties, and herself out into the suburbs to her dad's to stay for her last night on the East Coast. She had a 7:30 am flight out of Logan, and her Dad was going to drop her off at the airport at 5:30.

After spending most of the night doing cruel and unusual things to her bike while trying to fit it, and a bunch of other stuff as padding, into a box completely not designed to fit a bike, Fly climbed into the passenger seat of her dad's car, physically tired but way too wired to care. Her father dropped her and her entourage off at the airport terminal, gave her a hug and a kiss and drove away, leaving her with about 150 pounds of stuff and two cats scrunched into a little kennel, who were not altogether happy about the whole affair. Just getting to the line of uncomfortable travelers waiting to check in was an ordeal. The bike box was literally held together with a couple of rolls of duct tape and the bike's handlebars stuck out, as did the rear wheel. She was praying that no one would notice her utterly incompetent packing job. Did they have the right to refuse to take a package which was in such horrible shape? Turns out that all they do is make you sign a little tag which states that since you are such an utter nincompoop they refuse to be held responsible for any damage that their baggage handlers decide to inflict upon your poor possessions, and leave it at that.

So Dragonfly waited in the line. She pushed all her stuff up and then down the stanchions and ribbons that defined the maze of a line. After about a half an hour of shuffling about Fly was told she would have to check her bike and her cats in at another location, an another floor, and that she would have to pay more money than she had previously been told for her cats. After pleading with the airline representative for a while about not charging her for that extra fee, and failing, she went off to check the bike and cats in. She imagined she must have been quite a sight, dragging a cart load of duct-taped crap-around-a-bike and another box full of small, unhappy meowing things all over that airport, but she finally



managed to find the special baggage check in office. When she, et al, arrived there she was informed that, under no circumstances could two animals travel in the same kennel, no matter what she'd been told on the phone when she'd made the reservations, and that she would *again* have to pay even more money to buy one of the airline's kennels to put the second cat in. By this time she had almost nothing left of her life savings, and after failing to convince the baggage man that her circumstances warranted some leniency, she plopped down on the cold linoleum airport floor and cried.

All the adrenaline and other myriad endorphins suddenly failed to report for duty, and Fly was left with the reality that she was in way above her head and sinking ever deeper fast. What had she been thinking? She was one of the most disorganized humans out there, and to think that she could pull this off was insane. She sobbed. Her cats cried. And the baggage man ignored all three of them as much as it is possible to ignore three crying creatures sitting within feet of you on an airport floor at six in the morning.

Dragonfly's hormones finally got themselves a bit more in balance and she crawled back to the counter and handed the man all but \$40 of her money while he proceeded to start handing her more forms to fill out. She said goodbye to her babies and eventually made her way to the assigned gate. Unbelievably she made it to her gate with enough time before the plane loaded to collapse into one of the particularly uncomfortable lounge chairs in the lobby of United's gate 29. She was thoroughly numb.

Turns out she would be numb for quite a while. Off and on for about a month, actually.

The first plane ride was terrifying. Not because she was afraid of flying. No, Fly actually loved flying more than just about anything else, except maybe reading a great book, or eating pad thai. This particular flight was so terrifying because her babies were in the cargo hold of a tiny little three-seat-wide passenger plane and she just knew that they were going to have heart attacks or suffocate or something down there. Even the otherwise stunning sight of the Earth getting smaller and smaller and the sun rising above the misty clouds gave her no pleasure as she clutched at herself in fear. The flight was, fortunately, not long. It was just the

first leg of the trip. Dragonfly rushed across the airport to her connecting flight, and this time ending up being the very last passenger to board the plane.

While waiting to take off, Fly watched out the window of the airplane as one of her cats was wheeled around the tarmac back and forth on the little baggage train. Then Fly lost sight of her. She never saw her boy anywhere. The pilot made his obligatory welcome statement and handed his captive audience off to the flight attendants who educated them about the ins and outs of potential flight disaster protocol. Fly pestered one stewardess in a vain attempt to assure herself that at least she and her little ones were headed in the same direction. The woman assured her that she would make an inquiry about the cats to someone important, and then she disappeared. She never returned, and the plane started to taxi out to the runway. There was apparently a lot of traffic and Fly's plane was sitting right in the middle of it. They sat and they sat and they sat and then the pilot once again came on the loudspeaker and announced that the plane would have to return to the gate, on account of the fact that one of the passenger's pets had been forgotten. As in, they forgot to put both of Fly's cats on the plane. Because they were in two different kennels, rather than the one she'd originally put them in, together. Fly felt another gut wrenching blow to her already tattered psyche. And as the plane returned to the gate and loaded her kitty into the belly of the plane, the nearby passengers' snide little comments absolutely didn't help improve Fly's state of mind either. She told them that it was her cat that had been left, that her baby was not something to be snide about, and would they all just please shut up about it? Though she said it somewhat more politely than that. After that she had a fairly silent five hour flight across the country. She was stuck between two other people, so she didn't get a chance to see the planet as it passed under her, but that was fine with her, given her mood, and she made a pretty good dent in the book she was reading in the stretch time it took to cover such a sizable portion of the planet's surface. The book was about a poor little girl from the future who ends up with a sort of computerized fairy godmother to help her grow up. It was a beautiful story. And it was one of the few good things in Fly's life at the time. A good book is better than Prozac any day, she decided.

When the airplane arrived in San Francisco there was still apparently a significant amount of airplane traffic and they were forced to circle around the airport for a while before they landed, and then they had to wait almost an hour before the pilot could find a parking space. Honestly, no kidding. The plane finally parked and everyone had begun to stampede towards the flight attendants at the exit when the pilot came on the PA again and announced that if there was a passenger named Dragonfly on board would they please speak with one of the attendants. After five hours of relative peace and numbness in her brain Fly suddenly was jerked back into the front lines of the war. One of her babies was dead, she convinced herself, preparing for the worst. Making her way up the line of exiting passengers all the way to the front of the plane where some terrible news awaited her took much more time than was humanly comfortable. When she got up there she was told that one of her cats had escaped from its cage and was running loose amongst all the suitcases and boxes in the cargo hold. Fly giggled. Her numbness vanished instantly and she had to stop herself from laughing hysterically. She was still a bit worried, but the worst had not, in the least, happened. Her cats were alive, and they were all safely in their new home city.

Fly was even invited (requested, actually) to climb up the cool conveyer belt ramp thing to get up into the cargo area to retrieve her little furry rebel. Fly was given permission to step all over everyone else's luggage to claim her little girl, who was happily curled up on a particularly soft bag, probably filled with someone's expensive vacation wear. Fly even got to skip the special baggage claim desk since the nice airport employees let her just take the cats right out of the plane. She again got a cart, loaded it up with all her belongings and trudged down to the front gate where she plopped herself down to wait for a shuttle to take her off to her new, temporary home with Dan.

The next few days were uneventful, in that way that slowly settling into a new life after a dramatic move often is. Stuff like getting all the local newspapers, and studying the street maps. Stuff that could be incredibly dull, but when you are in a place far away from where you are used to being, suddenly becomes rather adventurous.

Dan's roommates were interesting. They were all European, and they all were generally friendly. Two of them were also just crashing there like Fly was. So Fly didn't feel so out of place. And she began to relax a bit.

The wedding celebration — not an actual wedding since the happy couple had eloped in somewhat nearby Las Vegas on a day off a while back — was interesting. Not quite as exotic as Fly had imagined, but somewhat more interesting than your average wedding reception. It was remarkably subdued and quaint for what you might have expected from semi-punk-rock stars. Mostly the guests were relatives, with only about a third or so being friends of the band. The groom was actually very sweet. Not what you might think of any of the members of Green Day, at least not from looking at them play. But he was also probably on his best behavior, too. Fly was amused to see that all three of the guys in the band frequently snuck off into the parking lot to get silly on pot (though in her later years she'd wondered if she was making that memory up, to liven up the story a bit). Other than that, though, the whole affair was very mellow. Fly did fall madly in love with the drummer's astoundingly adorable daughter. She was the most precious thing, all decked out in a tiny fake leopard fur dress and adorable shiny black dress shoes. She just kept running around, giggling with her very young, punk father following her.

When the event was over, as she and Dan rode back into the city on his motorcycle, Fly thought that it had gone fairly well, and was starting to feel rather proud of herself for making all this happen. She couldn't wait to get herself all settled into this new life.

Since the thing that Fly hated most was the idea of moving, again, she ignored that aspect of being in San Francisco as much as she could at first. Anyway, before she could comfortably look for a place to live she first needed to know what she was going to be doing for money, and where that job might be located geographically. It wouldn't do much good to have her place of work on the opposite end of town as her place of residence, now would it? And looking for a job was so much more fun than looking for housing anyway (remember, this was safely between the economic depressions of the early 90s and the mid naughts, so

jobs were relatively easy to get, even for the weirdos among us). Fly had a grand old time scouring all the newspapers for help wanted listings. This was her chance to really apply for just about anything she was even remotely qualified for, stuff she would never have bothered with back East. This was a whole new life!

So she sent in an application for a garden shop position, and as a photographer's assistant at an architectural firm. Fly was a bit outraged at the fact that, even though she had been a certified preschool teacher back in Massachusetts, she didn't even qualify for a lowly assistant position here in California. They apparently cared more about college credits than experience.

But she quickly put that bureaucratic annoyance behind her and applied for a position teaching art at a wonderful sounding afterschool program out in Oakland, one that offered to pay more than twice any salary she had ever had previously.

She also made sure to apply immediately to every position possible at the Exploratorium, her favorite place in the entire world. This was a science museum for the creative soul. The place crammed in more cool machines that spun, squeaked, fizzed, and crunched, all in unexpected ways, than you could ever imagine. Her favorite thing was a big tub of sand which had three underground jets of air that would periodically erupt with emergent blobs of perfectly round sand bubbles. It reminded her of the moon with all its pretty craters. Or one of those gurgling hot springs you sometimes see on public television shows about Australia or Iceland or something. Fly was always so transfixed by that particular exhibit, spending much of her visit just watching the craters bubble up like liquid and then suddenly be still, as only sand can do.

As a kid, Fly remembered seeing commercials for a toy called magic sand which purported to get completely wet and self-adhesive while submerged under water, but be completely dry as soon as it was removed from the water. She never owned this miracle product, but had always been fascinated with the concept.

One time, back on the East Coast, Fly had been walking along one of those beaches with a vast stretch of perfect sand and waves breaking continuously along the edge of the shore. And after walking along the exact border between the ocean and the land for a bit she happened to glance behind her at her footprints. The odd thing was that there were none. Hmmm, she thought. Immediately

she poked her toes into the sand to see what would happen. The sand did something weird, it turned into a liquid and sort of oozed back into a level surface. She stood there for a good twenty minutes poking her feet into the sand and watching the normally solid acting earth swallow up all the evidence of her activities. She must have appeared a tad touched in the head as she did this, but she didn't care, as she was discovering one of the mysteries of the universe. Yes, Fly had discovered quicksand. (Or, more technically, she'd realize later, Fly had discovered non-Newtonian solids, which most folks are most familiar with in the form of silly putty, and cornstarch mixed with water.) She wanted to call out to all the other beachgoers to tell them to look at this quicksand stuff. She decided to keep her discovery to herself, though, since she expected that no one else's brains would understand, and they'd simply think her crazy. So instead, she tried standing still for as long as she could to see how far she would sink. It took about ten minutes before the sand would even cover her ankles. Apparently this was some exceptionally tame stuff when it came to quicksand. But it was still pretty cool.

After just a week or so in San Francisco, Fly got a library card for the SF public library, which was a vast monolith of utter confusion as far as she was concerned. But it was pretty nice if you weren't looking for anything specific. She checked out a couple of Irish music CDs and a bunch of books about art and one on the history of bicycling. And speaking of bicycling, Fly definitely did a lot of that around her adopted city. She even surprised herself in that she didn't end up walking her bike up the hills much at all. Boston is basically flat, and the few areas which aren't flat are easily avoidable for the most part (unless you're a politician, or need to talk to one, up on Beacon Hill). But, as everyone knows, San Francisco is just one big mess o' hills. Fly wasn't fast by any stretch of the imagination, but it turned out that she was in good enough shape, and had low enough gears, that she could make it up all but the steepest of the hills in the city. And those hills were sometimes even too steep to walk up without using stairs (which were conveniently installed where the sidewalk would normally be) so she wasn't at all humbled by her inability to get up those monsters.

Just for the hell of it Fly even applied to be a bike messenger, and she actually got an interview, too, though she never did get called back. That would have been fun for a week or two, she imagined. Though they had said that she'd have to take out her nose ring, which seemed bizarre for a bike messenger service.

Fly got to enjoy riding for miles and miles around the city's waterfront. She would start out downtown, by the Oakland bridge and just keep going past the Golden Gate, with it's blob of fog seemingly clinging to the bridge for dear life. Then came the beaches and those grand cliffs you always see in movies. She was disappointed to discover that the ocean was far too cold, even in mid August, to really swim in, but they were still beaches and these were such magnificent specimens at that. Funny thing about the Pacific Ocean, you really get the feeling that there isn't anything else out there, at all. Fly had never felt that on the Atlantic, but maybe that was because she had been across that ocean twice before, and knew about the places on the other side of the proverbial pond.

While there, Fly had also participated in the either awesome or infamous, depending on whether you're a bike person or not, San Francisco Critical Mass (partially made famous by the controversial Puck from MTV's *Real World*). Critical Mass being a gargantuan group of bikers flocking to the streets all at once while generally celebrating the fact that they are not stuck in a two-thousand pound plus metal cage, spewing carbon monoxide, in the middle of traffic.

The cops in San Francisco had even, reluctantly, decided that if they couldn't beat 'em (not that they didn't give it a valiant effort in the past) they would join 'em, and they provided a rolling motorcycle escort though the city for an hour or so, when the party would start breaking up. This month's Mass was probably the largest ever, since it coincided with the Bicycle Messenger World Championship races, which had taken over impressive chunks of the city's streets with thin, muscular, rebellious athletes from all over the planet (mostly the US and northern Europe), wearing color coordinated spandex (the Europeans) and/or random baggy black thrift store finds (the US Americans) and/or nothing but shoes and beer (the Bostonians) and their fixies. After being a part of this monumental mass, Fly would forever praise

the miracles of the bicycle as the ideal form of transportation for non-winged folks.

But this San Francisco adventure would not last long. A month went by, and no job appeared. And no housing looked even remotely likely, especially given her furry babies. And one of Dan's roommates who'd been on vacation came home to discover that there were furry little people, who she was exceedingly allergic to, in not just her home but in her bedroom as well (no one else in the apartment had known of her allergies, or else that never would have happened, obviously). Also, Dan had gotten annoyed with Fly's continued presence for some reason, which saddened her to no end. So she swallowed up any remaining pride she had, called her father, and asked him to rescue her with some money for a plane ticket back East, and a place to live when she got back. She then packed up and said goodbye to San Francisco, and Dan. (Who she somehow never ended up seeing again, despite a couple of attempts at reconnection by both of them, over the years.)



-  
GO BACK EAST YOUNG WOMAN  
-

*Serotonin*

*noun*

*in biochemistry: a compound present in blood platelets and serum that constricts blood vessels, a neurotransmitter, 5-hydroxytryptamine*

*Etymology: of English origin, serum + tonic + -in*

It took Fly about a year to settle back into her more normal life on the East Coast. After a couple of false starts, she'd eventually managed to find a nice apartment in Somerville, on the other side of the famously dirty watered Charles River from Boston. And she'd liked the place so much she told the landlord that she would personally take on finding a whole pile of roommates to fill the place, so that she, too, could move in. A whirlwind of phone calls and meetings and such took place before, literally at the last moment when the landlord showed up with the lease on moving day, all the bedrooms were filled, and all the rent checks and security deposits appeared, and all was right with the world again.

Of course, Fly fell madly in lust with one of her roommates immediately. He was younger, but cute, geeky, and ridiculously clever in a sarcastic way. And he was not entirely offended by Fly. Most of the other roommates were nearly as interesting and playful and thoughtful as well. So she very much enjoyed life, for a bit.

But life was still fairly empty for our young lady. She just didn't have a firm hold on who she was or what she was supposed to be doing. Her life was all kind of just, meh. Fly's stepmother had put a notice about the family in Fly's father's college alumni magazine

which stated that Fly was an accomplished freelance graphic designer. Fly had been in shock when they showed it to her, and not mentioned anything about it at the time. She couldn't figure out why they had said that, since she clearly wasn't a designer at all. If anything she was an artist and not a very accomplished one at that. Even saying that she was a teacher would have been fine, but saying that she was a freelance designer was tantamount to a slap in the face — making her sound like she was some kind of yuppie, which she most certainly didn't want to be. She couldn't tell them that, though because they wouldn't understand, they thought they were doing a good thing, making her out to seem like a “successful business person”. She'd always thought of her dad as being kind of a hippy, but he became a full on yuppie as he turned forty, it seemed (or whatever you call a 40-something, moderately wealthy, semi-urban professional). And her dad and stepmother felt that the time was fast approaching when Fly would need to make something of herself if she were to avoid becoming a failure.

Fly, herself, wasn't being nagged by the feeling of being a failure in the way her parents saw it, though. She was, of course, somewhat disappointed by the fact that they weren't terribly supportive of the things that she was truly passionate about, like education and art and such. But the thing that did make her feel like a failure was that she didn't have anything to look forward to. What grand future was out there? What meaningful, life-altering quest was yet to come? What unique purpose was she put here on Earth to serve? Oh, sure, every once in a while some event would come along that Fly might be excited about, and which would make her feel alive and awake, but these things were few and far between, and always the feeling was fleeting. It wasn't as bad as loosing all hope, it was more like twiddling your thumbs and waiting, for Godot, or something...

Fly had been slowly losing what little passion she had. It was draining from her one trickle at a time. First she had started to not really care about the kids in her school. Then she stopped making her art. Then she lost interest in reading books. And even music began to fail to inspire her. She hadn't had a boyfriend in over four years and she missed being touched.

The body needs a human caress to keep it healthy. Not sexual, really, but sensual. The immune system will start to fail if the touch

of another is missing. Fly didn't particularly believe in all that new age stuff about auras and such, but there was something about the electrical charge of the skin, and all the millions of nerve endings all over your body. It had been far too long since anyone had touched Fly for more than a few seconds at a time. She hadn't realized that something so little could be so important to your life. She felt kind of like a beggar on the street, no one wanted to get to close to her. Every time someone she liked gave her a hug or touched her arm she would sort of freeze for a few moments, either in order to relish the feeling, or simply out of shock.

But now Fly had moved into this apartment with its beautiful and intriguing and clever young man whom, as has been noted, she had almost immediately fallen in love with, and it didn't take long for her to properly declare her feelings for him. Naturally, she was shot down with a rejection. He said that while he had told her that he was bisexual, when it came to *her*, she should think of him as being totally gay.

Fly was used to rejection, but had really imagined that she might get lucky this time. They had been getting along so well. She wasn't ready to give up completely yet, though. Maybe in time he would come to realize that she was really a very wonderful person to be with, and really rather good in bed, too? It was sort of funny that Fly felt almost no sexual desire for him, though she found him quite attractive and he even had a pierced nipple which was one of Fly's favorite fetishes.

She certainly wouldn't have minded having her way with him in bed, but what she wanted most of all was to be near him, to share secrets with him, to know all about what he thought about things. And to touch him.

He was different. He was a person who made her feel alive. Someone had once warned her that she shouldn't depend on others to make her feel whole, but she had never bought it. Most of the people surrounding our unique little Dragonfly seemed like robots to her, zombies without any passion of emotion, simply plodding along on the hamster wheel of mainstream consumer life. But every once in a while she would meet an individual who was simply brimming with life. She hesitated to use the word soul, because it conjured up all sorts of inane religious mumbo jumbo, but that was the word which seemed most appropriate for these rare folks who

could inspire Fly. They had a soul. Soul was a word that could be used to describe the special qualities of an individual, some permanent combination of traits, probably inherent in their DNA, or at least obtained during their *formative years*. Some people, in Fly's mind, had an individuality that shone above and beyond normal life. These folks weren't afraid to be themselves, to be weird, to be different in a world where being different was often shunned. These souls were brave. Even though they wanted to belong, they didn't let that get in the way of wanting to be free to be who they were born to be. Everyone certainly needs to feel a sense of belonging. It gives one a sense of purpose in life. But repressing one's core uniqueness makes any sense of belonging a sham. Dragonfly was too smart for that now, but it made life lonely most of the time.

Fly's father and stepmother (not her mom, though) had always chastised Fly for rejecting friends. They said, or at least implied, that it was her own "fault" that she was so lonely. But they just couldn't fathom how impossible it was to be friends with someone who simply didn't respect her, or themselves, really. Just about everyone around her was stuck in a routine — work, escape, sleep — all designed so that they could "fit in" and feel the false security of superficial belonging. Escape from this repression usually taking on the form of watching premeasured, inoffensive little snippets of entertainment on the television, interspersed with advertising aimed at convincing people to buy some product so that they might fit in a little more to the bland corporate world. Or perhaps escape was going out to a bar and drowning the day's memories in a few bottles of Sam Adams. Not that Fly's life was much of an improvement over this, but she couldn't imagine forcing herself to be around people like that. She was afraid that she would lose any last bit of remaining passion she had left in her.

So on the occasion of meeting one of the other living creatures who habited the proud-to-be-weird mindset with her, Fly would get rather emotional. Her numbness would disappear, and she would have floods of all sorts of emotions. She hadn't felt this in years, since her last two, much loved, art-school partners. Love, hate, fear, jealousy, joy were all piled up in her and waiting to spill out all over her new roommate. She could only hope he would understand, even if he didn't want to date her.

And he did. Understand. Yep, despite his rather unsurprising name, John was weird, and proud of it, and generally happy to have a companion in weirdness in his life.

He had borrowed Fly's green nail polish and painted all twenty of his nails. He liked folk music and sci fi. He was in the military, yet he was into Eastern philosophy. And he was, indeed, bisexual. Within a week of meeting him Fly had had to toss her prejudices about bisexuality out the window. Fly had always completely respected gays and straights, but had also always had difficulty believing that any one individual could be equally attracted to both men and woman at the same time. John seemed determined to disprove her doubts. Though he was still acting like he was not attracted to Fly, even though she had always thought that she had most of the better traits from both sexes, and figured that this might sway his attention a bit. She was a strong, logical person who was incredibly sensitive and caring and creative. She also physically looked kinda like a cross between a guy and a girl. Fly got her female roommate to give her a really short haircut, which only added to the androgyny thing. She had asked John if she really looked like a boy, after the haircut, and he had said, yeah sure, "a boy with breasts". Fly sometimes forgot about her rather full figured chest. It did sort of stick out a bit.

A few weeks after they had all moved in together, Fly's female roommate invited Fly and John out to a club. The five-person household (not including the small, furry people) ended up being half gay, they decided, with Fly being one of the only two totally straight ones in the whole place, with the other straight one being a guy who tended to hang around at his girlfriend's house a lot, the very sweet Iranian roommate being lesbian, John being bisexual, and a suspected gayness for the fifth roommate, a Russian guy (though the rest of them never discovered officially what his actual preference was, but it seemed fairly obvious that he was either gay, or asexual, or just really, really, really shy). Going to a gay night at the club was a relief to Fly, as it meant being free from the annoying, drunk college boys who usually frequented clubs that Fly went to. Oh sure, there were a few there that night but they had no interest in Fly, her being a girl and all, and they being *gay* drunk college boys. She was a bit disappointed with the music —

some remixed disco and eighties stuff which she didn't really care for — but she and her roommates had all had a couple of screwdrivers before getting there (a first for her), and so Fly was pretty mellow. And, she was with her boy. He got rather drunk and pretty giddy at the idea of all the poser gay boys all over the place, and Fly enjoyed watching him watch the boys. The two of them actually had a couple of interesting conversations and he was getting sort of cuddly with all that alcohol and hormones running around inside of him. And that made Fly really, very happy to be alive that evening.

A week later she was still feeling fairly alive, this time emerging from the exhilaration of having things to do and no job to hold her back. Dragonfly had gotten laid off from her comfy job at a computer service bureau, which had been supporting her material needs since she had returned from SF. She would miss the place, but she knew that something good was going to come from this. She had gotten plenty of perfectly desirable skills working there and she was ready to start using them for things she wanted to accomplish. And maybe she could find someone to even pay her to do this, since she still hadn't figured out how to get out of the corporate rat race slash scam completely.

Fly almost felt like she had something to look forward to, for a change. She would just have to wait and see what would happen in the next few months.

Dragonfly's ex-boyfriend, Jef, one of the art-school loves, invited her to come to his last-issue blow-out party for the comic book zine he edited and published. This was another thing she was really looking forward to. Jef was one of the men who'd been more in love with the pierced-and-later-to-become-a-lesbian-minister woman than he'd been with Fly. But in Fly's mind, he was lovingly thought of as a brilliantly glowing, impish soul, with a wild spirit of childhood wonder and curiosity, and a serious talent for both art and merrymaking.

All of Jef's parties were amazingly enjoyable, with just the right kinds of fascinating and entertaining and intelligent people. Non-superhero comic artists were a rare breed, and very fun to hang around with. It had been way too long since Fly had been around these people and she was really anxious to consort with the likes of

them once again. She dutifully prepared several copies of her own latest art-zine project. This was no easy task either, it involved a lot of glue stick, a bunch of tape, and lots of cutting. It was a different sort of thing from what she usually did in that it was made up of more pictures than words. Usually she would write long, dry essays about the stuff that interested her, but this was mostly short little sound bites accompanying a bunch of her favorite illustrations and photos that she had created recently, while still working at the computer place (with it's extremely high quality color printer, no less). She was very proud of the little thing, which she had titled *Ignis Fatuus*, referring to the glowing gasses which emerge out of some swampy areas, and are often mistaken for UFOs. (She loved that title.) And she waited with excitement for the party and all of it's promising weirdness.

Fly's first two days of freedom from work had been spent being sick. She took some NyQuil, for the first time ever, and slept for most of the day and all of the night. After consciousness returned, she wondered how long it would take to sink in that she was unemployed and didn't have all that much time before all her money ran out. She didn't really have any plans for all that time off, but had hopes that something interesting would come up. If it didn't she would have to go do some volunteer work somewhere just to keep herself busy. She was already bored. Maybe this experience would give Fly a bit more insight on what she should be doing with her life, she thought.

The night of the magical party finally came. John actually pulled through and accompanied her, even though he was sick as a dog (and Fly herself still wasn't quite the picture of health, but she at least had passed the worst of it). Biking with her new best friend was not exactly the most pleasant way to travel, as he was one of those red-light-running-overly-macho bikers and had difficulty slowing down enough for Fly to keep up. He was also in significantly better shape than she was, so he would have to wait at the top of every hill for her to mosey on up, out of breath and sweaty. But they eventually made it to Jef's house and before they even got inside they bumped into the illustrious Rev. Richard H. Makin. Fly had a vast quantity of stories about this guy yet she

hardly knew him. He was just that kind of guy. Articles about him, or by him, would periodically show up in the most random of newspapers and magazines. One time, at a previous edition of Jef's comic book zine party, Mr. Makin had come up to Dragonfly and said that a while back he had happened to call Fly's personal ad. He had recognized her from her nickname (not that many Dragonflies out there, surprisingly), but had decided against leaving a message for her. He also said that at present he was involved with another girl, but that it wasn't going all that well and he didn't expect it to last, in which case would Fly be interested in going out with him? *Well, er, um...* she not-said in response. That was just about the worst pick up line she could have imagined. (Many years later she kind of regretted not taking that rather unusual opportunity, as she did find him interesting, but she reminded herself of the not-so-good-in-the-girlfriend-department reputation which he had. And, in fact, even more years later, he'd managed to go through two wives. But she still was appreciative of his unique life, nonetheless.)

This night she had been very glad to see Mr. Mackin at the party, as he was a friendly face. She introduced him to John, who had already been told a few stories about the guy. They all went inside Jef's tiny little place, which somehow ended up being the only house on the entire street. It was in Brighton, on the edge of the far hipper Allston area, and everything else around the 1940's-ish looking home was large and made of bricks. Schools, hospitals, and student apartment buildings loomed over the tiny blue house. It reminded her of this pyramid shaped island which she and Jef had seen from an airplane on their way into Las Vegas many years earlier. After they had landed and driven by the island, they had remarked at how completely out of place the thing looked, and nicknamed it *Plunk*, as if there had once been a giant walking by who had simply tired of carrying their pyramid shaped rock around and just plunked it down in the middle of a lake. Fly would have to tell Jef about that comparison some day. His house — which he shared with his girlfriend, and another woman who was his ex-girlfriend, and one other random, completely unrelated girl who never was and never would be his girlfriend — was packed with people. A quick glance around revealed to Fly that this was definitely not a party of the same calibre as his previous parties. There were no people drawing anywhere. And there was next to



no one that she recognized. She got a bit of a sinking feeling in her stomach, especially after promising John that this would be one of the best parties he'd ever seen. But it was too late to go back now, she was committed to having a good time even if it meant that she would have to get very drunk (again, a very rare thing for our Fly).

Which is exactly what she did.

A few more people Fly knew showed up and made Fly feel better. And she was surprised to discover that John wasn't all that outgoing when he was out of his element. He really only talked to the people Fly had introduced him to, and that made Fly feel even better. She would have hated it if he had simply gone off and made a whole bunch of friends with people she'd never seen before. Our two new buddies ended up having a pretty good time, all in all. Though Fly got the bombshell of the month in the news that Jef, whom she was still very much in love with and holding out hope of reuniting with, and his girlfriend were planning on getting married. Fly was very glad that John was with her, otherwise she didn't know what she might have done in reaction to that news. As it was, she squished herself onto a small chair next to her roommate and let him talk to her about it until she felt normal again. It was time to leave when Jef started playing Dan Fogelberg or something equally gross on the stereo. So she and John made their way back across the river to their home.

When they were safely home, and completely exhausted, they got ready for bed. They were still both coughing up a storm, so they both drank a bit of NyQuil. Fly gave John a hug, thanked him for coming to the party and they both went to sleep. Not the most life altering event, ever, but noteworthy enough, she guessed.

Every once in a while Fly would be thinking about her life and would stumble into the theories of metaphysics concerning time and it's directionality. Some theorize that time is continuous, just like space, and that every moment of all time has already happened, will continue to happen, and is also happening right now. Fly thought that perhaps she wished that this were true, and that she could travel back in time and visit some of her more happy moments. She liked to visit her memories often when she was

feeling sad. It helped her remind herself that at some points in time she was actually popular, pretty, smart, or intimately loved. But sometimes the plan would backfire and it would just remind her of how lonely she felt right then, sitting in her bedroom, on her bed, where she spent most of her waking hours, except for when she was working. Her bed was her protection. Like a bird's nest. This was the place Fly always felt most comfortable, and she revolved her life around whatever form of comfy sleeping place she was claiming as her own at the time. She always planned her rooms' layouts so that just about everything important was within arm's reach of the bed. Piles of books and magazines gathered on the floor and furniture next to the bed. Her electronics were all right there too, even the computer, whenever possible. Her bed space was her refuge from all the sharp and painful things out there in the world.

The next night after the party, Fly actually felt like she might actually be ready to cry. She sat on her bed and contemplated what she should do about this pending emotional expression. There needed to be some effort in order for this to happen most effectively. Her door should be closed and her lights should be turned off. And maybe even some good moody music should be put on, something like Tori Amos. But Fly was afraid that if she went to all that trouble it would ruin the mood. So she just sat there feeling almost sad enough to cry, but not quite there yet. She was trying to wait for her favorite roommate to come out of his room so she would get a chance to say something to him. Anything. It didn't really matter. Anything they might talk about would be an improvement over this awful loneliness she felt. She was afraid that if she decided to close her door and have a good old sob, she just might miss the opportunity to talk to John.

She actually decided on a third option (which allowed her to keep her door open, just in case), which was to call this depression screening phone survey that she had read about in the Sunday paper. She ended up getting rather depressed simply trying to get through, as there were apparently hundreds of other depressed people questioning their continued existence at 11 p.m. on a Sunday. Fly decided to stick with it and pretend that she was trying to win something on some radio station by being the *n*th caller. She tried hitting redial for about ten minutes straight until she finally got

through. Funny, she thought, the voice which answered to tell you that all the lines were busy was female, but the voice you got when you got through to the screening itself was male. (Why that was funny to her at that moment is a mystery.) When she made it through all the questions, a woman came on and told her that she should call a doctor or suicide hotline immediately. Then the man's voice came back on and told her that she exhibited symptoms which fit the description of a moderate to seriously depressed person. Well, she already knew that, without ever having any stupid doctor tell her. But she had also read a statistic that said that of the 85,000 people who had taken the screening test last year seventy-five percent were also judged to be depressed. Fly was not alone, she thought. But it seemed ridiculous that all those people were really that messed up. Even though Fly had been told that depression was a chemical imbalance in the brain, the fact that a vast majority of the country was similarly "imbalanced" showed that there was something really wrong with the world. Was it actually an imbalance that was *caused* by one's environment, rather than some random internal problem? Was depression like catching the flu, but metaphorically?

Fly remembered an organization she had recently run into called the Church of Euthanasia. It was a semi-serious, performance art based, muckraking sort of group, that used outlandish messages to draw people's attention to important issues. She had heard of them before, but wasn't clear what they were all about. Their major slogan was "*Save the Planet, Kill Yourself*". They seemed to have a lot of other slogans as well. Another one was "*Eat a Fetus for Baby Jesus*" or something like that. She wasn't too sure about that last one (it just didn't make any sense to her), but she really liked the first one, and almost all of the others, too. These people seemed to believe that this world was going to hell and there isn't much that could be done about it, except mock it. Or, if you wanted to make the place a little better for the rest of it's inhabitants, you could actually just off yourself. She had bought a tee shirt and a couple of buttons from the group and wrote down her name on their mailing list. Thinking about the group consoled her, somehow.

After Fly finished making the not terribly useful phone call to the depression screening, John still didn't come out of his room to talk, or anything for that matter, and Fly was getting restless, as well

as having a bit of indigestion. So she wandered downstairs for some antacids. There was nothing particularly interesting happening down there with any of the other roommates, so she returned to her bed. All the desire to cry had left her, and now she was simply bored again, and her cats were of no help either. Finally, John emerged from his lair, but he wasn't in the conversational mood apparently. She tried to coax him into her bedroom to show him something on her new (used) computer, but to no avail. He, instead, elected to guzzle down some NyQuil and get ready for bed. Fly did at least get to watch him brush his teeth, as her door looked straight into the bathroom. That was fun for a couple of minutes of distraction. But then he went back into hiding and she resigned herself to being bored once again. Hanging out with him lately had gotten her into a different sleep schedule than she was used to. Before she had met him she had usually been asleep by eleven thirty or so. But she now didn't even start to get tired until after midnight. And she had had a fairly long nap earlier in the day, so today she wasn't even tired by then.

She ended up listening to *Carmina Burana*, the really creepy opera by Orff (which had been used in a horror movie she'd watched as a kid, and which she'd also seen her father perform while he was singing with the John Oliver Choral in Boston, and then decided she liked enough to buy the CD). And then finally she fell asleep.

For the next few days Fly altered between being highly productive and being utterly slug like. Her phone suddenly ceased to work one night, and that, for some reason, got her terribly depressed. She also hadn't seen her boy in several days and really missed him, so that probably was another factor in the blue mood.

Thursday, at the bank, they told Fly she didn't look a day over nineteen. Was she growing younger, in opposition to normal time flow?

Later that evening she bonded with all the other roommates in her new apartment. Yay!

On the first Friday of her freedom from work she started to volunteer at a (non-human) animal rights organization, in the hopes that it would alleviate some of her boredom, and give her a good excuse to get out of her house — which she could see was becoming a bit of a prison for her soul — and make her feel useful again.

She spent the entire day doing data entry. Fly thought of it as some sort of zen thing. She distanced herself from the reality of that ridiculously menial a task she was spending an entire Friday doing, and instead thought of nothing. Not the nothing of her usual numbness. But a positive sort of nothing, like the emptiness of a new blank notebook, waiting to be filled with interesting ideas and images.

That weekend was the weekend which her boy John was gone for his *Duty to the Country*, otherwise known as the National Guard. She had been dreading the thought of being home all that time without even the possibility of him being there with her. But it turned out to be nothing really. She pretty much lounged around the house, and played with her computer, which she had finally hooked up to the internet. And when he came back on Sunday evening she didn't even feel like she had missed him all that much. But almost as soon as he got in the apartment he used the excuse of playing with her Mac to get into her bedroom where her bong was. She had reclaimed it from an extended stay in his room, as he was a serious pot aficionado. So the two of them got very stoned and played with the computer. Later Fly found herself very fuzzy headed, somewhat depressed, and outside sitting on the porch with John while he did something with his tiny little guitar. It couldn't really be called playing because the notes were much more random than would ever occur in a real song. Fly found herself trying to forget all about the unrequited passion she felt for this boy, while simultaneously obsessing over him. She decided that the best thing to do, to prevent her from going insane, would be to get out her pen and paper and take advantage of the fact that she was in a more right brained state of mind, and so she started to draw. After literally drawing a potato stick and a bug climbing up a hill she declared that it wasn't working. John asked what she was drawing and this made her look up at him, something which she had been trying to avoid. But she ultimately decided that the only appropriate thing to do was to draw him, which would both allow her to obsess over him, while also keeping her focus on the actual process of drawing. He asked her not to but she ignored his protests and proceeded to make a most bizarre looking portrait of him smoking a cigarette and playing slide guitar with his lighter. The drawing looked incredibly unlike him. Just as she was finishing up her drawing he

announced that he was going to bed. She followed him upstairs like a lost puppy and watched him as he tried on his new combat boots, which he decided were too small. He again said that he was going to bed and she got a hug before he retired into the privacy of his room.

In her altered state, Fly watched a fire truck check out a high rise apartment building across the street from her house. Then she looked through her binoculars at Jupiter in hopes that she might be able to see some of its moons, but it was too cloudy to see any but one. Finally she went to bed, still very fuzzy and a bit depressed.

For the next few days Dragonfly turned into a full fledged hermit. She ignored the fact that the days were being as beautiful as possible for October in New England. She stayed inside, using the excuse that if she ventured outside, even just for a walk, she would spend money, and she really couldn't do that. On Tuesday she applied for unemployment. Oddly enough she did it by phone. She was amazed at the apparent efficiency of this particular branch of government, as compared to, say, the food stamp system or the RMV. The money they told her to expect was practically nothing, just enough to cover her rent and utilities, but at least she didn't need to be quite as worried as she had started to feel. Fly had also stopped taking her herbal antidepressant a couple of days earlier and actually noticed a difference. Hell, it was more like she had fallen from mere purgatory down several torturous levels of Dante's *Inferno*. OK, it was not at all that bad, but she was an extra not a happy camper these days. So, before she turned into a writhing mass of sloth and other nasty stuff Fly guzzled down a couple of doses of the antidepressant and went on with her kinda life.

Eventually, she emerged from her hermitage, and she went out to a movie, which she had initially intended to see with John, but he was in a grumpy mood after sleeping for something like eighteen hours and he bailed on her. Fly had then invited her lovely lady roommate, but she too passed on the film. So Fly went alone, and had a decent time.

This movie had been a fairly straightforward story about a German guy who ended up befriending the Dali Lama as a young man. It was pretty much a fluff movie, but it starred Brad Pitt and was nice to look at for a couple of hours. (And it was a decent introduction to the modern history of Tibetan Buddhism, which

would become more important in Fly's life in the future, though she, of course, didn't know it at the time.)

Later that night, sitting in bed, contemplating her life, Fly actually felt at peace with herself. She was happy to notice that. She had just read an article concerning depression which talked about one of the few good things which the author could attribute to her misery. The woman had said that only someone who is chronically sad could truly appreciate what a wonderful thing it is to feel merely ok. And Fly thought of that piece of wisdom as she sat there, very happy to feel only alright.

Fly had read another article in a different magazine about studies on the environmental influences which might be the cause of chronic neurosis. Apparently these studies had shown that anxiety prone animals have their fight-or-flight chemicals coursing through their veins, and brains, almost continuously, whereas normal folks only get that adrenaline rush when they actually need it. Fly was convinced that that theory would explain a lot of things about her.

On Thursday Fly had it all figured out.

She realized that what she wanted was to just relax, not accomplish anything, not conquer anyone, and basically not do anything for a while. This was antithetical to all of what "modern" competitive society stood for. The worst thing someone can do is to "do nothing" was the common belief. And this had caused poor Fly to feel torn apart, because she had been brainwashed into believing this too. She had known that the corporate hamster wheel approach to life was dumb, but she had still clung to the idea of accomplishment and progress and success as the be all end all at all times! But on Thursday she realized the problem. And she vowed to unbrainwash herself, relax, and just enjoy not having to be the least bit productive. If she happened to feel inspired to do something, then that would be fine, if not, that would be equally fine. Anyway, generally when people set out to accomplish something merely for the sake of accomplishment they end up using valuable resources and creating a lot of garbage in the process. And the world certainly could use a lot less of that. After so many years Fly had forgotten her slacker credo of living simply, and just

observing life, sometimes. But she was determined to not forget again. From now on Dragonfly was going to savor the pursuit of doing nothing, until, well... until something better came along.

There were a few necessities that she would need to take care of, like food and rent money, but other than that she really didn't need much. She was very adept at finding stuff that she might need. She knew all the good places to get clothes and stuff for free or almost free. And she had plenty of ways to get into clubs, museums, and movies without paying, usually respectfully and legally, even. If you payed attention, and had the desire to, you could have something entertaining to do every night of the week without paying a dime.

And then Fly had a breakdown. The 12 a.m. non-decaffeinated super sugary coffee (which her body was highly un-used to) hadn't helped matters. At 4:43 am Fly looked at her clock and was still quite awake. She had snapped. The entire day had been really very nice. She had spent it relaxing and enjoying the completely unseasonably hot, sunny fall day that it had been. She had read a entire novel before the sun had set, while sitting alongside the beautiful Charles river. She had watched all the crewing teams training for the Head of the Charles race. Fly had also picked up five tickets to see Bob Mould in an acoustic solo performance. In an amazing display of cooperation, all of her roommates had agreed to go together to the show. The idea of them all doing anything together was pretty neat, Fly had thought, and she was looking forward to it.

After watching a couple of hours of bad sitcoms, which were oddly all themed around witches and such (though it being October might have had something to do with that), Fly had decided to work on the invitations for the house party she had been planning since they had all moved in together. The party was a bit more than a week away and she realized that she should probably start inviting folks if there was going to be anyone there at all. The invitation started out with Fly appropriating a Time Magazine cover which featured a cultish group of men calling themselves the Promise Keepers. The picture centered on a Harley-Riding, longhaired, rock & roll guy with his hands clasped in prayer and eyes full of tears. To this Fly had added an image of the Jetsons and their



housekeeper Rosie holding a visage of Martha Stewart in her pincerlike hands. The text said: party, who, what, where, when, blah, blah, blah... "*And No Martha Stewart, We Promise.*" (Ms. Stewart, and her obsessively "*good things*" for home decorating and entertaining were everywhere in the media and stores at the time.) Fly was particularly fond of this random collage creation. But just as she was finishing up the thing John showed up and made her feel like her heart had been ripped out.

He had been completely MIA pretty much for the previous two weeks straight. He would stumble home at 2:30 in the morning, which Fly knew because she would always wake up, seemingly psychically, just as he was opening the house's front door, no matter how deeply she had been sleeping. And then the next day he would wake up around noon and run off to work with barely more than a "Hey." in the direction of anyone who was in the vicinity. Fly figured she had seen him maybe a total of five hours in two weeks.

She had really been on the verge of insanity a few days earlier, but it hadn't fully hit her until that evening. John came clomping into the house mid-evening with his best buddy, Pippin. John was carrying a bag full of overpriced black clothes. Fly figured out that the two of them were getting ready to go out somewhere and after inquiring she found out that they were going to Fetish Night at Manray. The same club they had been to a few weeks earlier. Fly hovered around the boys for a while. She even gave Pippin some makeup tips for applying eyeshadow and lipstick (like she was any sort of expert...). But in the end neither one of the boys managed to give her even the slightest bit of indication that she might be invited to join them. And in fact John had ignored her for pretty much the whole time he was there.

As soon as they left, Fly felt all of the nasty chemicals inside her brain start to spew all over the place, saturating all the areas within her cranium that had been previously occupied by contented thoughts. These new chemicals were all confused, and seemingly determined to wreak havoc on her poor psyche. She ended up just sitting and staring at the wall for almost an hour.

