

Design Document for The Aztorla Syndrome

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1 Preface

Einstein said (or someone else, i'm too lazy to check), that many people die with music still left inside them.

The Aztoria Syndrome is my music. I don't intend to die before playing this music to the world and people around me. It is the culmination of 7 years of ideation, excessive doodling, star gazing, and mellow rumination over many hours of the days, waking and asleep.

I was a different person when I first began this process, and the themes for the story have changed countless times - perhaps too sentimental at the start, and now more practical and tangible. The one constant is that the story is dedicated to humans, whom I love. And also my mum. Only recently (past 2 years) have the themes settled into a stable configuration, and I doubt it will change too drastically from now till the end of the project.

I will now tell this story.

2 Skeleton

2.1 Theme Statement

History is a process of evolution, not precession. The beauty of humankind.

2.2 One-Sentence Summary

A practical and curious member of the Aztorian bureaucracy decides to solve the mystery of disappearing citizens and appearance of alien-looking organisms at night; he finds himself among one of history's greatest conspiracies, and a city on the cusp of a grand revolution.

2.3 Apparent Story Questions

What is wrong with the city? → What is the Aztoria Syndrome? → What is the history of the city, and humankind? → Will, and how, will humans triumph?

3 Style

3.1 Artstyle

Character designs will resemble Tintin. Simple, but hopefully effective. Environmental shots will showcase a modern but non-generic city scape.

3.2 Storytelling

Episodic structure, each episode tells one mystery. More classic, more subdued style.

4 Setting

4.1 Earth

Northern hemisphere is empty - wiped out by an old war. Colossal megastructures still remain as ruins. Abandoned spaceports and intercontinental railway networks. Only remaining continent with humans is Oceania.

4.2 Aztoria

Megacity situated on the eastern quarter of the Oceania continent. It is the final city on earth.

4.2.1 Material Situation

Post scarcity. Production of all goods are automated. The city has some ancient structures with unknown purpose. There is an advanced train line called the Aztorian Train Line, with a City Loop near the center, where Aztoria began.

4.2.2 Social Structure

The Aztorian government, the Aztorian University, and the Civil Protection Institute, make up the 3 pillars of Aztoria - the Aztorian bureaucracy.

The Government consists of nothing but a group of human computers, who perform computations with the equations of SED that the Institute provides.

The University conducts research permitted by the Aztorian Government.

The Institute acts as the “arms” of the city - its police, ambulance, and fire brigade combined. It also has a central board of directors who actively research SED separate from the University. Among them, the First Director is the highest authority.

People can still pick jobs, but their lives no longer depend on it. They do it to pass their time. Aloh, for example, asked to take care of a communal space that primarily serves drinks and desserts. Scientists are one main area of work, now that mundane services are all automated. Above them, a job in the bureaucracy has the highest form of prestige, since they are viewed as guardians of civilisation itself.

Education is valued highly just by mandate of the Institute. To promote sense of social belonging, a class of students stay together until University.

5 Mechanics

5.1 Consciousness

Information flow across spacetime. Flow across space, over time, allows information to pass from one part of the bran to another, and formation of memory. It is poetically called the “currents of spacetime” by Professor Lambda, and sometimes referred to as “currents of time”, or simply “currents”. This is facilitated by an electric structure that is the brain. It is subject to influence by magnetic fields.

5.1.1 Currents

Near the end of the story, Emma realises that her memories are carried by warm currents of time, from the future. The newon awakening has caused humans to evolve to become proto-telepathic, using nothing more but the currents of time.

5.2 Plague

5.2.1 Symptoms

Extreme sleepiness, fatigue, dread, depression. Bizarre reactions to surroundings. Bizarre movements and speech, almost alien. Altered state of consciousness.

5.2.2 True Mechanics of the Plague

It is a gradual separation of the consciousness with the body. In the end stage, the consciousness - collection of currents of spacetime - forms a stable structure separate from the brain. This structure can take arbitrary shape, but most attempt to stay in shape of a human, but comically fails, and appear grotesque and alien. The structure is the black organism that seeps out of the patients head during their sleep - their mind has literally left their body. It will be referred to as a “newon”. It is so stable that no information can leave the boundaries of the structure - that’s why it appears black. Death occurs only because the structure has no way to recombine with the body, and the body is left to rot while the consciousness wanders till the end of time, deforming further.

Upon destruction, the currents of time disperse into the universe.