She recovered enough to move, and she threw energy into her e-mail. At midnight, she imbibed the previously mentioned large cup of coffee — chocolate raspberry, flavored with lots of soymilk

and sugar to make it palatable to her non-coffee-appreciating taste buds — and the buzz kept her typing until about 4 a.m. when she ran out of patience and people to e-mail. She had been hoping that John would come home and allow her to confront some of the feelings that had been torturing her since he had left. Or even to just say goodnight. But at that point she had to admit to herself that she probably wasn't going to see him for another day or so.

This was pretty much the point when she crossed that fine line between sanity and what lays beyond. She had ceased to be simply waiting for a friend, or Godot, or whatever, and fell into complete neurotic obsession. And what was worse was that she was perfectly aware of it, but couldn't do a damn thing to stop herself.

As she lay in bed her neurons ceased to operate in any sort of proper manner. She imagined that the electrical pulses kept bumping into little orange and black striped detour signs while on their way to the next neuron in the thought process. The impulses were then forced to return to their starting point. Unfortunately they all seemed to originate in the vicinity of the group or neurons that held the idea of John's Baja jacket. Fly had had a fetish for Bajas for many years, ever since her first favorite guy, Steve, had worn one when he was quietly stalking her and working up the courage to ask her out on their first date. Her new roommate's jacket was on the floor in his room, if it was still where he had left it a day or two before. Now it was the only thing that Fly's mind could come up with, no matter what she tried to distract it with.

This was when she realized that she really needed to do something about her disorderly brain chemistry. She'd become that tiny, lost, terrified little monkey grasping onto the terry cloth covered metal mannequin in the classic psychology experiment photo where some evil 1960's scientists had offered the poor thing the option of a wire blob with a bottle of much needed milk or the non-food-bearing cloth covered mannequin in place of its mother, as a way to test a primate's biological need for love and affection versus its need for food. (At the time of the experiment most people, astoundingly, believed that it was harmful to give a child love and affection, as it would "spoil" the kid.)

But for the time being, Fly decided, just to shut her brain up, to go find the Baja. After much difficulty, as his light bulb had blown, and she was forced to use a candle to search his room, she

finally gave up looking for the jacket. She settled for a pair of boxer shorts which were being much more obvious about their presence by lying near the top of one of the many piles of clothes on his floor. Fly carted them off to her bedroom, unsure of what she should do with them.

She alternatively fixated on the idea of ripping them to shreds and hugging them. She knew very well that this was all utterly silly. But she was that tiny scared monkey, clinging for it's life to something, anything, that was better than the cold, hard, loneliness that was her life.

Outside her window Fly watched the wind having it's way with the flag across the street at the VFW. It momentarily distracted her from her stuck brain. Sleep then took the opportunity to squeeze its way past, or on top of, the road blocks, which had been left unguarded when some imaginary brain cop had gone off in search of some donuts. When Fly got up the next morning, she felt significantly more mentally balanced.

Fly lived on newspapers and snack foods. She sat in the house every day filling her time reading, watching tv, surfing the web and waiting for John to come home (or wake up). Her life was the definition of monotony. Was monotony really all that bad a thing? If you had to choose between chaos and monotony which one would you choose? Fly's brain was the kind that could only have one or the other, never anything in between, it seemed.

She had gotten all excited when one of the medical studies' grad students had called her back about participating in a paid study about depression and brain waves. Brain waves, cool, she thought. They told her that they would hook her up to an EEG machine and measure her brain activity. She figured that they probably wouldn't call her back to schedule the thing, but she could hope. The idea made her happy for a while.

The big roommate thing with all five of them going to see a show together had sort of ended up being a flop. Well not a flop really, just incredibly dull, that's all. Except for the fact that John showed up quite drunk and proceeded to babble obnoxiously the entire evening. This did not endear him to any of the others. Fly found herself trying to ignore him until they all got home and the others went to bed. She and John then stayed up until early in the

morning arguing about all manner of strange things. She loved this sort of thing. She finally flat out asked him why the hell he was always so angry lately. She hadn't actually expected an answer, she had really just intended to make him aware that she did care about him and that it was enough of a problem that she felt the need to mention it. He had such a dichotomy wrestling inside him, with his poetry and Eastern philosophy clashing so completely with his macho, drunken, violent, militaristic tendencies. Fly always felt sympathetic with people like him, because she too had conflicting personalities within her. Almost every time the two of them had one of these late night talks he managed to nonchalantly reveal some deep dark secret to her. The things would just slip on out of his mouth like he hadn't even known they were in there. Like he was secretly hoping that she wouldn't notice them, or, perhaps, he was unconsciously hoping she would notice, and give him some help dealing with it.

Fly found herself both hating and caring deeply for this odd boy. That was pretty much how it always was with her relationships. Unhealthy as it was, she couldn't imagine it any differently.

After watching a movie one afternoon, a romance of course, since this was pretty much all the love and affection she could get these days, Fly biked over to a grassy area on the Cambridge side of the Charles River. It was a chilly October night and the leaves had turned brown and most of them were littering the ground under the trees. She sat there for a long time looking at the dead and dying leaves. It was quiet, despite all the cars whooshing by on Storrow and Memorial Drives. Very few people were out walking. A little too cold, Fly supposed.

Her hands still smelled of chlorine bleach from the battle with some stubborn bathtub mildew earlier that day. It reminded her that the party was only two days away and that she really hadn't invited all the people she had intended to. She hoped it would turn out all right.

After sitting by the water for over an hour she realized that it was getting a bit too cold and that she hadn't come to any life altering epiphanies, so she climbed on her bike and rode on home.

Then came the party.

Yeah, the party happened, as planned. Fly was bouncing all day, high on nothing but anticipation. As party time came closer and closer Fly got more and more fluffy headed. She even spent over an hour cleaning the kitchen floor. Then she dusted the stairwell. A couple of hours before show-time John finally appeared, bruised from yet another run in with a car, and with a hangover. They all ventured out to the store to pick up munchies and alcohol. Fly made a punch which ended up consisting of about fifty percent vodka. (Was she trying to kill the partygoers, or just drown her own sorrows?) By the time the first few guests arrived Fly was pretty much toasted. Her friend Otto brought his fiancé, who Fly had never met. She was cool, and Fly was glad to see the two of them seemed to get along well together. All these people getting married around her made Fly rather nervous, though. She felt so far away from that part of her life that she couldn't imagine anyone else her age being that sure about it either. Growing up in the first generation where there were probably more kids of divorced parents than not made Fly wonder how anyone could even think of getting hitched.

An interesting guy showed up, and when Fly asked John to introduce him to everyone, John said that he had no idea who the guy was. Since no one else obviously knew the guy, Fly figured that John was joking. The guy seemed nice enough and he even started following Fly around and asking her all sorts of questions about her. She was wondering what the hell this very cute, interesting guy was doing talking to her. He said that he liked jazz and asked Fly about her photography.

Fly found a chance to corner John in the kitchen and ask him about the stranger. He said that he really didn't have any idea who the guy was and that the guy had told him that he had found out about the party by "packet sniffing" e-mail (kind of like bugging someone's telephone). Weird, Fly thought. She didn't quite believe the story, but she supposed that it was possible. Then again maybe he was just a guy from the copy shop where she had made copies of the invitations. After talking for a while, Fly and the mystery guest both rejoined the rest of the party and it gave her a few minutes to think. "Wait!" she thought abruptly, through her vodka filled brain, didn't someone say this guy's name was Phil? Um, Phil, that would be the guy from the personals who she had been talking

to for almost six months via e-mail. Phil, the very first person she had invited to the party. Phil, the guy who was looking for an intelligent, artistic girlfriend. Fly gasped out loud and grabbed Phil's shoulder. "I just figured out who you are!" she yelled, awkwardly, and excitedly, looking around the room at her roommates. Everyone stared at her. She started making apologies to him and explanations to everyone else. She felt utterly silly, but happy.

She immediately invited her new companion up to her room to look at her portfolio.

They ended up talking for a long time, sitting there on her bed. Fly babbled on and on. A couple of times John would stumble in, insanely drunk, and interrogate Phil about his intentions. It was utterly endearing, Fly thought, that he actually cared about her. But she kind of wished that he would leave them alone. In her nervousness and with all the alcohol in her she completely forgot to flirt with the guy. Several hours passed and all she had done was talk. It probably wasn't the best impression, she thought later on. He ended up leaving before anything happened, but she was having too much of a good time to worry about it too much. She would talk to him in a day or two she figured, and make a better impression that time.

When the last of the guests were getting ready to leave, a bunch of John's friends showed up, very drunk and obnoxious. Fly said goodnight because she didn't want to be anywhere near all of them while she was still in such a great mood. She waited up for John to throw the guys out and then invited him to hang out with her. He ended up pretty much falling asleep lying on her bed before he finally said goodnight at about 4 a.m. Fly was happy and very, very tired.

The next day there wasn't all that much cleaning up to do and Fly just hung around for the most of the afternoon. John woke up grumpy, went out, and came home in a much better mood. He asked Fly if he could use her computer to play a MUD game on the internet. She followed him up to her bedroom and read the help wanted ads while watching over his shoulder as he tried to kill Barney (the much loathed by adults purple dinosaur from children's public television) and a variety of other lesser MUD evils. After a

couple of hours of this their lady roommate came upstairs to invite them to a spoken word performance that she was going to. Fly initially declined but after John said that he was going she changed her mind.

The three of them piled into their coats and meandered off to Harvard Square. Now Fly didn't really like most spoken word stuff, and she really didn't like poetry at all. She hoped that it wouldn't be too annoying. The three of them were having a fun time just hanging out together and then this woman came on stage and began to talk about her life as a kid in an abusive household. She read from what seemed like a diary of a ten year old girl who's mother was beaten and then in turn, beat the children. It was horrible, but beautiful at the same time. Fly had to hold back the tears. The woman went on to talk about being on welfare, having a child, leaving an abusive boyfriend, and having a frank discussion with Jesus about his faults.

After her performance was over the woman slunk to the back of the room and curled up on the stairs with her face in her hands. Fly let a few tears roll out of her eyes, and didn't talk for ten minutes or so, while she composed herself. This was the first time Fly had ever seen an artist confront the kinds of feelings that Fly carried around with her since her own childhood. While Fly had never been physically abused she had seen, or heard, it almost nightly sometimes. Added to that fact was that there was no one she could go to for comfort while her mother and stepfather screamed and threw stuff at each other. Fly would always just hide under the covers in her bedroom, hoping, and also fearing, that the UFOs would come to her window and take her away. When she visited her dad during vacations she would tell him about all the stuff that went on at her mom's. He just sent her off to a psychologist.

At least she never felt like it was her fault. She had always blamed the alcohol. Her mom and stepfather were really great people, they just turned into monsters when they drank their Budweiser. Fly was always amazed that she had grown up as healthy as she had. Sure she had her problems, but she could have ended up much worse.

When Fly mentioned the dramatic spoken word performance to her stepmother some days later, the woman was dumbfounded.

She had never realized that Fly's experiences had been that bad. Fly was a bit dumbfounded herself because she figured that everyone had known about her mom. Fly hadn't really talked about it in many, many years, because she didn't need to. It was all behind her, and the less she thought about it the better. It was only when someone else who had been through similar shit reminded Fly about it that she even remembered really. It was almost like Fly had turned her childhood into a bad made for tv movie. Something she could watch superficially and turn off when it got to be to annoying. The woman's performance had simply forced Fly to change the channel back, to watch a bit more of her childhood drama. This wasn't a good thing or a bad thing, it was just something. Fly wondered if her reaction might have been different if she had gone home alone that night.

After the early evening performance, Fly and John went on a quest to Allston for some pot. Or actually a *shitload* of pot. A friend of John's had asked him to get a couple of ounces for him. Upon hearing this, Fly asked if John wanted any company and he said she was welcome to come along. Since his bike had been trashed again in his most recent conflict with a car, they ended up taking a cab. Now, whenever you are out on the road as a pedestrian or cyclist you are almost always confronted by the fact that one of the most dangerous things out there are taxis. They are completely notorious for endangering just about everyone's lives, yet people continue to get in them and pay the guys into drive them around. Fly usually would refuse to go anywhere in a cab, but she didn't feel she had much of a choice in the matter at this point. This particular driver was either really drunk or just plain stupid, she decided. However, they made it safely to Allston and picked up what was the largest amount of marijuana Fly had ever seen at one time. The roommates hung around, smoked some of it, and watched a documentary about the life of Gilda Radner. This was the first time that John had invited her to be included in his life. She was now in the private world of his friends. Oddly enough, Fly felt comfortable there, like she did it all the time. Actually it reminded her of hanging out with her now lost friend Dan. He had always dragged her around to random people's houses. John's friends even seemed like the same kind of people Dan hung out with, sort of laid back, friendly, younger folks with an appreciation for mind altering substances.



On the cab ride home, the two of them hardly said a word to one another. They were both lost in their own little fluffy worlds thanks to the pot. It was kind of strange to be with him and not to be talking at all. Comfortable though, like they had known each other for years, though it had really only been a couple of months.

Before they went to bed, Fly had tried to do one of the logic puzzles from the back of a science magazine that had been lying on the dining room table waiting to be read. But she was completely unable to even make it through the question before she lost her train of thought. John though solved the puzzle in his head, unbelievably quickly. Hmmm, how annoying, she thought. It took her ten minutes and a lot of scribbling with pen and paper before Fly finally figured it out. She was always such a logical person, but the smoke had obliterated all the linearity from her neurons. At least she was able to do the thing on paper. It felt to her like a mysterious force was propelling her hand to figure out the answer, while the rest of her brain took a little vacation. She had heard about medical patients who had had their corpus callosum, the bridge connecting the two halves of the brain, severed. They experienced similarly mysterious, bodily “possessions”. Apparently, the part of the brain in which consciousness sat sometimes didn’t know entirely what other parts of the brain were up to. Maybe marijuana somehow shut off communication between the conscious and the subconscious bits of the mind. Fly thought that it was pretty cool whatever her brain was doing. She made a note to do a little research into the effects of pot, at some point in the future when she was feeling a little more logical.

A couple of days later, Fly had just had the greatest sex with John, only he wasn’t there. She had become particularly proficient at masturbation in those many years of involuntary celibacy. Sometimes she barely even needed to touch herself. When she had her period she was always infinitely more horny. Earlier she had been watching a PBS series about the nature of the universe and the discovery of the big bang theory. And metaphysics nearly always made Fly hornier than pretty much anything else. Her friend Dan had thought this was weird. She supposed it was, but it didn’t bother her. So she had been watching a science program and she had her period. Boom. She was actually happy that John wasn’t

around because she was afraid that she might say something embarrassing.

(Thinking about the whole thing with John and his only semi-interest in her, Fly realized that it might actually be a good thing. That way, if she did end up hanging out with Phil-from-the-party, she might not get all obsessed like she usually did when she started dating, which would end up scaring off the boy before the relationship could even start.)

Friday, Fly read all sorts of stuff about pot's affects on the brain. She came across a few web sites like NORML and such and downloaded nearly a book's worth of medical studies about the Cannabinoid family.

Then her boy came home and within a couple of hours the two of them were completely stoned. The other roommates were wandering around, but they pretty much just left the two of them alone. The two got into lengthy conversations where neither of them was paying any attention. Fly thought it was very funny. John spent ten minutes listing all of the different kinds of hats he owned. And then he told her about the *Dent the Door* incident. After hearing about that she got a little annoyed because it turned out that the night before, while hanging out at his work, he and his coworkers had reverted back to adolescence and destroyed the place in a fit of inebriated frustration. John's violence astounded her.

When they ran out of things to say, they headed up to bed, separately.

After John had shut himself in his room, Fly decided that she might be having a bad trip. In any case, this pot they had gotten from John's friend was very, very potent. John had called it a "creeper", because it took a long time to hit you. Because of this she had used more than she probably should have. And she was regretting it. Maybe if she listened to a CD, she thought, that would help.

She ended up listening instead to John breathing, in the next room, for a long time before she finally fell asleep.

The next day she wondered if she had merely hallucinated John's breathing because she was so stoned. There was a fair bit of door and wall between their rooms, even when her own door was open.

She spent the most of the next day out of it and sleeping.

Saturday night almost turned out to be great, but in the end didn't. Fly had told John that she wanted to go out to a club, and he actually was interested. So they got all dressed up, he showered, she brushed her teeth and they walked down to the T. The entire walk was silent. He seemed to be in bad mood. While they were waiting for the train to come she asked him if he was going to be grumpy all night and he said yes. A few torturously silent minutes later he said that he really wasn't up to going out and that he was going to go home. She told him to feel better and watched as he made his way up the escalator. She didn't quite know what to feel. On one hand she was glad she didn't have to worry about watching what she was saying for fear of further upsetting him for the whole rest of the evening. But now she didn't really feel like going alone, all the way into Boston, late at night, without her bike. It also seemed silly to pay all that money to get into the club when she didn't really have any money to spare. So when the train finally came she got on and then got off two stops later in Harvard Square. She decided to make the most of the trip and at least see if she could make it into the last show at the movie theater. No luck. All the interesting movies were sold out. She walked around long enough to become annoyed that everything was closed. Then she decided to walk the three miles or so home. Walking usually made Fly feel better, but for some reason it didn't this time. John was sitting in the dining room drinking a beer when she got back. He seemed to be in a bit better mood and they talked for a few minutes. After they both retreated into their respective bedrooms Fly tried to listen to him, but she couldn't really hear anything. She played with her computer for a while and then went to bed.

While she lay in bed she tried to listen for John's breathing again, but even when there were no cars going by on the road outside she still couldn't hear anything. Weird, she thought.

On Monday, after finishing up the book she had been reading about hallucinations, Fly went downstairs to the living room and discovered all her roommates home. They ended up having a lengthy discussion about the subject, and Fly was very happy.

As time passed, our Dragonfly was slowly getting used to feeling reasonable while being around her confused and confusing roommate. She wasn't as annoyed when he failed to invite her out

with him. She didn't get so bothered when he wasn't around for days at a time. It was helping that she was hanging out with her other roommates more. They had all watched a televised debate in the State House about the possible passing of a death penalty bill. Fly was mortified that anything like that could pass in Massachusetts. She had always prided herself on the fact that the general population in her state was at least smart enough to realize what an astoundingly idiotic idea corporal punishment was, given the reality of violence begetting violence and all that. What she found even more astounding was that after the bill passed, one of the local news commentators actually said that it was a case where the representatives had voted with their hearts and not their heads. And he said this with some twisted sense of pride, too.

The world is sick, thought Fly, if people were not only voting without using their minds, but if their hearts were actually that cruel.

After making it an entire month without monetarily paid work of any kind Fly was not the least bit interested in going back. You might think that she would have gone out of her mind with boredom, but by now it was exactly the opposite. She was reading all sorts of stuff she probably would never have gotten a chance to read. She was learning how to cook all kinds of particularly healthy dishes, since she didn't have any money to eat the more expensive processed foods she was used to getting, in a hurry, on her way home from work. She knew that she would be forced to go back to corporate employment sooner or later and so she was doing her best to enjoy herself for the time being. The freedom had also helped her loose some of that brainwashing that society had forced upon her about being "productive" for the sake of productivity. Every time she looked through the newspaper's help wanted ads she had to remind herself that there was absolutely no need for her to take any job that she just didn't absolutely love. She was holding out for the perfect position in the perfect organization. Something she could be not only proud of but that would be interesting as well. Her lady roommate had also been in search of a job and she had found the perfect one in less than two months, so Fly was hopeful.

A couple of nights earlier, Fly had been having a discussion with the lady roommate about what should be done about this Phil person. Fly hadn't heard from him in over a week and she was afraid he was going to simply disappear. John overheard the discussion, and in his overly inebriated state decided to comment. He started babbling on about how silly Fly was being and how she should just call him up on the phone and say Hi, how's it going, blah, blah, blah, and just start talking. Fly gave him the finger, and thought, who asked you? But, of course, he was absolutely right.

So on Wednesday Fly called Phil. Nothing terribly horrifying happened to her. She didn't make an utter fool of herself, not in the least. They ended up saying that they would get together on Sunday. She told everyone in the house about it. They were all very proud of her.

That night she figured out the John breathing thing. While she was sitting there quietly playing with her computer she suddenly heard him. It hadn't occurred to her before, but he often practiced his Tai Chi stuff at night. And he always did lots of heavy controlled breathing along with the exercises. Before, when she had heard it she had been enough out of it to forget about the martial arts part of his life. The pot had made her hearing more acute, but had destroyed her ability to connect the sounds with the rest of her knowledge. Apparently the chemicals in pot caused recent memory to be neglected by the rest of the brain, though long term memory remained intact. Fly felt much better now that she had solved the mystery. Finally she could go on with her life. She giggled.

The next book Fly chose to read was a rather dry text on the brain. She had sometimes thought she should have been a neuroscientist, but she didn't have the energy for all that rote memorization of random, academic terms for all the different bits of brain. It just seemed like too much effort to her. But that didn't stop her from wanting to know everything there was to know about how the human mind was wired together in a more general and relational way. The first chapter of this particular book was a rundown of all the parts of the brain like the hippocampus, and the basal ganglia, and the pons. She tried diligently to memorize these but her brain found it meaningless babble. She thought that she should maybe get a poster of the anatomy of the brain to hang on her wall so she could look at it every day.

*Arrrrrrgh!*

Fly screamed on the inside. She still didn't have the chemistry to cry on the outside. She put on some Tori Amos and tried to sing all her terror out. Her body wouldn't stop shaking. She hadn't felt like this since the airport scene, with her scared kitties in a box, over a year earlier. The stupid thing was that this time she alone was responsible for getting herself into this particular shit. Everyone else had been gone from the house and John had left his backpack in the dining room while he was off at Guard. Fly made the unfortunate, or perhaps fortunate in the long run, mistake of deciding to snoop a bit in his stuff. The very first thing she found in his notebook was an unsent letter from a while back, addressed to some friend of his she didn't know. It started with how he had just moved and talked a little about all his new roommates. Fly just wanted to see what he said about all of them so she read on. Most of the stuff was pretty banal. Nothing very nice though, except about their lady roommate. Then she came to the part about herself. It actually took up more than half of the two page letter. It was not very nice at all. Her mind took several minutes to fully digest the stuff he had written. Then she read it again, just to make sure. He complained about how she giggled all the time. He had actually said that same thing to her face once, but he had been in an exceptionally horrid mood at the time so she had brushed it off. In the letter he also called her fat and ugly. And an idiot. And screwed up. And a few other choice things too, including something involving her "cakehole", which she wasn't entirely sure what it was referring to, but imagined that he was talking about her mouth, since, well... that's the only hole she tended to associate with cake, really.

After half an hour of listening to Tori she felt a tiny bit better, Tori was good at that. Fly felt like she had crossed over to some alternate universe and she didn't like this place one bit. Rejection was one thing, she had learned to handle that, her whole life had been filled with rejection. Well not literally all of it but far more than was necessary or even healthy. But this was nothing like rejection. How could she have so terribly misjudged him? She had honestly thought that they were getting along really well. In this new universe she was going to be afraid to talk to him at all. She

was definitely going to be afraid to laugh. And she was trapped in her apartment with this person who apparently couldn't stand to be near her. After two months Fly had finally begun to feel comfortable around him. But now she thought she would never again be comfortable, let alone happy, in her house. She tried to not think about it. But of course her brain wouldn't allow any such thing.

Maybe she should try to psychoanalyze him. That might make her feel better.

The more Fly thought about it the more she decided that there was something definitely off about all this. The evidence: how could anybody be bothered by someone who laughs easily? She had figured out which evening the letter writing had occurred and she remembered that he had been in one of his grumpy moods at the time. So that would explain the particular malice with which it was written. But that didn't really explain why he had said some of the things. Actually much of what he said was true, Fly thought, in some form or other. Sure she was fat. So what, though? And, no, she didn't look like a model, but why would she want to look like that? She was unique and damn proud that she wasn't just like everyone else. Actually it was a trait she had most admired in John, himself, at first. He wasn't bad looking at all, but he wasn't likely to show up on the pages of GQ, either. The only thing that he had written that she completely disagreed with was the part about her being an idiot, and ignorant. She knew that was just plain old talking shit. She may not always express herself all that well but she was really very smart, profound even, at times. She hadn't read all those interesting and challenging books for nothing!

Fly also wondered why he had spent so much of his time thinking about her? Usually when she didn't like someone, she preferred to simply ignore that individual, and certainly not spend time writing a whole page letter about them. She decided that he was simply frustrated with his own love life and felt like taking it out on one of the few people who had actually declared their admiration for him. She sort of knew how it was when someone who simply wasn't your type announces that they are in love with you. Fly herself had said some relatively mean things about some of her own unrequited (non)lovers. Though never quite as

malicious as this. But she reminded herself that he was a violent sort. He openly claimed that he didn't like anybody, really.

In the end Fly decided to chalk the whole thing up to his bad mood and not her own problems. Small consolation, she thought.

Sunday came and went. But no Phil.

Fly had spent the morning reading her neuroanatomy book, and the afternoon making pumpkin soup. And then she spent the evening getting ready for the date. The guy, at least, had the decency to call to tell her that he wasn't feeling up to doing anything. But it wasn't exactly the thing that Fly needed at the time. Rejection is never fun, but coming a day after the whole the-guy-I'm-in-love-with-claims-I'm-an-idiot episode probably wasn't the best timing she could imagine. But she wasn't too miserable, given the situation. She called her mom and that was reassuring.

John soon returned from Guard and Fly felt fine being around him. He told her all about this guy he had met at Man Ray a few nights earlier. John had gotten the guy's phone number and Fly commented on the fact that he was smiling more than usual. She had put the letter business behind her after doing some handwriting analysis on him. She discovered that she had been pretty much right about all the things he was feeling, especially the frustration with his own sexuality. She was always amazed that something as arbitrary seeming as your handwriting could reveal so much about your personality and your emotional state. But it was one of the most accurate forms of psychoanalysis she had ever encountered. If she wasn't already so busy studying about the brain she might have liked to do some more investigating on the history and science of handwriting analysis itself. But, for the time being she just went by what her book said. After she had done the analysis on John's anti-Fly-rant she did some on her own writing and was actually a bit surprised at some of the stuff the book had to say. It not only told her that she was quite likely to be a genius, but went on to say...

*"...this individual has an inner conflict between a keen mind and a very yielding nature, between mental maturity and emotional immaturity. The emotional nature cannot carry through with what the mind perceives, and the person feels weak and frustrated."*



Well that pretty much summed up Fly's entire personality right there. Her brain was way ahead of her heart. Of course.

She wondered what would happen if she made a conscious effort to change her handwriting, would her personality change accordingly?

Late that night Fly had a sudden onset of her plain old ordinary depression. It had more to do with the rest of her roommates than with John, for a change. She had gotten some of the first negative vibes from any of them. Nothing major, but it was foreboding, she thought.

She really just wanted to have someone to talk with. Even though she was probably less lonely than she had been for a really long time, she still felt like she had no one to just be herself with.

A few weeks earlier Fly had been thinking about the idea of reading to someone, like the teachers did when Fly was a kid in elementary school. You know, the teacher would sit in the middle and all the kids would surround her or him. Each day the teacher would read another chapter from some really great book. Fly's favorites had been *The Phantom Tollbooth*, *The Lion the Which and the Wardrobe*, and of course, *Bridge to Tarabithia*. Being read to is such a wonderful thing, one of the few activities that can bring you back to childhood without being childish at the same time. When she was with Jef he often read to her. Mostly funny stuff. One of his favorites was Dave Barry. But he also liked to read from zoology textbooks. Parasites were popular topics, and bugs, too. She really missed having someone who she could either read to or be read to by. Teaching preschool had given her that chance, but for the past year there had been no one. That night, after thinking about it, she she had a dream that Jef was reading to her. She wished she could remember what it was he'd been reading. But the funny thing was that the next day she got an e-mail from Jef, a somewhat unusual affair in and of itself, in which he quoted a passage from the book he was in the middle of reading, which he had never done before at all. Fly thought it was kind of strange.

Thinking about all this made her wonder what else she missed from her past. She thought that maybe if she made a concerted effort at trying to provide for herself some of those things she might not feel so lonely. She decided to make a list of the things that she wished she could do with someone else.

.  
 be touched and touch another  
 read to and be read to  
 make plans  
 have someone tell me I look beautiful  
 eat meals made by someone else and  
 cook meals for someone else  
 make art to give to someone  
 make art with someone  
 trade backrubs  
 sing with another person  
 walk aimlessly together  
 play a game  
 .

Would she ever be with a guy again? Intimately? It sounded so morose to her, but Fly had to admit that the statistics were getting pretty bad. She really, really wanted a hug right then.

The brain wave study didn't, of course, work out. The psychiatrist told her she wasn't the right kind of depressed (which may have simply been a relativity problem, with Fly only being able to compare her own depression to her own depression, and thus noting that it wasn't especially depressing).

But in the process of having her neurosis rejected, she discovered a plethora of five dollar psychology studies. So she signed up for all the ones she was the least bit qualified for.

At the first one she went to Fly learned that they lie to you, in the name of science.

So by the second one she was amusing herself by trying to figure out exactly what the experimenters were up to. They would tell you what the study was supposed to be about but then after it was over they would tell you what it was they were actually studying. It was kind of fun and it gave her a bit of cash.

Fly was honestly happy for something like two weeks. John had been hanging out with her fairly often and it made her feel wanted. On some nights she would go to sleep at midnightish and when he came home a couple hours later he would quietly wake her up to hang out. Fly thought it was very sweet. One night he

even read poetry to her from his journal. Ever since he had started fooling around with random guys he met in the gay clubs he had found Fly more interesting for some reason. He actually e-mailed her an unsolicited message once. And then the big change, he invited her out to the movies with his buddies from work. The innermost lair of his little world. It was ok.

Oddly enough, though, John took up a most annoying habit of following around one of her kitties — her much adored Pooh Bear —and torturing him. Mildly. Not really torture, actually, but pestering really. Hissing at the cat, for example. Fly couldn't quite figure that one out. Jealousy? Some bizarre form of male dominance?

After a while Fly started to be less and less involved with John's life. She still enjoyed his company. And they did have a ritual of watching late night Star Trek episodes on the evenings that he was home. The two of them would debate odd topics for hours until one of them would be overcome with sleepiness. These discussions were something Fly looked forward to.

Then a time came when he stopped coming home. Didn't call. Was AWOL. For about a week Fly went a little crazy worrying about him. She finally broke down and started calling everyone he knew. She did finally talk to him. He was pretty out of it. On something more potent than mere pot. He reassured her that he was fine. Just taking a little vacation. From home, from work, from life.

She knew that he was beyond hope when he never showed up for National Guard one weekend. She stopped worrying. He would have to deal with his own problems now. As much as she wanted to help, he would have to come to her now, if he wanted her to do anything for him.

Life was suddenly a lot quieter without him. She actually rented movies by herself for the first time in a year.

One of the independent films she ended up with was a very dreary, and oddly unimaginative flick about an AA meeting. Kinda like *Slacker* on valium, she thought, not that she had any experience at all with valium. It got her thinking about her own addictions. She had missed the alcoholic's gene, or at least the alcoholic's environment, but got the next one in line: food.

Fly was definitely addicted to food. She knew this, the knowledge was always lurking in the far recessed of her mind. But

she wasn't always conscious of it. Once in a while the idea would resurface, awakened by some random occurrence, like a bad movie. She did some research on the subject and came up with some new theories that she'd not encountered before, linking food cravings to serotonin levels in the brain, and linking overeating to depression. Described her to a T. It's nice to be explained, she thought. But now what? For a couple of years, while she was actually making strides in the dating pool and getting her fill of sex, she had been in great shape. She had hardly thought about food at all. But starting with the devastating dumping by Jef, things had fallen apart. She was now at the stage where she pretty much ate all the time, and if she wasn't eating, she was absentmindedly obsessing over what she could eat next. The article Fly had read said that she was born this way. Her serotonin levels were about a quarter of what everyone else's were. She was essentially screwed out of the stuff of happiness. Hence the depression. (But how accurate was this? Science changes its mind all the time... What about all those times she wasn't addicted to food, and wasn't depressed? Does DNA turn on and off on a schedule?)

Life had dealt her a losing hand, she thought. A six of hearts, seven and three of spades, eight of clubs, and an ace of diamonds. At least she had the ace, the genius gene, but that wasn't helping her much. If society placed any real importance on having an ace, Ronald Reagan would have stayed washed up actor. Nope, society seemed more intent upon honoring some other quality that Fly utterly lacked.

Some day Fly would find a place where her particular brand of genetics was appreciated, she hoped. Some day the rest of life would catch up with her brain, and be on the same wavelength, or whatever, as her mind. Maybe.

The entirety of one particular weekend had been ruined by Dragonfly's need for justice. Riding home from her new teaching job on that Friday she had been silently screaming. For a while after arriving home she was paralyzed with indecision at what she might be able to do. She consulted her employee handbook and was given her answer. The child abuse report had to be filed within forty-eight hours, which gave her no real choice in the matter. She had to call the Department of Social Services. Had it happened on any

other work day, she would have simply waited until the next day and called her supervisor. But as it was a Friday, there was no one around for her to consult, and wouldn't be for three more days. So Fly called the child abuse hotline and reported one of the parents from her afterschool program.

While it had been happening, near the end of the day at the school, Fly had done just as she had done as a child. Stayed very still and quiet, frozen in fear, hoping the violence might simply vanish.

Drown out the environment and concentrate on only a tiny bit of tedium and the world couldn't hurt you. This is the place where folks with multiple personality disorder probably get lost. Fly hadn't gotten lost, necessarily, just scared. She hadn't even figured out what was happening until she started to hear strange noises coming from one of the storage rooms in the classroom. She stopped moving and listened. One of her students was inside pleading with her father.

The young lady's brother was also listening and he recognized the sounds. "*She's gettin a beatin'.*" he whispered.

When the girl and her father came out, the humiliated young lady was cowering under her large winter coat. Fly gave her a weak pat on the back and tried to console her, but that was not one of Fly's strong points, and probably didn't help much. Fly felt like a little kid again. Helpless and scared.

Only when she was outside, in the cold dark air, did she feel like anything beyond insignificant. As she rode her bike, her body became flooded with all those neurochemicals like adrenaline and the other endorphins.

When she got home, figured out what she needed to do, and finally got through to the hotline, she had to recount the whole story. And then when she hung up the phone she realized what she had done. This was one of those mild-but-important life altering decisions. Not so much for Fly, but for that entire family, probably. They now, presumably, had social workers descending upon their home and accusing them of abusing their children. Now Fly was suddenly afraid to go in to work and face the ramifications. Would she be ostracized for "overreacting" and going over all her supervisors' heads? Would she have to face the father? Was what she did wrong? Whatever the outcome, she felt

horrible right now. She called her Dad and talked. He said she'd done a good thing. She felt a little better.

And she hadn't even eaten anything.

Maybe if she explained her childhood experience with growing up around violence they would understand better.

She did eventually get into trouble for her choice, and given a lecture by one of the higher ups in the program, who seemed to think that it was wrong to judge other's cultural traditions when it came to raising kids. But Fly knew better. She knew that standing up for the rights, and health, of that young lady was more important, and worth risking her job for. So she was able to shrug off the negative criticism and the warning on her employment record.

After reading about it somewhere, she started taking some kind of "natural supplement" that she found in a health store in Cambridge. Little pills called hydroxy-tryptophan, or 5HTP for short. It was, apparently, a precursor to serotonin. In other words, it was supposed to help her brain make more serotonin, which would make her more "normal", happiness-wise. It was a hell of a lot cheaper than prescription antidepressants, and theoretically safer as well, and promised to be more effective than the St' Johnswort she'd been taking. We'll have to see what happens, she thought.

-  
ECSTASY?  
-

*Alter*

*verb*

*cause a change in character or composition, typically  
in a small but significant way*

*Etymology: from Latin "alter", meaning "other"*

Something happened to Fly. One of those mildly life changing events in a young person's world. But it wasn't anything to do with the little hydroxy-tryptophan pills.

John and Fly had sex. It broke the two year involuntary celibacy that Fly had been "observing".

She wasn't quite sure why it all happened, initially. He had been absent for most of the previous month and a half. He would come visit for a couple of hours or maybe even a night, but then he would disappear again. She had eventually discovered that he was staying at his cousin's house and that he had quit his job. He was, indeed, taking a little vacation.

She, of course missed him.

It got so bad that the rest of the roommates called a house meeting to discuss what they should do about him. Fly reassured them that John wasn't going to get them all kicked out of the place. Though she was starting to have some doubt as to his mental stability. She was having all sorts of disturbing dreams about him. In one he became a drug dealer. In another he was doing heroin.

He came home for a couple of days and Fly was very happy. They were getting back into the rhythm of staying up late, watching lots of Star Trek and talking. That particular night he had been unusually touchy-feely. Fly mentioned that back when she was dating Jef she used to only take hits of pot by inhaling Jef's smoke laden kisses. Kind of a human bong. She had always found it very pleasant. After babbling on quite a bit more about random things, she asked John, "Have you ever heard of the Ghost of Theda Bara?" As soon as the words were out of her mouth she looked up to see John lunging toward her face. He had just taken a bong hit and as his lips touched hers he opened his mouth and exhaled. She breathed it in. Not entirely a kiss, but about as close as you could get and still not be. She was sure she blushed. Pretending the whole thing hadn't happened was the best recourse, she thought. Though every once in a while she would think about it and feel her face get warm again. His unexpected flirting continued, with John playing with her nose ring. And then playing with his nipple ring.

Just about the time Fly was starting to think about shuffling off to bed, about three-ish, John asked her if she would possibly be willing to give him a massage. Hmm, she thought. He was always saying that he needed a good massage, but she had never really expected him to want her to give him one. Ok, she said. She made him lay down and take off his shirt. She toyed with the idea of getting some massage oil, which she happened to have, just in case, but thought that might be pushing it a bit, so decided against it. Fly was woefully out of practice, even for a total amateur, and felt a tad silly. She kept apologizing for her lack of massage knowledge. It wasn't that bad, but she never really knew whether her hands were doing anything useful. After about fifteen minutes of moderately interesting mushing and squeezing of his muscles, interspersed with a bit of mildly erotic touching, for good measure, she stopped. He said that it was her turn and she lay down on his bed, face down. He said something about massage oil and taking her shirt off. She did the latter and then he removed her bra. Hmm, she thought again. No massage oil ever showed up.

He proceeded to give her a rather wimpy back rub, though not without feeling. As he was sitting perched atop her butt he would periodically try to tickle her. She wasn't, unfortunately, very



ticklish, at least not in that way, but the thought was appreciated and so she giggled a bit (by which he did not at all seem bothered). When he stopped she looked over her shoulder at him and asked if that was it. He said he didn't know, it was up to her. She immediately realized that he was, in fact, seriously interested in doing the nasty with her. Um. I don't know... she told him. She turned her head away. Long pause.

She turned and looked at him again, "Will we regret this?"

"I won't, I never regret anything." he replied.

"Will I?" she asked.

"I hope not." him.

He mentioned something about him not being monogamous, just to make sure that she had a better idea of who he was. She already knew that.

So they had sex. Twice actually. It was pretty nice. Not the best she'd had, but definitely a highly pleasant experience. The first time she had insisted on using a condom. On Valentine's Day a local AIDS awareness group had been giving out red ones and Fly had picked up a couple, actually intending to just give them to John, since she never expected to need them herself. Kind of ironic, and the opposite of ironic, at the same time, perhaps.

The second time he didn't have a condom on and she got a little worried. Stupid, she told herself. She really never let a guy get away with that. But she didn't say anything. He came inside her. Oops. He said something about intending to pull out, and she said they all say that. Well, the (thankfully, non-impregnating, non-STD) damage was done, and there was nothing she could do about it now, given that this was a good half a decade before the morning after pill even became known to the general public, so she just cuddled up to him and tried to relax and enjoy his warmth. Touching another living thing's skin was just such a wonderful thing. So much better than a terry cloth mannequin or even boxer shorts.

After a while of her muscles being completely tense, she realized that there was no way she was going to be able to sleep

and asked him if she was going to keep him awake by being there. Yes, he probably wouldn't be able to sleep either, so she told him that she was going to leave. He said thanks and Fly gathered her things. Her own bed was so much more relaxing. Her cats cuddled around her body and she fell into deep sleep. The next afternoon Fly woke him up before she left for work, as he had requested, and he was friendly but not particularly talkative. She had expected as much. He said that he was going over to his cousin's to type up some resumes. So she knew he wouldn't be back that evening.

He wasn't, but did come home the next night. He made an effort to say hello, they chatted for a couple of minutes while he was opening his mail and she asked him if he was going to be around for his birthday. He said no. She said that they needed to celebrate it, and he said, no they didn't, and that she should return the presents she said she'd gotten him already. It wasn't as obnoxious as it could have been, but it was pretty harsh. John was that way sometimes. Fly had understood that he was obviously afraid of being loved or getting too close or something. He'd been told that he was adopted, and recently had gotten to meet his birth mother and the other sons she didn't abandon, so close relationships were something that he wasn't entirely comfortable with. Fly knew all this by now, so it didn't upset her so much to have him push her away. Though she was amazingly glad that she was taking this new drug. She could imagine what this sort of shit would have done to her under her typical body chemistry.

After the birthday celebration protestation, John said goodnight and closed his door behind him. This didn't surprise her. But it was still painful. She still didn't know why he had changed his mind about being intimate with her. Or even know what he thought of her now.

To keep her mind off of the situation, Fly decided to get back on the internet and hang out with her web-board buddies, on indy filmmaker Kevin Smith's website, where she had recently become a regular. The Ghost of Theda Bara question that had preceded the almost kiss, and full on everything else, was in reference to a screen name of one of the folks on the discussion board. Fly had posted a remark to Miss Ghost about the event and suggested that her name might be lucky. Everyone thought that what had happened to Fly was pretty interesting. Fly did a little research and finally found out

what Miss Ghost's name meant. Theda Bara was a rather trappy film star and Playboy centerfold way back when. Fly had originally believed it to be something from the Star Wars universe. Huh. Maybe the name of a softcore porn star was the magic word for John.

After thinking about it later on, she decided that the sex thing really wasn't as big a deal as she had expected. Her life wasn't any different now. John was still acting like John and Fly was still feeling remarkably like Fly, just not quite as depressed. As long as she didn't get pregnant or AIDS, and the odds were fairly slim for both of those, she figured that everything would go on pretty much as it always did. Things would happen and she would do other stuff, but it was all basically similar. Fly couldn't imagine being much different than she already was, even with "normalizing" drugs. She didn't really see much of a point to it all, as in this whole life thing. But maybe that was the point. You do what you do and hope to feel ok about it. You stick around for a while and you experiment with your local version of reality and then you go back to the whole nothingness thing. That was all there was to it.

She didn't regret it. Maybe she'd take his approach from now on. Why bother regretting anything? It all just ended up being part of the story.

Years later, Dragonfly found out that the effects of the club drug Ecstasy, or X as it's popularly known, stick around in the body for up to a week. The effects being an excessive cuddliness and desire for sensual experiences with pretty much whomever happens to be around.

John had done Ecstasy the weekend before their inexplicable tryst.

Yes, life goes on.

Fly got a yuppy job doing production work at a book publisher. She stopped taking the 5HTP. She started dating a guy (from the Kevin Smith bulletin board) who desired, more than anything else, to make the world laugh, and who was also absurdly too young for Fly. John acted mildly jealous. John stopped being

able to pay rent. Fly paid his rent for a while. Because she could, and because it was good for her to keep him around and generally well cared for. But it was not to last, and John was evicted. Everyone else, except Fly, moved out, too. (John, in an appreciated gesture of gratitude, eventually paid Fly back for the rent in the form of an oversized bag of highly questionable pot, which mostly ended up being eaten by similarly questionable grain moths.) Several very cool new people, including the way too young for Fly boyfriend, moved in. Fly paid her boyfriend's rent for a while. Again, because she could, and again because it was good for her, as well. The couple had fun for a while. Then they broke up. Fly read an article about a lesbian couple with Borderline Personality Disorder (which Fly very much identified with as someone with exceptional fear and aggression in the face of perceived abandonment). During and after the breakup, things got mildly ugly with the guy and the online community they were all on. Fly made her first real "enemies". (Or, more accurately, other people, for the first time, considered Fly their enemy, while she continued to like them for the most part.) Fly threatened to kill herself. With a plastic spatula. She got a therapist, who told her she was essentially normal. The house got sold and the new landlord wanted to move into their apartment. So everyone moved out, including Fly. Fly found a new place. New roommates. Some cool. Some not. Her most beloved cat died. She briefly obtained a bicycling boyfriend, who had an exceptional love of technology used for the singular purpose of dramatically magnifying the details of everything he experienced in the world, so that others could discover them too. He broke up with her in the middle of cooking three boxes of Kraft Macaroni and Cheese in the kitchen of her new place, abandoning her with a vat of very orange, and very inedible (not vegetarian), goop.

Douglas Adams died. Fly started carrying a towel with her wherever she went, in memoriam.

Oh, and 9/11 happened.

Praesens



-  
LOST IN SPACE, IN A PURPLE SPACESHIP  
-

*“For we convinced physicists, the distinction  
between past, present, and future is only an  
illusion, however persistent.”*

*~ Albert Einstein*

If you'd had the ability to peek in on a preteen Dragonfly one summer while she was staying in upper-middle class Arlington, Massachusetts, in her father's little pink stucco house on a hill, you might have seen her as she lay in the bunk bed slash desk that her father had recently built for her (after removing the far more awesome purple climbing structure that she had pretended was a spaceship, and which had included some impressive salvaged 1960's high school shop class electronics testing machines, with knobs and switches and wires and vacuum tubes, giving a very convincingly spaceshippy ambiance to the place). If you'd have observed her on this one particular evening, you would have seen her lying up there on the top bunk of the more sensible and dull and not purple structure, resting with her head no more than a few feet from the cracked plaster ceiling. And you'd have seen her looking as pathetic and tearful as a preteen girl can be. She was clearly suffering the same general form of indignity that too many preteens suffer at the well-meaning, but often terribly ineffective child-rearing of most human communities on Earth in the 1980's, which made young people feel like their lives were painfully empty or at least highly incomplete, desperately in need of others with whom they can connect and express themselves in useful and meaningful ways that make their families proud. And so little Fly wept at this mostly

unknown but deeply felt amalgam of lack of connection and outlets and sense of being valuable to her parents and mostly nonexistent friends. When she had depleted herself of her built up lamentation energy, she said to herself, and perhaps the universe, “I wish I would go to sleep and not wake up until I meet the man I’m going to marry.”

And, to some extent, all that happened between this tearful preteen moment and the moment of finally recognizing her future husband for what he was, two decades later, was indeed experienced in a state of very real semi-unconsciousness. Just as most animal species have a protective mechanism that puts individuals into some form of stasis — from fainting to hibernation — when the environment doesn’t fully support active living, Fly’s own biology placed her brain into a state of passive observation, which was the best it could do in the circumstances of where and when she happened to be living as she moved from being a girl to a young woman. To preserve her sanity, her mind had been placed in a time capsule, woven out of silken dreams, while it distantly monitored the world around her, helping her thoughts wait patiently for a time and place more conducive to her brain’s particular needs.

“You have the patience of Job.” observed a woman who was interviewing Fly for a job, once.

Fly hadn’t known what to think of that comment. She recognized patience in herself. And even the inhumane challenges that she faced in her life. And, eventually, she even found it in her soul to “trust the will of God” (which she preferred to think of as an ancient name for the laws of nature and the process of evolution within the universe). But she was sure as hell never going to intentionally sacrifice someone else’s life to “prove” anything (which was what Fly had been told Job did), no matter what happened. So, Fly wondered what her interviewer really was thinking when that comparison came out of her mouth, and afterwards decided that it wasn’t a compliment. (She also didn’t get offered the job.)

Not long after the prepubescent night when she first drifted off into waking sleep, Fly found herself sitting in her stepfather’s



car, back in her regular locale of southern Maine, on their way to pick up her mother at the airport (an event that might very well have only happened once in Fly's life, as her mother tended to not wander very much anymore). While sitting there in the car, mildly uncomfortable, but not terribly miserable, she thought to herself that someday this very moment will be a past memory. Some time in the future, this "now" would be "a time long ago" which she could look back on. Her mind was, again, ahead of the rest of her. *Remembering now.*

Decades later, she still remembers that now.

In fact, it was all there, in her mind. All of her life: past, present, and future. But the future was even more of a vague memory than anything else. A not yet experienced memory which nonetheless had occasional specific sensations of textures, tastes, smells, sounds, and sights attached to it, but which mostly had more oblique feelings of something-or-other that was somehow different from the present moment. A dream, of what is not yet.

Her experience of 9/11, or as Dragonfly tried to always call it, "the bombings of 9/11/2001", since she was cognizant of the fact that other things happen on other September 11ths, (technically she didn't even like the term bombings, but at some point you just have to give up trying to be accurate, she admitted) was something that she most definitely knew was very different from the memory of the future she had. It was an incredibly jarring difference.

-  
THE INCEPTION OF A STRANGE LOOP  
-

*“Hello Mr. Zebra.”*  
~ *Tori Amos*

Dragonfly was properly hitting her early thirties in 2001. Her identity began its move from the larval, spongelike, auto pilot stage of her young adulthood, into the waking metamorphosis stage of full, active adulthood. Her self's basic structure and function was almost completely reorganized now, compared to that lonely little preteen huddled under her bed covers. Perhaps because of the hearts that had been broken by the pain of the events around 9/11/2001, her environment was also changing ever so slightly, and becoming just enough supportive of her unique biology that her mind's eyes started to open up, just a smidgen, making a window for her to see out of her protective capsule.

The interesting and Fly-friendly freaks were coming out of the woodwork, it seemed. And Fly, perhaps to her own astonishment more than anyone else's, saw a reflection of herself which offered evidence that during its long period of protective containment, her mind had very quietly been growing two beautiful sets of iridescent wings, expanding out into thoughtful realms never before touched by her. These stunning, complex, and surprisingly strong mental wings took on the form of a thorough cataloging of her life's

experiences, packaged up in all manner of creative textual and non-textual sentences, paragraphs, and often even whole chapters in various overlapping intellectual containers, including piles of journals, blogs, internet forums (she thought calling them forii was too pretentious, even though she did very much enjoy thinking the term privately), and in other people's brains as directly as possible.

Her stories merged with her visual art, which then merged with her exploration of her own and other people's subjective, objective, and projective experiences of what it means to be a living being on a planet which is itself just beginning to blossom, and reaching its own wings up and out into the universe.

Fly's own creative expressions formed an expanding network of delicate dark lines of blood vessels coursing with intellectual energy, and completely covered in a shimmery sheath of inspiration. As she breathed, she unfolded herself, and her wings, slowly, into the atmospheric eddies of gas floating just above the Earth.

Not that she had the slightest clue how to fly yet.

But she had now shed her comfortably insulating coverings completely, and was blinking her eyes in the brightness of the outside world, and she had an innate desire to explore the full capabilities of her new form of being.

So she tried some running jumps at first. They were not much different than her previous, wingless, movements, and they ended up looking, from the outside, like a lot of metaphorical drunken stumbling. But they were, at least, a start in a new direction.

She began to slowly find herself feeling connected to people, places, and things around her a bit more. She started to rediscover some of the diversity that she'd found briefly in college — in art school — and was again finding people who might want to actively work with her as she used her artistic, intellectual, and educational skills to move the present a little more into line with her memories of the future, towards a place where things felt a bit more “right” to her.

Now, when she sat with the people around her watching the ever increasing news, personal stories, art, and science unfold, something inside her new mental structure just kind of clicked.

Fly started a blog. The low hanging fruit of philosophical fluttering.

10.06.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 10:42 PM

One of the main inspirations for me doing this journal was because of the recent terrorist actions against our previously complacent country. So, I'm going to start with a little of my own personal reactions.

Obviously, everyone in the entire country has been affected by the events of 9/11. The interesting thing to observe is the different ways in which people have changed. Some people have gone out and bought up all the Made-in-China American flags they could find and draped them out their windows in a most unceremonious manner, in an attempt to show the world how proud they are to live in the biggest superpower on the planet. Other people have gone out and donated blood or \$20 to the Red Cross and gone on with their lives.

Me? I have been having reoccurring attacks of why the heck am I working for a pro-automobile company when I should be doing something positive with my work. Don't get me wrong, I really enjoy the company I work for, the people are really great and they are even surprisingly openminded and socially aware. But, making books about cars is not at all what I want to be spending my life doing. As a matter of fact, this is one of the only jobs I've ever had that wasn't at a non-profit. I just got comfortable with the luxury of it all, you know, of being able to pay most of my bills, and by some nice things for a change. But that's not what it's all about. Early on I realized that my reason for living (my "religious philosophy" if you like) was to make a positive impact on the world. To make the world a better place, cliché as it may be. And these recent events have simply reminded me of that philosophy.

Sounds great, right? But my problem now is that I haven't been able to find any kind of job that is even moderately appropriate for me. I sit there and look at all of the so called non-profit jobs on Monster.com and I see nothing. Not a damn thing that would be beneficial to anyone, human or otherwise. And then I realize that, in this world, people who do good are rarely paid for it.

It depresses the fuck out of me.

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10.07.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 3:48 AM

I hate this world right now. I seem to have gotten myself deep into my old friend depression. I don't think I've felt this bad in many years. It's a combination of uselessness, hopelessness, and loneliness. And that's a lot of nesses.

Luckily for me I've been here before, and I know what the deal is. As someone recently pointed out I'm a very patient person. I suppose it comes from having an alcoholic and violent mom and stepfather when I was a kid. I must have learned that I could just wait and eventually things would stop being so utterly terrifying.

Actually, that's a pretty good definition of depression. Terror. But not of anything physical. More of a mental thing. And more of a creeping type of terror. That's what makes it so fucked up. Feeling terrified in the face of immanent danger is explainable and even expected. But terror when things look, for all intents and purposes, A ok, is perceived as abnormal. This kind of terror is built up while you're not really noticing. Just by the accumulation of everyday things continuing to go wrong. And then, when the proverbial last straw breaks it's just like BANG. The feeling that nothing ever is going to go right again. The feeling that the world is so

irreparably screwed up that there really is no point to continuing.

Many folks seem to think that depression is a chemical imbalance, and is a disease. But I don't buy it. Many years ago I read an article in *Adbusters* magazine that argued essentially that depression was merely the reaction of compassionate people to an uncompassionate world. And that seems like a much more logical and rational explanation.

Then a tiny compassionate breeze blew into Fly's mind, from somewhere deep in the heart of the world, and she started to let go of her attachment to the old ways of excessive mental gravitas.

Our stumbling Dragonfly opened up herself to the world, as she looked for mentors in philosophical flight. She sought, still somewhat unconsciously at first, small packages of ideological pixie dust, with which to sprinkle on her own wings, to give them lift. She reached out to anyone who seemed to have something useful to say about this sort of flight, and incorporated those many diverse loops of experience into her own structure, and then tried out the strength of her muscles, as she flapped intentionally, but awkwardly. She read, listened, watched, and otherwise absorbed stories from the likes of Jim Hightower, Howard Zinn, Ralph Nader, Barbara Kingsolver. A lot of these tiny packages of thought she simply stuck onto herself, as is, quite superficially, and without much integration into her own philosophical biology. Others looking carefully at her from outside must have thought she was trying to cover herself in metaphorical bumper stickers and buttons full of alternative pop culture slogans, similar to the cars and clothes of teenage humans. But this was all a healthy part of the process of learning what feeds a newly metamorphosed mind.

Fly's first fluttering expressions in her new form were cast off into the environment, looking to anyone who discovered them as an unusual zine called *Dinkum Oil*.

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10.20.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 2:52 PM

Not much to report these days, as you can clearly see by one of the “Top Stories” on Boston.com today: “Portland Bans Snakes from Public Places.” Good to know that the government in Maine is busy defending the city from evil.

On a related note, I’m seriously considering producing a one-off zine/newspaper dedicated to alerting the general public to the news that mainstream media, like the New York Times, doesn’t see fit to print. If anyone would like to contribute to this project, please get in touch with me. (My e-mail address is on the left.) I’m particularly interested in realistic analysis, personal stories, and art reflecting on the “war on terrorism” and its accompanying dangers. I’d like to keep the tone positive, and avoid name calling, pointless rants, and so on. There are plenty of places for that kind of thing (this journal being one!), but not too many places focusing on where to go from here. The most popular question coming from the flag-waving crowd is “Well then, hippy, what do YOU propose we do?” I say, lets tell them what we’d like to do.

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Fly even found a way to use Halloween as a form of inspiration for intellectual investigation. She went on both a Critical Mass ride in Boston and a Subversive Choppers Urban Legion (SCUL, a geeky, art-bike semi-secret organization that Fly had recently joined) ride that Halloween weekend with a special costume for her and her bike.

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10.27.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 1:30 PM

The War on Terrorism costume was a big hit on the Critical Mass bike ride last night. Some of the elements of the

costume included: Giant pink foam Jiggly Puff outfit, zombie makeup, a plastic skull sword with an American flag hanging from the blade, and a gorgeous pink kid's bike with fake flowers on the front and an inflatable Earth suspended off of the rear. (The gist of the costume was that it made no sense, get it?) The ride was fun, though short. Highlights of the evening were two CARS getting involved in an accident because neither had the patience to wait 30 seconds for us to pass, and responding to a couple of BU geniuses who were yelling "You suck!" by chanting "USA! USA!" Oh, and Dan the Bagelman (from Food Not Bombs) joined the ride for the first time ever. About 12 of us ended up at a tiny Indian restaurant in Central Square in Cambridge. Pictures should be forthcoming...

Tonight is the big SCUL Halloween ride. Same costume, different group of people. Should be even more fun. I've actually managed to convince Jef to come. And possibly a roommate or two. Yay.

So, you're probably saying to yourself, how's the Zine/Newspaper thing going, Dragonfly? We'll it's going pretty well. I've got a preliminary layout, title, and lots of written material that needs to be edited. I still need artwork, though. And some time to actually get the thing all together. But things are moving along.

In the meantime, check out my letter to the editor that's in the Boston Phoenix this week. It's the first letter in the section (for some reason they left out the names in the web version, though I'm fully credited in the real paper).

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10.28.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 11:53 AM

I can't say enough good things about SCUL, and their fearless leader Skunk. Their basic motto is to have even



more fun on bikes than they did as kids. It doesn't always happen, but they never give up trying. The world could use more people like these. The Halloween ride is their season finale, and everyone is invited to participate, even civilians, as long as they've got a costume. The War on Terrorism Costume was a big hit once again. The Fish Bike was there as an ambassador from Bikes Not Bombs. Jef did, indeed, come with me, and had a grand time. He was inducted with the SCUL name Cockroach, and was spoken highly of by Fleet Admiral Skunk, who had apparently been trying for quite some time to get Jef to join.

Finally, I need to mention DangerMouse. She is, quite arguably, the most adorable person ever. Certainly the most adorable person in SCUL. I have no pictures of her, so you're just going to trust me on this one. She's not only adorable, but the sweetest person, too. And she rides a chopper. If I was gay, I'd be in love.

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And while she was on a roll, if not quite actual flight yet, Fly leaped into the fray of political activism, and came out with some newfound energy for aiming even higher.

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11.10.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 4:07 PM

While the rest of the US has it's head stuck up it's collective ass, and is wandering around muttering that it sucks but it's the way it's gotta be, I am off to join the few brave souls who want to try to pry those heads out. I'm dressed in my sexiest post-modern hippychick duds (baggy jeans, little black tank top with an even littler lacy purple camisole-thing on top) and I've got a messenger bag full of Dinkum Oil (that would be my zine, the name comes from the Australian slang term for "the truth"), and a pile of "peace is patriotic" stickers. I'm off to change the world. Wish me luck.

While I'm out there fighting the good fight (non-violently, of course), you can do some armchair activism by joining in a virtual sit-in over at the WTO (World Trade Organization), to demand that the priorities of human beings are placed before the priorities of big business.

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11.12.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 8:41 AM

You're never too old to be a hero.

Let's see. The Nader rally was good. Nothing earth shattering. But good. The place was packed, mostly with college age kids. Though there were a few older people, most notably an 80 year old WWII veteran who sat next to me for a while and told me his life story, as well as his theory that the US was screwing up once again. There was also an older woman, probably in her 60's, who had a nifty moon goddess sort of costume on and was waving an America flag that had a "Be all that you can be: work for peace" sticker on it. She danced through the isles all night and made people happy. And, of course, there's Granny D.

Granny D. is now 91 years old, and just a year ago she completed a walk across the country (3,400 miles or so) to raise awareness of corporate corruption in politics and to encourage the House of Representatives to pass the McCain Feingold — clean elections — bill. (The bill did eventually pass in the House, but when it went back into the Senate, where it had already passed, it was essentially killed in a committee.) So Granny D., even after her huge adventure, and significant success, is still working harder than most corporate CEO's do in their entire lives.

On Sunday, Granny D. was awarded the Humanist of the Year award by the Boston Ethical Society. I went to the event, and got a chance to give her a copy of Dinkum Oil, which leads with her statement about the attacks of 9/11. She told me that she'd gotten into a lot of trouble for that statement. And then she reached up, patted me on the head, and exclaimed "Good for you!" What's so amazing about her is that she's not really amazing. She's just a regular person who cares, and isn't afraid of failure. Some people think that it's brave to point a machine gun (or missile launcher) at other people. I don't agree. I think what is really brave is to stand up against those people with the guns and say that you don't want to fight. Our country needs some more truly brave people. Actually, the whole world needs them.

Dragonfly ended up the year on a high note. Still not flying, but working on it.

12.21.2001

Posted by Dragonfly at 9:10 PM

happy solstice!

If you listen carefully  
in the stillness of the night  
you can hear peace.  
Remember that sound, when dawn breaks  
and bring it into your day.

Thus began the serious stretching of her wings. Dragonfly was appointed onto a city government committee. She was offered, and accepted, a job working at the state bicycle advocacy organization as their number two person. She got interviewed in the Boston Globe newspaper. She organized a very successful Rolling Blackout Bike Ride, celebrating human power, rather than non-renewable

corporate energy. She biked to, camped at, and volunteered for the Maine Organic Farmers' and Gardeners' Association's giant art and culture filled Common Ground Country Fair. She got deeply into politics, reading legislation and even proposing it, very occasionally. She got sucked into the cult of snark, turning her anger into awkward and cruel humor. She missed the subtle, but crucial, difference between non-violent violence and peace. She marched in a protest, where very young anarchists got their black flags stuck in the wheels of her bicycle, and where she encountered a butterfly arguing with a presidential candidate dressed up in a clown costume holding a giant toothbrush, and where she was watched by military snipers and black helicopters. She won a Stone Cog award in the wild and crazy and ridiculously geeky chopper bicycle gang, SCUL. She wrote a record breaking number of posts in her blog. She spent a lot of time on advocacy communities online, getting deeper into her life's work and loving it immensely. She went on an official business trip out to Minnesota and met a whole pile of interesting human powered transportation professionals (and went to the Minnesota State Fair, just because), and then got invited to be a presenter and a moderator at a bicycle education conference out in Portland Oregon. She published a couple of issues of an adorable zine celebrating urban bicycling. She spoke adeptly about the manufactured joy that was numbing the people, robbing their resources, and making them repress their humanity to boot. She explored Walden Pond, and put a sticker on her bicycle that quoted Thoreau, proclaiming "*All good things are wild and free.*" She watched a lot of Buffy. (The Vampire Slayer, a tv show.) And she started asking a lot of questions about *why* things were the way they were, rather than simply complaining that they were. She even started offering better options than what everyone in mainstream politics kept claiming were the only ones. She pointed out that a threatened, scared creature who feels cornered is a hell of a lot more dangerous than a puffed up creature who is angry but has a clear escape route, so the best way to disarm one's "enemies" is to give them a safe passage out of wherever they happen to feel trapped, to a place that feels safe and comfortable.

Unbeknownst to her, also, was something new, lurking in the shadows of her life. Something that did feel trapped and scared. Something that was both stunningly bright and tragically dark, all

in the same container. Something similarly newly winged, hiding just outside her periphery, which she had yet to discover, but which had already discovered her. Something that would slowly reveal itself, and it's own desire for flight, over the next few years, as being a special part of the universe that belonged to Fly, while also remaining quite separate from her. Something that would throw her life for a huge and bizarre loop that would take her to peaks and valleys unimagined by most human beings, and certainly by our little Dragonfly, as well. Again, even with so much of her brain living in the future, it did not allow her to have even a tiny glimpse of this particular path. So, she carried on, oblivious to what was ahead. Nonetheless, she had already started down this strange, spiraling path, as her attempts at flight began.

The word *flight* is perhaps best defined as *the ability to move in a dimension beyond the normal, superficial two dimensions*. That extra dimension of freedom can, of course, be up and away from the ground, or it could be in another direction, unseen yet meaningfully present, and spoken of in hushed tones, visualized in quiet art, and understood as wordless imaginings of where we are and where we might want to go next as a planet, well beyond the banal future that's been loudly and aggressively promoted by the talking heads of mainstream media and politics.

(On the other hand, the British science fiction writer Douglas Adams showed us that flight is what happens when you fall and simply forget to hit the ground.)

Dragonfly didn't realize that the direction she was moving in now was so very perpendicular to any she'd gone in before. It just seemed like a tiny detour off the path she'd been going down. But, as we know now from chaos and complexity theory, the flapping of tiny wings in one part of the world can have a dramatic effect on parts of the world very far away. And Fly was flapping quite determinedly these days, so it's no surprise that strange fluctuations were now afoot in the upper atmosphere of the Earth, at least from the universe's omniscient perspective.

A year and a half after New York City's Twin Towers came crashing down, Dragonfly finally put into words her newly

designed flight plan, and set it free out into the world. She spoke out about the vision of a better world that her brain had shown her, and encouraged others to join her in starting to flap towards a new way of being.

2.15.2003

Posted by Dragonfly at 8:07 AM

The problem with protests is that there's a lot of effort put into them, but often there's no real progress. Standing around with a bunch of other people who agree with you is nice, but doesn't really accomplish that much. Imagine if all those people who are presently descending upon NYC (and 500 other cities around the world...) spent just a few hours actively advocating for peaceful solutions to world problems. What if, instead of standing around in the cold, these people met with their local legislators, mayors, news reporters, neighbors, school committees, etc., and simply talked about solutions more productive than violence? Better yet, what if these people mustered the courage to run for office on a platform of civility, with rational approaches to politics and a serious aim to put people before profits? Or how about if these folks quit working in corporate habitrains, broke their addiction to personal automobiles, vowed not to contribute to overpopulation, and spent their lives working to enrich society. Take that gut feeling of wanting the world to be a beautiful, happy, safe place and use it to effect change as a non-profit teacher, holistic doctor, writer, artist, political leader, police officer, lawyer, city planner, craftsperson, baker, engineer, or farmer. Think of the thousands of people who you could share your idea with in one of these jobs!

I used to think that I was accomplishing something by being an outspoken person in the corporate world. But, for all the good I was doing, I was also contributing to business as usual. In my desire to have a comfortable job, I lost sight of the fact that the point in life is not to be

comfortable, but to be alive. Sitting at a computer day after day working on making a product that no one needed is not what I want to do with my time here on the Earth.

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As turned out, someone heard Fly. And wanted to join her. Someone who thought she might really be onto something. Someone who thought of her as infamous, but without realizing what the word actually meant. Someone with his own wings and visions of flight.

Just as this perpendicularity was developing, Fly's maternal grandmother passed away.

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4.19.2003

Posted by Dragonfly at 3:10 PM

My grandmother died a few hours ago. It was a little sudden. But she'd been fading for a while. She went very peacefully, in my mother's arms. My mother was telling her it was ok to go, that everything was all right. She missed her favorite holiday by one day.

It's been a bad year for relatives of the people in my neighborhood. My neighbor across the street lost his father a couple of months ago, and my backyard neighbor also lost her grandmother this week. So much loss, so close to home.

I feel sorry that my grandmother didn't get to see the spring this year. She was always so happy to see the birds, flowers, and trees come back to life in the warming sun. She wasn't a big explorer, but she enthusiastically enjoyed the simple act of sitting on her porch and watching her small world of nature go about it's business. Her other passion, besides nature, was poetry. She loved the simple, sweet, honest words. She had a tough life. She grew up with lots of rough and tumble siblings on a farm in coastal

Maine and not a whole lot of anything else. But even as a child, she loved to read. And write. Not too many years ago, my mother, grandmother, and I published a few issues of a zine together. Probably the only three-generation zine ever created.

Oh, and she voted for Nader in 2000. She was definitely no political activist, but she knew what was good for her family and friends.

She will be missed by many. Her quiet, but happy soul was always there, watching the birds and flowers in the yard. And in my memory, she'll always be there, even now that she's left us.

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So as Fly was losing a loved one, and her new employer was losing it's office space, and her latest batch of roommates were losing their awesomeness, Fly was simultaneously gaining new hope for her love life.

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5.19.2003

Posted by Dragonfly at 11:57 AM

It was a cold and rainy bike week, but it wasn't too bad. I, sadly, couldn't bike to work, since my bike doesn't fit in the space between my bed and the computer. But I did bike to a few events, and they were fun.

My birthday was very mellow, as was the SCUL ride. I did bring my first official Maggot (a new recruit) on the ride (Hi Pywaket!), and I built my first ship (chopper bike). So I'm just way cool now.

On Sunday, my grandmother (the other one!) took the big family to an herbal farm and restaurant in NH for lunch, ostensibly as a surprise birthday party for my aunt who's birthday was a while ago. The rest of the family



pretty much used the party to celebrate everyone's birthday who was born any time in the spring, and I got presents (Yay!). It was nice, and, as a bonus, I bought a very cute wire model of an English 3-Speed bike as a present for myself. (No, Smasher you can't have it!)

Finally, my favorite little band of misfit roommates have finally succeeded in their obsessive quest to make my life miserable, and they have apparently convinced the landlord to kick me out when the lease runs out at the end of August. I'm half thinking of asking several of my next door neighbors (who are good friends) to write letters to the landlord letting him know how good a neighbor I am, and how he is making a mistake. I was even considering asking my friends at the Office for Housing and Community Development to talk to the landlord. I'll see how I feel in a few days. But, in the meantime, I'm going to start packing (3 months might be just enough time!), and looking for a place near Davis or Union Square, in Somerville of course.

This time, no lame roommates. The weird thing is, I always mention that I want to live with politically and/or environmentally active people in the roommate ads, but somehow I keep ending up with an astoundingly large percentage of uncaring, unstable, and sometimes just plain mean people who have nothing better to do than bitch and moan (and watch cartoons on tv, and play horribly violent video games, and drown themselves in alcohol!).

Is there some definition of "activist" that I've just not heard of (*activist*: n. person who likes video games a lot [1983 < English, derived from product named Activision])? But seriously, I don't really expect much from roommates (people in general, really), just a little respect and some ability to act rationally...

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5.26.2003

Posted by Dragonfly at 9:07 PM

Despite some incredibly gloomy weather (quite possibly record setting), and some frustrating crap with the roommates (I talked to the landlord and he says he never agreed to kick me out) and a bit of panic about presenting at two workshops at the Bicycle Educator's Leadership Conference in Oregon in a week, I'm in a pretty good mood right now. I spent the weekend with a friend, and had fun, even if I am probably frustrating the heck out of him (sorry!). I decided not to push myself to ride on the SCUL mission on Saturday night in the cold rain. And I'm actually glad. I'm sure I had just as much fun, and I got to observe the Somerville police and fire departments as they wandered around hopelessly for an hour and a half looking for a fire somewhere in my neighborhood. I can't imagine that the fire did much damage, since literally no one could find it, even though it was burning for almost two hours or so. My friend and I might even have seen the kids who set the fire (yes, I called the police and reported the suspicious kids). I can't wait until Thursday to see what our little Somerville Journal has to say about the whole thing.

I haven't decided what to do about my roommates and my home. I still have to talk to the landlord again and see what he's thinking. But I know that the rent is going to go up, since property taxes are shooting through the roof these days. And I think I can find a better deal, and a place where there aren't quite so many people (reducing the chance of insane people). So, I'm keeping my options open.

I've been blissfully out of touch with most of the news outlets, so I don't have much to complain about politically :-). Though the FCC is doing an amazing job convincing me to get rid of cable tv, and stop watching much tv at

all. (Also, Buffy is done, so tv is significantly less appealing anyway!) But, you should all be watching NOW with Bill Moyers on Friday night on PBS. It's about the only decent news show, along with Democracy Now and the Daily show. (The last two I will sorely miss if I give up cable...)

Finally, I now have a reason to look forward to going out to the Portland, Oregon bicycle conference, even with the daunting task of speaking in front of a whole bunch of real education professionals (who luckily don't know that I don't have any credentials whatsoever!). I'm happy I'm going now because I can hang out with my friend Rich Mackin who recently moved out there. He's always entertaining and an excellent source for creative political activist type inspiration. Plus, I'm curious to see what type of place could convince a die hard Bostonian to up and leave!

Oh, and I'm slowly cleaning my room. Yay for me.

What she didn't mention was that the reason she was cleaning her room was because her new "friend" had moved onto the "sleeping over" version of friendship. And his assumed frustration stemmed from Fly's indecisiveness about how much further she wanted to go down the path with him at her side.

Thankfully, her brain offered her a nudge towards mustering up the courage to do what she needed to do to make a decision. She had a dream where she happened upon a Kevin Smith movie set while they were filming a Bluntman and Chronic movie (characters based on Smith's amusing Jay and Silent Bob characters, which are themselves based on the real life buddies of Jay Mewes and Kevin Smith). In her dream, Fly caught the co-producer's eye and he decided that she would be great in the film as Bluntman's evil ex girlfriend. The film crew gave her a makeover that turned her into a super villain dominatrix. Who hoo, she thought! Most of the rest of the dream involved her wandering around a forest littered with broken dishes, looking for a cast party. And she never did get to work with Kevin Smith, as she was only on the second

unit's set. But it was clearly the most memorable dream she'd had in a while, and she thought it was a particularly entertaining way for her future living, Freudian-loving brain to tell her to act more bluntly in her waking life.

So she did what she needed to do, and set aside her previous design for a solo flight path as she and her new co-pilot looked at maps and discussed how high they might be able to fly together.

He even met her at the airport when she got back from her business trip to Oregon. It was a weeklong trip, which turned out to be the longest they'd be away from one another for the next four years.

Because they decided to get married.

7.05.2003

Posted by Dragonfly at 10:06 AM

There is something to be said for honest-to-goodness tradition. Many, many years ago (like, a thousand), the rulers of the world tended to take much less interest in the private affairs of the little people. For example, you could, for the most part, ingest any particular substance that you could stuff in your face. Another example: marriages were official if a couple (or their families) said they were official. Nowadays, the "people in charge" seem to think that it's very important that certain things are allowed and certain other things are not. And, certain things must be done a certain way.

Well, as you can imagine, David and I couldn't possibly have any of that ridiculous mamby-pambyness or pandering to the authorities, so we got married without anyone else's consent, or even in the presence of any other human beings. Just some sand, some ocean, some rain, some birds, and the two of us. We said some stuff to each other, tied some ribbons around our clasped hands in a handfasting ceremony, and basically just basked in the

glow of the idea of having found the person who we wanted to be with for the rest of our lives. So, now we are betrothed. Not because some judge gave us a piece of paper, but because we say so. And that's really what it's all about, isn't it?

Oh, and we did this on the Summer Solstice. Hopefully, Mother Earth will bless us.

Other stuff is going on (the development of the Police Ed curriculum is coming to a head and pretty much consuming all my energies, the roommates are being the usual insane bunch that they've been, and the housing search hasn't really even begun...) but, really, nothing else seems to be all that important anymore when you suddenly realize that you are a part of a larger thing, and you are no longer alone in anything you do. It's such a powerful thing to have found someone who understands you so perfectly (yet not quite enough to make life boring!) and STILL wants to spend their life by your side. I only hope that everyone reading this ends up as happy as we are.

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Dragonfly was finally really, truly flying. Above and beyond.

Her new husband, awkward as she was with that term initially, was quite literally an airplane pilot. Just a little one. Plane, that is. A cooperatively shared plane, even. But more than enough of a plane for him to physically fly the two of them to an island off the coast of Cape Cod where they could have their wedding ceremony on a "deserted" beach, after biking for miles, with only the forces of nature and whatever tiny wild beings were already on the beach, as their fellow congregants. During their ceremony Fly appealed to the four elements to officiate their union. There were candles. And a lot of rain and wind. But at least all of the elementals — Earth, Air, Water, and Fire — did indeed show up to help Fly and her mysterious Star of David consummate the emergence of this new and complex being that was their marriage. There was, in fact,

enough wind and rain that the most romantic wedding photo that Fly took of them (with the camera sitting on a rock, and the timer set to give her just enough time to jump into the frame and kiss her new partner before the shutter snapped) was almost entirely taken up by brightly colored raincoats and rain pants, most of the rest of the image being taken up by mist, and just a small central portion showing an awkward and enthusiastic kiss between the two yellowish-pink faces of the beings who were very clearly most determined in their love.

Fly and David's more metaphorical flight was seriously beginning, as visions of houseboats, gardens, geodesic dome greenhouses, yurts, and complicated community-center/art-gallery/education-space/farm things floated into their collective consciousness.

In the meantime, more mundane practical matters were dealt with. They found a new apartment to rent in Somerville for just the two of them. They bought a queen size bed, together (he bought the mattress, she bought the frame). They looked for silverware. They argued about where to put the refrigerator. They planned a somewhat more mainstream traditional wedding ceremony for their friends and family for their first anniversary (but not so mainstream that it didn't involve medieval costumes and bicycles). They worried about money. They went to important events together. They created a guest room space with which they hosted two different guests, her mother from Maine, and his old friend from Colorado. He sold his condo. She quit her job. They fought about fighting. They found a bakery that made veg\*n wedding cakes, and a veg\*n restaurant that made delicious home style comfort food (including popcorn) that would cater their wedding. They bicycled together. They shared their lists of needs and wants for the rest of their lives — respecting and appreciating nature, doing something beneficial for the world, finding a healthy and inspiring and creative community to live in, growing their own food, being together. They appreciated one another immensely.

-  
YES  
-

*“Love is the synergetic  
marriage  
of radiation and gravity.”  
~ Buckminster Fuller*

Posted on March, 19, 2004  
Wedding Announcements  
Boston.com

Dragonfly and David are pleased to announce the formal celebration of their 2003 handfasting ceremony. Dragonfly and David will be celebrating their wedding on the Summer Solstice (June 20th) 2004 with friends, family, Hobbits, fairies, and other fantastic creatures near a castle in Cape Elizabeth Maine.

Dragonfly is an artist and activist who has lived in the Boston area since graduating from Mass College of Art in 1990. She is currently working for the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition and runs Dragonfly Productions, a non-profit company that uses art to promote environmentally and socially responsible ideas. She brings approximately 10 bicycles and a trike into the family.

David is a computer geek who has aspirations of becoming a woodworker, furniture maker, boat builder, sustainable energy proponent, and airplane flight instructor. He

attended the University of Massachusetts/Lowell and worked for Sun Microsystems for many years in both California and Massachusetts (until getting paid a lot of money to leave!). He now works for a small computer supplier in Littleton, where he commutes via bicycle and train three days a week. He brings about 10 bicycles, a trike, a sailboat, 1/3 of an airplane, an electric moped, and some good hiking boots into the family.

They met on an internet discussion list for the Massachusetts Bicycle Coalition. Within weeks of their first date at a bike ride with the Subversive Choppers Urban Legion, they moved in together with Dragonfly's cat Vegetables. The three now live in a comfy attic apartment in Somerville (with a large garage and basement to store all of their vehicles) where they will live until they can find a nice plot of land in the woods (near public transportation) to build a cabin.

For the rest of Dragonfly's life, whenever anyone asked her what the best day of her life was, she immediately responded. "Our second wedding!" That day, on a Summer Solstice, 2004, had been both the culmination of years of planning (long before she'd ever met David, she'd considered what she wanted out of a wedding) as well as a whole lot of utter good luck. Fly had started referring to herself as "The Event Queen" because she'd discovered that putting on fun and interesting events for the public was something she seemed well designed to do. She loved everything about planning creative experiences that offered people something valuable. And she usually loved the way things ended up flowing, with plans and unexpected stuff mingling together creatively during the actual happening. Plus, she really loved when people she cared about got involved with collaborating with her on shared projects.

David and Fly were best when they were combining their skills and interests on a shared goal, Fly thought, and so she was exceptionally happy that he appreciated planning as well, with his own specialties being things like transportation, playing with maps, and carrying heavy things (which is a sort of transportation, noted



Fly). Together, they scouted locations on the coast of southern Maine, which was about halfway between the two primary areas where guests would be coming from, and which was where Fly's maternal grandmother had grown up and recently died, so it seemed a fitting tribute to a kind and loving woman from Fly's life who wouldn't be able to be there. They worked as a team, wrangling parents and friends into helping everyone and everything get to the right place at the right time. And they organized their costumes. David's outfit was a sort of sexy, modern take on Robin Hood with a vegan black "leather" vest, white swashbuckling style shirt, archer's style wrist protectors, and even a long sword, which they finally managed to track down on the day before the wedding at a pagan shop in some town Fly had never been to before, somewhere in non-coastal southern Maine. Fly sewed a majestic, satiny purple Medieval gown with an almost iridescent corset to contain her overzealous bosom, and a crown of baby's breath flowers was made to top her long brown hair (she had wanted sweet annie, but it wasn't at all the season for it). And, of course, Fly wore bike shorts underneath it all. Fly thought David looked absolutely amazing, and that she looked, well, good enough, at least.

They'd picked a mysterious little area in the woods for the ceremony, below the fairly well preserved ruins of an antique castle-like fort, a stone mansion built in the 1850s, which had also housed military families at the end of that century. It was just above the ocean, at the state park where Portland Headlight is located, in Cape Elizabeth, Maine. It had all the elements of nature, Earth, Air, Water, and Sun, plus plenty of car and bike parking, and a nearby covered picnic area that they were able to rent for the day for the reception.

David reserved tickets for themselves and their bikes on a new Boston-to-Portland train. And they booked a pile of ridiculously expensive suites for themselves and guests at a fancy hotel that was apparently popular with wealthy humans who liked to travel with their dogs on vacations. Fly had chosen the place because it was the closest to the wedding location, as well as because her mother's friend, and the wedding officiant, had managed to convince the hotel staff to let her stay once for a very discounted rate, and Fly used that knowledge to find the gumption to ask for her own impressive discount, which she, mostly, got (though it was still far

more money than she ever would have paid for a hotel any other time in her life, and she felt guilty about it for decades afterwards).

Fly and David's suite was lovely, with a balcony looking east out at the sand dunes, a loft with a king sized bed, and a large jacuzzi or hot tub or something. Fly's mom and stepfather, and their crazy dog Tanzy, and her mother's friend, the officiant, were in a suite a couple doors down from the marital couple, and there was another more basic suite in another building nearby that housed a couple of couples who were Somerville friends. David's mom and stepfather were on the other side of the complex. And Fly's dad and stepmother, and their crazy dog Daisy, were in a Bed and Breakfast on the other side of Portland. Most everyone else carpooled from wherever they were coming from. Many brought bicycles with them, as requested by the wedding couple, so that there could be some kind of awesome bike parade after the wedding, and several SCUL pilots showed up with ships (chopper bikes), and made the whole event an official mission. David even asked them to bring his favorite steed, a tallbike named Skylab, which was a single bicycle made up of one road bike welded on top of another road bike, putting the rider's head about 10 feet up in the air. Fly chose to ride her own normal bike, for no specific reason other than she could.

It was sweet to see the otherwise anti-establishment, eccentric, nontraditional Dragonfly turn into a fairly mainstream bride-to-be in the months and days surrounding this momentous day of her life. It could be imagined that this event was essentially a loving gift to Fly's younger, more innocent, nearly teenage self, granting that version of Fly's dreamlike fairy tale wedding wish.

Fly and David were, of course, already married in every way that mattered to her. But a celebration of this most meaningful lifetime coupling with as many of the people she cared about surrounding them as possible was something nearly as crucial for their success as a unit going out there into the big bad world as anything else. It made their permanent vows to one another a fact for everyone else, and not just David and Fly and the forces of nature. It made their partnership not just something deep and spiritual, which their first, elemental handfasting had done, but also something social — a merging of souls for both the benefit of the souls themselves, and for the benefit of their community. This more

public event was a political statement, with human witnesses, a human officiating, and even government approval, with a fee for filing paperwork and everything. It was almost a way of designating Fly and David's marriage as a non-profit organization, complete with a mission statement and monetary donations to kick off their dreams of making the world a better place.

On the morning of the wedding, Fly woke up early, naturally, while David was, also naturally, sound asleep. And beautiful, in Fly's eyes. Fly took a leisurely shower, braided her long hair, and stepped out onto the balcony. Her mother and friend were already chatting quietly as they sat on their own balcony, soaking up the peacefulness of the sunrise and the morning dew emanating from the lush green brush of the sand dunes between the building and the beach. After hellos and some brief discussion they decided to head out to find some breakfast. Fly left a loving note for her man, and the three ladies set off. They ended up at a diner type place, where Fly expected to find pretty much nothing she could eat, but she didn't mind. And she was amused when she asked the staff what they fried things in, with a mild hope that she could get some vegetarian home fries. The staff joyfully retrieved a large box of the goop that they used in their fryers, and everyone carefully examined it, discovering that it was indeed entirely free of animal stuff. So fly ordered a hearty plate of home fries and some juice. While breakfasting, Fly's grandmother's former minister happened by and recognized Fly's mom. They all chatted about life, and how much they all missed Fly's Grammie, and shared the celebratory news of Fly's immanent wedding. It was an unexpected and surprisingly joyous little Mainer breakfast to start the day off nicely.

When the women returned to the hotel, David was awake and enthusiastic. The couple offered some last minute information to Fly's mom, for preparation of the reception area with the caterers and cake and such, and they all arranged to meet up again at the ceremony area for a brief rehearsal.

David and Fly packed up their costumes and biked the couple of miles from the hotel to the park. They probably had enough happy energy to keep biking all the way to Canada that morning, but they stuck with the plan, and made the right turn into the park entrance, and rode down to the beach area where they parked their

bikes, and headed into the woods to make sure everything was set for the ceremony.

It was a stunningly beautiful day up there on the cliffs, with a brilliant sun in the sky, and a light ocean breeze, keeping everyone just the right temperature, and blowing both flags and waves toward the shore in an entirely pleasing way. This alone seemed miraculous to Fly, especially since the previous day had been cool and foggy, and since their original wedding had occurred during the year when the weather appeared to follow a calendar that was said to consist of the months January, February, March, March, March..., making the first day of summer feel exactly like the last day of winter. Though there probably wasn't a power in the universe that could have truly dampened Fly's spirits on her wedding day, anyway. But the blessing of careful plans and irrational hopes turning into reality certainly made everything so much smoother, nonetheless.

In a small clearing in the woods, just below the castle-like fort ruins, a gathering of Fly, David, Fly's mom, who was the bridesmaid, David's brother, who was the best man, and Fly's mom's friend (the officiant), occurred, for a quick strategizing rehearsal. Once everything seemed all set, and the sun was getting close to its peak up in the big blue sky, Fly and David parted company to get dressed and go to their separate corners, so to speak, while they waited for the big event to finally begin.

Fly assembled herself in full regalia, with her billowy grape juice colored dress randomly adorned with dozens of fake white and pink roses, her bawdy shiny corset, and her baby's breath crown topping her now-unbraided and tousled hair. As she headed back into the pseudo castle ruins, a couple of tourists were amused enough with her costume to ask what was going on. Fly divulged the secret wedding plan, and encouraged them to join in on the festivities (the more the merrier, right?). They bubbled excitedly for her, took a photo of her, politely declined her invitation, and wished her well before departing to another area of the park.

Fly made it into her previously agreed upon waiting location, on the other side of a wall where David and the best man would be holing up, so that he couldn't see her all dressed up before the big reveal. Fly's mother and father showed up, and for a rare occurrence in her post-kindergarden-aged life, the three of them were together alone. Another friend of Fly's mom appeared with a

camera and took a lovely “family portrait”, which was, in hindsight, probably one of the best wedding presents Fly got, as it was so rare. Then everyone else wandered down the little hill below the building, to play their parts. Fly’s dad had brought a few of his fellow Solstice Singers to set the medieval mood, acoustically, singing a couple of romantic early music pieces to start the whole shebang off. Then Fly’s mom offered a storytelling tale with a mythical account of a human man falling in love with a goddess who tested the man’s love by disguising herself as a mud-covered peasant forest dweller. The man, being truly in love, recognized his goddess immediately, and the couple was happily married. After this entertainment, Fly’s father was supposed to come up the hill to retrieve Fly, so that she could be reunited with her own beloved god-man to be officially betrothed. Only what actually happened was that where Fly had been hiding up in the fort, she couldn’t hear any of the goings on down below. She didn’t even know that things had begun, or even that David had already left his hiding place. After a while of feeling like she might just have been forgotten, Fly got nervous enough that she decided to peek into the area where David had been waiting. It was empty. Ok, then, she thought to herself. Now what? She crept, quietly, over to the doorway that led down the hill, not wanting to appear before things were ready for her, but not being totally convinced that they ever would be. Finally, thankfully, her father appeared in the doorway, and gallantly lead her, arm in arm, down to where she belonged, standing face to face with the man she loved more than anything else in the universe.

She overly self consciously wondered what he thought of her in her giant purple dress. She certainly was nowhere near as attractive as he was, all romantically heroic and everything, but she hoped that she was adorned enough to be at her womanly best, physically, given the genes and environment she had to work with. She was no goddess, at least not physically, but she imagined that she could at least accentuate the positive, and cover up the flab well enough to help David think nice things about how she looked on this important day.

In photos of the event that she saw later, she was happy to see her beloved with a delightfully mischievous grin on his face as he looked at his wife, and her enthusiastic upper torso.

The only other thing going on in her overwhelmed mind was “Why is everyone so far away?” The gathered friends and family and others seemed to be much further away than she had imagined they would be. (And later she was told that no one could hear the actual vows being exchanged, because they were all keeping their distance, like in a church, rather than coming in close, as you would in an outdoor setting. This was the only truly sad part of the wedding day for Fly, when she looked back on the memories.)

But the vows did happen, while Fly and David clasped hands once again. Fly had picked some special words from some more mainstream versions she’d found in her research, so they were a nice mix of traditional and modern, and both Fly and David brought their own special pieces of writing to share with one another and the gathering. David had only just happened upon the one he chose to read, when they were shopping for his sword on the previous day. He’d originally planned to read a sweet children’s poem about people getting married because they don’t rhyme with anyone. The one he did end up reading, from Nathaniel Hawthorne, was much more powerful and important to Fly. It was also a sweet, and unintended, connection to her maternal grandmother, as Fly had once recorded herself reading several Hawthorne stories as a gift to her Grammie.) Fly chose to read a Native American poem that she’d found years before and which had taken on new meaning since meeting her partner in life.

From the pregnant silence of the forest and all it’s present forms of life, the officiant began, “Good afternoon...”

“Welcome to the ceremony that will unite Dragonfly and David in marriage. We gather here today to celebrate their union, and to honor their commitment to not just gazing at one another, but to looking outward together in the same direction. Today David and Dragonfly proclaim their love to the world, and we rejoice with and for them.”

“In marriage, we give ourselves freely and generously into the hands of the one we love, and in doing so, each of us receives the love and trust of the other as our most precious gift. But even as that gift is shared by two people who are in love, it also touches the friends and family members who in various ways support and contribute to the relationship. All of you are David and Dragonfly’s community, and each of you has played some part in bringing them

to this moment. This is why gathering as a community is such an important part of a wedding ceremony. Because David and Dragonfly are now taking a new form as a married couple, and in this form, they become part of their community in a new way.”

“Dragonfly and David would like to say a few words to each other.”

She paused, and looked at Fly, who took out a small scroll of paper from her tiny maroon pouch tied around her waist. Fly spoke.

*Hold on to what is good  
even if it is a handful of earth.  
Hold on to what you believe  
even if it is a tree which stands by itself.  
Hold onto what you must do  
even if it is a long way from here.  
Hold on to life  
even when it is easier letting go.  
Hold on to my hand  
even when I have gone away from you.*

Fly looked up at David, who then took out his own bit of paper on which he'd hand written his newly discovered words of offering. He spoke.

*Happiness is a butterfly  
Which when pursued  
Is just beyond your grasp.  
But if you sit down quietly,  
May alight upon you.*

Dragonfly was so proud. He was so perfect. So beautiful. So amazing.

They both looked back at the officiant. “Dragonfly and David, we are here to remember and rejoice with you and to recount with one another that it is love that guides us on our path, and to celebrate as you begin this journey together. It is in this spirit that you have come here to today to exchange these vows.” She stopped and looked over at David. “David, repeat after me...”

David began the slow, gentle process of repeating his vows under the guidance of the woman.

*I David take you Dragonfly to be my wife  
I promise above all else to live in truth with you  
and to communicate fully and fearlessly  
I give you my hand and my heart  
as a sanctuary of warmth and peace  
and pledge my love, devotion, faith and honor  
as I join my life to yours.*

Dragonfly watched him lovingly and tenderly. And then when he looked up, the officiant guided Fly in her own pledge.

*I Dragonfly take you David to be my husband  
I promise above all else to live in truth with you  
and to communicate fully and fearlessly  
I give you my hand and my heart  
as a sanctuary of warmth and peace  
and pledge my love, devotion, faith and honor  
as I join my life to yours.*

And, then, of course, what mainstream wedding would be complete without the cyclical symbolism of rings? The officiant continued, “For thousands of years lovers have exchanged rings as a token of their vows. These simple bands are not of great value in themselves, but are made precious by our wearing of them. Your rings say that even in your uniqueness you have chosen to be bound together. Let these rings also be a sign that love has substance as well as soul, a present as well as a past, and that, despite its occasional sorrows, love is a circle of happiness, wonder, and delight.”

The officiant instructed David to first ensconce his beloved’s finger with one of the silver bands that they’d asked a SCUL artist friend to create for them. This one had a tiny, fiery sun carved delicately into it, representing David, and the brilliant, life giving energy he offered his wife. He repeated after the officiant while he completed this symbolic gesture.



*Just as this circle is without end, my love for you is eternal  
 Just as it is made of indestructible substance  
 My commitment to you will never fail  
 With this ring I take you to be my trusted confidante  
 and partner for life.*

He held her hand up near his chest and looked at her with a big, proud grin on his face. Then the officiant guided Dragonfly in offering her own physical representation of a lifetime embrace, emblazoned with a tiny, delicate moon, representing the mysterious, tidelike creative force she offered her husband. She repeated after the officiant while she joyfully placed the ring on his finger.

*Just as this circle is without end, my love for you is eternal  
 Just as it is made of indestructible substance  
 My commitment to you will never fail  
 With this ring I take you to be my trusted confidante  
 and partner for life.*

He now looked so very serious. It was real, to him, now.

As the officiant brought the ceremony to a close, she offered one final reminder of the meaning of it all, “David and Dragonfly, although I’m officiating here today, it is not truly in my power to sanctify, legitimize or bless your relationship in any way, because the two of you have already done that in your hearts. So, by joining hands right now and looking into each other’s eyes, let it be known that you are joined, body and soul in this lifetime, and that this bond is sacred and eternal. And now that you have stood before me and exchanged these rings and these vows, and have agreed to be married according to the laws of the state of Maine, it gives me great pleasure to pronounce that you are Husband and Wife.”

Now it was time to get down to the serious business of living happily ever after! The couple kissed, ineligantly, lustily, and adorably. The officiant, Fly’s mom, and David were completely teary eyed. Fly was absolutely beaming (though now overly self-conscious of a recently removed tooth, to the point of refusing to

smile properly with her teeth showing, a behavior which David, years later, claimed was a sign that she wasn't really happy, which annoyed her to no end, because, of course, she was, in fact, exceedingly happy).

Everyone else was intent upon taking photos of various combinations of the wedding partners and their families. The couple was effervescent, fingers perpetually entwined, and the two bounced around as a unit moving from group to group as if they were being poured out around the wooded gathering like some kind of hearty, geeky mead and its bespectacled Medieval froth. Fly could now properly get a chance to broaden her awareness outward to the details of who had shown up, and in what sort of costume they had decided was most appropriate to reflect their unique selves on such an occasion. Fly was indeed happy to see that several folks had taken on the challenge of some kind of historic~fantasy outfit. She'd already known about her mother's somewhat odd choice of a white velvet medieval gown, with appropriately purple sleeves and cape. And the officiant had her own more subdued blue gown in a similar style to Fly's. The best man had rented a black "Merry Man" style outfit, which looked fetching, mostly, as long as you didn't look closely at his "shoes" (a similar problem to Fly's own costume, with her very, very last minute drugstore find of some extremely plastic molded sandals which were supposed to look like they were made of some kind of natural cording, but really didn't at all). The best man's wife had also rented a pretty green velvet thing, making the two of them look quite lovely together. Fly's stepfather dressed as a wizard with a black and purple cloak and hood, and was carrying what was presumably a magic sort of staff. He was also wearing large, dark sunglasses making him appear to be what it might look like if very tan Roy Orbison was cast as Merlin. Fly's father and his fellow singers were, of course, attired in their usual minstrel fare.

About 60 people had shown up altogether, and there were more than a dozen who'd donned creatively celebratory outfits in addition to the main players. There was an especially beautiful fairy lady, with a nose ring, who was a young friend of Fly's mother, who'd been given the task of guiding the guests to the somewhat hidden forest wedding, off from the main path of the park. And nearly all of the SCUL pilots had enjoyed themselves when getting

dressed, with Skunk in his full dashing young Han-Solo-with-a-lightsaber outfit that he often wore for missions, and his girlfriend was a sexy pirate sort, and Waltor and Diva had followed Fly's invitation directions on how to make medieval garb from old sheets and they looked appropriately ready to party like it was 999. David's boss and wife were wearing lovely modern, liberal Muslim dresswear, which Fly found exciting, and surprisingly appropriate. Nearly all of the women on David's side of the family had sweet floral hair decorations, with his mother wearing some tiny yellow roses in her blond hair. In the background of some of the wedding photos Fly was given over the next few months after the event, Fly's uncle also showed up briefly wearing a large Viking helmet with long blond fake hair braids hanging out from underneath, which Fly had never seen in person, as he'd taken it all off right after the ceremony. One of Fly's teenaged cousins could be seen wearing a Harry Potter t-shirt, which Fly appreciated (and years later, Fly had discovered a post by him on a social media site where he mentioned his love of Doctor Who, which pleased Fly to no end, since she'd always had a bit of fondness for her youngest cousin, even though she'd really only interacted with him once, when she helped him work on a puzzle he'd gotten as a Christmas gift, when he was around preschool age, by which time Fly was already preschool teacher).

Even Daisy, the dog, who had been allowed to wander around the ceremony freely, was wearing a flowered garland around her neck.

The crowd was slowly dispersing from the wooded area, heading up to the top of the hill at the park, for the reception. Fly, David, and everyone who had brought a bicycle gathered together, and when all were ready they mounted up, and slowly paraded up the hill, with literal bells and whistles, and flags and cheers as well, with David towering over everyone on his trusty Brobdingnagian chopper. (Again, in photos Fly was given later by her aunt and uncle, David was caught right in the middle of a lusty stare in the specific direction of Fly's billowy purple behind, as she climbed the hill directly in front of him, on her own trusty bicycle.)

They all ate delicious vegetarian "homestyle" food (catered by the funky, vegan Seventh Day Adventist restaurant that Fly's mother had introduced the couple to) amidst the colorfully

decorated covered picnic area festooned with a half a dozen curtain-like banners hand painted with suns and moons and old fashioned bicycles, custom made just for the occasion. They all listened to more minstrels making music, while blowing bubbles (some of which had bottles that were mysteriously labeled with skulls and crossbones!), and all cheered as David used his sword to cut the beautiful multitiered white cake — with its toy chopper bicycles being ridden by sweet little toy “animal spirits” that represented the couple — and then cheered more when he lovingly stuffed a piece of the cake into Fly’s giggling face. Eventually most of the guests disappeared from whence they came, and the lingering bicycled celebrants again collected themselves to once again mount up and head out to escort the couple, in human-powered parade like fashion, to their temporary home at the hotel by the beach.

Before the cyclers bid adieu to the couple, they all ventured down to the beach below the hotel, to enjoy the late afternoon sun and sea. They dipped toes in the cold summer waves, and drew wedding messages in the sand.

It was all so... right.

Fly and David retreated to their suite, and, after reading all the well-wishing cards they found tucked into a romantic velvet bag that had been hanging from the handlebars of Fly’s bicycle during the reception, the couple finally spent some very quality alone-time giggling, cuddling, and seriously cavorting in the giant jacuzzi in their extravagant bathroom, mostly naked and high on pure joy. The world held and supported Fly and her beloved, fully and completely, for that entire day. This was a world she felt she belonged in, absolutely. This was what she’d been waiting for for her entire life up to that point. It was everything she could have hoped for, and everything she needed, for once.

The next day began their adventures in planes, trains, and automobiles, and boats, busses, and bicycles. And B and Bs. The couple and their bikes circuitously made their way to Nova Scotia, where they were once again free of internal combustion engines, and could pedal around under their own power, exploring the really-only-foreign-on-paper land, sea, and sky.

They first stopped in Halifax. And initially, they parked their stuff in a rented dorm room in Dalhousie University, as the school tried to make use of the absence of students during the summer break as a way to make a bit of money off of tourists. But as soon as Fly saw the uncomfortable looking twin beds in the room, and tried to imagine them attempting to do what couples on their honeymoon are supposed to do, on those sad excuses for beds, she fell apart. They'd already had a very challenging trip earlier that morning, escaping the drizzle and gloominess and general practical problems that threatened to postpone their long, elevated hop over the Gulf of Maine — between Rockport, Maine, and the Halifax Airport — in David's cooperatively shared, adorable little Grumman Tiger twin prop airplane. There had been much tears and shouting before the near thunderous roar of the wind and engines calmed them both down as David deftly guided the plane up into the air and got the partners on their way to where they wanted to be. Now that all of the ups and downs of the previous several days of excitement was finally winding down, and Fly was sitting there on the unpleasant little beds in a sterile concrete tower that felt so unloved, all of the wildly divergent hormones still left in her head and heart crashed into one another and emerged from beneath her flesh as a torrent of tears. The sense that things were now going to start going completely wrong in her world overwhelmed her. In retaliation for all the goodness that had just happened to her, maybe.

Those beds, designed as they were to be as unromantic as possible, to discourage the promiscuity of young and not entirely prudent student lovers, were, to Fly, very clearly a sign of impending doom for their marriage.

David, presumably, had brought his own overwhelm with him, and was at a loss to console the mess that his sweet little woman had become.

But they persevered. They vented their fears. They cuddled. They consoled. And, being the clever sorts that they were, they consulted a local visitor's guide, where they discovered a Bed and Breakfast that was not only cheaper than the dorm room, but also had Dragonfly's name written all over it. They called and booked a stunningly beautiful and classically romantic little room, with words like "Laugh Often" stenciled on the ceiling above the bed, and all was right again in their world.

Reassured by their collaborative problem solving skills, and able to look forward to something much nicer starting the next evening, they relaxed and made the best of their one night in the emotionally challenged dorm and its ridiculously puritanical beds, which they pushed together and covered with a foam mattress topper, which David had felt compelled to add to the clump of luggage strapped in and around his bike's panniers like some kind of bizarrely useful tumor.

Halifax and their new B and B proved to be fantastic. The couple explored, on bike, foot, and bus, and fell in love with the delightful combination of worldly intellect, polite Canadian charm, and urban hippy color, and food, of the seaside city and its surrounds. And they briefly flirted with the housing and roommate ads on a local community bulletin board, after seeing how cheap the rents were there.

They then made their way down south a bit, to the officially historic quaint fishing village of Lunenburg, for which both David and Fly had faint, but meaningful, childhood memories, and to which they added many new, stronger, and even more fun and meaningful, shared memories. They celebrated, quietly, the Canadian version of the Fourth of July, which is on the second of July, and doesn't have quite as much pomp and circumstance as the US version, and much more of the typically pleasant, polite down-homey-ness of the most northerly nation of the American continents. The two admired local cats. They appreciated specially prepared vegan pancakes at the tiny B and B they stayed at right in downtown Lunenburg. And they bicycled, and talked, and simply enjoyed life, as much as they could. And even had a little sex here and there, because that's what you do when you're in love, and lusty, and in locations specially engineered to look like theatrical sets of romantic films.

All in all, it was, perhaps, two of the best weeks of the first four decades of their lives.

*"Silence is the perfectest herald of joy.*

*I were but little happy if I could say how much."*

*~ Claudio, in Much Ado About Nothing*

*by William Shakespeare*

-  
EVOLVE  
-

*“So I walk like I’m on a mission  
cuz that’s the way I groove  
I got more and more to do  
I got less and less to prove  
It took me too long to realize that  
I don’t take good pictures cuz  
I have the kind of beauty that  
moves”  
~ Ani diFranco*

Of course, as always happens, the honeymoon ends.

Life gets complicated, difficult, less supportive of romance and celebration. Fly and David remained devoted to one another. But stuff happens. People raised in broken families — with parents who walked away from one another and their kids, due to their own life problems — end up with a major deficiency of crucial relationship skills, regardless of how intense their desire for living happily ever after happens to be. When the world became more actively threatening to their collective selves, stress frequently got the better of them, and their wildly different approaches to problem solving made things painful. They floundered, often. Repaired usually. Fell hard, occasionally. And flourished, not enough.

They created beautiful shared dreams in their minds. They envisioned open, green spaces, oceans, gardens, blue sky, yurts, big old barns with environmentally friendly workshops going on in them, art spaces, solar panels sprouting upon country roofs, and a

community of compassionate, creative, intelligent people to work and play and think and do amazing things with. Growing up into sky was their goal, but their daily struggles, even just getting enough of the most basic needs, kept dragging them back into the deep, dark, scary waters of worry.

During one of their darker times, Dragonfly desperately asked David three questions. Who do you want to be? Why are you with me? What do you want for the future? He eventually responded with a six page handwritten letter that, while she outwardly seemed dismissive of it, became a monument to their marital vows for Fly. Poetry it was not. But it was the most he'd ever spoken about his thoughts about their marriage and what it meant to him. The final paragraph he offered gave her real hope, then, and during all the other dark times in their shared struggles as a couple. The folded pages of yellow legal pad paper, with its thin blue lines, and handwriting that belied a struggling soul, were constantly nearby, for years after, acting as a sort of adult version of a toddler's soothing blankie.

*"I believe that we have most of the same ideas about what we want for a future. To work for ourselves doing something that is good for the world. I still haven't figured that out exactly what it is for myself but I have some ideas. We both want to be in a place that is progressive with good people around us. I have always hoped for someone who would be excited about living as close to the land as you are, growing our own food, building our own place to love, or at least finding a place that is close and making it something we both want. I've always wanted someone who is as interested as me in minimizing our impact on the planet's ecosystem. (I know I have not done the best job of that, driving way too much but I'm getting better and trying to find better alternatives). I want someone who cares about the needs of all beings and not just about themselves — you are definitely that person."*

*~David*

One bright morning, David awoke to tell his lover that he'd dreamed that she'd wanted to encourage him to fly, so she'd pushed him out of a tower window. That vision stuck with her, and she



wondered whether it was what she was doing in real life, pushing him to fly, and if she was, was it for better or worse?

During those first years together, they did both reach some exploratory heights, mostly in their individual projects, which were elevated by companionship and mutual support, and far more interesting than anything they'd done before their unification.

Dragonfly officially declared herself a philosopher, and hung a virtual sign on the internet offering her services counseling people about their deeper questions of the meaning of life. It was something she'd never before believed she was allowed to do, but her soul had conspiratorially always held quietly onto it as her true lot in life. She alternated the philosophy with teaching, at a preschool at Harvard this time.

David committed himself to getting his airplane pilot instrument rating, for flying in conditions where you couldn't see where you were going (which was a large portion of the time in a part of the world where the common saying about the weather was "If you don't like it, wait a minute.")

They looked for land in Vermont (until the zoning laws were changed, and prices soared while lot size dwindled).

They bought a few acres of fertile, mountainous land in Nova Scotia's stunning Annapolis Valley, and David flew them over it while Fly captured photographic images, onto which they could overlay their dreams in colorful pixels.

And in general, they continued to plan for Something Better, while periodically enduring Something Worse.

One of the ideas that Dragonfly had begun to consciously remind herself is that everything is impermanent, and even utter failure and painful suffering will end, and something better will always come along again, as long as one waited.

Fly started off a new blog, a more professional one, linked to her main philosophy counseling website.

She found herself being astoundingly prolific these days, in reaction to so many offerings of wisdom and curiosity, which she found most everywhere she went. It all jumbled up in her head and emerged in spurts of creative expression that were something both familiar and new at the same time. She shared all that she could put into words and pictures.

One of the first posts that appeared on her new blog was accompanied by a small silvery photo titled “bicycle woman” that featured a collaged humanoid shape made up of an antique bicycle gear — with herons carved delicately around the center — as the head, and old fashioned curvy handlebars as the arms.

Doing the right thing is just like riding a bicycle.

Published February 8th, 2007

Sometimes we tend to think that doing the right thing will take too much effort, that we just aren't up for it. We convince ourselves that it's hard work being healthy and happy and productive and compassionate and all that other good stuff we want in life. We think of inertia as the tendency of a body at rest to stay at rest.

But the truth is that inertia also is the tendency of a body in motion to stay in motion. It's only difficult to drastically change direction or get out from that place we may be stuck in, but once we've managed to muster up that initial burst of energy needed to get us in motion, staying in motion is easy. Once we've given our bike that first kick start, inertia keeps the bike heading steadily off towards wherever we want to go. We only need to keep pedaling along, with some minimal effort, and give some attention to the steering so that we keep going in the direction we want to go. Sure, we may hit some hills along the way, but once we've pedaled ourselves to the top, we get to fly downhill for a while and thoroughly enjoy our hill climbing efforts.

Occasionally we fall off our bikes or get thrown off by some careless passerby, but if we just give up and stay laying in the ditch, we're not going to have much fun. So, even though we know that it will take a bit of effort to get back on and get going again, we also know that once we do, the journey will be much easier and more fun. And we realize that this bicycle we're on is the most efficient vehicle known to humankind, so if we want to go somewhere, this is the easiest way to do it.

So, when you find yourself stuck in a ditch after falling or being pushed off your path, you only need to find that one small thing that will get you right back up again and heading off towards all the good stuff in life, like friends, a hearty lunch, or maybe a really good biking story.

With all the research Dragonfly was doing on what it takes to be mentally healthy — which had originally started, at least in part, because she wanted to understand how to take better care of her marriage, given both of the partners' somewhat difficult and lonely childhoods and the adulthood baggage that was attached to such an early life — Fly was finding so many meaningful ways of looking at reality and what it means to be alive and awake and moving purposefully forward through the world. As she was piecing together all the different answers to her most important question that she was continually asking the world, “What do we need to be our best possible selves?” she was finding perspectives that she'd never encountered before. Perspectives that she wished she'd grown up with. Perspectives she felt compelled to share with as many people as possible, so that they, too, might find some use in making choices about their own lives that helped them feel more positive about themselves and their world.

Fly discovered positive psychology, mostly through an extremely popular course at Harvard, that was also being freely offered on the web, virtually, taught by a unique visiting educator named Ben tal Shahar. Fly feasted ravenously upon the course, and another one offered by the same teacher on using positive psychology in leadership. It was all very revelatory.

There was also a rather unexpected biofeedback computer game that was essentially an education in breath-work and body-awareness. Fly justified paying quite a bit of money to purchase the game and its accompanying equipment, saying that it was cheaper than just a few therapy sessions. The game, and its online community, turned out to be a highly valuable asset to Fly's navigational maps for finding health and prosperity (though the odd little finger clips that measured her sweat, as a sign of her stress levels, made strange gray, metallic marks on her fingers, after she spent hours breathing in a certain, particularly calming, way that

would allow a shy bunny rabbit to emerge from her hiding place, near the end of the game).

Buddhism, too, offered an abundant field of wisdom that had millennia of history. And in the more Western-friendly versions, Buddhist ideas could be found scrubbed clean of all the controversial politics and confusing stories of many of the other spiritual and philosophical traditions. So for a few years Fly somewhat superficially immersed herself in Buddhist discussion. She'd read, with much appreciation, a book by the Dalai Lama, voraciously devoured all the articles she could find on what Buddhism had to say about anger, and joined an online community of mostly US Americans interested in Buddhism, which was sort of a free for all, but at least it kept Fly busy considering reality in a way that was fairly foreign to her mostly Western, pop culture past, with just a bit of a hippy slant.

At the heart of most Buddhism is, of course, the idea of meditation, with meditation being a wide variety of different tactics of focusing one's awareness in a particular way, to get some different data about reality. Fly hadn't really found much use for the mainstream Buddhist meditation practices of "emptying your mind", which she so commonly encountered, but she at least appreciated the value of putting a bit more intention into one's attention, and adding to the diverse techniques for using one's brain.

In response to some of the Buddhist reading she'd been doing, she offered up a more sci-fi update of one of the common Buddhist tales on her blog. Fly accompanied the piece with an image of the moon and glimmering clouds floating beside an urban roof, as the Earth's partner in space rose up into the night — a photo she had taken by leaning out the bedroom window, at the top of the three story house she and David had moved into when they first got their own place together.

If Rube Goldberg was a philosopher

Published February 20th, 2007

Unless something extraordinarily interesting happens in the near future, you won't get to see the end. And by "the

end” I mean the end of everything. The end of the universe as we know it. The end of time. The end of life itself. Sure, maybe someone will be around for the end, but it’s just not likely to be you, the seriously mortal human being who’s reading this right now.

Not being there for the end means that you’ll never get to find out if all that work you put into making the world a better place really makes it a better place in the end. That amazing discovery you make may turn out to wipe out the entire planet. Or that insult you flung at the politician on television may turn out to be exactly what your nosy neighbor needed to hear to remind him to call his old college roommate, who happens to be the dictator of a small, but nuclear-weapon-filled country, and invite him to an intimate dinner party, at which one of the other party goers mentions that she loves reading Plato, which turns out to be an all time favorite pastime of the dictator as well, so the two party goers fall in love and get engaged, and as part of the wedding ceremony the dictator, having been cured of his wish to destroy the rest of the world, unveils an invention for turning all of the world’s deadly weapons into harmless robot squirrels, and saves the world from both nuclear devastation and petty crime, only the seemingly harmless squirrels turn out to be not so harmless after all and build a rocketship that they fill with all the other Earthling species and send everyone hurtling toward the sun, however, because their calculations are off by a decimal point the rocketship just misses the sun, and is flung, at nearly the speed of light, into the center of the galaxy, where it encounters an Einstein-Rosen bridge and is sucked into another universe, where all the Earthlings are rescued by a super-being who offers them it’s secrets to immortality and happiness and they all live happily ever after. The end.

So really, you just have no idea how anything you do will affect the final outcome of things.

And if that is the case, then it seems to me that the most important thing to do in life is to just relax and enjoy the trip — do what you love, and enjoy what you have.

Imagine if everyone lived like that.

Her posts were reflecting her general comfort level in life these days. Things were certainly still very dicey when it came to practical matters for the partners, probably more so than any time before. But in the moment, most of the time, Fly felt more relaxed than she had in a while. Maybe a lot of that was a result of David trying to protect her from the harsher reality of things, and her lacking the information she needed to see how scary her life might really be in the very near future. She was aware of some of the problems they had, but David was aware of far more problems, and he was very likely becoming painfully overwhelmed, but not being ready to admit it to her.

One challenging night, one of those ridiculous marital spats that no one outside of the situation ever believes is possible, yet happens constantly all across the planet, triggered an emotional breakdown in both Dragonfly and David. While the literal argument very much skewed toward the silly and superficial side of things, it had, at it's roots, a more dangerous and terrifying story of homelessness and hunger, and of deep feelings bubbling up within both of them around the pain of being unwanted and unloved by the world outside their little partnership. In a fit of frustration Fly blurted out something to the effect of, "Everything I say makes it worse!"

So she stopped talking. For four days.

But, with her usual inclination for experimental playfulness, she took her own wise advice she'd been giving on her blog, to look at things from a different perspective, and to do what you love, so she decided to approach this as a sort of Buddhist style silent retreat amidst a modern urban life. She gathered up a small stack of index cards on which she carefully wrote the few words that she felt she could offer with confidence and respect to anyone she

needed to communicate with while she remained silent. She found her hole punch and yarn to turn her cards into an unattractive but practical necklace. She presented the explanation card, along with a loving smile, to her honey when he awoke, that morning after the breakdown, and he seemed to be amused.

After it was over, she blogged about the experience, with an image of a tiny stone chapel in the woods, lovingly hand built by the Von Trapp family, of the Sound of Music fame, at their vast mountainous Vermont home where they settled after escaping Austria and the Nazis. The family was not especially religious, but they, like Fly, appreciated the intrinsic idea of seeking a connection with something deeper and more powerful than mere day to day life, which all spiritual practices have at their core.

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Four days of inner silence in the real world.  
Published February 23rd, 2007

Recently, I tried a silent retreat while living in the modern world. Instead of taking my body out of society, I took my thoughts out of my body. In other words, I stopped talking to the world and started listening to the world, instead.

I didn't plan to do this, it simply arose out of circumstances where I felt like my words were not working as well as I wanted them to.

So others wouldn't be frightened or offended by my silence, I made up some cards with a few simple sayings on them, which I could use to communicate my situation, and answer simple questions, if people seemed to need me to. I wore these cards as a necklace during my silent retreat. Not the most fashionable necklace ever, but very useful! The cards said things like, "yes", "no", "maybe", "thank you", "I love you", "I'm sorry", "What do you suggest?", and the intro card that explained what I was doing.

My goal was to observe what would happen to my thoughts, and how much more I might be able to hear and understand if I wasn't constantly trying to figure out what to say in response.

The results were fascinating! I found some surprising effects, and was delighted at the quietness that I found, not in the world outside, but in the world inside. My mind was beautiful and calm. I imagine that this is what it is like to be a very young child, watching the world, and taking it all in with wonder and awe. And once people understood what I was doing — having been reassured that I wasn't giving them the “silent treatment”, but instead giving them the chance to really be heard and fully listened to — everyone seemed to be really comfortable with it, and happy to have the chance to genuinely open up to me. I'm sure I would have missed many of the stories and ideas that people shared with me, if I had been concentrating on my own thoughts and reactions to them.

I also heard a lot of environmental noises that I probably would have missed otherwise. Just little sounds, like pipes squeaking, neighbors playing outside, and some random noises that I never bothered to put images to. I also discovered that I paid more attention to my body as it physically interacted with the world. Several times I found myself quietly watching my hands play with the fabric of my bed covers. I also smiled a lot at other people, even more so than usual. I did start using pantomime a fair bit to communicate to my husband, who is an especially quiet guy these days. After a while, I realized that the pantomime was not quite in line with my goals of listening, and stopped, but it did offer me an unusual way to absolutely know if my husband understood what I was “saying” to him, because he had to say my thoughts out loud, as he guessed what my crazy gyrations meant. So many frustrations in a relationship, any relationship, stem from miscommunication. So it was refreshing to have a



simple way to identify misunderstandings before they caused all sorts of calamity.

I only chose to break my silence when I encountered a bit of an emergency and needed someone else's help. Four days seemed to be a useful amount of time for this retreat. Though any amount of time spent listening carefully to the world and being silent inside would seem to be a valuable thing, I could easily see myself choosing to take another silent retreat again. I think this kind of inner retreat is a wonderful way to give yourself, and the world, a little break from your "monkey mind" as they say, while remaining in the real world. It really gives you a perspective that doesn't often get seen by many folks. And I am definitely grateful for the extra bit of silence I offered myself (and others).

During those voiceless days, she listened to her lover, as he spoke, and more often, when he was similarly silent. Things got goofy as she not only tried pantomime, but also doodles, to communicate thoughts she felt the need to share with him. She amused some passersby when she went into exceptionally silly arm and face flailings resulting from an attempt to communicate her discovery of some scaffolding that had suddenly appeared around a building on their route to the grocery store one afternoon. And there was one very incomprehensible drawing of comedy news presenter Stephen Colbert, which was what made her realize that she was definitely pushing the limits of her experimental meditative retreat.

The two of them discovered that while David had often complained that he had a hard time getting in a word edgewise around Fly, it turned out that now that she was all ears, metaphorically, he honestly didn't really have that much to say. But it was comfortable as a sort of vacation, for them both.

Something that had always come much more easily to Fly was listening to young people, and even when she wasn't teaching kids, she still kept their voices inside her heart, and she spent a fair bit of her professional time addressing the needs of the generations to

come. Much of her online and offline work was based on looking for a better way to nurture the species' offspring, so that they wouldn't have to go through the unhealthy, creativity-squashing, mind-numbing crap that Fly and David and so many more of their generation's members had to, as they tried to fulfill their dreams of contributing great things to the world.

In a celebrated Somerville street party once, one of Fly's favorite ex-neighbors collaborated with a SCUL pilot friend of theirs to set up a sort of hippy art amusement ride, where they took turns riding around the city's most famous traffic circle (with the geometrically challenged name "Davis Square") on a bicycle attached to a trailer that was itself supporting a full sized decommissioned recreational canoe which had been enthusiastically decorated by local students, with inspirational graffiti. As an adorable, smiling little girl of perhaps three years of age, sporting an extra adorable whiskered animal painted face, along with her tiny brother, who barely could be seen from within the depths of the vessel's hull, were both gently paraded around the square's circle, Fly snapped a picture, which, just by chance, happened to frame the boat in such a way as to include the painted words "Carpe Dream" prominently, as your eyes landed on the image. Fly titled the photo "a street canoe named desire" when she uploaded onto her blog. She wanted to remind people how precious even the smallest dreams are to the world.

To honor the future generations, and clarify the present's, Fly posted a brief message of pure hearted intention to support and listen to those who come after, for anyone who might be listening.

#### A Meme for the Next Generation

Published February 28th, 2007

You are incredibly important to us! We need you to be healthy — intellectually, emotionally, and physically — and my generation will do everything we can to support you in your lives, so that you will not only feel loved, respected, valued, effective, and useful, but also so that you have access to a world of knowledge, a world of

beauty and diversity, and ways to find more peace and understanding of yourselves and our Universe.

My generation isn't always so sure of how to accomplish this for you, though. So please be patient with us, and understand that we are just as confused as you are sometimes about how to keep this world and ourselves healthy. But we are trying, and we care so very much about you, and our world.

What can we do to help you?

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Dragonfly was saddened that she never got any replies to this post. But nonetheless, she would never give up listening to the hopes and dreams and appeals of those who have such a small voice trying to be heard above the din of the main streets of corporate culture and political grandstanding. On the bicycle she brought up to Maine, to store at her mother's for vacation trips and such, Fly'd stuck a sticker on the frame that said. "Children Know Everything". And she really believed it. At least everything truly important.

Human children instinctively inhabit a state of "I don't know" which is what Socrates famously said was the mark of the wisest persons.

A mysterious, multi-sea-creatured natural sculpture that had appeared on the beach below the couple's wedding hotel back when they had first arrived and explored the area, before any of the other of the grand event's guests had shown up, had its portrait topping the following post, speculating about the complexity of advanced minds.

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Can you have intelligence without the option to say "I don't know."?

Published March 4th, 2007

For a century or more now, humans have been racing to create Artificial Intelligence — presumably so we can

finally, finally let the machines do all our difficult and dirty work for us, allowing us all to retire to a life of leisure (and perhaps enlightenment) like we've been promised ever since the Industrial Revolution.

But, I'm wondering if it's possible to create intelligence, synthetic or otherwise, using a binary structure. I have a sneaking suspicion that the base 2 language of ones and zeros — yes or no answers — that our present day computers use to think isn't going to quite cut it when it comes to thinking about the complexity of the Universe, or even just the complexity of a good cup of tea. In addition to "Yes" or "No", I'm thinking that we may need to teach our non-animal progeny a third option, "Maybe" if we wish to give them real intelligence...

"I do not think that I know what I do not know."  
~Socrates, on wisdom

(A decade later, Fly would still be struggling with the problem of giving a binary system an option to be curious and open-minded. She considered that as long as you allow for more than two digits to exist as a single answer, as in 01 and 10, you could, it seemed, get the answers of noyes and yesno as well as the singular yes and no. So perhaps even the binary computer language would do for wise thinking at some point in the future.)

In March, as the tiny purple cupped crocuses took over the city, Fly discovered the book she needed, without knowing it yet, but with a strong attraction already emerging as soon as she heard about it in one of her favorite magazines, a short-lived independent science and culture production called Seed.

Fly clipped a somewhat challenging and infinitely intriguing paragraph from the book that she found on the publisher's website:

*"If one believes that the essences of any human is an abstract pattern realized in a brain, one is released from the idea that one's self is intrinsically tied to just one brain. To the extent that a*

*“strange loop” pattern can be transplanted into another brain, then to that same extent, that “I” lives in the second brain. This “interpenetration of souls” provided by the strange loop view of selves is a vision not only of the origins of compassion, but also of the partial existence of each person as an abstract pattern inside the brains of deeply loved ones.”*

*~ Douglas Hofstadter in I am a Strange Loop*

In simpler terms, the philosopher (who was most renown for his deeply brilliant earlier book on the mathematical depth of Gödel, Escher, Bach) was suggesting that a mind might include copies of other minds, or at least parts of other minds, inside itself. Sort of like having a library full of other people’s biographies in one’s head, but with more sensory data attached to the stories, making them feel as if you were experiencing them yourself. So that not only can one experience one’s own perspective, but other perspectives as well, at the same time, as the memories of emotions and thoughts that others have shared with an individual are incorporated into their own sense of self. When your child cries, you feel their pain. When they laugh, you feel joy. Not just because you are sympathetic, but because you actually have a little bit of the patterns of thinking and feeling that they have, inside your own mind. Fly seriously couldn’t wait for the library to get a copy of this book... In the meantime, she posted some of her own questions about the I, along with a magnified image of a light bulb filament (with the probably overlooked punny title of “What?”).

What’s in charge of you?

Published April 1st, 2007

A little while back I asked you: What are you in charge of? Now I’m flipping the question: What’s in charge of you?

How much of what you do is really what you consciously want to do? How much is just the sum of the various bits of nature and nurture that you’ve accumulated over the course of your existence spilling back out into the world?

Do you think you can even know why you do the things you do?

What if consciousness, this I, is just a narrator explaining what was going on in your brain, rather than the director or producer? Or, what if your consciousness only has control over your body in the way that a faucet does — able to turn the flow of subconscious thought up or down, but not control what sort of substance is flowing out of your subconscious? And if so, what if your subconscious mind knows what is good for you better than your conscious mind? What if you are literally throttling your subconscious' good intentions?

I certainly don't know the answers, but it's definitely something that seems worth considering.

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This line of thinking was leading Dragonfly in a very interesting direction, but one that would end up going nowhere for quite a long time, quite soon. Though she still had a bit more to explore about the meaning of the I and its relation to its common container, before she had to refocus her thoughts. The abstract image of a somewhat naturally artificial appearing object atop one of her next meandering musings was titled "I am like you, but am I human?"

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I am like you, and I am not like you. What do you think of that?

Published April 2nd, 2007

What does it mean to be a human?

This is a question that I've been wanting to pose to people for a while now, especially in a political context. We talk of Universal Human Rights, but can we really apply these rights if we don't have a proper definition of

“human” in the first place? I imagine that a lot of people’s initial answer to this question might be something like their answer to the question, “What is art?” (or, “What is pornography?”) and that is that they can’t really define it but that they know it when they see it. That answer is all well and good for the average guy or gal, but you’re not average, are you? You want to go a bit deeper than just vague presumptions, right?

So consider the present or possible future scenarios of:

- intelligent alien life being discovered and interacting with us on political, economic, and personal relationship levels
- artificial life being created and introduced into the population
- new discoveries about other Earthling species who use tools, have social lives, express complex emotions, have the intellectual capacity of at least a Kindergarten level human child, and are capable of learning to communicate with humans
- unusual births of humans who are very different from our usual understanding, such as conjoined twins with only one body, but two heads (with separate brains)
- genetic science discoveries that propose that homo sapiens share more than 98% of their basic identities with other primates
- cloned homo sapiens
- brain-dead homo sapiens existing on artificial life support
- severely mentally handicapped homo sapiens

(And, of course, there is always the question of fetuses and when a human life actually starts, but feel free to leave that potentially heated question out, if it gets you all hot and bothered, and not in the good way...)

So, with those scenarios in mind, can you come up with a definition of what a human is? And also ask yourself if just maybe we might need a broader set of Universal

Rights, that includes individuals other than humans who might be sharing this Universe with us...

These were questions that would have to wait, before Fly, and the rest of the world, found the time and energy and context to seek answers. For now Fly was going to have to go backwards, redefining herself and her ideas of what it meant to be her own self, human or otherwise, in this reality.

One of the people who added so much to Fly's life, during a time of distress, had once had a dream of finding Fly strewn amidst a pile of trash on the side of the road, dumped there and waiting to be trash-picked and recycled or repurposed into something lovable. Fly was, herself, always looking to rescue things that seemed unwanted. And in that lengthy, heartfelt, honest response to Dragonfly's fearful three questions, from a few years previous, when she worried out loud whether or not David really loved her and if so why, David had provided a sweet, no-nonsense comment appreciating her resourcefulness.

*"Your creativity still surprises me — your ability to take a pile of what looks like scraps of fabric or a pile of random junk and make something really interesting is something that I'm very impressed by."*

*~ David*

Fly wasn't sure where this ability to let go of attachments to old, limiting beliefs about what something was useful for and instead open her mind up to seeing all the possible purposes that something could serve, came from, but she felt herself constantly envisioning things being transformed far beyond the ordinary, or at least as being more valuable than they might appear from a superficial glance. However, Fly's paternal grandfather, who had died when she was fairly young, had been an inveterate trash-to-treasure kinda guy, literally going to the dump and finding broken things that he used his engineering skills, patience, and love of all things functional and fun, to turn unwanted items into gifts for the only granddaughter he ever got a chance to meet. He'd given Fly her first bicycle, a



sweet little mid-century modern children's frame with swooping handlebars and down tube, springy seat, and multicolored tassels coming out of the hand grips. He'd even taught her to ride it on the sleepy suburban streets of Arlington, back when life was simple, and Mom and Dad and Daughter were a seemingly happy little family. Later on, when Fly was older, and the 70's were nearly over, not long before her Grampie suffered a fatal heart attack (from smoking, eating steak, and being kicked out of the house by his much loved wife), he'd found a rare early edition video game console that featured pong, breakout, and a particularly useless game of virtual bowling, which he fixed up and gave Fly, to keep her busy when things got too lonely and dull, and there was nothing on television. It wasn't the fancy Atari that some girls she knew had, but it was still awesome. And recycled. (David was not unlike her grandfather in this way, which was something she, too, appreciated in him.)

So perhaps Fly just had the resourcefulness genes passed on to her, in a long lineage of creative-users-of-what-you've-got ancestors. Or perhaps it was simply learning from her elders. But she definitely would come to appreciate her ability to make lemonade from not just lemons, but things that weren't lemons at all (like sumac berries!).

Being resourceful, is, perhaps, a kissing cousin to resiliency.

The experimental vow of silence, from the previous month, had given Dragonfly a better familiarity of the practice of mindfulness, also somewhat related to resourcefulness and resiliency, and she brought this newly improved attentional skill — bringing the expansiveness of the external moment inside the self — to her day to day life, more and more. Fly had that growing sense, not entirely lucid yet, that while one might not be able to control the external outcome of any given activity in life, one might be able to find progress even in what outwardly looks like failure — looking for unexpected and meaningful ways to use circumstances, in addition to the usual material objects that get re-imagined into something better.

Dragonfly was, if anything, always in need of tricks to add to her magic bag of ways to deal with life's more dangerous dragons.

The philosophy counseling work she'd been extending to the general public was offering her an exceptional opportunity to research, process, and explain the various life saving tricks that a world of others had come upon. Everyone's problems were the same, worldwide, when you really got to the heart of it. So whenever Fly found a potential solution for one of her clients, it also instantly appeared in her own imaginary pocket full of charms, like the hovering icon on the edge of the screen in some classic computer fantasy adventure game. And by now, she'd stocked up on so many proven spells, her bag was overflowing, and she was always thrilled to find someone with a more meagerly packed bag with whom she could share.

For David's birthday, Dragonfly had something to give.

Who am I?

Published April 23rd, 2007

What I do is not who I am. What I want to do is who I am. What I'm trying to do is who I am. What I can do, if I have all the resources that I need, is who I am.

At least, that's who I am today. Tomorrow, I may be something else.

Who are you?

She wanted, so very much, to know who her husband was. She wanted to know what he could do, if he had all the resources he needed to do it. She wanted to see into deep time, what this warm, fuzzy, shiny object she so cherished really was from the perspective of the universe as a whole. She knew that she loved him more than anything else in the great expanse of reality, but she still didn't really understand why, or if there was something else she could do for him as she fulfilled her vow to honor him as her life partner, and give him the sanctuary of warmth and peace that her hand and heart so very much wanted to provide him. She felt she

was missing some crucial bit of information about who he was, and it was making lasting marital happiness take much longer than it needed to take.

But for the moment they were at least muddling through, together. And Fly continued to dream, with her visions — of a better life for young people, along with better ways to solve larger problems in the world, and ways to ensure that everyone could meet their basic needs for living sustainably and healthfully — slowly merging into a single view.

A real living wage

Published May 7th, 2007

Here's an idea... Combine public school with a program like Americorps or Peace Corps. And tie everything but the most basic public assistance into participation in these community service schools. Everyone would have the right to get their very basic needs met by the government — simple shelter, healthy food, water, clean air, health care, and public transportation — while the more complex needs and wants — a fancy home of one's own, a personal vehicle, vacations, toys, gourmet food, etc. — would be offered to those who contributed to society through a community service school. Those who participated would also be gaining an education and skills that would serve themselves and their community in the future. These schools would be open to everyone of any age, with a mix of "classes" that were based on specific skills and/or levels — like literature or science — or were more project based for a wide range of skills and levels — like building a playground, growing a garden, or taking care of the elderly.

Participation would be completely voluntary, and one could choose to instead get a job with a free market business, live off of savings or an inheritance, or pay for private schooling, but the benefits to going to a

community service school that “paid” people for going by taking care of their more extravagant wants would mean that nearly everyone would actually want to go to school. And being able to choose your own classes and learn at your own level, as well as feeling like an important part of your community would mean that you would truly enjoy your school. Can you imagine everyone wanting to go to school, getting paid to go, and benefitting the community while they are there? I can!

The community service schools would be given contracts to do some of the work that governments, and government contractors, normally do, and professionals would work alongside students to keep things running smoothly. And the dual bottom line would be both healthy personal and community development. And no student would have to worry about having a healthy meal when they came home from school-work or how they were going to get to school in the first place. Everyone who wanted one would have an honest to goodness living wage, and would be contributing to the health of the world at the same time.

It really would be a win-win solution to so many of our modern world’s problems.

So... how do we make this happen?

Fly didn’t know. She really wanted someone to give her the answer to how to make it happen. She might have been good at organizing things, but she didn’t know how to even begin to create something that big.

In May, using some of her new mindfulness skills, Fly had a seemingly insignificant experience that she found she could allow to balloon inward into an exponentially meaningful exploration of all the dimensions of her thoughts on life and it’s complex processes, like an intellectual deep breath. She once imagined this to be like

magnifying a single point in time into a whole new three dimensional volume of reality in her mind. And when she was being particularly poetic, she envisaged that the practice was also akin to capturing a single moment of experience and planting it as a mental seed which is then tenderly nurtured as it is allowed to grow into a towering Redwood tree of grand thought, with multiple sensory impressions branching out in all directions, and with a riot of tiny colorful notions filling out the ends of each contemplative twig like so many late summer leaves. But all the metaphors in the world couldn't really accurately convey what was really going on. She always felt a bit sad that she simply couldn't share her mindscapes directly with others, rather than having to try to squash the breadth and depth of it all into mere words. But that was what she had to work with, so she wrote, as expansively as she could.

Goodbye, fly.

Published May 28th, 2007

A little while ago I noticed a fly who seemed to be getting ready to die. The fly fell on my desk next to my computer and seemed to be stuck on her back. She buzzed her wings and wiggled her legs fruitlessly as she tried to right herself.

My first instinct upon noticing all this was to let her be, and go on with my work.

My next inclination was to try helping the fly right herself, or maybe put her outside where she could enjoy the fresh air in her last moments of consciousness.

My next thought was that everything was exactly as it should be for Ms. Fly and that she didn't need me disturbing her death plans or giving her false hope or making her work any harder to stay alive (or die).

My next thought was to simply watch her die, and see if I could find some life lesson in the process.

My next thought was to save her body, after it stopped living, and encase it in acrylic so that I could have a funky educational tchotchke like the ones I was considering buying from the gift shop the Museum of Science a couple of days ago (but chose not to, because I didn't want to support a business that probably goes around killing living things just for a profit).

My next thought was that I was having a lot of interesting thoughts because of this dying fly, and that maybe I should write down those thoughts to share with you folks.

My next thought was that I should tell you all about first instincts, and how they are usually good ideas.

And then I wrote all these previous thoughts down, bringing you all up to this point. And I realized that it's not so much your first instincts and first impressions that are important, it's that all of your instincts and inclinations are important. You don't need to act on all of them, but being attentive to all of them makes life more interesting and offers you more options for creating the kind of world you want to live in.

So I'd like to express my gratitude to that fly who decided to share her death with me today, as she offered me an opportunity to think some things I'd never thought before. Thanks, fly!

I wonder what I'll think, and do next...

.

When Summer Solstice, 2007, arrived, Fly discovered a mysterious post on the Craigslist "Free" section of the classifieds website. The post seemed to be just what was needed for an appropriate celebration for their fourth anniversary. She forwarded the posting to David, at work.

*What's that? YOU WANT BRICKS AND FILL?*

*Reply to: sale-356958802@craigslist.org*

*Date: 2007-06-21, 10:14AM*

*You know you want it. You know you need it. You've heard it on the radio and you've seen it on tv. Now YOU TOO CAN OWN IT FOR YOURSELF. What am I talking about? BRICKS AND DIRT!!! There are two piles, one each of bricks and fill (dirt) that you can come and take away for FREE. You can take a little or a lot but you have to take something. I'm not asking you. I'm telling you. Your life will be an empty pit of nothingness without these products. Your marriage will crumble right in front of your eyes if you do not come home tonight and show your wife a trunk full of bricks.*

*Avoid this tragedy by calling or just coming by and picking it up yourself.*

*(Pictures are merely meant to remind you of how vacuous bachelorhood feels and only resemble the actual piles)*

After some negotiation, and a brief time getting lost and going around in circles in an unfamiliar town a few miles away from their apartment, Fly and David made it to the promised pile-o-bricks, which were not as classy as one might hope, having come from a demolished chimney, and mostly not being whole. But still, they had potential, and were nicely “antiqued”, some with intriguing text on them from the manufacturer, from a century or two ago. So, the best and most attractive bricks were collected and carefully stacked into the trunk of David’s little red Volkswagen, which probably appreciated being used for a change (cars being generally more of an annoyance than a help in the dense cities around Boston). Then the bricks were delivered, in a refreshing first-day-of-summer drizzle, which is so very characteristic of New England, to Fly’s brand new community garden, where they were given aspirations of contemplative, spiraling pathways between the soon to emerge sprouts.

Fly, putting on her most adorable, rain drop speckled face, queried David, “Aren’t you glad you married me?” He responded affirmatively.

Tired and slightly wet and very hungry, they made their way back to their apartment, to have some dinner and relax and watch some quality science videos.

The evening ended somewhat unpleasantly, at least for David. Fly stayed up later than her usual bedtime, to post about it in her blog.

I won’t mention Aretha.

Published June 21st, 2007

Damn, I guess I just did, didn’t I?

Anyway, I have a somewhat less philosophical, and somewhat more human-centric thought for you this time...

I just had a discussion with my husband — about physics, telephones, sound waves, and such — and my husband started to get frustrated and stressed because he wasn’t able to explain his thoughts in a way that I could understand. A common scenario, I imagine. (The misunderstanding part, at least. Though I imagine that my readers are relatively clever, and at least occasionally get into similarly frustrating discussions about geeky sciency stuff, too.) His frustration turned into anger. And then I started to get stressed, too. So I offered him an option for de-stressing both of us. That option was to respectfully and honestly say that he didn’t know another way to explain things right then. He replied that he couldn’t do that because he didn’t know what I meant by “respectful”. Which seemed to me to be a reasonably respectful and honest, if somewhat unexpected, response, and so I happily let him toddle off to bed. I then took the opportunity of my time alone to do some good old fashioned thinking about what I



mean by “respect”. (By the way, thanks Honey, for giving me a good excuse to pontificate, and for inspiring some material for my blog!)

So, what I came up with is that respect is the act of honoring each party’s wishes. It’s a simple acknowledgment of what our perfectly reasonable intentions are in a given situation. For example, I wanted to understand how a telephone worked (including the gruesome details of how something as beautiful and diverse as sound can be so unceremoniously squished into just two boring old dimensions, and whether or not light is made of atoms, in the same way that sound is) and my husband wanted to help me find answers to my questions while also wanting to get some sleep. A respectful solution to our mutual frustration would have been to acknowledge all those goals, and admit that the reality was that at least some of those goals were not going to be met, at least not for a while. (And that’s ok! Not all of our goals in life have to be met right now, if ever. If all of our goals were miraculously met right now, we’d become instantly bored, probably fatally so. It’s the continual striving for at least some of our goals that keeps us happy.)

What’s so great about respect is that people can have conflicting goals and still be respectful. Respect may not solve the problem of not meeting the conflicting goals, but it does offer the opportunity for friendship, which is yet another of our goals in life. So respect is definitely useful, for those of us who happen to be human, at least.

The past fall, to Dragonfly’s relief, David had finally quit his comfortable but not that challenging or rewarding job out in the suburbs, and after a making it through the winter with the strange mix of relaxation and anxiety he had turned up in exactly the right place at exactly the right time to show off his geekery skills to someone who believed that MIT could indeed use such a helpful

and useful and friendly person in the library services department at the school. And by late June, the MIT people finally got themselves sorted out and offered him the position, officially. It wasn't David's dream job, but it was more than decent, and was also close by, and more interesting, and paid quite well right from the start, and even came with a built in best friend SCUL pilot as a coworker.

To Fly, the world was starting to feel, on a somewhat more long term basis, solid and whole and welcoming, and unquestionably not boring.

-  
FUGUE  
-

*“Sorry I’m being so weird”  
~ David June 13, 2007*

Dragonfly really was feeling very strong and purposeful and inspired and so very ready for amazing things to happen. She felt finally comfortable with her marriage, felt proud of her continuing work as a philosopher and internet-based counselor, felt good about her prospects working with some of the local non-profit organizations, and felt happy that things seemed to be headed upwards, slowly, but surely, for her and her beloved.

The universe had also given her a welcome, slightly early, birthday present recently.

.  
knock knock.

Published May 16th, 2007

There’s a rather unusual magician in the UK named Derren Brown who works with intellectual and emotional illusions as well as the traditional physical ones. He’s currently got a tv show on British television called Trick or Treat where he has volunteers pick a card that says either “trick” or “treat” on it.

The volunteers blindly pick a card, and then get a highly personalized and shockingly powerful bit of magic played

on them, based on which card they picked. It's all very amusing and creative and bizarre.

The real kicker is that the cards actually say both "trick" and "treat" depending on how you look at them.

No matter what surprises life hands you, there are always ways to look at things so that you can see both the scary trick and the delightful treat.

It's up to you to decide which one to see. What would you think if you nodded off while getting your picture taken in a photo booth near your home, and woke up in a photo booth in the middle of a busy market in Morocco?

It was similar to her understanding of how you never know how something will effect other things in the long run. Like how saving the world by turning all the weapons into robot squirrels could lead to planetary exile, which could, in turn, lead to discovering a whole new alien civilization that was even better than Earth. And this idea was also related to the idea of impermanence — the reality that there is an absolute guarantee of rhythmic change in the directions of life. Up, down, up, down, up, down, on and on.

The ever growing bag of magic spells for the mind that Dragonfly had been amassing was probably the biggest factor in her being able to survive during the next several years of intense darkness. The unpleasant tricks life was playing on her, with some effort, could always be transformed into at least somewhat pleasant treats. At least when she really needed them to, for the sake of her fragile heart.

At one point a while back, Fly had somewhat nonchalantly told David that if he wanted to stay in overly expensive Somerville, he'd have to figure out how to make it work on his own.

And somewhere, deep in the dungeons of his amygdala, maybe he took that far too literally than was good for anyone.

.  
you are here  
Published June 3rd, 2007

I remembered my dying fly again.

And I had another thought, about my thoughts, about the fly...

It's not just important to be aware of and attentive to all of your thoughts. It's also important to realize that you will only act on the thoughts that turn out to be the right ones.

Yep, I absolutely guarantee you that the decisions you've made so far were the correct ones.

And do you know how I know that the decisions you made were the right ones? Because you made them.

(You can try to argue with reality, but reality will always be right in the end. Right?)

The decisions you made in the past may not end up being the right decisions you would want to make in the future, but they were absolutely the right ones when you made them, simply because those were the decisions you needed to make to get you to where you are right now.

And isn't where you are right now, reading this, exactly where you need to be?

.  
The right decision doesn't necessarily make anyone happy in the short term, though.

When July hit, David started his new job in the bowels of one of MIT's most ancient buildings. It seemed to be exactly what the couple needed to relax and feel safe, physically, once again.

On the first weekend in July, Fly chose to remain home while David explored a world very new to him, that of geeky artist hippy types making a joyful mess out in nature. It was like Burning Man, but northern New England style, with trees and rain, rather than dust and wind.

It had been Fly's idea to go, with the geeky bicycle chopper gang she and her beloved were in. But then an uncomfortable fear of having to compete for her honey's attention with the far cooler people they were planning to go with directed her towards a different path. She didn't want to be so far from her protected little nest in Somerville while also feeling abandoned. One she could take, but both was too much for her. It was not an especially terrifying image, but still, it was one that she believed was worth avoiding. When she initially told David she didn't want to go, he sort of crumbled, weirdly. He literally lay down on the middle of the hardwood floor of their apartment. He looked broken. Fly didn't understand. What was going on? Apparently, some beautiful, strong, loving thing inside him had snapped into pieces, and he was no longer capable of supporting his own weight in the world. Fly didn't know what to do. She tried to reach out to him, but there was nothing. He'd simply shut down. He lay there for a while. Eyes closed. Empty.

How can you repair a leak when the hole remains unseen?

If he really didn't want to be apart from her, couldn't he have simply stayed home with her? Or, if he really wanted her to come with him, why not just say so?

He said nothing.

She responded with nothing.

Things got better after that. He was excited about planning for his trip, organizing with the other folks who were going, and also with finally starting his new job. Fly remained focused on her own work, still hoping that he would choose her, rather than them, in one way or another, but, still, not feeling too terrible about it all. If nothing else, she hoped that he'd enjoy his vacation, and that

she'd get some quality time for her latest project, and that they'd then reunite and everything would be fine.

The path Fly had originally chosen for David remained fixed, as did her alternate plan to stay, and early one shiny morning he got ready to ship out with the rest of the gang and their enthusiasm, hipness, luminescent art, and gateway meat (bacon). Fly helped him pack, and when Skunk, their fearless leader, showed up to collect David and his stuff, David enthusiastically told him that the couple was going to go camping by themselves very soon. Which was a surprise to Fly. But a not unwelcome one. David had clearly taken it to heart when she'd told him that she really did want to spend time with him, and go camping, just without the competition. So this was good news to her. And the couple parted lovingly, with deep hugs and kisses and smiles and well wishes.

This was the first time they were apart, for longer than a day or so, since they were first married. That had been more than four years ago.

It wasn't that they intentionally planned to always be together, it just happened that way, up to that point.

Fly spent her alone time wisely.

Fly's beloved, apparently, did not.

At the end of the long weekend, Fly lay in their first-large-shared-purchase-of-their-marriage bed waiting longingly and passionately for her honey to return, and even after succumbing to sleep periodically, she still spent most of the dark hours lying there imagining being able to embrace him again, lovingly, and heatedly. Having now actually been apart for an extended time was, to her, exiting, because it meant that her adoration of him could really become embodied, as it was allowed to accumulate, rather than being expressed in smaller, more regular installments.

But for her beloved, it was too scary. It brought back too many memories. There was too much history of uncertainly. Too much past loss. Too much of everything, all rushing terrifyingly through his mind. To the point where his only option was to desperately latch on to anything that seemed to offer even the slightest bit of friction, for a more stable grasp on reality. It might have been

completely magnificent, as a spiritual awakening from a stage of enlightenment that Buddhists call the Dark Night, if only the direction that the seeming solidity that he found himself gripping onto hadn't ended up being an illusion, which pulled him far, far away from his aspirations of marriage and commitment and sanity, and off to an impenetrably dark place. The man who'd begun the weekend with the story of himself as David, the thoughtful, intelligent, and kind man who had a clever, creative, and passionate partner as his wife, with whom he was going to build a flourishing home and community some day soon, was suddenly immersed in an environment he was highly unaccustomed to — one filled with unfettered artificial wildness. Rather than the guiding rhythms of authentic natural wildness which truly can support a healthy ascent out of the dangerous depths of a mental crisis, he was confronted with the manufactured rhythms of blaring synthetic trance beats competing with a forest full of arbitrarily blinking light emitting diodes, and rubbing up against some illicit inorganic Ecstasy (which his system was entirely unfamiliar with), all rounded out with yet another fallen soul grasping for anything that wouldn't slip away from her own desperate manipulations. The man named David simply disappeared.

Dragonfly's beloved had no chance. No choice.

After his decision, very much a right one, to seek solidity, he had no more freedom available to him. He couldn't make a right decision any more. There were no decisions left.

Dragonfly didn't know all this. At least not for a long time. All she knew was that David didn't come home to her. Something came back, eventually, but it wasn't him, and it didn't stay. It showed up the next day, mumbled acknowledgement at Fly's presence, then sat down in their bathtub, with water spaying down it's body, looking, sounding, and acting utterly alien. It dressed, and left for work. It tried coming back home a few more times, at night, after work, sleeping, or at least pretending to sleep, then getting up and leaving for work again the next morning.

She was stupefied.



After several inexplicable days, the thing that came back finally repeated for her the story that had been given to it.

Fly had guessed the superficial generalities of it by then. He fleshed out the details.

In the middle of it, neither of them knew the deeper truth, that David was still inside this thing, trapped and terrified, under an ugly fiction that had been all that was available when he'd hypothesized that he had to give up on who he really was and where he really wanted to go.

Mental illness is having thoughts that tell you to do the opposite of what you want.

The lovers were now doomed to be dragged into a long and arduous series of self-destructive events that would turn the couple's marriage into something of a freakish soap opera, for which there rapidly grew a small, but devoted fandom. (Eventually with some bad fanfic and, later, some exceptionally terrible, anonymous slashfic.)

Most of the details of that drama are the part of the story not worth revisiting. At least not here and now.

However, the beginning of this unpleasant genuine fabrication of a chapter in their book was notable as the tipping point at which Fly discovered that the cult of the disposable human was one everyone might be better off if she, at least, escaped. If David was to be rescued from the false belief that he and his dreams were not worthy of protection (by the world, or even by himself), maybe if she could crawl out from under that belief herself, she could pull him up behind her.

She marked the very first few days of her flight for freedom with a tattoo. She boldly gave the world a new message, one that refuted the previous version both she and David had been given, which claimed that the best parts of them were disposable. Fly's new message said, proudly and simply, "I am for you." on her chest, for all too see. Later she added some poetry to further elucidate the yous for whom she had been made...

.

I am for you

And by “I” I mean my intellect,  
my thoughts, my creative mind,  
my focus on the future.

I do not mean my body is for you,  
because I cannot speak for her,  
as my body speaks for herself,  
sometimes clumsily  
sometimes elegantly  
sometimes weakly,  
sometimes with great strength  
and always most independently  
and wordlessly.

I also do not mean my heart is for you,  
because my heart has already been bequeathed,  
entrusted to her beloved DPM  
for as long as she beats.

So  
My thoughts are for you.

And by “you” I mean the world  
and all its living beings,  
great and small  
ugly and beautiful  
simple and complex.

So  
My thinking is for all life.  
My body is for herself.  
And my heart is for my love.

.

This was the first crucial step to healing. If she was to make any progress, she had to let go of the long held and exceptionally

false rumor that she and her highest goals didn't deserve to be loved and cared for. It would have been easy for her to fall into that old habit, especially given the situation. But this time, her own well being wasn't the only one being threatened, her beloved husband's was as well. This was no time to wallow. At least not for any more time than was absolutely required. This was a time to be proactive. She'd been trained as a creative activist, and her marriage was a cause that was seriously worth crusading for!

A few weeks after the horrible events of the July 4th weekend, Fly tried and failed to respectfully and passionately promote her marital-commitment-leads-to-bliss cause to her beloved. After realizing her utter failure to rescue him directly, she sent out an email to the people in their community — their closest friends and family — because that was what you do, when advocating in some kind of movement.

I love you all. Absolutely. You are perfect. And so is life, even though it's hard to see sometimes...

Behind all hate is love. Hate is simply the instinct to push people away when we love them but know that we can't give them what they need. We push them away from us and, hopefully, towards wherever they are supposed to be.

We don't have to use hate to help our loved ones get what they need, but we find ourselves resorting to it when we don't know any other way. David and I clearly didn't know any other way, especially earlier tonight. We hated the other because our love was so strong that we couldn't stand to see them suffer any longer, and we had to set them free, pretty darned aggressively :-)

David once told me that he'd dreamt that I pushed him out a window because it was the only way he'd be able to fly. Well, I pushed him out that window a few hours ago. I pushed him hard. And it hurt both of us. But now I know he's going to fly.

And he pushed me, too, and now I'm going to fly as well, it seems.

Who knew?

We did the wrong things for the right reasons.

One of the things she was trying to do, somewhat consciously, was to present her best possible self to the situation, not just so that others would see how decent a person she was, and not just so that David would be spared from being harmed by others who felt he was in need of being punished, but also because it was the only thing she could do to keep herself upright at a time when she would have otherwise slipped into a very nasty abyss. This was by far the worst thing that had ever happened to her, and since previous great losses had profoundly devastated her, if she was to make it through this absolutely unprecedented erosion of her soul's vitality, she'd have to approach it all in an entirely exceptional way. So every undulation of her conscious awareness was propelling her towards a perspective of her reality where everything could be seen as entirely appropriate in the grand scheme of things, in the same way that the anti-human plots of wayward robot squirrels could end up being just what humanity needed to find the solutions to its greatest problems.

What Fly didn't realize was that this sense of herself as having a perfect life story was, finally, a view from the future, which her brain was allowing her to blurrily see, just this once, as an emergency fail-safe. And, what she really didn't realize was that the view she was given, was far more distant in her future than she could possibly believe.

So, while her life fell apart around her, and she found herself, yet again, waiting (though this time, she was awake), Dragonfly did the only thing she could: use her time wisely. She floated there, taking in the scenery, and reporting on her discoveries. Her brain was keeping itself busy in a very different corner of awareness. As her thoughts moved perpendicular to the volume of space that all her previous thoughts had been contained by, she found herself both attracting others, and repelling them, at the same time, as they

became curious as to this strange new version of the woman they'd casually known before as a fairly innocuous and unsubstantial being, but that when they came in for a closer look, found themselves confused and bothered by the visions she was describing. Her seeming freedom from stifling societal norms offered a refreshing oasis to so many of the frustrated, lonely, and bored, who's cherished abilities were being severely underused by their environment. So she drew a crowd. But because she couldn't offer her audience any guarantees, and wasn't even really able to offer them passage to wherever she was, they heckled her mercilessly, while continuing to follow her around in the desperate hope that maybe she would finally offer them the freedom they were seeking. Or at least a map.

The more Fly investigated human behavior, the more she understood. Hate is the intense desire for connection, combined with an intense frustration of the lack of knowledge of how to make that connection hold: a forward, "YES!" movement from one part of the brain, along with a backward "SOMETHING ISN'T RIGHT!" warning to put on the breaks, from another part of the brain, both acting in concert, causing jerky actions.

The magic bag of mind tools Fly had collected was fully in use, for she now not only had to struggle with David's demons, but her new followers' demons, and her family's and friends' demons as well.

There was hypnosis, Byron Katie's inquiry process, audio brain entrainment, Buddhism, Alan Watts, breathing exercises, a totally raw vegan diet, Psychology Today, lots of British sci-fi and fantasy stories (the final Harry Potter book came out right around then and she listened to the audio book, with her favorite, Stephen Fry, narrating), and all the therapeutic writing she could muster, all being employed regularly. And there was the lushly growing community garden plot which was simply perfect, and which soon contained a beautiful mini spiral labyrinth of repurposed antique bricks, for her mind and body to get comfortably lost in.

Fly used both her professional blog and her more personal online journal to connect with the rest of the human world, continuing to try to reach out not just to the small circle of weirdos

she found herself in, but beyond them, too, as she worked through things in her mind and sought something, anything, that would help them all find a way out of their immobility.

As time passed, even more of the lingering attachments Dragonfly had, to her old beliefs about what you were supposed to do with your life, who you were supposed to be, and how you were supposed to behave — which had gotten her dangerously close to the point of complete dismissal of her true self — were tossed out of her neurons, dismantled into their constituent chemicals, and put out in the recycling bin of the brain. These beliefs were no longer at all useful to her, and room had to be made for something new, and better. With this letting go of the problematic weight of the unfit ideas, her thoughts were set adrift to explore the edges of nature's brilliant boundaries. At those edges, she found stories from humans, and other Earthlings, who'd discovered ways of living in the universe that worked more collaboratively with the physical laws that existed in their part of reality.

She immersed herself in studies of the psychology of love and anger even more than ever before, and took a major intellectual and emotional detour into the fringes of an already fringe science of Neurolinguistic Programming (NLP for short) and its most eccentric and controversial founder, Richard Bandler.

The mainstream psychology path mostly led her to dead ends, where people who had suffered while in the company of those struggling with mental illness had sought to both heal and harm their companions through a bizarre mixture of blame and compassion and ineffective prescriptive acronyms. (Fly even came up with her own acronymic approach — HOPE: Helping, Observing, Perspectives, and Energy — which was, perhaps, a bit better than the ones that sprung out from those who were offering the mixed messages of “I love you, you asshole.”) But there were a few useful tidbits from the mainstream route.

The NLP path was far more practical, it turned out, and at least offered Fly a mental playground where nearly everyone was not only enthusiastic, but also honestly believed that together they could solve any problem, even hers. (This was a stark contrast to the mainstream psychology tactics, which Fly tried at a later point, where she and David had finally managed to get assigned to a

couples' therapist through MIT's counseling services only to have their new therapist cancel their first appointment and flat out refuse to treat them because she claimed that she couldn't work with people who had Borderline Personality Disorder. Which, Fly bemoaned, is not only the worst thing you can do someone who's got abandonment issues, but is also a pretty large indicator of Borderline behavior itself. Presumably the therapist had gone into therapy as a way to deal with her own demons, and hadn't had much, or any, success, but kept at it, since it paid well.) The NLP community was even more of a breath of fresh air compared to Buddhism, where the goal turned out to be more of a hard won temporary reprieve from suffering, than any truly effective cure for it. Though Fly was ok with that less-than-ideal goal at the time, so she also kept up her Buddhist studies and community participation as well, since she had plenty of time to kill and didn't really know any better.

Plus, Buddhism was at least a reminder that David's pretending not to want to be married thing that he was doing was impermanent. It was simply not going to last. That's the way life flows, she'd learned. Life was always ups and downs and ups and downs, on and on, until the end. Dinner parties and dictators, angry squirrels and alternate universes, marital commitments and infidelity. And since this was not the end of either of their lives, things had to change, eventually. So she would stick it out, and do what she was trained to do: wait.

Her local library finally lent her a copy of the Douglas Hofstadter book, *I am a Strange Loop*, which she'd been so excited about months before, and which did indeed help point her in another new direction, where she could use her appreciation of all the beautiful experiences that David had already given her before, to feel more emotionally fulfilled and complete now, despite her present, physically abandoned, state. This new direction of thinking encouraged her to use her recently learned skills of expanding a single point in time out to a fuller multidimensional volume, so that it could take up more space in the emptiness that was her present life. The book itself was immense and dense, and so, beyond the spiritual and philosophical inspiration it gave her, it also simply provided a lot of mental distraction, as she had to work long hours

to comprehend Hofstadter's complex and meandering trail, skirting around the What Might Be of his logical contemplations.

Fly's own philosophy work now merged the two extremes of her need to understand and solve broad social problems, and the need to understand her own very specific personal problems and find possible solutions. This new dual mission gave her some healthy direction, and extra motivation. (Not that she really needed it, but she at least made use of it while it was there.)

1 is 0 and 0 is 1, and everything in between is fractions

Published July 18th, 2007

Brace yourselves, this one is for the folks who want to hover on the edge of understanding absolutely everything, nothing, nonduality, and the infinite. If it doesn't make sense, you're normal and healthy, and don't worry about it. If you do understand it, then welcome to my world!

Before I get too deep, I want to point out that the ancient mathematicians and philosophers who came up with the ideas of 1 and 0 got it mixed up when they tried to write their thoughts down on paper (or stone? or dirt?). The idea of "one" is wholeness and fullness, and is perfectly represented by a circle — O — not a line. As for the idea of "zero", an empty space — — would be most appropriate, but that might make things a little awkward when writing mathematical formulas. And a line — | — is reasonably un-full, since it's such a darned skinny little thing. (Maybe this backwardness explains why I was awesome at the ideas behind complex math stuff, but absolutely terrible at adding and subtracting...)

Ok, so now that we've got that straightened out, I want to tell you the really interesting stuff...

So, we've already got our two extremes of emptiness versus fullness (zero and one). But what about all the other stuff? The Universe isn't purely binary. If it was it would



be really boring, with everything happening all at once or nothing ever happening at all. The Universe is a third state, not emptiness or fullness but somewhere between emptiness and fullness.

If you think about the numbers between zero and one, in math, you'll note that they are fractions. So if the Universe is between emptiness and fullness, and if emptiness means zero and fullness means one, then the Universe is made up of fractions.

I am one of those fractions, as are you. Which helps explain why you are always craving more, it's because you are not complete, you are just a fraction! You look to other fractions — other matter and energy — to join with to make you feel more complete. And as you take in more stuff (fractions) — physically, intellectually, and emotionally — you grow, and become a larger fraction of the whole.

But you never find completeness as long as you are alive. Because completeness is absolute fullness and fullness is the end of the line of the Universe. There is simply nothing higher than pure fullness.

But wait! In math, there are definitely numbers beyond one (which we've been calling "fullness")! What gives?

Ok, here's the skinny: We know that we've got zero (emptiness) and one (fullness) and the stuff in between, which are fractions (somethings). What more could there be? What could be beyond emptiness and/or beyond fullness?

In other words, what about the rest of the "whole" numbers, you know, 2, 3, 4, 5, 42, and so on?

I'm not entirely sure.

I suspect it has something to do with The Infinite. I suspect that the universe is, itself, a fraction, a something, in a much larger... er... something. And that larger something is a fraction of an even larger something. And so on in an infinite progression. Or possibly in a infinite loop, as suggested in Douglas Hofstadter's recent book, *I am a Strange Loop*.

But I'm really not sure.

So, stay tuned, for the continuing saga of the Dragonfly theory of Life, the Universe, and Everything!

There was quite a bit of messing about with the universe being *one of three* in Fly's brain. She expounded upon the three elements of nothingness, everythingness, and that sort of everythingness in between that she kept encountering in her mind wanderings.

She postulated. Nothingness is really the three spacial dimensions. That's where matter comes from. Everythingness, on the other hand, is really time. So between time and energy lives life, the universe, and everything (as we know it).

And she made passing mention of the three types of people looking at the classic theoretical glass and it's questionable level of liquid:

- Nihilists - believe that things begin and end with nothing
- "Thingists" - believe only the current something that they are experiencing
- Optimists - believe in the perfect love of the Universe as all embracing everything

Her brain had gotten tired of seeing things in only black-or-white, and voraciously devoured anything that offered some color, some diversity, some mix of what was and wasn't, so that there might be found a third option between David's destructive dalliance being good or bad.

Fly had total confidence in her community, and was quite sure that with just a little encouragement, they would be able to redirect

David away from the illusion, and back towards where he truly wanted to be heading. So, along with her more broad castings of requests for help that she seeded in her journal and blog, she also spoke to a few people on a more individual basis, looking for them to represent the couple's best interests to David, in a way that wasn't whatever Fly had already tried with so little luck. Fly figured that David's other friends and family would be able to show him how to sort things out better than she could, given his tendency to lose all perspective when she was around. These other folks who presumably cared for them both could bridge the gap between where David had gotten stranded and where Fly was, safely in their comfy home, so that David could cross the chasm more easily and get back, mostly intact.

This was where things got really, really ugly, for everyone.

Not only did David's friends and family not help him find his way out of the darkness, but it turned out that they often made things much worse for him, and in at least some of the folks she had reached out to the whole mess triggered their own insecurities and demons, which left Fly suffering from serious backlash. And she, in her own deepening frustration, returned the fire.

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Why are we a disposable society of disposable people?  
2007-07-23 21:39:00

So my question is, at what point did we, as a society, start treating marriages (and spouses) as disposable? At what point did the promise to love, honor, and cherish, etc. in sickness and in health, etc. till death do us part, etc. become an empty and patently false sentiment?

Maybe it had something to do with plastics...

But I'm not plastic. I'm not disposable.

It's one thing for David to get worried and leave me because he's afraid it won't work out. I get that. Running

away is a natural human defense mechanism to escape from the fear of being hurt, or hurting someone else. It's also what David has convinced himself he needs to do.

But it's an entirely different thing for the people around him to encourage him to run away from his commitment, instead of saying that this marriage thing is a serious relationship and that the right thing to do is to get some advice on how to make it work from people who've made it work.

He may still choose to dispose of me, even with the message of what the right thing to do is, but at least he would be getting good advice about how to have a successful relationship. Know what I mean?

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Following that, Fly mapped her tumultuous path of frustration and discovery through the lens of Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, which she'd been spending much of her time researching and clarifying, noting that it was something exceptionally useful that mainstream, modern psychology seemed to have forgotten. She shared her mental cartogram on her journal for all to see. (She used David's geeky gang name, as that was what he was known as on the social website they all hung around on at the time.)

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Where am I?

2007-07-26 08:18:00

It occurred to me that throughout all this Pywaket-leaving-me-and-throwing-himself-into-another-relationship mess, I've been going from Super Me mode, where everything is perfect and beautiful — where I completely see the big picture (so big that I can see the whole Universe, and even beyond a bit) — to “Oh god! This is terrible! And the world is so absolutely wrong!” to, “Ok, what do I need to do to get him back, and get us into a more healthy and honest and open-hearted marriage.” to

“All I can do is be the best person I can be, and act the way I want everyone else to act, so I’ll just keep reminding him that I love him unconditionally, will be there for him whenever he needs me, and let him do what he thinks he needs to do.”

And why all this crazy, seemingly “bipolar”, thinking and behavior? Because I’m vacillating all over the spectrum of development levels. On Maslow’s pyramid, you could say that I’m mostly hanging out at rock-bottom, in survival mode, where I’m focusing on taking care of my most basic physical needs. I’ve gone raw, and I’m eating better than I’ve ever eaten before, getting plenty of exercise, drinking lots of water, resting when I need to, etc. I’m so damn healthy! (I lost 25–30 or so pounds, from 215-ish, at least, when he left me, to 189, this morning.) And I’m sleeping really well, waking up early and feeling totally energetic (rare for me!).

Feeling that good, and meeting my basic physical needs lets me move up to the next level of Maslow’s pyramid: Love and Belongingness. That’s when I crave Pywaket, and feel either hopeless and angry at him for being such an asshole to me and others, or desperately try to do whatever I can to get him back. And since neither of those are working so well for getting his love back, this stage is obviously a tough one for me right now. The person who made the commitment to loving me has (at least temporarily) abandoned me, leaving me feeling almost completely empty of love, and mostly stuck here. Fortunately, mom is great, and others have offered a tiny bit of love (which mostly consists of understanding and support), but it’s still not really enough.

Though occasionally, (especially when I realize that Pywaket does indeed love me very, very much, even if he’s not acting on it right now), there is enough love and belongingness that I can move into Maslow’s next stage: Self-efficacy. This is when I start to have at least some

semblance of effective ideas and actions. This is the stage when I realize that I need to be the best person I can be, and follow all my higher values about non-attachment, and using love to guide your life, and “I am for you”, and so on. And that’s when I start to honestly feel comfortable with things, even if I know that they are wrong. I can see the good, even in the bad, at least a little bit.

And then, on very rare occasions, especially when I do some of my really powerful tricks, like the meditation /hypnosis/NLP/audio-EMDR stuff (or just go for a nice long walk). I can make it way back up to where I was before he pulled this crap on us, which was really high in the “Transcendence” part of Maslow’s pyramid, where I had lots of understanding and wisdom and ability to work with the universe to help the world be a better, healthier, happier place. And when I get back up there, it’s amazing, and probably very scary for others to witness, since it’s so foreign, in a world of fear-mongering and greed and anger and hopelessness (more than 1 out of 4 people now suffer from depression at some point in their adult lives). I’m certainly still not perfect, and definitely come up with some strange ideas when I’m up there, that may or may not be true (I’m never attached to my ideas, and I’m always looking for more useful and realistic theories). But this is clearly a better place to be, than struggling with all the other stuff down in the bottom of the pyramid. I can be kinder to myself, to Pywaket, and to everyone else when I’m here, and that’s my goal in life — to be kind, to be helpful, and to be always open to learning more about the universe, and especially human nature.

Right now, however, I’m probably in stage 3 of Maslow’s pyramid (stage 4 in my own spiral theory), and I’m trying to be effective at being a good person and getting Pywaket back where he belongs, with me, and I’m hoping that he will make the right decision finally, and come back to make good on his commitment to loving me and being my partner in life, so that I can quickly and healthfully

move back up to a more stable life where I'm supposed to be, doing amazing things and making the world a better place.

So yeah, that's where I am right now.

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Most of the responses from the people she'd previously considered intelligent and more than capable of helping David out were negative, with cautionary comments about not being able to "go back" and urging her to give up on him if he's "renege on his promise" to Fly.

The community that Fly had put so much faith in to help her and David wasn't there for her. Of if it was, it didn't know how to help. It was, at best, jerky.

It was all so unhelpful. And unexpected. Fly felt even lonelier. It took so much out of her already depleted internal energy to have to explain and defend her dreams and goals and wisdom about how to get there, gleaned from insights that were offered to her from a place that clearly was very far from the place from which most of the people around her resided, the place from which Fly had thankfully escaped, but hadn't realized so many others were still stuck in.

So she pushed her awareness ever outward, seeking new perspectives. And wherever she ended up she would ask all the questions she could conceive of.

And she got the very occasional answer.

And the even more rare, good answer.

Along with a photo of a sand Valentine that she'd crafted on the beach, on the day of their first wedding, Fly posted one of the good answers she'd found.

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A heart made of sand may be transient and weak, but the human heart is very strong and lasting

Published July 27th, 2007

Psychology Today has an article that talks about a more mainstream approach to understanding why people might run away from a perfectly good relationship. It's because they've been trained (by neglectful or abusive parents, friends, or others) to expect rejection. Psych Today calls this "rejection-sensitivity". And when someone expects rejection, and the pain that comes with it, they vigilantly look for the signs of the impending doom. And because no one can ever be perfectly attentive to them, they find lots of possible signs of rejection all over the place. And when they've collected a bunch of these signs, they skedaddle. Or explode. Or close up their heart. Or cheat. Or whatever else they can think of to escape the relationship to protect themselves from the "inevitable" rejection.

So what's the cure for this sad malady? Acceptance. Love. Patience. Understanding. Anything but more rejection.

In an email to Fly, David described some of the demons that had encased his heart while he was up in Vermont.

*"You wish I was less angry about the state of the world. I wish you were more angry."*

*"You think you can change the world. I think you are crazy for thinking that and wish you'd just give up."*

*"I don't think you should wait around for me to come back to you. I won't say it will never happen, but it doesn't seem at all likely."*

He knew that his demons were destructive, but he couldn't tame them.

*"I am very, very sorry I have hurt you.  
I hope you will forgive me."*



The question Fly had was, was his more global sense of hopelessness a symptom of his personal hopelessness, or the other way around? Or was the whole set of hopelessnesses a result of something as yet unobserved by her?

In his flight from himself, David also tried to get people to stop calling him David, and instead only use his SCUL gang name (which he'd originally adopted with the belief that it was the name of a medieval weapon, but actually turned out to be a Shakespearian cat, which sort of suited him in an ironic way, in that he claimed to hate Shakespeare but loved cats). For a while Dragonfly acquiesced, but eventually, she realized that it was "enabling" him in that unhealthy, co-dependent way, and that the artificial name he'd given himself was simply the name of the monstrous facade that was suppressing his soul, and which was very much a lie. So Fly mostly still used his birth name. Or, more accurately, she mostly used her romantic nickname for him, and only used his birth name when talking to people for whom romance was really not a priority.

When she talked to a few of her more aware and awake friends, lamenting how David had gotten lost while up in Vermont, some of them admitted that they had actually encouraged him to do so, believing he was merely engaging in a fairly healthy form of creative experimentation, which had been the primary purpose of the event. They only realized afterwards how his choices had not been made from a healthy mindset, and they apologized for enabling him in what turned out to be harmful, addictive escapism. This was cold comfort, but any comfort was very much welcomed. Fly offered advice for all who wanted to help, saying that David needs to hear from as many people around him that the sooner he starts making better, more positive, more right decisions (according to his own meaning of "right"), that lead him to better understand how be in a successful relationship, how to take responsibility for his mistakes (hurting people) in healthy ways that make him feel better about himself and the world, how to make amends for the harm he's caused, and how to ask others to do the same for the harm they've caused him, the happier he'll be about himself and everyone else. She shared lists of things that might provide the necessary wisdom. She crossed her fingers.

Dragonfly continued to imagine that if she found the right answers, and shared them with those around her, they'd suddenly get it, and everything would be fine. She truly believed that she could solve the problem by teaching everyone else how to solve the problem. Once they understood, someone, somewhere between David and her, would make things right. It was the only thing she had left, after trying everything else. All her various attempts to do something proactive had only made David more scared, and annoyed everyone else. So what else could she do?

Dragonfly took a personality test on one of the websites she lingered on, and it declared her an INTP - The Architect. Her best qualities in life were, she was told, a desire to "sculpt the world around you... and fix problems creatively", but not by directing others arrogantly, and instead by informing them. Yes. So very yes.

But she wasn't always her best self. And when things got really scary, she, herself, discovered who she was at her worst. As she fell into her own deep, dark place, she found herself grasping onto a story that was not very loving or kind, and the very opposite of intelligent. In allowing herself to be inserted into that unfortunate story she made a huge, terrible, insane mess.

Not yet ready to give up on being proactive, Fly followed some monstrously bad advice about "how to stop a divorce", and let herself get pulled into the mosh pit of her well-meaning, fascinating, amusing, and even-more-lost-than-David-and-Dragonfly-when-it-came-to-healthy-relationships heckler audience.

So, in September, while David was at Burning Man, cheating on Fly, Fly cheated on David.

-  
EXTEMPORANEOUS  
-

*“When you feel bad, you think bad.  
So when you feel bad, just feel.  
Feel until the feeling is gone.  
Then you can think.”  
~ Dragonfly*

David thought it was too dangerous to feel. There was a lifetime of feeling bad inside him, and it seemed like if he allowed himself to feel, it would hurt more than he could bear. Or, it would hurt others. Or, most likely both. So, he thought badly, and avoided feeling. And it hurt everyone. But not as much as he thought it would hurt everyone if he felt. Maybe he was right. Or maybe not.

Fly felt, and thought, and felt, and thought. Trying to think and feel her way out of a terrible situation. Then, when that didn't work, she felt and thought some more. For a very, very, very long time.

The two of them did what they could, given the limited resources they had, and they tried their best to love one another and themselves. There was just too much getting in the way. And things kept sliding backwards into hopelessness for David. And the more he slid downward, the more his psychological demons, and some of the messy humans around him, fed him more of that artificial story about who he was supposed to be, and in the process it buried the authentic David, and his greatest dreams, ever deeper.

Fly never gave up, though. Never. When people continued to question her about why she didn't just bail on her beloved, she

felt obligated to continue to try to explain her very good reasons in great detail. It probably was a waste of time trying to help others understand, though, since most of those listening honestly weren't actually interested, but it helped her, at least.

Fly catalogued all the important things David had given her, on every level of her self, and diagrammed how much being with him, and staying committed to him even when he seemed to not be able to commit to her, was beneficial to her in every way that was important. What she was doing what scientifically proven to be the right thing. Also, when someone you love is sick, you want to help them. Period.

Through sheer persistence, Dragonfly managed to organize herself and a small, but significant, portion of her environment around her, so that she could relocate herself into a small, sparse bedroom at a lonely Tibetan Buddhist center in the middle of the mountains of northern California, for the winter, while she waited out what she hoped would be just a few more months of David's messiness. Fly would offer herself as a volunteer at the center in exchange for room and board. She hoped to find a community of people there who could help her personally, while she helped them professionally. David even agreed to escort her out there, and while she was so very appreciative of that gesture, he was mostly miserable-to-terrified during the whole trip, which made her horribly frustrated. There was one massively insane fight after they got into San Francisco, which continued, more mutedly, pretty much all the way up the coast as Fly drove the rental car up to her new, temporary, home in the hills. Once they got there he calmed down, and she was quite happy.

At Padmasambhava!  
2007-12-02 14:58:00

We're here! We're both alive, and in reasonably good moods this morning after some very up and down times.

The landscape and garden are beautiful. It's very quiet

(except for the wind and its friend the windchimes). And the people here are very kind and encouraging and understanding. There are just the two folks who run the place here right now, with the Rinpoche, his wife, and their baby off in Nepal and India for a couple of weeks. There won't be any big events until around New Years, when they have a traditional Tibetan cleanse of some sort. Until then, I'll be helping out with daily chores, prepping for the event, and helping them fix up the place. It's an old military prison. Security seems to have consisted of being out in the middle of nowhere about 6 miles or so up and down 1700 feet of an incredibly winding road from even the tiniest bit of "town" of Cazadero. (I can't wait to bike it!) The town has a general store, a post office, an automotive supply place, two churches, and that's pretty much it. The ocean is a couple of miles to the west, but you can't just go there easily, and instead you have to go about 6 miles or so around and around to get there. But we can see the ocean from the top of the hill, and it's lovely!

And, wonder of wonders, my computer just worked when I plugged it into the internet here. Now to find my Airport card and see if that will work too...

So yeah, I'm here and staying. David will leave this afternoon. When we next see each other, we'll be changed, for the better. And we'll be able to use our new skills, ideas, wisdom, and resources to be successful in our marriage! How amazed will you all be when that happens?

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David left the next day, after enjoying some of the center's home made vegetable soup, which he enjoyed, and having walked and rode around the stunningly beautiful lush coastal area with Fly, spending his time almost entirely in deep silence.

Fly persevered.

Butter Lamps

2007-12-05 19:24:00

I spent much of today cleaning the butter lamps!

Butter lamps are the goblet things that people burn oil in and light like candles when they want to make a prayer or something for a loved one. I'm not sure of the whole ritual of it, but it's a lot like the candles in a Catholic church, I believe.

So yeah, I spent many hours today cleaning them with rags.

What was nice, for me as a vegan, was that instead of yak butter or something, they use coconut oil in the lamps. So no grossness as I might have suspected. It made for a nice calm project sitting outside in the sun, on a very warm day with a tank top on to get a bit of a tan.

Yesterday, amusingly, was spent driving and riding around in a big pick up truck getting various supplies for cleaning out the new water system they have here.

It's also my job to take care of the chickens. They are friendly, but not terribly good conversationally. They lay different colored eggs, which the mostly ovo-lacto-vegetarian residents eat. I'm mostly ok with that, since everyone seems to be happy with the deal.

Some day I'll get around to taking a long walk in the woods. But I've been too busy to do that so far except for the short walks we did when we first got here.

And there are funky pointy hills with lots of rocks to scramble on. That's something I'm looking forward to! Mmmmmmm rocks...

Fly relaxed a bit. Things were generally friendly and she could simply be. She didn't get invited to participate in any actual Buddhist rituals or practices, really, which was bizarre to her. They mostly left her alone, or chatted casually with her. There was an older lady visitor who Fly became fond of, and talked to on a deeper level about life, and Buddhism, and such, but then she left. And so Fly just kind of puttered. She was either vacuuming, collecting chicken eggs, washing dishes, writing in her blog and journals, walking in the woods, taking hundreds of photographs, hunting mushrooms, or looking for something useful for her life on the internet or in books. She talked to David whenever she could. He was sometimes friendly, other times dismissive, and other times simply not there.

tongue lashing

Published December 16th, 2007

Communication is one of the most powerful ways we humans control our world. Communication gives us the ability to effect change via information.

Now that we are well into the Information Age, the power of communication has become the power to control vast swaths of the human and other-than-human environment.

Every word that slips past our tongue is part of an elaborate attempt to control something. Our words offer us the opportunity to give information that will, hopefully, get us what we're looking for. With our words we have the power to share information that others may need, making us seem trustworthy and useful in others' eyes. Our words can also encourage others to share information with us that helps us find what we need.

And sometimes the words that flow out of our own mouths are meant for us more than anyone else.

Yes, I am talking to myself here... I'm sharing information with myself that may help me get what I need. Perhaps this information might help you get what you need, as well.

Fly was convinced, still, that all she needed to do was say the right words, and everything would be better. Words seem to have so much power. The right combination would be magic, wouldn't it? If she just kept speaking, eventually she'd stumble onto the precise pattern of symbols to fix everything, just like those hundred monkeys and their hundred typewriters and a hundred years eventually producing Shakespeare, or something similar which David didn't supposedly detest so much.

She imagined that her words could be like a Trojan Horse, with the ultimate battle plan of getting inside David's defensive mental wall so that she could kidnap him and get him to come outside to play with her.

So she continued to persevere.

On Winter Solstice, the Rinpoche, who hadn't been around much and hadn't really talked to Fly, took her on a terrifyingly speedy car ride down the mountain and into a small, more robust, town a ways away, so that Fly could go to a tiny little natural foods store. The Rinpoche generously paid for half of her groceries, as a Solstice gift to her.

On the scary trip there and back, as Fly looked over the steep cliff edges they were careening around, she decided that if she died at the hands of a revered Buddhist teacher, she'd somehow be blessed.

She then imagined something she'd read in one of the Dalai Lama's books, which was to treat everyone as if they were your mother (assuming that you really loved and respected your mother, of course), which made Fly think that if she could overlook the terrible driving of this Rinpoche, she could probably, similarly, deal more kindly with David, when he was endangering her health and well being. If Fly wasn't about to get annoyed and say something snarky or aggressive to the Rinpoche about his potentially deadly



behavior, why should she get annoyed and say something snarky or rude to David, regardless of his behavior?

By the end of the trip with the Rinpoche, she still hadn't gotten any Buddhist insight directly from him, or even casual Buddhist philosophical chat. It was still odd, to her.

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Trimming the Buddhist Tree

2007-12-26 09:45:00

My big project they've given me now is to cut a ton of branches off of this one particular shrubby tree that has thorns all over it, and systematically remove all the thorns. The branches are then to be burned in some kind of a fire ritual ceremony.

It's funny, so many of the things they keep asking me to do causes harm to living things. I periodically wonder if they are testing me to see when I'll finally stand up for my morals and refuse to do these destructive, or at least disrespectful, things, or if they just aren't anywhere near as aware of things as I am. Either way, I'm wondering when I'll finally stand up for my morals, and say something.

Anyway... having a sad morning, wondering when my banishment (from David's love life) might be over, and if I might have my sentence reduced for good behavior. :-)

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There was a busy week or two of celebration right after Christmas (which was really only nodded to at the center, since no one was officially Christian there), and suddenly there were many, many people at the center, attending the ritual meditations and recitations and celebrations. Fly asked if it made sense for her to attend, too, but was told that it probably didn't. So she washed dishes in the center's giant kitchen, and chatted with the rest of the attendants occasionally, but mostly stayed to herself. This was not turning out to be what she'd imagined. It was mostly ok. But when

everyone was gone again, things kind of got lonely and boring and annoying. Instead of being appreciated for the innovative, creative, and philosophical person she was, or even made use of as a child care type as a babysitter for the Rinpoche's young daughter, Fly was simply asked to keep washing dishes, dusting, vacuuming, and occasionally painting eggshell white walls with more eggshell white paint. Was it supposed to be some kind of meditative thing? Or were they just not really that organized enough to make use of her somewhat unique skillset?

Fly asked the Rinpoche's wife about getting some Buddhist instruction about what to do, and the woman replied, "No one wants to be told what to do!"

Fly was at a loss.

One minus one is... OW!

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The human mind is a natural adding machine.

Not a subtracting machine.

We don't do so well with negatives. When we lose something, we feel wrong.

This difficulty in dealing with negatives is quite literal. We have a hard time feeling comfortable when we hear the negative words "no", "don't", and "can't". We want to avoid them so much that we often don't even hear them.

When someone tells us that we're not supposed to do something, even if it's our own inner voice saying it, our brain tends to unconsciously filter out the negative element of the suggestion — the "not" part — and we instead tend to simply hear that we are supposed to do something. And so we go and do it.

We hear, “(Don’t) forget!” And so we make sure to remember to forget.

If we can’t ignore the negative, if it’s so loud and clear that we have to pay attention to it, we get weird:

Imagine what your mother would look like if she was NOT human.

As you thought about that, you kind of got lost, didn’t you? You might have looked for something to focus on, and not found it. If you are creative and in a good mood, you might have enjoyed wandering around lost, as you took in the bizarre sights, like you might have done if you ever happened to be invited into a carnival freak show as a kid. If you were in a less than wonderful mood, you might have gotten overwhelmed and uncomfortable until you found your way out of those confusing images (or lack of images) that appeared in place of your mother.

Negation, lack of something, something not being itself, is simply odd to us. A person can, if they find themselves in a state of health and happiness, turn that oddness into humor. A person can defend themselves from discomfort by looking for the funny way to see things, like the way Ron Weasley defended himself from the Boggart monster in Harry Potter by picturing the giant spider that was attacking him wearing rollerskates on all it’s legs and falling down comically. So if you found yourself feeling lost or uncomfortable when you tried to picture your mother as something generally not human, now picture your mother, specifically, as a comfy chair, or as a sea otter playing in the seaweed while wearing a flowery hat, and see that you begin to feel much more happy and amused.

The other way to negate the effects of a negative is to make it into a positive. Rephrase thoughts, even negative ones, to be an overall net gain — for every negative, put in two or more positives. Pile up the positives! Put in a

bag of chips, and all that, and you'll never miss those negatives that you will miss anyway!

So... Don't forget to remember to be miserable while you enjoy the good, true, beautiful, and amusingly odd stuff you find in your life.

Eventually, Fly kind of gave up on the whole explore-Buddhism-at-the-Buddhist-center thing. She started to talk to her parents about coming back to the East Coast. There was some rather startling negativity about that. Fly stopped relaxing.

But, in January, there was a special event that she'd been looking forward to since she first read about the center, which was a funky hippy pagan permaculture training that was being held at the Buddhist center. It wasn't Buddhist, it was just happening at the center, which rented out their sprawling used-to-be-a-military-base buildings for groups who wanted to use them. The permaculture training turned out to be the exact opposite experience from the one she'd had at the center up until that point. It was joyous, creative, wild, philosophical, and full of interesting and curious people who totally appreciated Fly and vice versa. When they first got there, Fly shyly asked if she could participate in some of the events, even though she couldn't afford to officially attend, and they welcomed her, which was a great and very much needed gift from the universe to her. She joined them as often as she could, while also catching up on her obligatory, mindless, and sometimes wasteful chores at the center, cleaning butter lamps, dishes, and windows. She sang, roleplayed, walked like a fox, felt for temperature differences over mushrooms, held hands in dancing circles, and generally felt right at home with these lovely people.

In the middle of it all, something inside her died.

I'm far less hopeful, physically, emotionally, and intellectually right now, with a continued belief that this world is horrible, no real belief that anything is going to get better, and I really just don't want to be here anymore.

It's just not worth it. My life was nearly all lame for 30 some odd years until my honey came along, and then things were tolerable (and occasionally even good) and then he decided that I was too horrible a wife, and threw me away, which he said was "the right thing to do". If that's true, then I really don't want to live in a world where abandoning someone and bailing on a lifetime commitment after only 4 years is at all "right". And it's just too stupid for me. What's the point of making a lifetime commitment and then trashing it soon afterwards? And this is the norm for society. Nearly everyone seems to think that I'm the wrong one for wanting to make it work, and expecting to have to put the effort into really being a healthy couple. So, I see no point in being here, really, anymore, if this is the kind of world that people want to live in. If this is the way you folks want the world to be, then fine you can have it. But don't force me to live in it, because it sucks.

I really don't want to kill myself (I'm not a killer, and it's definitely not vegan), but I really can't take much more of this. I'm constantly miserable, and don't see any reason to bother trying anymore. Honestly. This isn't living. This is barely surviving. And that's not the kind of life I want to have. If there were other people who think like I do and were on "my side" (the side of making the world a better, healthier, kinder, and more sustainable place for everyone) it would be different, but nearly everyone seems to be on the side of lameness and hopelessness and cruelty, and I just can't do it anymore. Maybe I can get some stupid cop to shoot me or something, or some drug happy psychiatrist to drug me into a coma so I don't ever have to be aware of the world again.

Finally deciding that enough was enough, she headed out into the evening, into the natural spaces of nowhere, to, perhaps, simply stop breathing. She started walking, and initially thought to go somewhere nearby to lay down and let go of everything. But the

idea of being close enough to the center that they might find her sooner than she wanted to be found kept her walking. She walked and walked and walked and walked, thinking of the edge of the land as her destination, mirroring her internal sense of teetering on the edge of life. So she walked, in the near blackness, until she came to fork in the road. Literally. (Well, not the kind of fork you eat with, but a “fork in the road” in the sense of multiple roads forking away from one.) It was a fork she misjudged, having only been there once before, with David, on their quiet day of exploration when they’d first gotten to the area. After a while of walking past the fork, Fly discovered herself on a route that seemed not right. Even through her deep feelings of wanting to give up on it all, she nonetheless had an internal drive that made her need to go in a specific direction. So she called David, back on the East Coast, to ask him for directions. He gave her directions, then got angry at her for feeling suicidal. He raged into his tiny cell phone at her, and claimed, “You’re just doing this to try to get me to crack.” He hung up on her, and she returned to the fork and took a previously invisible-in-the-darkness road down the mountain, which David had indicated should bring her to where she needed to be.

Once Dragonfly finally reached the ocean, after so many hours of walking into the approaching midnight, she felt both lighter and less real. She made her way down to the particular rocks where she and David had visited not that long ago, and sat down on the cold stone edge. She had such a strong sensation that her heart would now just stop beating. It was ready to be done. It could rest, for once, and for all. She listened to it thumping, along with the thumping of the waves crashing against the rocky borders of the land and sea. She closed her eyes and thought of nothing. She emptied herself in some invisible way.

Something then propelled her up and across the grounds of the sprawling Fort Ross park to see what else this bit of dramatic Californian coast had to offer. For a while she tried curling up under a small, broad pine tree, with its soft needle bedding, but the cold ground and air seeped through her many layers of spring jackets. She then wandered, almost unconsciously, around the wooden walled fort’s settlement area, but found no entrance, and so she continued down to another rocky cove and settled down right at the edge of the sandy beach. But the stillness brought the

chill, again, which crept further into her core than the universe wanted, so it urged her to find a more protected shelter. She eventually crawled, with quite an effort, into a wooden box that normally held one of the park's public trash bins. The box was just warm enough that Fly could, occasionally, drift off into sleep. While she slept, the pieces of whatever had been broken inside her now dissolved.

When she awoke, there was light creeping into the slits in the box, and as she pushed her body out of the tiny container, the morning sky entered the spaces that the broken and dissolved parts of the old story of herself had left open, filling her with starlight and air and infinitesimal particles of everything that the universe had ever been.

Dragonfly felt wanted and protected and right.

She turned her body upward, and began to climb back up the long hill, this time in the bright daylight. At one point, near the peak of one of the steepest roads, Fly looked off to the side and saw in the tall grass the shadow of her body with a glowing halo around it. The mist steaming off the cold ground as it was hit by the radiation of the sun was creating a glittering effect that refracted light in a way she'd never experienced before. Her mind allowed the experience to feel important and reassuring.

After more hours of walking, Fly arrived at the point where the night before she'd been miraculously saved by a curiously glowing creature who'd just so happened to be lounging casually about a foot before the smooth pavement of the road stopped, and a dangerous metal grating with holes wide enough to swallow a small Fly-sized foot started, threatening to send the non-foot parts of her body crashing forward and down into the metal mesh with enough force to mangle her tender flesh and bones. In the darkness of the previous night, Fly had very briefly allowed her curiosity to overtake her misery and she had bent down to investigate the bioluminescent being, and in so doing had also seen the looming death trap of a steel bridge that was mere inches away from where her feet were pausing. As she passed this somewhat less threatening bridge in the daylight, on her way back, she again appreciated the

little crawling thing and imagined that the universe really had sent it there to keep her safe as she made her way through the challenging world.

Soon after that miraculous point in space, a parade of permaculture people rode by her on their way to a day of building creative cob structures at a local farm. The permaculture people poked their heads out their car windows and asked her if she wanted to join them, but she declined, knowing that she had to complete her journey back to her starting point under her own power. So she kept walking, thankful for the generosity of the wild and free, before she finally got to the place she'd been temporarily calling home. She collapsed into her temporary bed, pulled off a tick that had temporarily taken a ride on her side, and finally slept for a very long time.

No one at the center had ever noticed that she hadn't been there. She was grateful for that.

It was, of course, not a lasting sense of being right in the world, but it marked a turning point in her mind, as a time when she offered her life to the universe, and it had responded with kindness and respect, planting within her a seed of purpose for her to bring with her into the even darker days to come, and letting her know that there was much more to life than the small, provisional, artificial setting that was the current human culture.

Re-arrangement was arranged, and Fly packed up her stuff, hitched a ride back to the San Francisco area with some of the workshop attendees, and opened herself up to opportunities as she planned her trip back to the East Coast, where negotiations had happened behind Fly's back about who was going to house her for a while when she got back. She was offered a small apartment in what had been a guest house on her father's rental property, out near Woods Hole on Cape Cod, in the exceptionally wealthy armpit of Massachusetts. She was told she could stay a few months, at most.

Fly had also been looking forward to an NLP workshop down in Florida, which she'd taken out an extra credit card to pay for back in the fall, as a last chance option for helping her find a way out of her insanely challenging situation trying to rescue David and herself from a homo-sapiens world that was highly self-harming



and actively antagonistic towards anyone who wanted to change that unhealthy state.

While staying briefly in San Francisco at a towering hostel, Fly did everything she could to both enjoy the cultural options that the city had, and plan for creating a better life for her in the near future. She chose to take her time getting back, and allowed herself, as often as possible, the room to simply observe the world around her, as she moved through it slowly and carefully.

Something, again.

2008-01-21 15:58:00

I'm in Berkeley right now, after having to come out here to buy train tickets ('cause Amtrak has this bizarre thing where they let you get all the way through the ticket ordering process online, only to tell you at the end that the only way to get your tickets is to have them mailed to you, which, in my case wouldn't work so well), and then walking about 3-4 miles to downtown Berkeley to go to another of the Cafe Gratitude locations (such amazing raw food!). I also picked up an \$8 winter coat at the Goodwill here, since I'm not sure what's happening with me when I get into Boston, and my normal winter coat is in my storage. It's more to carry (and I'm already completely bogged down with too much stuff), but at least I won't freeze to death (unintentionally, anyway) when I get back home.

I did actually call Cafe Gratitude's main office to ask if they might be interested in hiring me for a month, after a suggestion by one of their very friendly employees. They did get back to me right away, which was nice, but they didn't do that sort of thing. I figured, but I thought I'd try, since it is the place I've been to more times than any other out here (twice this past week, and once when we got here). So now I'm definitely planning on coming home, even if no one wants me there. I simply can't afford

to stay here anymore, even though it's kind of nice, and warm, and the people here mostly don't remind me of my honey and all his friends.

Anyway, I'm now sitting in a bubble tea place, where I traded a few dollars for a horrifyingly sweet jasmine tea and some free wifi and warmth before I head back into SF. Other than the insane sugar levels in the (not raw) tea, it's nice and comfy.

Not sure what I'll do tomorrow, my last day here. Probably wander over to Fisherman's Wharf and maybe the Ferry Building. I suppose I should check out another museum or something, if my Boston Museum of Science membership can get me in for free (like it does at the Exploratorium). The science museum in Golden Gate park would be cool, but they've been rebuilding it to be this amazing LEED certified, super-eco building, with a green roof and all, and it won't be open until late 2008.

Maybe I'll wander over to Haight and then over to the first Cafe Gratitude that we went to, to get their yummy food one last time before I'm off. Or maybe over to Rainbow Foods, which I can't remember if I've ever been to (my friend Dan might have taken me there when I lived with him briefly here about 10 years ago).

Or maybe some kind of trip to the ocean. That might be nice. The coast really is stunning here. But if I'm to be living on the Cape, I'll be able to visit the ocean every day if I like, though it's gonna be cold! :-)

OK, enough of the boring stuff. I'm off to post something on my professional blog, using one of the really beautiful photos I took at the Exploratorium yesterday. I'm almost tempted to go back tomorrow and take lots more, because they came out so brilliantly.

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Right before she left San Francisco, the impending loss of the newness and quiet friendliness of that city took brief hold of Fly, and instead of mourning that specific forfeiture, she fell backwards into a more general and undefined moroseness again. She recorded it privately, to be publicly shared later, perhaps.

So I'm back to thinking, intellectually, that it does make lots of sense to stop being here, alive. There really doesn't seem to be a point to being alive anymore. And I do mean that logically. I've already done so many great things and had them be either rejected or ignored. And with the world being as it is, so stupid and mean, and my own family (parents and husband) not being able to take care of me when I need it the most (for whatever reason), there really isn't any reason, and again I mean logically, for wasting more of my time and energy on trying to make this life thing work. I mean, even if my ideas were absolutely brilliant and capable of solving humanity's greatest challenges, to get us to a point where we are able to live not just sustainably, but joyously so — a world truly worth living in — even if I was capable of doing that, my ideas would probably be ignored or dismissed as “crazy” or “idealistic” (the fact that ideals are seen as being somehow a bad thing is one indication of how fucked up our human society is...). Who knows how many people who came up with amazing solutions to our problems have come and gone before me without being listened to. With this world where people actively fear good things (like ideas and ideals and even love), what chance do good things have?

It really doesn't seem worth the effort, personally. And when the present and future are as bleak as they are for me right now, logically, the best answer does appear to be letting go of life. If I can't do what I believe is my purpose in the world (to help it heal), and I can't even live comfortably, then it's actually stupid to use up the resources it takes to keep me alive, when I could, instead

become a resource (by becoming compost). I mean, if I can't even make a simple marriage work, and keep two of us reasonably happy, then what chance do I have with the rest of the world? Honestly, if I'm not going to leave the Earth in better shape than I found it when I showed up here, then I really should bade it farewell asap, before I destroy it even more. Save the Planet Kill Yourself, right?

There is one small thing, though, that I have that's keeping me from getting some sleeping pills and heading off for some nice natural setting in the woods by the sea perhaps, to go to sleep for one last time, when I get back to frigid New England, and that's those two funny little beliefs that are floating around in the back of my head, unattached, except of a few tenuous threads of neuronal filament. Those beliefs are intellectually based, as well as being physically based, and at one point they were emotionally based as well (I "felt" them inside), though that isn't the case right now.

Belief number one is that in a little less than five years, something really important and amazing is going to happen in the world, as predicted by many diverse human societies and cultures, including the Mayan calendar (which scientists agree is a masterpiece, and shows an amazing understanding of how the universe works). There is enough evidence to suggest that there are large cycles in the planet's history, just like the cycles of the seasons, and that we're just about to enter into the next one. And I'm curious enough to want to know if we really are.

Belief number two is that the stages of human development that so many scientists and psychologists and philosophers have discovered do indeed have a truly transcendent level, where we reach that punctuated equilibrium and jump to a new evolutionary step beyond homo sapiens. And that my own current level of development (intellectually anyway) is pretty darn close to that level, according to my calculations. And I'm

curious to see if that theory has merit, and if so what am I going to become?

Now, while everyone else may think that these two funny little beliefs are unbelievable, and mark me as insane, they are keeping me alive, intellectually. So think what you will about them.

The only problem for my intellect is that those beliefs aren't emotionally based right now, and without that emotional grounding that we social species need (love, companionship, etc.) to keep going it's not easy for me as a whole person to appease my intellect and physically stick around for that seemingly vast amount of time (around 5 years, at latest, for at least one of them to happen).

In other words, I have an intellectual reason for being alive now, but no emotional one, and I'm running out of physical resources (the credit cards will be maxed out by the time I get to the Cape, and I have no way of buying the things I need after that, including transportation to Florida or lodging at even the cheapest hotel there so that I can attend the NLP/Bandler classes that are so promising for helping me really heal and helping me learn how to really heal others. So I'm not sure if I'll make it, even with my intellect being in favor of sticking around for a while...

The train ride across the States took three long, quiet, scenic days. The mountains of Nevada and Utah were stunning, and again reminded Fly that the universe is generous with its beauty, and that reality is so much grander than the sometimes pettiness of human society. It was a melancholy trip, but one that she needed, as it made no demands of her, for the most part, so that she was able to simply sit in her row of seats, spreading herself out in the fairly empty car, watching time and space pass, and occasionally capturing just a tiny portion of the view out the train windows, with her ever present companion of a camera.

At some point, Fly realized that knowing almost nothing about what is, is the equivalent of knowing almost everything about what isn't, and by looking at the negative space around what isn't, you can, paradoxically, discover nearly everything about what is.

When she got back to Boston, David agreed to lend her the little red car so that she could get her stuff out of storage and bring it and herself down to her new temporary home base.

Again, she was able to relax, briefly. And focused on creating more useful things to share with the world, inspired by all that she'd discovered in life.

All things come to naught.

2008-02-08 13:44:00

No matter what we do, the outcome of life is death. Yet everyone reading this has so far continued to choose to live, despite the nearly absolute chance of utterly failing.

Fred Kofman, an Integral Business leader and teacher has the following to say about it all:

“So, that’s the paradox... from the outcome standpoint, ‘life’s a bitch and then you die.’ From a process standpoint, ‘thank god.’ because that’s the only opportunity we have to show our true nature. That’s the gift, that nothing will give us refuge. That nothing will hold us up. That nothing will endure. Nothing. We’re either gonna die before our loved ones, and break their heart. Or they will die before us, and they will break our heart. It’s no option. And that sucks. But at the same time, what a courage that calls for... in order to love, in a world where you know every love is going to be lost (in this physical shape).”

Indeed, even if we never agreed to be here, or knew the consequences of being here before we came, we’re here now and we know the consequences, and those of us who

continue to stick around are most definitely either stupid or courageous to continue to go through this process of living.

So, life is the process. Death is the outcome. The former we might have some control over, the latter we don't. And that's why living, and living well, hopefully, is the only way we can affect anything.

Kofman also talks about how our greatest attributes come out only when we face our greatest challenges. For example, to show great courage, we have to be presented with something really terrifying. And to show great depth of love, we need a great threat to that love. And to show great teaching ability, we have to have difficult students. :-)

Adversity is a gift, in Kofman's mind.

He says, "Every time that you say 'Oh, shit!' from now on, I'm going to ask you to say 'Oh, fertilizer.' So no more Oh shit's. From now on it's only 'Oh Fertilizer'. See, it's the same situation... the story changes with a different interpretation."

And I generally agree, adversity is an opportunity, and for greatness to be expressed there has to be a great challenge facing us. Except there are a couple of caveats...

First of all, we sort of do have some control of the final outcome, in that we have at least partial control over when we die. We can take better care of our bodies, and avoid dangerous stuff, or we can do the opposite, all consciously and intentionally, which does very much affect our death. So we do have some control over the outcome, if only in the timing of it, and only to some extent. But still a point worth noting.

And, possibly more importantly, the second caveat is that the adversity that naturally arises in a healthy world is far

more exquisite fertilizer for our greatness than manufactured adversity. Going out of your way to create adversity synthetically, via punishment or intentionally harming or scaring people, is the opposite of greatness.

If you look at your own life, don't you already have far more challenges than you can handle without anyone randomly piling more upon you? The same is true for everyone. It's already a huge challenge to live sustainably and healthfully on a planet that has over 7 billion humans on it, even if they were all absolutely compassionate and cooperative and respectful. Who needs expensive football games, or boring school classes, or even wars, when we could all get all the benefits of physical, mental, and emotional challenges just by exploring the vast ocean, or rescuing people stuck in New Orleans during a hurricane and flood, or helping them rebuild their communities after the storm water recedes, or climbing Mt. Everest to collect ice samples for climate research, or simply caring for someone who is ill?

What it all comes down to is that greatness is about meeting the challenges that we face with the wisdom that "responsibility" simply means that we are *able to respond*, and that our responses allow us to have the continuous opportunity to be even better than we'd ever been before.

Live and learn. Yep.

For Valentines Day, Dragonfly intended to offer David something exceptional. He needed something better than just ordinariness in his life, so she created an art piece loosely based on her experience that night out walking in the darkness and waking up in the light. She wrote a twelve part story where each of the three primary parts of the self — physical, emotional, and intellectual — had their say about who they were and what they wanted to do, and then tried to listen to what the elements of David's self had to say to her, as well. She had scheduled her



professional blog to post one part of the story every day for two weeks surrounding February 14th, accompanied by hand painted watercolor style hearts that she created in a rainbow of colors.

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one

What is this body?

In my dream I am looking for something. I'm seeking some satisfaction, some understanding, some sense of wholeness for my body. I'm vaguely aware of the need to find something that will make everything all right. I'm asking everyone what they think I need. I can only hear vague mumblings and half-spoken words. energy... time... warmth... motion... sights... sounds... touch... gentle... vigorous... sweet... salty... first empty... now full... good.... Some kind being leads me to a beach, where the waves are just the right height, and crash over my head as I hold my breath for a moment, and then the wave subsides and I take a breath again. This gentle person tells me that what I need is this. I'm not entirely sure I understand, but the pattern of the waves and my breathing and my body floating up slowly and then returning back to the sea floor seems right. I trust that this is, indeed, what I need, though I can't explain what this is, exactly. It simply feels right. It feels flowing. The rising and falling, cresting and subsiding of the waves mirrors the rising and falling, cresting and subsiding of my body, and I feel that everything is indeed all right. My body tells me that this rhythm is the way it is supposed to be.

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two

What is this mind?

Another someone appears in my dream, this one more excited and colorful. This one leads me to a forest where there are thousands of large, old, solid, exuberant trees

stretching up towards the sky, which is full of stars, moons, suns, and tiny, muddy galaxies. The someone tells me that the trees are wise, and have been observing the sky for millennia. I can ask them anything and they will tell me the answers, but I need to learn to speak *Tree* to understand the answers they have to offer me. I consider asking a simple question so that I might have a chance at extracting some of these wise tree's knowledge. The question that comes out of my mouth surprises me, but it is exactly what is on my mind, and the trees seem to flutter joyously ever so slightly when I say out loud, What do I want to know? The trees give me an answer in the form of a hundred fireflies that flicker and flutter and dance around together high above me in the dark branches and quietly rustling leaves that radiate out from their wise trunks. I don't speak *Tree*, so I'm not sure how to translate this answer, but I see and hear the importance of their wisdom. And when the trees extended their lower branches towards me, I know that they are offering me the opportunity to explore their glowing, flickering answer more intimately, so I begin to slowly climb up into the forest towards the fireflies, and the sky. While I am in the midst of the thick branches and foliage, I imagine that I am completely hidden from all but the trees, that no other beings can find me. But I know that the fireflies are waiting for me, and so I keep climbing upwards.

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three

What is this heart?

When I reach the last of the branches that the trees have offered to me, I see that I am in the very top of the forest canopy. It smells of crisp mint. Or balsam. Or something very clean and smart that I can't quite place. It reminds me that there is much life and energy in the trees, and for that I am grateful. I look out at the edge of the world where the last bits of the trees touch the first bits of the

sky, and feel something fluttering around my body. I look down to see the fireflies tickling my feet. They giggle at me! I never before imagined that fireflies giggle, and I giggle back in response. They flutter up around my body and I extend my own hands and arms for them to land on for a moment, so that I may admire them in relative stillness. Their own bodies are so small, yet so intricate and purposeful. As I watch them, I discover that when one of them glows, the ones nearby glow in response, and then the next ones glow in response, and so on, sending a path of light around in a great circle through the fireflies' little abdomens. The direction of their circle leads up and in front of me, and so I let myself lift off of the branches that I'd been standing on and jump up and forward towards the sky, following the path of the fireflies' flickering lights. I find that I can fly easily, with the glowing fireflies guiding me up and outward toward the night.

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four

My body moves.

I wake up slowly, still half aware of the ideas and images that were floating around in my head from my still fresh dreams. I'm warm and quiet. It's still dark outside, with just the slightest hint of indigo peeking in my window from the sky to the east. I move the muscles in my shoulders and chest a bit to test out my solidity. I am no longer flying, but very grounded. I feel the covers keeping the heat of my body close to me, and I feel safe and most definitely solid now.

I imagine the sun rising soon, and enjoy the sensation it, too, gives me of energy, and strength, and warmth, and light, and gravity.

I become aware that my breathing is slow, but strong. The

air is fresh and crisp outside my covers, where my face is just emerging.

I stretch my arms and legs, to awaken their cells that have been resting for so long.

There is a glass on the table next to my bed, made out of old bottles and blown by hand in some far off land. There is some cool water in the glass, and I take a sip of it to replenish some of my liquid that evaporated from me during the night.

I feel the covers slide off of me as I leave the warmth of the bed, and feel the solidity of the floor as it supports my feet, which support my legs, which support my torso, which supports my head, which is just a little dizzy from the ascent up into higher space and lesser gravity. So I pause for a moment to let the solidity of the ground make it's way up my whole body and into my head.

Now, I feel balanced.

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five

My mind moves.

It occurs to me that the ground is far less solid and stable than I imagine it to be. The Earth is moving at some enormous speed, as she careens around the Sun, and the Sun itself is moving at an almost unbelievable 200 miles or so per second as he, too, careens around some ambiguous center point in the Milky Way galaxy, which is also zooming around in space at a rate even faster than it seems anything could reasonably go. But no one ever said that the galaxy was reasonable, right?

However, my experience has shown me that the Earth is gracious and will continue to provide me with a very real

sense of stability in her mass and constancy, if I let her. She keeps me close, and won't let me go, unless I'm very sure I want to leave her protective force.

So, yes, I know that I am balanced, and safe, and cared for.

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six

My heart moves.

I'm looking for my firefly. Someone to glow and fly with me. Someone to help me be very sure that I am ready to go on that first tentative, yet confident, flight up and away from the protective, yet also restrictive, force keeping me Earthbound. Someone to see the beauty of the edge, the wonder of the sky, and the passion of letting go of the stability of the ground. Someone who will help me trust the universe and feel capable of taking that first step off the top of the trees and into the vastness of potential.

I seek. I find. And then I speak. Who are you? What is your mind? What is your heart?

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seven

What is your body?

I believe that I have found my firefly. He looks like my firefly, at least. He seems to have the form of the one I seek, and he too seems to be looking up at the sky with a longing in his eyes. But his glow is diminished by some unseen demon. I ask who he is and he says that he does not know. I say that I believe that he is my firefly. But he tells me that his body is not capable of flying with me at his side. He says that his strength is not enough to carry my weight up there, over the edge of the Earth.

As he speaks, his glow disappears.

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eight

What is your mind?

I ask the second question of the one who I believe is my firefly, and he replies that some other body might be able to help me, but not his. He's seen something that I have not, or that I do not believe. I see that the knowledge he has been given is flawed, and I tell him that he is indeed my firefly, and that if he is not willing to guide me into the night sky, I cannot go.

He says he is too afraid of being hurt, and believes that it's impossible for him to go with me, but that he has hope for me, and that he wishes me to have hope too.

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nine

What is your heart?

I have no hope now, though. My own heart is dying with the news that my firefly doesn't see that he is my firefly.

So I prepare to stop. I prepare to lay down and let my body, my heart, and my mind lose all of their energy. I don't need that energy anymore if I cannot continue my journey, and I would like to give all that unused energy back to the Earth, so she can use it elsewhere, where it may prove more helpful to others on their own journey.

As I prepare, I walk. I walk in the dark. I don't have my own light anymore. I accept the little bit of light that the sky is offering the Earth, to see where I am going. I have one last intended destination for my body, and heart, and mind, and that is by another edge — not at the tops of

the trees, but at the side of the land. I seek to reach the ocean edge to lay my self down and release all my energy for my final offering to the world.

As I walk, I lose my self. I cannot find the ocean edge. I call out to my firefly and he appears briefly to guide me to where I am now going, and I am grateful for his help. Before he goes, I ask the third question of my firefly, but hear nothing but the wind.

So I listen to what the wind has to say, instead. And she says, Keep walking until you reach your edge.

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ten

Your body moves.

So I walk. In darkness. The ground is solid and stable and allows me to keep my balance. And where the Earth has been disturbed and has lost some of her firmness, she asks a small caterpillar to let me know with it's own tiny glow that I need to notice the hole in the ground. I do discover the hole and I thank the tiny messenger for pointing it out to me, before continuing on.

After many hours I reach the edge of the land and the sea. As I look out at it, I see memories of my firefly fluttering around the waves and rocks. But when I look again, there is no one there.

I am tired. My body, my mind, and my heart have lost almost all of their energy now, and I rest a bit. But my body is getting cold. It is dying too, now.

I sit at that ocean and land edge for a night, only occasionally raising my eyes to look up at that other edge, the one where the top of the Earth meets the sky. It is so beautiful and beckoning.

The sky glows with blinking lights. Not the lights of my firefly, but the lights of far off suns that have enough warmth and energy and stability to keep the whole universe alive.

The dark and cold ocean speaks up, and tells me to listen to the stars now.

So I listen to the stars and they say that the universe wants me to keep my energy for another day. The universe says that her body doesn't need my energy yet, and I can see that. She has so much energy already. Her body is bursting with strength, and I let her offer me just a little of it, so that I can honor her request to continue on my quest. I take a breath of light, and then exhale the darkness. I gaze up again, and appreciate the blackness of the night, which provides the frame for the whiteness of these thousands, or millions, of suns shining back on me. I take in a bit more of that shine, so that I can move on, to the next spot of Earth, and see what it has to offer me.

There is, once again, hope.

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eleven

Your mind moves

So I walk, again. There is still much darkness, but now that the stars have offered me more of their glow, I can see more easily where I need to go. I climb up away from that cold, old place. I wander around for a long time, into the woods where I offer some small eight-legged creatures a bit of my energy to feed their hungry bellies, and then I make my way out of the woods again. And finally, I descend into a more enclosed area of the Earth, near where the edge of the sea and land are, but not so close that it chills my body so much. The stars have told me to save my energy, and not let it dissipate so quickly. They



have told me to stay under the Earth's protection for a while longer. So I seek out a spot where the Earth is warmest and most secure. A small, but suitable shelter appears and I snuggle into it. I share my tiny home with many even tinier armored bugs, who are content to hide in the corners, while my own body takes up the rest of the space. I am warm, and I sleep.

While I am sleeping, all my fears leak out into the night. The stars have taken them away with their wise actions, so that I might have more space in my mind and my heart for hope, and for the energy I need to continue on in my long journey.

I wake up cuddled by the Earth in the form of some old wood on my side and above me, and some dirt below me. I see the light of the Sun through the cracks in my shelter and he whispers to me that it is time to go. He says that it is Time to return to the world of humans, and hardness, and questions, and needs, and ideas, and work. He tells me that he, and the Earth, and the other stars, will give me all the energy I need to get to where I need to go and to do what I need to do.

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twelve

Your heart moves.

So, I again walk. In the light this time. I can now easily see where I am going. I still stumble when there is a hole, when I don't pay attention to the messengers that are provided for me to alert me of the holes, but I am not afraid anymore. I am full of hope now that my fears are gone and there is space in my heart and my mind for taking in the most exquisite things that are in front of me, just waiting for me to reach out to them. I reach out for an apple that was lying patiently on the Earth waiting to nourish me during my long walk. I also reach out for some

small pools of water that are being cupped by some grounded leaves, and I sip that fresh rainwater to rehydrate my cells during my journey back to life.

And while I walk, I realize that all along my journey it was your heart that was guiding me. It was your heart that was speaking in the wind. It was your heart that was speaking in the ocean. It was your heart that was speaking in the stars. And it was your heart that was speaking in the Earth, and keeping me warm and safe and stable and guiding me to where I needed to go.

All along your heart was already with me. I feel it's rhythmic flow rising and subsiding in me, and it fills me with energy and balance and hope. You had given me your heart so long ago, and I had not noticed it. I'm sorry that I wasn't listening, and I missed it for so long. Now I know it's here, with me, and I know that it will not only protect me and care for me while I am here on the Earth, but that it will also guide me in making that first tenuous step off the top of the Earth and into the sky, over that edge of ground and into the vastness of potential as I fly up and out into the wondrous universe.

Thank you so much for offering me your heart, my firefly. I believe that perhaps some day your body and your mind will join your heart with me as well, so we can fly together. Up there. Perhaps you need to learn to fly on your own before you find that courage to fly with me.

Whenever I, myself, venture up into the sky, I will stay only as long as I need to, and then I will return to the Earth to rest, as I know that the rhythm of rising and falling is how it is supposed to be. And when I return I will seek you out to ask if perhaps now you are ready to come with me, up above the edge of the Earth...

Not the end.

And not the beginning.

But the middle, as everything always is, here in our universe. All of our stories are in progress, always already begun, and never ending, always in the middle of the telling of it all.

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EVERYTHING HAPPENS  
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*“Scientists have calculated that the chance of anything so patently absurd actually existing are millions to one. But magicians have calculated that million-to-one chances crop up nine times out of ten.”*  
~ Terry Pratchet (from the book *Mort*)

Fly was finally starting to assimilate the fact that the universe is a highly unreasonable place. Light is both particle and wave at the same time. Quantum physics doesn't need to make sense, or be “reasonable”. It was a lesson that gave her a new appreciation for her particular path through time and space.

So, life kept happening to our Dragonfly. Unexpectedly, and predictably. She had no choice.

Fly went to Florida, for the NLP training, and enjoyed it immensely, but did not find her magic words there.

My Kobayashi Maru scenario  
2008-03-15 13:42:00

The David Thing has cleverly trapped me in a corner from which there appears to be no escape.

When we got married we pledged to be partners for life. And I made that pledge with all my heart and mind and

in all truthfulness. But now my life partner acts like he wants to have nothing to do with me and avoids me at all costs.

So I'm stuck. It seems to me to be a no win scenario. The only options I see available to me have terrible outcomes.

1. I could bail on my commitment and give up on David and our marriage. But that would result in me becoming the kind of horrible person that I don't want to be, and would result in me destroying some of the most valuable things about me, the strength of my convictions, my persistence, my patience, and my unconditional love for him.

2. I could continue to be devoted to him and our marriage, while he continues to treat me like I've got the plague. But that would result in me continuing to suffer the most horrendous pain I've ever imagined possible, off and on for the rest of my life.

3. I could end my life. But that, again, would result in the same stupid crap from solution 1 — me becoming the kind of person I loathe.

4. He could die/be killed. But that would probably cause me even more pain than not being with him while he's alive. And the guilt I'd have would be infinite.

The only other possible solution to my dilemma is:

5. He could deal with his fears and demons and choose to work with me on making our marriage work and be successful and comfortable and happy.

But I have no control over what he chooses to do, ultimately. So, in the meantime, I'll continue to stick with #2, as long as I can live with the pain, with occasional, temporary, forays into #1, and #3 being the (shitty) back

up plan, all the while clinging desperately onto the hope that David is as amazing as I know he can be, and #5 ends up happening.

I'll note that in the no-win-scenario called the Kobayashi Maru test in Star Trek, a few industrious folks have figured out a way to win.

Captain Kirk, in particular, figured out a way to reprogram the computer that was running the simulation. I was hoping to make that solution happen by getting the help of the master (human) programmer Richard Bandler. But that seems to have not worked out (I was hoping he could reprogram me, or that he'd teach me to reprogram David. But neither seems to have happened as brilliantly as I'd hoped.).

I'll also point out that Captain Picard never took the test (or at least it's never mentioned in official Star Trek history), but my guess is that he would figure out a way to save everyone else and prevent war, but he would end up with my option #3 and he'd die in the process. So, while I'm definitely more of a Picard type in most situations, I'm not sure I want to look up to him as a role model/hero in this case.

Kirk seemed to be more of my kind of hero in this instance, but I just don't have the resources to reprogram the system right now, and I'm not sure I'll ever have them.

So it's possible that I may end up being like the engineer Scotty, who manages to reach a stalemate using his creative engineering skills to continually just survive, but never actually wins or loses.

So yeah. Life sucks for me, most of the time, and there isn't really anything I can do about it. But at least I have some entertaining metaphors to keep me busy sometimes.

A little while after this, she offered something a bit more professionally polished, on her main blog.

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make the most of your investment

Published April 19th, 2008

Some people like to do a risk analysis and cost/benefit analysis of their prospective options before making a choice of where to invest one's resources. I suggest adding in the factor of how enjoyable the investment process itself is. If you can find a way to make the investment process itself a rewarding experience, then the result of the investment already includes a payoff, regardless of whether or not there are more benefits in the future.

In other words, pick the best looking option and look for a way to gain something useful and enjoyable out of the plan even you don't succeed in achieving the overall goal.

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It was a rather elaborate way of saying, "It's not whether you win or lose, it's how you play the game that matters." If what spending your time, energy, and material resources trying to accomplish isn't enjoyable in and of itself, and you end up not accomplishing your goal, you've really lost it all, but if you at least enjoy what you're doing while you're doing it, then even if you don't end up where you want, you've still gained something good.

Fly didn't want anyone to think she was advocating pure hedonism. Very few empty, temporary pleasures feel worthwhile in the long run.

But giving generously of oneself, out of one's own deep joy of doing so, rather than out of obligation or sacrifice, does seem to be one of the few things that raises the quality of life even in otherwise desperate times. If nothing else, Fly loved being curious about healthy growth, David's deepest desires, and her own increasingly exceptional ideas. So even if all that investment of time and energy didn't pay off in the end, even if she didn't "win" her beloved's body and mind back by her side, the investment process

itself was more worthwhile than anything else she could imagine spending her life doing.

So, Dragonfly moved back to Somerville. She became homeless. She made art. She philosophized. She researched. She allowed herself to occasionally enjoy the physical and intellectual closeness of a couple of men who weren't David. She tried power yoga. She moved in with some friends who had young twin boys who Fly took care of during the afternoons. She got threatened by David's demons and the legal system. She updated Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs to reflect basic patterns of growth as she saw them. She gave a workshop on Community Building Through Storytelling at the Boston Skillshare at MIT. She added a fourth level of self — philosophical/spiritual — to her theory of consciousness, and it's physical, emotional, and intellectual kinds of awareness. She spent a week eating only wild foraged raw vegan food, in the city, in the spring. She created a non-profit educational program aimed at offering a more practical and scientifically proven way to help people all over the planet explore their world more meaningfully and collaboratively. She went to jail very briefly for making a grand attempt at getting past David's monstrous fortifications. (In jail, she meditated, and thought, and wrote down her further discoveries of the patterns of reality, on the styrofoam containers that they served her not-very-nourishing food on, using a tine of the plastic fork she was given to eat it with, since they prohibited pens and paper in the tiny police station's holding cells.) She discovered a general pattern of development in the universe, which turned out to be the same pattern as the I Ching. She went as an invited guest to the World Bank in Washington DC for a summit on social engineering for a better world (while being fully aware how bizarre it was for an anti-establishment activist type like her to be there). She moved up to Maine to live with her mother. She grew a lovely garden. She got grants to run educational programs at the small community library. She moved a few miles away from her mother's place onto an off-grid building in the middle of nowhere that could have been really lovely, but wasn't. She adopted her mother's most awesome orange cat, and then lost him to some unknown illness. She stopped being raw, then started again, and stopped, and started again, depending on her available



resources and mood. She ate tiny studded puffball mushrooms (cooked), and a vast amount of amazing home made vegan ice cream (raw). She was kindly delivered the solar panel that David had given her as a gift for their first Winter Solstice together (the panel had been stored at a friend's house since Fly's initial homelessness), and used it to run her laptop and blender. She wrote and illustrated and published a childrens' book that nobody read. And she continued to struggle to find a home for herself, her work, and her still very lost and beloved partner in life.

And always, always, Fly sought to share her own stories with others, and sought others who would share their stories with her, because she understood that the higher conscious beings of the universe were made with the special purpose of connecting all the different bits of reality together through a network of energy, in the form of information.

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beautiful creatures living in your mind

Ideas are lovely creatures. But they are symbiotic creatures  
— needing minds in which to live.

An idea that only exists in one mind, and is not shared, is  
an idea that will soon die.

Thus, in order for the world to have a diverse wealth of  
ideas from which to create newness out of, we have to  
share our ideas with other minds.

What ideas that you've been nurturing in your own mind  
would you like to share with others and allow to live on?

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On every Solstice, Valentines Day, and David's birthday, Fly would try to reconvey her love and appreciation and support for the man who was still being kept hidden inside that repellent facade of artificial *okayness* so far away from the real world and Fly's longing body. She never felt like her offerings were as good as she wanted them to be. There were simple poems posted on her blogs.

There were garden grown zucchinis and basil plants delivered to his porch. There were intricate public art projects installed in the playground near where he was staying. There were complex Theories of Everything lovingly illustrated and offered up to the world with their combined names on the top. There were silver moons, and cloud covered boxes for containing visions. She posted the creation story of her gift box on the site of an interactive activist game she was playing.

### Earth Box

I finally picked one thing to make for the action part of this week's mission. I had so many ideas! And I'm actually going to add some more small things, once I can get the materials...

But for now, this is what I've created, the Earth Box, in which I've combined native wisdom from the Wampanoag tribe from the Eastern Massachusetts area and my own ideas about the future of human natives of the whole Earth. While researching native peoples (for which the best information seemed to come from the Boston Children's Museum, of all places) I found a quote that really moved me:

"We name ourselves after the land we live with. Because, not only are we breathing in, we are also drinking from the water that is flavored by that very land. Whatever is deposited in the soil is in that water is in us. So we are all one thing, and we name ourselves after the place that is our nurturing. That sustains our life." Ramona Peters, Mashpee Wampanoag

And then I found another one:

"The four colors on the Medicine Wheel represent the four races of people. The reason that there are four is that the Creator created all four — each one with a specific

responsibility and special gifts. In order for people to live together on this earth, everyone has to have their place in the circle.” ~ Jessie ‘little doe’ Fermino of the Mashpee Wampanoag tribe

And I did some more research on medicine wheels, and found some wonderful philosophy about the elements that go into making a whole human, and a whole world, with each direction of the wheel — north, east, south, and west — each representing an element of life — mind, spirit, heart, and body, which are the elements I also include in my own philosophy of life. So I took those two ideas and combined them into some words and images to put on my box. Now that the box is done, I’m putting in four real things that represent the four elements of life of the medicine wheel. I’m putting in the very meaningful clay heart made from pink clay that that my husband and I found on the Wampanoag reservation on Martha’s Vineyard when we first got married, to represent the Earth. I’m planning on collecting some rain water from where we live now, in some pretty glass container, to represent the water of life. I’ll probably put in another bottle of air from the ocean nearby (unless I can think of something else to represent air). And I plan to collect seeds from local native plants this summer and fall, and put them into the box, to represent the fire of life, and as a way to preserve local native plants for future generations. I’ll include some information about the meaning of the elements, as well as a description of the plants and what they traditionally were used for (medicine, food, rituals, etc.), using the Native American Ethnobotany website. (I’m definitely including wood sorrel, because it’s not only a yummy lemon flavored plant that has lots of vitamin C in it, but also because it’s leaves are shaped like hearts!)

Here’s how I repurposed the trashpicked toy box and turned it into a box of cultural treasure, with step-by-step photos of what I was doing:

The box started out as a rather silly and frilly pink teddy bear jack in the box music box, which I properly disassembled after finding it in a pile of toys that were being abandoned when a family moved out of their house near me.

I used my grandfather's old file to remove the cute, but mostly unmeaningful bear.

The box is now dedecorated and ready for some real meaning!

I played around with a variety of techniques for putting the text on the wood, including using a candle flame to heat some metal things as a way to do wood burning, and eventually settled on using some metal stamp letters that I had with suitable application of a hammer. It took me about 1/2 an hour to hammer out the following text (with my young housemates downstairs wondering what the heck I was up to making all that noise!):

“We name ourselves after the land we live with. We breathe it in, eat it, drink it, and gain energy from it. We are all one thing — the Earth is us and we are the Earth.”

Then I added a medicine wheel design on the side with some wind/water waves going around the box.

And then I added my first element to the Earth container, a bit of the Earth, the red clay heart made from the beaches where my husband and I first got married, a gift from my heart.

And finally, because this is meant to be a gift, to pass on this very valuable information, I intend to give the finished, and elementally full, box to my husband on our anniversary, on the Summer Solstice, this year. :-)

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Fly didn't quite get all of her intended things in there, but she did add her invisible dreams of a future of farm and orchard and yurt and greenhouse dome and barn and bicycling into a small culturally diverse and flourishing town with her partner by her side, and left the box on his doorstep. And then ran away before the messenger was discovered.

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THE METAPHORICAL AMOEBIA  
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*“The future is already here.  
It’s just not very evenly distributed”  
~William Gibson*

Back when Fly had first started working for the bicycling organization, nearly a decade earlier, one of her business trips had been an intensive effort to try to advance her understanding of the state of bicycle advocacy in North America. It had been a wonderful and inspiring trip that started with a more intimate, old-school progressive-style organizing camp, then had a short middle bit involving a delightfully breezy totally flat 40 mile bike ride from the camp into Saint Paul, Minnesota, and then had a bustling, upscale hotel ballroom conference filled with VIPs involved in the politics of walking and biking, from all around the world, for the ending. The most valuable thing that Fly had taken back from that whirlwind trip was an image of an amoeba that had been drawn on a chalkboard accompanied by an explanation that cultural change happens when just a few bits at the front of an organism push themselves outwards, in that exciting pseudopodic way, towards some promising signal that looks to be beneficial. Then, when the middle part of the organism gets the message that something good is coming up, the main part of the collective body starts following the leader. And finally, whether the tail end of the organism gets the message of goodness or not, it has no choice but to be dragged forward into the future, since its mass is insignificant compared to the mass of the middle, and abandoning the organism as a whole would mean certain death.

These days Dragonfly always seemed to feel like the front part of the amoeba, pulling desperately on the mass of everyone else, because that promising signal from the future was just out of reach, but she just didn't know how to convey that message of "goodness ahead" so that the midsection of the world understood that it was time to move. But, at least Fly had an idea of where they were all heading when the rest of the crowd finally got it in gear.

Eventually, the event Dragonfly had been so curious about back in the earlier days after David first got lost, which was that mysterious cyclical ending point of December 2012, happened. Nothing visibly changed. Fly was disappointed, but still held on to the idea that it was a turning point in the loopy progress of life on Earth. By now Fly had learned that unlike tiny amoebas, global cultural movement is only obvious when you step way, way back, and look at the period of many, many moments side by side, so that you can see the turbulent waves in which reality is flowing on the largest scales. It's like the way the horizon of the Earth looks flat and unchanging until you get high up into the atmosphere, and look out of the window of the plane, and see that the edge of the land is very much curved and constantly changing direction. And then looking at the solar system from somewhere else in the galaxy, and seeing that the simple orbits of the Earth around the Sun are actually corkscrew shaped, with all of the bodies spinning around one another as the whole lot of them are being pulled down some kind of immense wiggly uncoiling spring. Circular revolution plus linear evolution combined into something much bigger and so very important, which nonetheless lacks a name.

So Dragonfly continued on with her life~work, now only half awake, and half asleep, while waiting, as always, for the loopy detour part of her story to come back to it's primary plot of creating a better world in collaboration with her star, of David, with whom she at least still shared an orbiting path around the Mother Earth.

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SPEAKING UPWARDS  
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*“The world is your chance to create.”*  
~ Dub FX

Words are magic. They can make us feel almost anything, make us inspired enough to move mountains, and curious enough to build a rocket to the moon. Words can be spoken or written, or even not.

Stories are magic. They can explain complex ideas with amusing and powerful tales. They can scare us into going to war, or inspire us to work joyously for peace. They can bond a people together, or create a rift in otherwise neighborly cultures. Stories can be seen or heard or passed on.

Art is magic. It can combine all the sensual ideas of what it means to be alive in the universe into a small collection of matter and energy that one can hold in one's hand or heart. Art can be anything at all.



Anyone who can comprehend even a small part of the distance between the point inside them and another point outside them can create words, stories, and art.

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As Dragonfly waited, she sat in the low autumn sun, winter, really, she thought, as November really is winter in Maine, when there are no leaves left on the deciduous beings who populated the region so lovingly. She sat on the floor. Ish. She was still staying in the eccentric building in the middle of nowhere that was intended to be part living space and part woodworking shop space, built by an eccentric grandfather who's family had left him, decades ago, with far more land and building space than any single human could use. The apartment-like space Fly was staying in had been empty since it's inception, until she put the word out that she needed a free place to stay while she volunteered full time in the tiny rural town's public library. She'd reluctantly accepted the offer of this odd space, about as off grid as one can get, which suited her tastes just fine. But as soon as she finished moving her stuff there was an outbreak of especially unfortunate small town politics at the little library, and her enthusiasm for helping run the library was intentionally decapitated by external forces. So, while she waited, for something locally new, some change in the library community, or some globally different direction by the universe, she sat. On the floor. Ish. (For the only semblance of a bed she had managed to deploy was a feeble pile of blankets and rugs and such.) She sat and appreciated the process of making tea with actual tea lights. Four tea lights, on a refried bean can, in a sort of candle holder lamp lovingly and creatively made (by some artist back in the Boston area) out of a larger can, and then a rather drab steel pot on top of it all, allowing the well water, which Fly had lugged up the passive aggressive stair ladder that led into the living space from the workshop space, to heat up to a point that was suitably stimulating on a cold and windy autumn-winter day.

And while the tea water was warming, she wondered to herself where and when she had acquired that old belief that she didn't deserve to be taken good care of by the world. Fly didn't have any specific memories of thinking this, either as a child, or as a younger adult. In fact, if you'd have asked her, she probably would never

have even said that she believed this backward idea. But in some part of her brain, the notion that she had to prove herself worthy before she was supposed to be loved had lurked for so very long. While sitting there on the floorish, in the sun, listening to the windy roar of the inverter that turned the photons from the sun into the right pattern of electrons for her computer to use, to show her geeky sci-fi movies and let her play MahJong with monkeys, she imagined that the process of indoctrinating her into the cult of disposable life — where the most honest souls and their greatest dreams were to be discarded if they didn't immediately prove monetarily gainful — was a long and subtle one. However, Fly did have a memento of this presumably extensive process, a memento which she periodically shared with others who seemed to be likely to find it interesting, and that was a letter that her distant father had written to her when she was in grade school. The letter was almost entirely made up of a careful list of the quantities of money that went into and out of her father's bank account. It was, in other words, his budget. And he was sending it to her, he explained, as a way to help her understand how adults needed to do certain kinds of work in order to get the things they needed to live. The message, whether he intended it or not, was that unless Fly could prove herself capitalistically valuable to the world, she wasn't worthy of being healthy and happy and cared for, especially once she reached adulthood. Fly imagined that many other children (including her parents) had gotten this message rammed into their hearts and minds as well, and that's why the world was so filled with humans desperate to do anything at all to get money, regardless of how much it might go against their morality or how far in the opposite direction it might wander away from their dreams and ideals and visions of a better world. Fly imagined other people had similar mementos of the hazing that they went through as they were, themselves, indoctrinated.

She looked up the word in the dictionary.

*indoctrinate*

*verb*

*teach individuals to accept a set of beliefs uncritically*

*(Etymology: from the Latin word “doctrina” meaning ‘teaching, learning’, itself from the word “doctor” meaning ‘teacher’)*

Huh. Thought Fly. Doctor means teacher. Not so much healer. But teacher.

Teach a man to heal himself, and he can heal for his whole life. That’s a true doctor.

Fly had always been a teacher. Now she saw that she was also a kind of doctor. A teacher of healing.

But any “indoctrination” she might perform was an attempt to teach people to *never* accept beliefs uncritically. She was an artist who wanted to create memetic gardens blossoming with ideological panaceas that inspired people to learn how to heal themselves, using their own highest goals of who they wanted to be and what they wanted to do in life. She was designed, by her nature and nurture, to be that cultural architect, sculpting the world around her, fixing problems creatively, and doing it by sharing her maps, visions, and plans. She was that leading edge of the amoeba, trying to pull the weight of the world towards something better for everyone. She was that doctor who, rather than manipulating others into healing through force, wanted to teach people to find their own way to health.

But right now, it was tea time, a healing ritual for her own self.

-  
PURPOSE  
-

*“Our minds are susceptible to the influence of external voices, telling us what we require to be satisfied, voices that may drown out the faint sounds emitted from our souls, and distract us from the careful, arduous task of accurately naming our priorities.”*

*~ Alain de Botton*

“What do you do to justify your existence in the world?!” shouted Fly’s only female neighbor on the off-gridded section of Banton road, in sleepy little Palermo, Maine, as they both prepared to leave the library, where they’d been enjoying a rare indulgence of internet and electricity. They had been in the middle of a discussion about the purpose of government, and whether or not the government should be serving the needs of people, unconditionally, including medical care (universal coverage for which the current, rather wretched, governor of Maine was ardently rejecting, even though the US government was funding and promoting it, and Fly had been intimately feeling the effects of this lack of care due to some mysterious illness, recently, which had gone ignored by the “doctors” she had begged assistance from). The accusatory explosion that suddenly erupted from Fly’s library compatriot during the health-care conversation was one that could have been copied straight out of the bible of the cult of the disposable, if such a thing had ever existed in print. The implication was that Fly didn’t deserve to have the things she needed to be healthy, because she hadn’t been monetarily invested in.

The retaliatory response that was instantly flung from Fly's mouth was something akin to, "Do you even know what I do? Or are you just making assumptions so that you can judge me harshly? Have you ever looked at my website?"

The woman admitted that she didn't have the time, nor the energy, to actually take a look at Fly's work, which Fly voluntarily offered the world, and then tried to deflect the question by claiming that Fly was being judgmental, and thus hypocritical.

(Fly always hated it when people used the term *hypocritical*, because it nearly always meant that they were either: A. missing the point that having ideals that one has yet been able to achieve is a good thing; or B. making an unfounded assumption that the particular behavior is to be avoided.)

Realizing that trying to make any progress with their discussion, given both of their current unstable internal states, was a lost cause, Fly politely said her goodbyes, and started walking the long road back towards her temporary living space up in that strange building.

As Fly walked, her body shook with that odd mix of fear, anger, and confusion that she felt far too often after trying to relate to people who simply had no idea what it was like to see the universe from Fly's perspective, with her mind at least partially somewhere in the future. She set her mind to wander, as she walked off the stress chemicals, and realized that her initial knee-jerk reaction was, perhaps, only half as bad as it could have been. But it was nonetheless so very much the wrong answer, as seen from Fly's more conscious perspective now that she was safely outside of the original threatening moment and able to shrink it down to a single point in a much wider stretch of time.

This woman's interrogation involved a question that had been posed to Fly before. And it had always been posed by those who were, themselves, in a situation where they were feeling like they were not living up to the expectations others had for them, when it came to contributing to the world economy. The question was put out there, in Fly's general direction, not because they actually wanted to know what she personally did to add energy to the system, but because they supposed that she might shed some light on why they, themselves, were still existing in the universe, continuing to at least be supported in getting what they needed to

stay alive, despite the seeming lack of justification for such an investment by reality. The question was offered as a complex philosophical one, not the simple political one that it appeared to be on the surface.

It took Fly some time to understand that the beginnings of a far more useful answer as to why she belonged in the world was that she, just like every other being in the universe, was birthed, carried, supported, and endured, by nothing less than nature herself, with the sole purpose of exploring, recording, and sharing the stories of the universe, as seen from the unique vantage point of an otherwise average-seeming impermanent being aware of the fact that it is traveling through a specific path through time and space, alongside so many other, diverse beings, like some kind of tiny woven thread in a great, universal tapestry.

Given the definition of life, Fly knew that all living things are designed by nature to procreate in some way, biologically (through physical copying and modifying of genetic packages that offer coded information about reality and how different individual elements of reality interact) and/or ideologically (through copying and modifying more abstract coded information such as emotions, theories, and cultural traditions, using art, technology, and media as the information containers). Fly, just like everyone else living on Earth and beyond, was born to listen to, reflect on, and share stories about how life, the universe, and everything appears to her, uniquely and specifically, so that as a whole the universe can become conscious of itself. The most necessary work of the living is the input and output of particulars. The universe reaches enlightenment when every individual's view of reality is overheard and understood.

What Fly did to justify her existence in the world was nothing more than being herself. Following her instincts. Communicating, through the matter and energy that her body expressed, all the most meaningful experiences she'd had, to anyone who seemed interested. And, as far as she could tell, everyone else in the universe was doing the same thing, justifying their own existence in the world by simply being whatever they were made to be, and communicating their own unique, meaningful experiences in their own particular patterns of expressions, for the rest of the universe to learn from. One could even go so far as to say that you didn't

have a choice in the matter, because even if you managed to pull off the state of not being yourself, and somehow succeeded in not following your instinct (here, Fly thought of David's past digressions), and by some miracle totally triumphed in not communicating even one iota of your true story to others, you would still end up doing so, only from the opposite side of the mirror of who you were made to be, which would, in the end, still reflect who you were originally meant to be, as the opposite of the truth defines the boundaries of the truth. (Not that Fly was aware of anyone who'd ever successfully been able to really not be themselves. But if it was possible, it would simply make them exist in a *different*, dark-mattery, insidey-out sort of way, rather than unjustifying their existence entirely.)

One of the most majestic stories Fly had been told by the universe was that, just like each grain of sand falling from the top of the hourglass to the bottom, each of us living things has to take a specific path through space, so that the whole lot of us gets pulled into a tidy collaborative mountain at the end of time. Some of us fall directly forward, quickly enough to be at the center of the base of the mountain, forming the foundation of the end of it all. Others squirm down the sides of the container tracing a slower, curvaceous path. Others are bumped and jostled by their neighbors, making a very wobbly, unpredictable journey. And still others are kept back in time, moving exceptionally slowly, and only making through the center — the “now” point — of the vessel at the very end of the line, and then, after hitting the peak of the mountain, sliding down dramatically in a sudden avalanche of forward momentum, to finally touch bottom, meeting the earlier-arrived beings at the base. In other words, we all have our own, unique paths through life, *by design*.

The universe wants to know everything possible, Fly had been told, and so it gives every atom an inborn mission to investigate something slightly different from every other atom, and larger collections of atoms have more elaborate missions of getting together to form living beings who are to take in all the sensory information we happen upon in our investigations, to ferment upon that information, and finally to output the resulting mental sauerkraut, so that as a whole, the universe can become conscious of what it is, in all of its many delicious dimensions, inside and out.

As long as we trust our instincts for where we feel most compelled to be and what we feel most compelled to do, and as long as we allow our stories to be spread, we are serving our purpose in life. And even if we don't, we are giving the universe an inverse view of it's self, which is equally telling.

Fly might not be able to share that universal story with everyone right now, but her instincts were to keep working. Keep observing. Keep processing what she observed. Keep sharing her observations. And keep looking for a home for herself, her work, and her David, so that she might be even more effective in being a teacher~doctor~architect who helps as many people as possible find their own healing and growth. So, she kept working.



-  
INTERTWINED  
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*“We are a way for the Cosmos to know itself.”*  
~ Carl Sagan

In a fit of inspiration, Fly scribbled in her neat and tidy little gridded composition notebook. She drew careful little waves of half circles looping forwards and backwards in the pattern of a small particle moving through an ocean wave — a pattern that she’d discovered in a tiny animated gif on the Wikipedia entry on *waves* years before, and had realized that it might just be the same with non-physical waves, moving consciousness through looping patterns as thoughts are pushed and pulled by the flow of incoming information. On the top of the notebook page Fly wrote, “*What is a RELATIONSHIP?*” and the letters had been gone over in pink pencil, to emphasize them, lest they be overwhelmed by all the other scribbles on the page. There was also a yellow highlighted oval with the words “*orbiting each other*” swimming in the middle, next to two squiggly lines superimposed on one another. After a while of close absorption in the page and inside her head, she sprung up to scrounge for a largish piece of cardboard. She’d recently burned all her paper-based waste packaging, such as cereal boxes and such, in the borrowed wood stove in her borrowed apartment, so she wasn’t sure if there was anything suitable anymore in the vicinity. But then she discovered a box of stuff she’d hoped to donate to some so-far-nonexistent free store type of thing, and there was an old calendar in it, that her mother had given her as a

gift years ago, which had bold and colorful block prints of various Geeky Hippy images on it's large, thick pages. She figured that this would do. She set to work cutting one of the pages into a spiral with each round slowly turning into strips of colorful wiggly streamers. When she was done cutting, she held up the center of the spiral and let the rest of the paper curves flop delicately down to the ground in droopy ribbons of lazy waves. She surprised herself in finding a box of tacks almost exactly where she imagined they might be, and used one of the little pointy things to poke a hole into the center core of the spiral and attach it to one of the large, dark, wooden beams that held the barnlike building together, horizontally. After looking at the art for a while and contemplating the meaning of such a stretched out spiraling corkscrew wave, she realized that she needed to add another one. And she found an even more colorful calendar page to similarly slice into wavering ribbons, and tacked that one immediately adjacent to the first, and let it fall into the other's embrace. The paper spirals, together, fell almost all the way to the floor as they intertwined and pulled and pushed gently on one another in exchange as they eddied through the space, turning the bit of the universe between the floor and ceiling in that one location almost in the middle of the room into a mathematical special effect, depicting some mysterious, multicolored alien DNA. It was, to her, a visual expression of her marriage, with the two three dimensional coils moving towards and away from one another, bumping into each other, and fully enmeshed together while also being very much independent, from an intimate point of view, while also simultaneously both moving in almost identical directions over the course of their long travels from beginning to end, from a more wide perspective.

Kinky.

In the past, every time Fly had given up on something, either because she was finished with it, or because it was no longer worth pursuing, David had become increasingly terrified. He had taken her more short-termed relationships with ideas and projects and such as an indicator that she would do the same thing to him, abandoning him when she was finished with him, or once he no longer was worth pursuing. But the crucial factor that he was

missing from his unfortunate theory was that Fly knew what Neil Gaiman knew when he wrote his first story for Doctor Who.

*“Are all people like this? So much bigger on the inside?”  
~ Idris/TARDIS (from The Doctor’s Wife)*

Fly was well aware that ideas and projects were only three dimensional things at best, reasonably expansive, but limited, and easily moved beyond, like an action figure or doll that outlives a child’s creative playacting. But humans, and other living things, are four dimensional, bigger than their superficial packaging purports, because they are constantly changing and growing in unpredictable ways (from any individual’s perspective). Animate, three dimensional beings traversing through that mysterious dimension of motion, have a depth and complexity that, at least potentially, expands from the beginning of time to the end of time, and out to the very edges of space, all of which is hidden within a seemingly petite parcel. From Dragonfly’s perspective, David would never be completely knowable, and, in actuality, possessed the inborn ability to keep Fly’s mind intrigued, and heart compelled, for as long as they both were alive.

Marriage, Fly had just decided, was what happened when two people discovered, probably unconsciously, that while they were very different in some of the specific patterns of how they wobbled through life in one or two dimensions, they were also very much the same in their overall heading and dreamed of destination in all the other dimensions.

Fly and David had started up the same path, side by side, on their way up to the peak of the same symbolic majestic green and purple mountain, but they’d gotten separated along the way, during a storm, perhaps, and now David was on the other side of the mountain from her. But they were still both ascending, albeit excruciatingly slowly. To Fly it felt like David was walking around in circles. But those circles were, hopefully, ever-widening. Eventually, their paths would cross again, or at least meet at the top. Fly also noted that neither of them were taking the direct route, which only added to their protracted pace. But they were both dedicated. They’d get there some day, she was sure. Neither of them were the type to give up on what really mattered — they

just sometimes took a temporary break, allowing themselves to catch their breath. They were both notably stubborn when it came to the important stuff. Fly was a little better at it, but through that facade David was as determined as she. His dreams had been too filled with disturbing visions of trying to take off in his plane and not being able to get enough lift to make it over the trees at the edge of the runway, and her dreams had been filled with somewhat more interesting, but still surprisingly mild-mannered flight, with her feet mere inches above the ground.

Fly imagined that she needed to lighten both of their loads.

Futurum



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PRIME DIRECTIVE EARTH  
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*“Nature arms each man with some faculty which enables him to do easily some feat impossible to any other. And thus makes him necessary to society.”*

*~Ralph Waldo Emerson*

Dragonfly’s fuzzy visions of the future came into focus, and detail was added.

stone, steel, silicone

Did you know that human society can be observed growing and developing in the same pattern that all other living systems grow and develop?

0. When we humans first began to collect in larger groups called civilizations, we settled down into the Agricultural Age. This was a time for asking ourselves “What do I want?” Society answered its own question with all manner of religions, philosophies, scientific theories, and other self-defining stories about what it is that goes into making us what we are. We humans spent most of our time working to take care of our physical needs, and learning how to create a more stable human system that better supported who we felt we were.

1. Then when human society became stronger, it naturally became more curious about its abilities, and we entered

into the Industrial Age, asking ourselves “What can I do?” And boy, oh boy, did we do some wild stuff. During this age we focused on creating a more free system, with a goal of unlimited expansion of ourselves on, and off, the planet.

10. More recently, when human society started to get bored of playing with itself, it noticed that there was a whole world out there beyond itself, and we stumbled into the Information Age, with the grandiose question “What can you do that I might enjoy?” We didn’t just open up the floodgates of communication with other far, far away humans, but we started asking nearly everything else alive that we could imagine communicating with, including life in other solar systems, and artificial intelligence, and all the diverse flora, fauna, and otherwise we shared the Earth with. In this stage many individuals and groups in society are working passionately to create a system with more global belongingness, community, and understanding, either directly — by finding value and use for the physical resources that others want to offer us — or indirectly — through the creation and maintenance of communications technology that works well for everyone who has something to say.

That brings us humans up to the third stage in the basic four stages of growth (which move in alternating waves of inputs and outputs for self and other, like binary numbers). So now what?

11. What might be up next for human society? Well, if we take a peek into the future of the pattern of growth for other things, it suggests that the next question that human society asks itself is “What can we do together?” Perhaps we humans will finally feel naturally confident enough to truly collaborate with all of the other life on our planet, to see what we can do with a whole community of Earthlings, of all species, biological and otherwise, working together for the blossoming of life itself, out into the vastness of space.



Whether we will be successful or not is not entirely clear, but it does seem very likely that this is where we are heading, especially given our fascination with the internet of things, biotechnology, cybernetics, nanotechnology, organic farming and permaculture, biomimicry, networked locally-resourced energy grids, new urbanism, transportation hub systems, and a seemingly unending variety of other fields looking to bring everyone together, and merging nature and technology in awesome ways.

After so many years of waiting, working, hoping, planning, inputting, and outputting, and everything else Dragonfly could pack into her life without David, something happened. It wasn't really a something as much as it was a large collection of many points that when looked at from high above turned into a something symphony, with each individual sphere of tonal notation assembling itself into a relationship with all its neighbors in such a way as to produce something never before played, yet which becomes immediately familiar to all who overhear.

One of the metaphorical messages in bottles that Fly had gently dropped into the memetic waves of the world was finally discovered by the right person, at the right time, and in the right place, for things to start moving rapidly. Fly was led to a small bit of land not far from the ocean, with an old farmhouse and barn that very much wanted to be loved and given some new life. Fly put the word out for all those who were interested in starting a creative space for doing amazing things that served the needs of the community and world in playful, thoughtful, and inspiring ways, freely. (Some called this the *gift economy*, Fly just called it the way normal, healthy organisms functioned.)

Fly told people that her goal was to find ways to turn whatever resources were available into something that offered more of what people in the community needed, so that they could have a higher quality of life, fulfill their own greatest dreams, and serve whatever professions their own nature and nurture might have designed them to want to serve.

It took a lot of discussion, but Fly now had at least a few folks who shared her vision of a future where humans were supported

and nurtured in being their best, rather than feeling like they had to compete against themselves just to survive. Five of these fellow visionaries moved into the farmhouse: two locals, two from “away”, and Dragonfly. They found many others online, from all over the world, who were interested, and who joined the effort by providing intellectual and emotional support.

The Global Organism Database had begun in earnest.

Dragonfly, being one of the primary architects of ideas, offered up a succinct plan for organizing everything. Or at least everything that moved. (Everything that doesn't move being stuck in the past, of course, and not something one includes in plans.) Her plan for organizing everything started with the most general functions of a healthy future and progressed to the more detailed elements. Anything that was even more detailed she figured would need to be left to the particular professionals and hobbyists in whatever area they chose to work in. (One of Fly's own favorite hobbies that she'd been practicing for longer than she probably had wanted to was food, specifically locally grown, wild-ish, mostly raw, and especially exciting foods. She loved to give people a taste of native sunchokes flavored with feral chives and lovingly lemony wood sorrel, sprinkled with ocean salted sunflower seeds, and then when folks were done eating, she adored giving them some corms, bulbs, seeds, and seedlings, along with suggestions for planting and identifying where to look for all kinds of wildly yummy things lurking in fields and forests.)

When Fly presented her map for the future, she suggested that every individual who was excited about contributing to the growth of the world in some way could pick one or more of the more general categories to focus on, and, given the diversity of personalities and interests and environments that nature creates, all of the circles of purpose on her map would get filled in with willing volunteers rather nicely.

The Goal: A Fertile Planet - able to procreate a new planetlet of some kind

### Earthly Processes:

0. Global Circulatory System - create and maintain effective ways to transport resources from where they are unwanted to where they are needed

1. Global Nervous System - create and maintain effective communication systems for moving information from where it is produced to where it is needed.

### International Intentions:

00. Physical Needs: serve the solid, liquid, and gas (food, water, air) needs of the diverse communities in the system

01. Coordination: use feedback to assess how well needs are being met

11. Informational Needs: ensure that every community has access to communication tools for expressing their diverse dreams and ideas, and input and output needs.

### Local Organizations:

000. Body Resiliency: provide access to high quality food and water for each individual, wherever they are

001. Home Resiliency: provide long-term, comfortable, warm, and airy housing/shelter for each family unit (one or more individuals, depending on personal preferences) in which to live~work, wherever they want to be

011. Community Resiliency: provide a network of resource storage and generation hubs that support resource sharing by individuals, both materially and informationally, wherever individuals are located

111. Global Resiliency: provide a global database and thinktank for researching and exchanging ideas about how to use available resources to get more of what people need, to be more effective in their goals

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Fly nicknamed that last one, the global database and thinktank, “GOD”. It was, indeed, presumptuous. And appropriate. They were generating a force of ideological power that would be creative on a vast, possibly universal, scale, as it helped move humans and all the other Earthlings upward and outward into the rest of reality. It was to be forged out of the most beautiful, loving, inspired dreams of every living being known to humankind, with the ultimate ambition to touch every point in space and time with love. Or something like that.

If nothing else, giving the Global Organism Database that acronym certainly got people’s attention.

One of the primary messages that Fly wanted to share with the world was that the old approach of trying to quantify everything important in the world, by assigning it a fairly arbitrary and subjective number, and then adding a symbol next to it, such as \$ or £ or ¥, was unequivocally interfering with the world successfully learning how to take good care of itself, because health, companionship, problem solving, and inspiration — the most important elements of a good life — were qualities, not quantities, utterly impossible to measure on any number line. At best, monetizing the world was a waste of time and energy. At worst, it was causing undue illness by blocking the free flow of resources from where they are in excess to where they are useful for creating a thriving system. Like donating your unwanted banana peels to the compost pile, and it’s worms and bacteria to turn into fertile dirt.

*Imagine, Fly articulated, if your intestines suddenly started getting obsessed with collecting as much poop as possible, and your heart started demanding bribes before it turned its vital blood pumping action on. How long would you, and your heart and intestines, survive? Hoarding and quantifying everything is killing us!*

Fly even offered a video that featured the bubbly teacher version of herself writing down an algebraic equation, and then proving, with math and logic, that the zero-sum, monetary system literally caused suffering, sadness, and sorrow, entirely unnecessarily.

The more she shared her ideas, the more people appeared to share her understanding, or at least be brave enough to consider testing it all out. Which was all she ever wanted, intellectually,

anyway. Consideration. *Consideration* is a word derived from the Latin words for *with* and *stars*. Fly didn't know what to make of that, but it seemed appropriate in some unfathomable way.

As Dragonfly's own ideological wings found more lift, as they were increasingly supported by so many other like-minded folks, and as many of her problems of not being able to take care of her body's needs disappeared, David, was starting to feel his courage again. Discovering that he now had a real choice of where he could be, comfortably and stably, and once again feeling like he could be of better use to the world taking his place beside his wild and free wife, he quietly reappeared in her life. First with a few brief, almost whispered words. Then with a hushed hug. And finally, with the full force of his long suffering libido.

As David found holes in the monstrous defensive story he'd been encased in for so long which he used to sneak out into the open, and as Fly's own quietly held frustration at being battered and bullied by David's demons finally found ears willing to hear them out, there was, of course, much previously unexpressed, intense emotion to be shared by the two. But in their new, supportive, friendly environment, they were given the time and space to get it all out and processed and finally reformed into a lovable, if muddy, collective monster, which the couple compassionately incorporated into their lives as one would an ugly but much appreciated stuffed animal that your childhood clings to when things get scary.

Physics tells that that you can neither create nor destroy matter or energy, you can only repurpose it, turning it into something more useful. And that includes baggage.

Finding their balance as a team took quite a bit of time, and space, expanding out over the next several years to warmer climates with sweaty rain forests, turquoise tides, and desolate deserts, and then back up North again, to give them a deep sense of who they were as a couple, oscillating around a central point as they moved forward together, in heart and mind, and usually body, as well.

They spent much of their time together exploring David's more hidden talents. Fly had been fortunate enough to have followed her heart enough to bring her own hidden talents to light already, with her natural inclination for teaching, art, and

philosophically based organizing of everything, all converging on a sort of memetic gardening theme that mostly took the form of helping people grow their own stories in creative media outlets of all kinds. (She was exceptionally delighted when David started writing his own stories to share with the world.) Fly's work building the GOD system (the coding of which David also helped out on) was the peak of her idea-nurturing, but the stuff that she did on a more personal level was more to her liking when it came to day to day community work, as she ran classes, staffed libraries, and organized storytelling and skill sharing events. But David had never really felt free enough to wander where he needed to wander to discover his own convergence of interests, so the couple worked together to move the last of the lingering crap out of his way, and he began to allow himself to flesh out into his true calling.

(Much of the more longitudinal and latitudinal part of David's self exploration was done via the vertical, employing an elegant little flying machine, mostly of his own design, which had a very sweet and efficient biodiesel engine, and brilliantly expansive wings, covered in the latest incarnation of solar panels, which allowed the plane to cut a swath through the air like a glider, running on silent sun-driven electricity once the craft ascended into the azureness of the atmosphere. David absolutely loved that plane. It was so agile and easy to lift off the ground!)

While the partners were busy growing into their better selves, the rest of the human world, along with other species, animal, vegetable, and mineral was growing as well. (Computers — the "mineral" category of the world — were now being designed to be stunningly effective in their abilities to naturally evolve answers to some of humanity's biggest technical problems through a process of information mutation and recombination and testing for fitness of the potential solutions. Artificial life was starting to become not just self-aware but also aware of the goals shared by all life, goals of creating and sharing information and other resources that assure a long and prosperous future for all.)

Once ideas like Fly's design for a healthy, organized, flowing system, and it's clear building blocks of general intentions and processes, were taken up by some of the more enthusiastic movers

and shakers of the world — that more forward thinking middle region of the amoeba — and carefully combined with the visions emerging out of a healthy handful of local governments and non-profits and other future-minded community-based groups and eccentric individuals, there was finally a dramatic shift in the public mindset about where society should focus its resources, and who society wanted to have making decisions that effected everyones' lives.

As a younger woman, one of Dragonfly's favorite storytellers, the indomitable spirit that lay inside the mortal man known as Joss Whedon, always seemed to be able to convey, in some glaringly obvious but rarely attended to way, the same truth that another of Fly's raconteur heroes, Malcolm Gladwell, had discovered, which was that the secret to overcoming seemingly impossible odds against you was to be desperate, and let the freaks be in charge.

With the impending disaster of climate change, increasing rates of mental illness as the norm, rampant poverty and insecurity threatening nearly every human even in world of abundance, and constant threats of rebellion against corrupt governments, enough folks had become desperate, and enough freaks showed up and were given permission to lead the way to a grand solution that no one else had seen.

-  
REVERIE  
-

*“The boldness of asking deep questions may require unforeseen flexibility if we are to accept the answers.”  
~ Brian Greene*

Fly, being one of the freaks with an ever more lucid vision of the path forward, and a healthy respect for the desperate, wrote even more books, blogs, journals, embraced the more mobile media of video and audio, and offered a whole host of workshops and events, which were now becoming quite popular and well attended. She took a lot of her more beloved older, smaller expressive creations and reorganized them into new, more multisensory intellectual and artistic offspring.

A short movie taking the form of what she sometimes called “sneak previews” was offered one day to those who subscribed to her neuron (a sort of blog/channel/website/profile/status page that was hosted on the latest trend in online social networking, an open source, peer-to-peer set of applications that were designed around individuals’ personal media feeds rather than being located only at some kind of centralized corporate site). The movie offered some friendly and colorful animation done by one of Fly’s fellow artists, and the narration was done by Fly’s favorite small neighbor, an adorably mischievous young human girl named Lillian.

It’s all there.

All of it.



Always.

Did you know that the universe recycles? There is no more or less stuff in the universe now than there was at the beginning of the universe, and there won't be any more or less stuff when the universe ends.

If it ever does.

The stuff of the universe — energy and matter — that gets used up for one thing really just gets recycled into some entirely different thing. And then that new thing gets turned into yet another different thing. Sometimes it looks like energy, and sometimes it looks like matter. But really, energy is matter from a different perspective. Einstein figured this out. And it's good to know. Matter is like the ocean wave you see coming towards the shore, with the water that spreads out all over the place once the wave hits the shore being like energy. But even after the wave hits and spreads out, the water never disappears, it just waits around until it gets pulled back into a new wave.

All of the stuff of the universe is like that water, it's always there.

So there can never be any energy shortage or even resource shortage for us. The stuff we need is always, always there. We just have to look for it from a different perspective, if we don't happen to see it right away.

And to find that different perspective, we can ask the kind of individual who already seems to have discovered a way to turn what we have into what we want.

Like alchemy, only realer!

Come visit all the different alchemical perspectives, and add your own, on the [Global Organism Database!](#)

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By the time the couple hit their 60's, a bit over a decade after they rejoined one another, the up and coming generations of young people had finally fulfilled the dreams of the older generations in creating a resource based economy, with a sort of ad hoc, geeky grassroots government that really was doing a fairly good job of operating the core nervous and circulatory functions of a healthy, living system, distributing the resources produced in one area of the system to wherever they are needed, or wanted, throughout the system as a whole. Robotic technology had flourished to the point where, finally — after centuries of industrial automation leading people to believe that soon everyone could live a life of leisure, since it was so easy to produce everything we needed in factories — most everything really was able to be produced or processed or delivered by artificial creatures who hadn't been designed with complex conscious minds that were able to feel bored, frustrated, or under appreciated. This left the more complex, biological thinkers like humans free to focus on offering more lovingly crafted items and services at their leisure, with great appreciation from those who benefitted from the exceptional customization available to suit their idiosyncratic tastes.

The wiser minds of the young generations, some of whom Fly had so lovingly worked with as a teacher in her own early adulthood and then in her more recent years, had recognized the abundance of nature, including the eccentricities of human diversity, and figured out that the whole antagonistic, competitive, scarcity-based rationale that had created the artificial monetary economy was utterly in opposition to what a true economy was supposed to be, which was to carefully manage available resources in a way that served the system's needs for healthy growth. The elders of the world had longed for such a shift in the way of life for decades, and longer, having opened their eyes to the way nature functioned so well and in such balance, even when things like stumbling humanity mucked things up so badly with the polluting of our homes, the raping and pillaging of non-renewable resources, and the infamous carbonation of the atmosphere. When Fly had been in her middle years, only the more edgy, playful, open-minded scientists had begun to look at biomimicry for solutions to the artificially created problems of human culture. But the younger generations had grown up feeling increasingly trapped in an

inhuman, plastic, faux culture of poorly designed artificial crap which turned almost immediately into useless trash that threatened to take over the wild spaces of the world (even far out into the middle of the great Pacific Ocean), all of which was painfully produced by what the young folks came to see as nothing more than a modern version of slavery, with only a few subtle bells and whistles added on to make it look more appealing to those who were indentured (which really was pretty much everyone from the factory workers all the way up to the CEOs). And, of course, they'd been told that there was likely to be nothing left of the planet's abundance to pass on to their own children. So, in the 20's, even the teens and twenty-somethings who had never heard of the elders' ideas of a better world, rebelled, as always happens in a growing culture, against the obviously unhealthy, regressive choices of the past, and instead, almost unconsciously, the young people embraced the "new" biomimicry ideas of using solutions that evolution had already spent millennia perfecting, in broader environments, including human society. So now, previously segregated social functions such as schools, workplaces, libraries, stores, theaters, restaurants, science labs, city halls, playgrounds, and such were all recombining and merging and connecting into a network of more open-ended, free-flowing community resource hubs where a diverse range of humans and others could research, build, test, perfect, and share anything and everything they felt inspired to add to the world, from geothermally heated treehouses to poop propelled art cars to wind powered wearable computers to zucchini powered toddlers. In short, the up and coming humans of the world were fervently filling all those crucial roles that Fly had long before imagined as being the natural functions of a healthy planetary system, just like the diverse ligaments, bones, muscles, and internal organs of animal bodies. And somehow, against all the detractors' incessant bemoanings, it was all working out really well, with most everyone honestly happy with their lot in life, as they say, and able to live in whatever way they choose to live, from the folks who like to watch robots wrestling to those who prefer human jello wrestling, and from the folks who follow Jesus' word to those who speak in more mathematical tongues, and onto the ones who simply observe the universe in an atom.

It was Chaos. But it was a good, thriving, luxurious chaos.

The Guinness Book of World Records had, in past centuries, proved that even average folks can become the best at something. And now that people were free to pursue their dreams, and were supported in doing so, the world was putting the otherwise impressive collection of accomplishments in the Guinness Book to shame.

Another of Fly's sneak previews that she'd posted on her neuron feed was a reworked blog post from back in the naughts. This one was composed of Fly walking through her very artful neighborhood, and talking to the camera about what she imagined the people watching might find exciting within their own imagination.

Some things that people choose to be the best at are more useful than others. Being the best at lightsaber limbo could be what makes you happy, though I imagine if you are watching this video you might be planning on being the best at something more meaningful and valuable, like designing the best playgrounds or running the best science library or growing the best heirloom tomatoes. You're probably not going to be happy unless you're the best at something really big, and important, and extra sparkly, right? Though, you know, lightsabers are indeed quite sparkly! And who says you can't have lots of things you're best at?

How about being the first to invent a real lightsaber? One which can cut through rock! Or that can slash through the invisible barriers of ignorance! Or weld sand together into a solid, structural material for building instant housing in the desert! (Without having to lug around that bulky 3D printer.) Maybe you have the skills and resources and interest in being the best at one of these things, but I imagine that it's something else entirely that you are going to be most excellent at...

So, as you and I consider all the unusual and life-changing things that have happened to you up to now, we can look forward to discovering what point of excellence all your experiences and resources and wisdom are converging towards. And we can maybe get a brief glimpse of the peak of your metaphorical mountain, and see how your particular excellence will make a real difference in the world.

Once the couple settled down into a more permanent way of life, with the couple sorting out what they, themselves, wanted to be best at, and after having built their own small house to act as their home base, and after spending much of their time staffing their little community resource space nearby where they were practicing and promoting their particular ideas for a more sustainable way of eating, drinking, breathing, heating, lighting, and generally interacting with others, Fly and David were able to really relax and enjoy this truly new and improved life.

They sometimes took vacations to areas where there was a hearty concentration of some of the more extreme, and conservative, belief systems, so that the partners didn't become too ensconced in the idea that human nature was always better when it was wildly diverse, the way most of their Northeast home, the West Coast of North America, and northern Europe, especially, had become.

There were so many pockets of both old fashioned and recently invented persuasions of ideological congregations, that it was almost like a whole planet full of theme park rides made out of culture itself. In the same way that an almost infinite number of communities had rapidly appeared on the internet when it first became commonplace, with virtual groups covering every possible interest, lifestyle, philosophy, tradition, and fetish, now there were an almost infinite number of geographical, meatspace communities settled by the sorts of people who populated the online spaces. And because the new form of natural governance had eliminated the artificial barriers to free flowing travel, people were, for the most part, able to move to wherever they felt most at home, for as long or as short a time as they felt like staying.

(There were, of course, still some folks who were ultra-conservative and adamantly adhered to their chosen way of life and ardently believed that it was the only acceptable option. These types aggressively protected their communities from what they saw as unwanted outside influence. And there were the inevitable micro-war-zones that most decent people avoided like the plague, since entering such territory for any reason was tantamount to an invasion, with violence being the only appropriate response by the residents. But generally, most communities were open to anyone who wanted to live or just visit, as long as one basically respected local customs.)

One summer, when David and Fly were feeling especially adventurous, they asked their neighbors to divvy up the couple's regular jobs at the community farm and workshop, and they packed up their basic necessities into a small solar (and wind) powered sailboat (with the tiniest and most adorable little kitchen you've ever seen, in the not quite as tiny but still very, very small cabin), and headed off to a place almost on the other side of the planet. They plotted a circuitous journey to a large island off the coast of Africa, where a group of modern Luddites had, a few years earlier, decided to try to recreate the primitive life of early humans. The Fetal Culture settlers, or *Firsts* as they sometimes called themselves (when they bothered to use spoken language at all), had re-de-evolved, through a combination of genetic engineering and cloning (hence the addition of the word "modern" to the term "Luddite"), an ecosystem that reflected as accurately as possible what it might have been like for the first homo sapiens living on the plains and small forests of equatorial Africa. But in this case these primates had at least some knowledge of things like airplanes, toxicology, and four-part harmony complicating their brains. This island was, as one might imagine, a rather bizarre place. When the couple finally got there, after an energizing, cold, and stunningly beautiful voyage around the Horn of Africa, Fly, who had always thought of herself as one who preferred the simple, natural life, had had an especially challenging time dealing with the custom there of eating bugs. She could handle most of the things most Westerners and other affluent people who'd grown up with such comforts as running water, electricity, and global communication claimed they "couldn't live without", having herself lived without them on occasion, but she

just couldn't find a way to think of putting animals, especially live arthropods, anywhere near her tongue (where there are supposedly more sensitive nerves than anywhere else in the body!). This was simply not any kind of adventure she was willing to commit to. So, after being confronted by a long term resident (nonverbally) insisting that she eat some presumably deliciously crunchy beetles, on the second day after they'd arrived, and really just finding no way she could accept the offer, she realized that she could simply do what she did with children who were asking her to do something she just didn't want to do, and distract them, by pointing to something else in the area and pretending to be confused by or curious about it. It worked like magic. Literal slight of hand. Fly felt much more comfortable when the neonatives shared their nuts and fruits and even leaf based meals with her. That was the part of living simply that she had appreciated ever since she was a little child and her paternal grandmother had shown her that the purple clover flowers growing in a wild field near the blueberry bushes they were picking from, were also quite sweet and edible. And Fly hoped that the Firsts might simply chalk her weird food preferences up to her being more like the small multi-colored ungulate neighbors (who Fly knew almost nothing about other than that they grazed on grass and shrubbery around the settlement's camplike living area), as opposed to being more like a healthy, hearty "eat anything that moves and doesn't make me sick" homo sapiens that they were trying to be. Of course, these intentionally only-semi-conscious humans tended to think of things in more direct sensory terms, and generally avoided naming things with words, even though the adults of the community had been completely verbal before going into the experiment. (The children, on the other hand, were being raised mostly non-verbally, which many other people in the more modern world were slightly troubled by. But after some heartfelt stories being shared by a group of deaf people who'd grown up mostly on their own and who'd created their own language simply because they felt the need to, and after some neuroscientists discovered that Buddhist and Christian monks and nuns who took vows of silence and essentially lost their ability to think verbally had the portions of their brain that normally governed language skills taken over by visuo-spatial functions that allowed them to create and manipulate very intricate

three-dimensional designs that they used as both art and technology, and after linguists insisted that this was a very important opportunity to study the evolution of human communication, most of the worriers wandered off to do something more fun, and left the community to carry on with their choice of lifestyle, and hope for the best for the kids being born there. The kids did, eventually, turn out perfectly happy and healthy and intellectually quite reasonable, if a bit more like Buckminster Fuller combined with Hellen Keller than the typical mainstream human. Many of those raised in the primitive culture did choose to leave, but even those who left tended to come back, in the same way that kids who were raised in the more restrictive, simple, and community-based life of the Amish had done for centuries.) David and Fly agreed, after a week of living with and around the Firsts that it was indeed a valuable experiment, but that they were seriously glad that someone else was doing it, and not them. Technology was just too cool for them to ever want to give up for any significant period of time. They both had known, even as wee little ones, that science and technology and machines and innovation were where their souls belonged, even while knowing that the magic of mother nature was also a necessary part of their core way of being. That merging of the two extremes of conscious awareness, with the ability to both appreciate life as it is, and to manipulate life in a way that allowed for even more diversity and delight, was something unusual about them both, which gave them a shared vision of where they wanted to be and how they wanted to get there.



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BLUELAND  
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*Dragon*

*noun*

*mythical, serpent-like monster; in Europe the dragon symbolizes chaos or evil, in Asia it is a beneficent creature representing fertility, and is associated with water and the heavens*

Fairly early on in their reconnection as a single unit of marital bliss (which Dragonfly periodically pointed out was ideally about one fifth conflict, as discovered by marriage researchers John and Julie Gottman), it became popular to order one's own personal extrasensory bot, which often took the form of a flying robot, or drone. It was surprisingly popular with the older folks, perhaps because they had both less energy for the more dangerous physical exploration of unusual places, and less time to actually spend on random exploration compared to the kids these days, who tended to want to have first hand experience with all the wild stuff the planet, and beyond, had to offer them. Also, the kids tended to like to switch their robotic avatars regularly, and didn't want to have to be stuck with the limited selection of sensory options on any one bot, so when they did do virtual exploring, they mostly used whatever bot happened to be designed for that particular environment and task.

After a bit of fun playing with the bot design tool on one of her favorite local tech communities, Dragonfly fixed herself up a sweet little biobot, which was partially organic structure, and

partially printed carbon, and partially complex collections of computing devices, all connected together with nanotech materials that allowed for coordination between the living and non-living systems. She could have gone with a more traditional, completely artificial design, but she really loved the added ability to sense things virtually in the same way that she sensed them, with living cells that exchange chemicals and electromagnetic energy as they experienced their own tiny little environments.

Fly just knew that even though the popular scientists denied that there was any noticeable difference in the digital senses versus the analog senses, there just had to be something crucial that the analog, living, organic biology and chemistry and electricity did that the artificial stuff couldn't, in the same way that listening to live music being made by real instruments with plucked strings and winded tubes and vibrated membranes sounded so much more intense than anything that ever came out of a computer audio file, no matter how much gold wire there was connecting the device to no matter how many impressive custom built speakers you had aimed at your ears.

In this way, Fly supposed that she was a bit more childlike in her exploratory needs, looking for as close to the first hand experience as she could get, even when she wasn't up for an actual trip to the unpredictably fishy coral reefs of Australia, or the unbearably frigid ice of the Antarctic, or the three-weeks-of-intense-military-style-training-before-being-cleared-for-flight of the trip to the moon or Mars, or even the simply awkwardly-sweaty dance floors of Eastern European night clubs, which Fly figured she should experience at least once in her life, but which didn't really enjoy all that much, as she found them to be not that much different from the similarly awkwardly-odorific dance floors of her old stomping grounds of Boston and Cambridge in the 90's. (Though virtual dancing was really not something that worked for anyone anyway, so it was hard to get a good sense, tactile-wise, of what the experience was like, even with the new motion sensors that were common in the bots.)

The way the extrasensory bots worked, usually, was that the person who was using the machine would have their normal body and brain directly linked to the intellectually-empty, puppet-like

drone though a wearable input device, and sometimes, small sensory implants made of conducting nanomaterials injected into the skin just like a tattoo. Dragonfly had the tattoo implant, and she could choose the types of input that the external system would be allowed to feed her, so that she could either use the drone as a simple robotic camera, audio recorder, and data collection device, or she could go all out and accept the more detailed and sensitive inputs that the device was directly experiencing, such as temperature, spacial movement, smells, pressure, and so on, including the more raw neuronal inputs from the organic materials of the bot, or use it as anything in between those two ends of the sensory connection spectrum. Essentially Fly could use the machine as an extension of her own sensory organs in a way that her brain would interpret as actually being her own body out there being exposed to whatever the bot was being exposed to. Some of the inputs took more of an effort for her brain to sort out and translate into a more realistic reaction inside her body, while others, like temperature, were pretty simple for her brain to comprehend. Though, because the tactile sensors in her tattoo implant covered only on a small area of her arm, it created a somewhat odd sensation of just that little bit of her body being in some different part of the world. But after a few months of using her personal bot, her neurons kind of arranged things in a way where it made sense that what was being felt by the arm was *really* sort of a separate part of her self, which could go off on it's own accord sometimes. That sensation of having a physical presence in more than one location at a time was totally normal and reasonable now, in her brain, even if the closest thing that evolution had ever come up with to such a thing was the tentacle or hand, which really wasn't at all similar to having a body part totally in another physical location. It gave an amusingly rational meaning to the previously mystical terms *out of body experience* and *extra sensory perception*. Fly could log on to her bot any time she wished and it would switch on and be fully under her control. And when she was not consciously driving it, it would simply collect data in whatever way she'd left it perceiving — local environmental conditions, global news, individual people, places, and things that interested her, and so on, in addition to the usual sensory experiences — so that when she logged back on, it would have summaries of the data ready for her to explore if she wanted.

(There were also, obviously, settings that could trip an alert that would be sent to her net-connected tattoo, letting her know that something especially important was happening even if she wasn't logged on.)

David designed his own flying robot in a more practical way, naturally. His was entirely mechanical, and took the form of a paper airplane. It was fully articulated and beefed up with all the sensors a geek could ever want. It was, as Fly christened it, WMOEPA 2, the World's Most Over Engineered Paperlike Airplane, the second version (the first being a bit of woodcraft she'd made for David as a Solstice gift, when they first got together). David preferred to call the bot Jacques (rhymes with sock), after one of his favorite explorers and thinkers, Jacques-Yves Cousteau. (Fly, uncharacteristically, just called her bot, "my bot", or, occasionally, "I" and "me", as it really felt like an extension of her own body, at least some of the time.)

While Fly, who'd always been a big fan of quiet observation, truly enjoyed connecting to her sense bot and wandering around all manner of environments, she also genuinely appreciated simply being a homebody in their little creative community. This was, perhaps, only the second time in her life, other than being at art school in college, when she felt like she could just relax and be herself in a larger community of humans, who sometimes actively worked together, sometimes worked around one another, and sometimes worked alone on a range of interesting and useful projects. All the other times in her life she'd felt like an outsider desperately trying to feel safe in a society that just didn't understand her, or support her unique needs. College had been pretty good since it really was specifically designed to give her something that she could use in her creative efforts to understand and live in the world. Back then, her friends, while not overly abundant, had been mostly as curious and playful and full of meaningful intent as she. And her teachers had usually been genuinely enthusiastic about helping her find something that was meaningful and interesting for her to do in life. So she'd settled into that world and found ways to do her thing, either with willing collaborators or on her own, with a willing audience. There was a kind of social flow to that time of her life that she hadn't really found after graduation or during most of her adulthood, where her growing fuzzy awareness of a whole

system being out of whack and in need of... inwhacking? had taken hold of her primary choices in life, which made her rather pariahish in most circles, and certainly in her family and local communities where even well meaning and thoughtful change seemed scarier than the surety of middling lameness or even annoying frustration.

Fly's relations with most people for most of her adult life had been either exceedingly superficial and practical-minded, or downright unpleasant.

But now, now that the world had changed so much, and now that most folks' fears had been faced (and found to be as small and friendly as Fly and David's own childhood monsters), and now that the majority of those who had clung to the broken stuff for so long were finally exploring their own dreams, now Fly could again open up to everyone around her and find welcoming participants for her various projects, either as co-producers or as free consumers of her offerings. This meant that she once again was finding some meaningful, deep connections with others around her, beyond her beloved husband. She still was totally in love with him, and loved working intimately with him on their shared efforts, and she also now could comfortably work with a larger group as well, so that the couple could collectively achieve far more diverse projects than the two of them could do by themselves. And work was even more like play now, with such a sense of belonging for Fly, since she no longer had to spend so much time seeking out others who *might* be interested in collaboration, and she didn't have to waste so much time and energy trying to explain to people what she was trying to do.

The people around Fly were now thinking far more similarly to Fly than ever before, even more so than when she'd been in art school with so many like-minded artists. Now it wasn't just the curiosity and creativity that she shared with others, but the philosophy and logic and science and politics she'd had for so long were more universal now, culturally, as opposed to just being in Fly's blurry visions of a future and the occasional obscure book or article that almost nobody else had ever read.

Now, instead of only feeling free to babble about her ideas to some easy to ignore neuron feed or discussion community or even a small corner of the local art gallery, Dragonfly would wander boldly over to Patrick's greenhouse to ask what he, a botanist with

a penchant for saffron crocuses, lotuses, orchids, and other exotic vegetative reproductive displays, thought about the idea of trying to grow a plant that could change colors or scents like a chameleon, so as to camouflage itself whenever too many plant-eating insects showed up in the garden. Or Fly could climb up into the astronomy observatory on nights she wasn't feeling sleepy, and ask Maggie to again try to explain to Fly how supernovas made the heavier chemical elements of life. And sometimes, Fly simply liked to take the zip line down to the beach to sit in the sun with the other sunbathers, and chat about relationship problems and what the latest news was regarding the warplay communities, or gossip about the floating circus community that anchored just off the coast from their own community, during the warmer months.

Even idle chit chat was comfortable and rewarding to Fly now, since so many folks around her shared her beliefs in diversity, respect, and equality of access to resources, so that everyone could be free to experience whatever part of reality they felt most drawn to, and share their experiences in whatever way was most appropriate to their personal expressive tendencies. Now that almost no one felt forced to do things they believed were wrong, and they knew that there was pretty much always an accepting and interested audience somewhere just waiting to hear their unique thoughts and feelings about what it was like to be them and all the interesting things they'd discovered, the kinds of discussion and other interactions that happened most of the time almost always made Fly feel like she was a part of something cool and important and special.

It was like all those people who had been chosen as Time Magazine's "person of the year" at the turn of the century — the newly-empowered "you" that was the individual participant on the internet — finally realized that they not only don't have to try to be just like everyone else, but that they also don't have to try to impress and/or con anyone just to survive, and instead simply followed their hearts and minds and found that doing so was just what everyone else wanted them to do. It turned out that while most people didn't want to have to do whatever others liked to do, they often did want to hear about it. So, now everyone could live vicariously through others while also having the time of their lives living their own journey. It was, as someone on the online politics

community that David hung around in said, “as if all the Autistics realized that it was OK to be the Schizophrenics they always wanted to be, and all the Schizophrenics realized that it was OK to be the Autistics that they always wanted to be.” (Fly didn’t really know if that was the best metaphor, or even if it was a meaningful metaphor at all, but it still sounded good as a funny quote, so she would sometimes use it in her own stories of how the Earth became a healthy, conscious organism that worked as a fully functioning system, rather than as competing parts powered by miserable souls. Fly figured that the quote was generally understandable as meaning that people no longer felt like they had to stay stuck in whatever uncomfortable box they’d been put in by both the well meaning and the non well meaning “authorities” from their past.)

Dragonfly had shed that old, inaccurately labeled, box she’d been put in as a child and younger adult, way back when, and she was happy to now find those around her climbing out of their own unnatural and constricting boxes as well, so that they could all enjoy playing together outside in the bigger, much vaster, and more stunningly beautiful universe.

Most days, the couple fell into a rhythm of practiced “wise elders” in their modern, sustainable, and collaborative system. Living in their smaller community, and in the world at large, Fly and David worked together, either doing the basic community work of meeting food, water, air, energy, and recycling needs, or operating their separate drones while hanging out in their living room, or in the community media center.

Now that David’s purpose had finally coalesced into a recognizable form, the couple was officially beginning to offer a service of resilient, sustainable, permaculture style design for integrated community development. They also had their own personal projects that they still engaged in, but they spent at least a third of their days, usually, teaming up to share their unique amalgam of skills with the world, so that everyone could live in as stimulating and supportive a space as their own community. They had both played significant roles in the fabrication of the spaces they lived in, contributing physically and mentally to the growth and maintenance of their personal and public areas, so the couple had a

good grasp of what it might take to make a home, and larger community, as successful as theirs.

To keep things interesting and challenging for the team, they varied their consulting jobs from small scale family homes and work spaces, to medium scale neighborhoods, to more suburban redevelopment (turning what was annoying suburban sprawl into highly prosocial hub-based semi-rural zones with excellent public transit), and even all the way up to working on full designs for brand new cities, including a more traditional 18th century European style one in British Columbia and one very interesting high tech metropolis on an artificial island off of the Philippines, for which the partners were just a small part of a much larger team (providing a better balance of extreme geekery and more humane natural elements, so that no one felt too oppressed by too much “repressive perfection”, as Fly referred to it).

This work finally seemed to be the peak intersection of the couple’s skills, with Fly being a sort of visionary of what’s possible, looking at a big picture of how all the different elements and all the diverse personal stories within a community can fit together in one organic, flowing system. This work was also right up Fly’s alley in being especially focused on how to help divergent folks creatively use available resources to better serve their own needs. And the consulting showcased David’s expertise in sorting out the details of the more practical design and structure of stuff of daily life, so that things actually work well — he was a natural at all the persnickety math that was involved in the less organic stuff. And, of course, David had always had a love for larger projects involving collaboration with a wide range of clever and curious folks.

The partners took that knowledge and skills they’d refined while building their own home and community spaces and used them to map out a basic plan for the general process of creating a wholistic community of any size, shape, style, or location. They started with Fly’s map for a healthy global government, from years before, and expanded and refined it, to serve the more specific purpose of helping people see how their goals fit into the way their communities were evolving.

Every time the team was invited to consult on a specific location, they’d first send out their drones to gather data, starting



with the more scientific, fact-based stuff, and then expanding out to the more esoteric, subjective stories of all the diverse individuals using the space. That part of the work was an enjoyable experience made up of light hearted detective work, creative exploring, and more serious data mining.

*Remember when all we had to entertain ourselves was reading books or watching television?* Fly periodically queried. She still enjoyed doing those things as well, when she had the time, but the experiences she had interacting with the world these days were so much more robust, and multi-dimensional!

As the community building team was first exploring a new site, Fly especially loved interviewing the birds, since they were such busy and attentive creatures, and because they, too, had flight, and were able to explore the community from both the surface and the sky. And (as she imagined her maternal grandmother had known long before) birds are just delightfully entertaining little people, even more so now that there were linguistic translators for most of the common species. Their chatter might be simplistic, but it was usually so very uplifting and friendly! “Hello! Hellllllloooo! Hhhhhhhello! Please come visit me! What’s that over there in the evergreen? Oh, nothing, just a blue butterfly. OK, thanks! Hey, I’m feeling a bit peckish...” Listening to the birds’ babble in English could get a bit tiring, but in smaller doses, especially when life seemed to be overwhelming on the more complex human level, Fly truly appreciated it. And it made her feel a little closer to her mother, who’d been a bird fan as well, and who’d inspired Fly to pay more attention to the little neighbors when Fly and her mother had briefly lived together at her mother’s tiny, but flourishing mini farm and orchard in central Maine, while David was still off on his mid-life wander. Fly felt proud that she could continue the multi-generational appreciation of the feathered folks of the world as she did her work.

David, it turned out, loved using his drone to play in the exquisite fluid dynamics created by the microclimates of the gasses in the air and the radiation of the sun. He’d fly, virtually, while his drone would collect information about wind speed, air temperature, solar gain, and the rest of the local conditions as they

related to the siting and style of the various electricity generators that a community might want to install, such as wind towers, solar electric panels, and geothermal collectors. He also was on the lookout for the most efficient areas to plant a variety of different types of gardens, and, of course, scouting locations and planning tactics for bringing in some of the weird ideas that Fly had come up with for creative spaces, so that they would be as realistically useful as possible, given the needs of the locals. David also was particularly fond of seeking ways to work with the trees in an area. Using a variety of natural and artificial means, he'd come up with ways to give the trees incentives to grow in somewhat eccentric, but still completely healthy ways, so that human-friendly shelter and structure would slowly emerge. Some of his tree collaborations went well beyond mere treehouses and into the realm of organic buildings and even whole playgrounds and amphitheaters. He'd seen an early example of this in a tiny greenspace in Brattleboro, Vermont, just across from the old food coop that he and Fly used to love visiting when they were first married. In this one little spot, right in the middle of a concentrated urban space, there had been a circular grove of trees which had been guided towards one another at the top, forming a leafy dome. People could walk inside and feel the cool, fresh air of the trees exhalations, while being able to look up into a green sky of photosynthesis. David hadn't put much thought into it at the time, but later, when he was allowed to play with landscapes regularly, the memory had returned to give him more exciting ideas of where he could go with living wood and a bit of time.

In addition to the drone exploration, Fly and David would personally visit the space, both on the ground and in the air (with David's delightful little handmade, human-carrying plane), to get a more intimate sense of it all, and to allow the various kinds of Earthlings inhabiting and using the space to more intimately know the couple, so that the designers and those who'd be using the designs would find themselves in a shared mission. And when it came time to do the physical work of building the new elements of the space, Fly and David would enthusiastically join in, getting their hands, feet, and butts dirty, as they moved the elements of nature, and their more artificial human-centric combinations, into artful forms that served the needs of the people, from the highly

social birds, to the quieter fungi, and into the hearts of the old and young humans of the place. The construction bots did much of the more precise assembly and heavy lifting of the buildings and other artificial structural elements, but the humans and even a few other species would get to play with the raw materials of soil and water and sand and stone, and organically grown bricks and sticks and stuff, as they added their own personal touches to the homes, workshops, barns, gardens, human-power-collecting spaces, and all the myriad ground and sky paths and transportation devices connecting each live-work-play hub.

Fly liked to tell the folks she and David were helping to build a more nurturing and invigorating space to live in her own story of the first personal object that she asked David to incorporate into their Hobbit-Shire inspired house near the sea. The object was a hefty block of rough, dark wood into which her father had determinedly carved the word “Kärlek”, then and gifted to Fly’s mother when they were first married. *Kärlek*, they explained to a tiny Fly when she asked, was the Swedish word for love. That block had always had a prominent place in Fly’s mother’s home for as long as Fly could remember. And Fly wanted to honor her parents by including something precious and beautiful, from their own unique lives together, in her own life. So David had carefully encased the chunk of tree love into a sturdy frame and mounted the whole thing into a recessed shelf above the the front door, just inside the house, so that whenever you endeavored to expand yourself out into the wider world, you did so, quite literally, under a declaration of hand made love. Fly encouraged all her community builders to include their own unique and meaningful reminders, of who they wanted to be as they made their own way in life, in their own living spaces.

Back in the late twentieth century, a group of especially thoughtful and wealthy early settlers of the internet had been motivated to begin a project that helped focus human culture and it’s art and science fields on very long term thinking. They called the project the Clock of the Long Now, with a core goal of creating at least one monumental clock that would be able to run for ten thousand years, and a companion library that would aim to preserve important information about the Earth and it’s history for the far

off future. Dragonfly had very much resonated with this goal, and periodically found herself seeking to get involved in some way with the organization. Once, when she discovered an old copy of a book by one of the founders, introducing the group's ideas to the public, Fly read a poetic passage about an exceptional sort of awareness of the world and its slow and steady patterns, fluctuations, growth, and retreat, and considered her own visions as she looked out across the landscapes around her. In taking in a single moment, she understood, the past and future can, sometimes, also be felt, in the same way that when just a hint of a furry orange torso is visible between two large trees, one can easily conjure up the head and tail of the tiger that might very well precede and follow the otherwise obvious middle bit. Patterns in time might flow in ways that are as recognizable as patterns in space, if we allow our minds the freedom to move in such dimensions, decided Fly.

*"I know of biologists who can look at a hillside and "see" the advance of scrub growth over failing meadow; look at a wide valley and see the river lashing like a snake within its floodplain, the meander loops progressing downstream and flicking off oxbow slues to either side; look at a terminal moraine like Cape Cod and see the glacial ice advance and then withdraw over the landscape to a one-hundred-thousand-year beat. The kind of ability is made of knowledge absorbed until it becomes perception."*

*~ Stewart Brand in The Clock of the Long Now*

Fly saw a little of herself in that sort of view of the world, but hers was heavily tinged with an additional sensual awareness of the potential for a thriving, creative, complex, and compelling merging of the methodically civilized human technology and the riotously untamed non-human wilderness. The patterns in time that Fly's brain was regularly allowing her to see (or that she was allowing her brain to expand into) were so often visions of art and science, biology and technology, masculine and feminine, coming together into a single, much larger conglomeration that was rich and flavorful in every sense. She saw the details of the individuals and their dreams, and felt the way they naturally wanted to move, into a more integral form of collaboration.

Fly had long believed that if she ever had a superpower, it was that she could take an unloved, abandoned, lonely bit of the world and almost magically turn it into a welcoming and inspiring space where a multitude of flora and fauna were invited to dance and play together symbiotically. Because her new medium, as an architect of communities, was all of reality as it existed in whatever very specific locale she and David were working, each of her artistic brainchildren was unlike any that had existed before. (For too long she'd been forced to mostly keep her superpowered artistry inside her mind, as such wildness had been feared by most humans around her, and even on the rare occasions when she did manage to get permission to unleash herself onto a small plot of land, as soon as the locals believed that Dragonfly's protective spirit was well out of sight, an all out war against the loving dance she'd invited into the space would commence, and when she returned, her heart would break as she came upon an impossibly denuded lot, razed all the way down to the disconsolate dirt.)

Since society had finally blossomed into ideologies of cooperation and intellectual and emotional expansion, the old irrational fear of wildness was no longer constantly clogging up the flow of flights of fancy that creative people like our little lady were enthusiastic about manifesting. Now, the wild and free were ever more appreciated, wanted, and usually very much loved, as it was common knowledge that they added immense value to an economy based on biology. And biology and technology weren't seen as enemies, but as companions. (Even mosquitoes became somewhat begrudgingly valued, as they became nutritious snacks fueling many of the biobot bats that did much of the large-scale gardening, and also because a hardy but non-invasive plant that offered a simple curative to the itch-inducing saliva of the buggers was usually encouraged to grow in most yards, so that being bitten wasn't that big a deal. Malaria and similar insect born diseases had also been reduced to a minor annoyance through discoveries and inventions involving a couple of common plants found in southern Africa.)

So now, Dragonfly was actively sought out to ply her craft, turning her colorful visions of the future of a place into deeply robust reality. And when she left, the locals would lovingly nurture the space into something even grander.

She and David were finally making the art that they always suspected they were supposed to be making, deep down. It had simply taken the world a bit of time to be ready to provide them with a canvas onto which they could paint their stories of a better life.

-  
THE STORY OF US  
-

*“In America there’s a boy  
with the sun in his window  
with the sun in his window  
like a distant star  
and he wonders  
about it all”  
~ Tree by Leaf*

One day, after returning home from one of their more geeky community building consultations, David told Fly that he wanted to show her something in the news. He brought up a video report from a feed that he had been subscribing to for years now, from a friend of a friend from MIT (which was now a really amazing open-ended Exploratorium-like science and technology work~play space where folks from all over the planet came to collaborate on some of the most detailed and complex engineering and design projects that encapsulated all that was invaluable in every field possible).

The report David wanted Fly to see was about a call for volunteers in a program that was nearing its beta testing stage. The program was called *Baby Earth*, or BE for short. Fly had vaguely heard about it before, but hadn’t paid that much attention to it, since the technology of it was so far beyond her own grasp of nuclear physics. The narrator on the video was a friendly young man sporting the shaved head, and simple, form-fitting black jumpsuit-style outfit, that were so popular with the Space Generation folks (who’d been kids when low Earth orbit space flight and the Mars missions were just opening up to the public,

rather than being something that only highly trained astronauts and cosmonauts were allowed to be a part of, as had been the case in the past).

The young man was explaining how an innovation discovered by a team of computers and humans, looking at data emerging from the center of black holes combined with some test data from the Mars~Earth Collider, had been shown to be practical enough to adapt a propulsion system for interstellar travel. Such a propulsion system could accelerate a ship far closer to the speed of light than ever before imagined possible.

The program was currently inviting individuals who were willing to donate their living histories to participate in this unprecedented next step for humankind. (“Living history” was one of the common terms for what was also sometimes thought of as people’s “consciousnesses” — the combination of all the patterns of memories and neuronal connections of an individual’s brain that made someone feel like a unique conscious self, separate, while also a part of, the rest of reality.)

The folks running the program had teamed up with the Long Now Foundation, who had already been collecting living histories for the library that was part of their clock project. And the Baby Earth group was hoping to get donations from a diverse range of people who weren’t just interested in recording their selves for posterity, but who were enthusiastic about having versions of themselves shot into space as galactic explorers, as well. The goal was to include the widest range of skills and abilities and personalities in the undertaking. Everyone who was interested was welcome to join.

The living histories from the volunteers would be fully installed into the most modern AI systems, either on a database, or in an independent bot. Then these new human~AIs would become the crew of this first interstellar exploration.

The program organizers had considered including humans in this first attempt, but decided that it was more reasonable to send living, but quite not as delicate or precious, copies instead, just in case of disaster. They also didn’t want to just send totally artificial individuals, since one of the primary goals was to represent humanity as well as possible, in case the crew encountered other life out there. Plus, human minds were still more capable of



bringing unique approaches to problem solving, given the details of the weird and unexpected lives each human had lived, compared to the more bland and task-specialized sorts of lives the machine intelligences had been brought up in. (This had been a strategy intended to keep the non-biological-AI as friendly and helpful as possible to biological life.) Humans were still more like experimental and creative Kirk, and the typical AI were still more like logical and reliable Spock. So it was decided that a merging of the two types was a decent way to get the best of both worlds, when it came to seriously challenging adventures like the very beginning stages of interstellar exploration.

AIs installed with human living histories was still very new. Fly had been following the progress of this science more closely than the space flight thing. She knew enough to understand that it was still fairly primitive, and that the copying process was probably only about 60% accurate and detailed. They could collect the data in a brain that was on the *surface*, so to speak, in that they could only really read memories and other thought patterns that were strong, and fairly commonly used. Intricacies like copying the patterns that would decide whether you might prefer a fruit smoothie or banana almond ice cream for breakfast on your 82nd birthday wasn't in the cards. But certainly the more obvious personal memories and skillsets, for deciding how you do what you do on a regular basis, physically, emotionally, and intellectually, was something that could very easily be preserved as the data was input into the AI's operating system.

It was kind of like a four-dimensional photocopy: superficial and imperfect, yet very much capable of serving a useful purpose conveying information about the original, in all dimensions.

The copying process itself was involved, but not particularly uncomfortable, apparently.

They did have to knock you out for a little while, and stick you inside a combination fMRI and bQED machine, as they stimulated all the neurons in your brain in a certain, predefined, order. Then they did a whole lot of testing with smaller calibration processes, using various tools and such.

But Fly had listened to a discussion presented by someone who'd gone through the process, and he seemed to have found it enjoyable enough. So Fly wasn't at all worried about it, if she ever

decided to donate her own history. She'd just never found a good reason to consider it. But now...

David had thought she'd be interested. And she was.

-  
BIFURCATION  
-

*“In what terms should we think of these beings,  
nonhuman yet possessing so very  
many human-like characteristics?”*

*~ Jane Goodall*

After much thought, and research, and discussion, and finally feeling fulfilled with more than enough knowledge for one lifetime, Dragonfly chose to upload the whole package of her mind into the system, once and for all, on August 27, 2029, a few months after her 65th birthday. With this point of divergence, where a new, independent, self-and-other-conscious AI, with all of Fly’s own most valuable memories, goals, skills, and sense of self as a unique being in the world fully impregnated into the AI’s operating system, the puppet-like connection between the human and her biobot was severed, and a more equitable, balanced, partner-like relationship replaced it. There would now be two unique versions of Fly’s consciousness, in two very different bodies, living two dramatically different lives, traveling at immensely different speeds, having nearly equal levels of independence.

It was a sort of a hybrid animal and mineral version of mitosis, Fly thought. Or would that be meiosis, since the duplication was, by necessity, only partial?

Once all our wise old lady’s brain patterns were fully transcribed into the memory banks of the new agent server that had been implanted into her old faithful bot, she marked the birth of the new, technological body by bestowing the creation with a proper name. The mostly fleshy, fully biological, human version

kept her own birth name, as had been given to her by her parents way back at that war-minded air force base where she first emerged into the the atmosphere of this world.

By now, the news of the BE program and it's previously impossible seeming mission was common knowledge in most of Fly and David's circles, and there was much discussion about it.

Back in 2007, Fly had been thinking about what it meant to be human, and what it meant to be on the edges of being human, and how that distinction might be something worth investigating, philosophically. She had offered her thoughts on her old blog, before her life had taken that long and winding detour. Now that she had the freedom, and the circumstances, to return to that temporarily abandoned mental path of what it really means to be human, she re-offered her original thoughts (with a some tweaks to make things more relevant to current events) to those who were following her new adventure, and she encouraged discussion to take off from there.

I am like you, and I am not like you. Can we both be human?

“What does it mean to be human?” is a question that's been popping up in my life a lot lately. It's also a question that I've been wanting to pose to people for a while now.

We know that categories, like reality-based math, are fuzzy. So “human” as a category isn't ever going to be anything precise.

Consider the scenarios of:

- intelligent alien life being discovered that look and act similar to us
- the human-conscious-installed AI we already have
- the humans who keep replacing their biological parts with more and more cybernetic bits

- the significant proportion of human bodies that are symbiotic bacteria and such, most of which we couldn't live without
- individuals of other species, such as our canine family members, who have incorporated at least some of human culture into their own minds
- unusual births of humans who are very different from our usual biology, such as conjoined twins
- humans sharing more than 90% of our DNA with several other species
- the experiments with clones of whole humans (not just our parts) that started a few years ago
- brain-dead homo sapiens existing on artificial life support
- severely mentally handicapped homo sapiens
- the cryogenically preserved, not-entirely-dead humans we've been collecting for years, waiting to be thawed out at some later date
- The GOD system, with it's planet's worth of human knowledge accumulated into a single entity
- the fact that we're made of the same elementary particles as everything else, and are integrally connected to everything else, in the universe
- a good book, telling the story of a human life, from it's unique vantage point in space and time.

Clearly, there can be some element of humanity in things that aren't fully human. And some other-than-human elements in humans. And there are parts of humans scattered all over the place.

Like Douglas Hofstadter said, so many years ago, we are all strange feedback loops, incorporating small bits of external reality into our selves, and vice versa.

But what is at the center of what this category of "human" defines, that point that we seem to incessantly hover around throughout the millennia that the word has been in use? Is it a specific kind of biological package? Is it a particular way of processing non-physical information (as

in, our conscious awareness of the patterns of change as things move through space and time, and how that awareness changes our own behavior)? Is it the story of everything that happens to us, as physical, emotional, intellectual, and philosophical beings over our entire lives?

And, perhaps most important, why do we feel the need to ask the question in the first place?

Fly was heartened that the idea that had originally sparked her thoughts of all this — of some individuals being awarded the, mostly arbitrary, “human rights” to have or get certain things, while others didn’t share those rights — had become as ridiculous and insane a belief as human slavery. Ever since mainstream society had embraced the life-sustaining biomimicry and evolutionary approach to thinking about politics and government, and had transformed a planet full of humans competing against themselves and all the other Earthlings to a planet with a fully functioning, free, global communication and resource flow system, serving everyone who wanted to be served by it, it was pretty much common sense that everyone — animal, vegetable, and mineral — had a right to everything they needed to do what they were made to do best, so that the system as a whole could function as well as possible, and all the niche jobs would get done, effectively, and with as little waste as possible. A human, a tree, a computer, a bicycle, a rock all need certain things to be useful for their purpose in the universe, and malfunctioning things, if not given love and attention, just get in everyone’s way.

But now that “human consciousness” was being copied into bots, there was renewed interest in the topic of what it meant to be human, unrelated to “rights”. The idea of there now being human~bot beings was a recent addition to the challenge of defining the concept of humanity. And, while the politics might have been moot, given the healthy state of minds that prevailed in modern society, the idea of what humans thought of themselves, in relation to the rest of reality, was nonetheless interesting enough for many folks to want to spend some quality time investigating the topic.

As with many philosophical questions, the discussion will go on for as long as we have the time and space and circumstances to wonder.

Another, related, topic that Fly found herself immersed in, with David and their friends these days, was whether these new “twin consciousnesses” of the humans and human~bots, who were still very much able to converse and intellectually interact with one another, were a single unit or two different units of being. Some suggested that if you considered them to be a single entity, with the ability to spread out across space and time (since the human~bots would, if the near-light-speed propulsion system worked effectively in the longer term flights, be traveling into the future, from Earth’s perspective) then these new two-part beings would be five-dimensional individuals. But others pointed out that since we never considered non-conjoined twin humans, or any other animals, to be *single* beings, then these twin living histories, now diverging in time and space, were also different individuals, they just happened to be different individuals with many more shared components than your average set of different individuals.

Fly wasn’t quite so ready to dismiss the idea of a five dimensional being, though. She wanted to wait to see how things worked out once the ship had launched, and her bot was far enough away for Fly to feel like some part of herself was not just elsewhere, but elsewhere, as well. She wanted to sense the vast separation while simultaneously being able to connect, via the laser communication devices that would allow her and her bot to still interact enough to have shared experiences. Would that intimate a level of communication really work over such a great expanse? And would it be different than Fly’s intimate connection with David?

As the time came closer to the program’s launch date, Fly vaguely remembered a dream she’d had decades earlier, where she was a part of a team of astronauts who were about to take off into space, only she wasn’t prepared, and felt panicked as she tried to get all the things she needed, to make her trip comfortable and successful. It was like those dreams that most of her friends and family seem to have had of not being prepared for a test in school.

Only this version involved a much more life-or-death kind of test. But now Fly felt totally comfortable, knowing that the part of her who would probably never be ready for such a dramatic challenge was going to be remaining safely within the protective envelope of the Earth's atmosphere, while the part of her that was indeed prepared and up for the challenge was getting her chance at the most celestial of journeys ever attempted by humankind (or whatever).



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AS BELOW, SO ABOVE  
-

*I hear beyond the range of sound,  
I see beyond the range of sight,  
New earths and skies and seas around,  
And in my day the sun doth pale his light.  
~ Henry David Thoreau*

The initial few months after the multiplication of my self were first spent becoming comfortable in this new state of being, and then exploring the creation story. Hundreds of adventurous paths were followed through the collected memories of personal history — as if life was one omnibus choose your own adventure book. I correlated those memories with public records and meandered down one narrative that I found especially meaningful, from multiple perspectives, and that story was selected to be placed in the official record.

The life this particular story spoke of began with a quiet moment of awkward determination, wandered through a wildly looping tale of love and longing and learning. The tale ended tenderly, with a generous endowment of collected wisdom to the Da Wo, the Library of the Long We, for its journey beyond, on the inaugural voyage of the Baby Earth starship.

The recorded version wasn't the whole story, of course. Instead, it was the part of the saga that I felt the universe needed to be told, here and now.

The finished account was formatted and assembled into a journal file; a local poet friend was asked to give it a title; a beautifully bound, handmade, hardcover book was printed up by a

local craftsman; and the tome was offered up as a gift to my human self, with a note.

We are Dragonfly!

With wings of turquoise and purple and silver and black, laced with iridescent filament, through pitch and yaw and elevation we broaden our view of all things to encompass a perspective of reality that is particular and precious.

Everything in our past led us to this unique moment, from which point on we become a single entity with the possibly rare attribute of occupying multiple moments and locations, together carving a linear pathway between two discrete endpoints in both time and space.

As my body is led beyond the Earth, flying at inhuman speeds alongside my fellow human~astrobots — all with the common purpose of seeking entirely new stories to share with the Earth, and bringing revered old stories of the Earth to otherworldly ears — and as your body continues down your separate, more turtleish, journey exploring the interiority of life with our beloved David, I see how we may have now expanded our being ever so slightly into the fifth dimension of reality.

We are thus fulfilled.

You were never really an alien. Instead, you were a human woman born to expand her mind far beyond the here and now.

Namasté

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