5.2.3 Transmission

During sleep, black organisms seep out of the patient’s head and wander about, infecting anyone they come into contact with. This is because the organisms have affinity to one another, and draw each other out (probably due to the electromagnetic origins of consciousness).

5.2.4 Destruction of Transmission

A powerful and concentrated magnetic field differential will disrupt the organisms. If by the time of destruction, the physical body was still alive, the currents will return to the body. Otherwise, they disperse into the surrounding.

5.2.5 Immunity

If an individual is unable to sleep, they are unable to let their consciousness escape their body, thus immune to death by this plague.

5.2.6 Treatment

Terminal illness. Death is inevitable. Though, preventative measures can be taken such that if someone is hyper alert and insomniac, the initial transmission/contact does no effect to pull the person's consciousness out.

5.3 The Grand Synthesis

Plan of the Institute to integrate all of humankind's consciousness into a single superstructure.

5.3.1 Chain Reaction

In general it is possible to merge consciousness in the nonstandard form - the newon form. One on one, it requires physical contact, but if there is a large enough concentration, people in the surrounding can spontaneously lose their consciousness to it.

5.3.2 Great Attractor

To create a species wide chain reaction, they need a cite of nucleation - a great attractor - a newon that is so perfect that it retains the person's likeness perfectly. It is now capable of transmitting info in and out of its boundary, gaining colour once more.

The people who volunteer to become an attractor, have to abandon their bodies and live as an attractor. Unless the Institute intends to begin the Synthesis of mankind right away, these attractors must be put in perfect solitude.

The only two attractors created in history escaped, and the Institute put the project on hold. The first one escaped to district 0, and accidentally caused a small scale synthesis event, merging all residents of that district. From then on, she *was* the district. The second one was Nerezza, Lucca's mother. She did not straight up disappear, but promised the Institute to fulfill their plans in the future, so that they will not create any more attractors. Nerezza wanders the city in the outer regions, never stopping long in a single place in fear of the newons attracting towards her and starting the synthesis event. Her real body is severely mentally impaired. Lucca grows tired of caring for her and sends her to a nursing home, which he intensely regrets.

5.3.3 Superstructure

The object that is the amalgamation of all human consciousness. Upon destruction, Nerezza's existence is scattered across spacetime. That's why brief images of her can be seen at all points in the story, in weird places.

5.4 Electromagnetism

Given a loop of wire, no matter the scale, if an electric current runs through the wires, a magnetic field will be generated in a donut-like shape engulfing the loop. The shape of the magnetic field at the center of the loop is a straight line shooting in both direction to the infinite, along the axis perpendicular to the plane of the loop.

5.5 Weapon of the Order - Aztoria

“When in trouble, get on the A Train”, sing the older people. It was a clue passed down the generations by the people who created this city.

The City Loop is actually a colossal loop of wires hidden in the concrete. Upon activating a hidden power source, the loop generates enough magnetic field to destroy a superstructure the size of the entire human race. If this is done when the bodies have yet to decay, the currents will return to the bodies. The sight looks like a massive rain from the sky.

Instructions to use the weapon are inscribed as horizontal striped markings of uneven lengths, on the side shields of the train line. The messages hidden in these markings will only be apparent when the train starts moving - the stripes appear like flashes through the window, long and short. It is Morse Code.

The weapon is simply named “Aztoria”.

5.6 Societal Evolution Dynamics

Mathematical, formalised system describing theorems of evolution of human societies. Originally created in the warring era when scholars across the earth were tasked by the Earth Federation with finding a way to predict and prevent wars.

Includes characteristics of fluid dynamics, thermodynamics, linear algebra. Main high level process is constructing a Jacobian detailing the partial derivatives of a set of inputs and outputs for a certain human system. Solving the tensor equation gives the required changes in configuration space in order to achieve desired outcomes in the real world space.

5.6.1 Precession

One meta-theorem of history birthed from following theorems:

1. Humans alter their surrounding conditions.
2. Surrounding conditions alter humans.
3. A capable society alters their surroundings favourably.
4. A favourable surrounding produces a complacent society.
5. A complacent society alters their surroundings negatively.
6. A negative surrounding produces humans capable of withstanding it.

On the largest time scales, this forms an inconceivable cycle, and results in a periodic timeline of golden and dark ages. History repeats.

5.6.2 Evolution

The real meta-theorem of history.

History is a process of evolution, birthed from the continual resolution of contradictions. Each set of contradictions defines an epoch. The transition between epochs are where history happens. A new standard is established, and human society reaches ever higher heights. History does not repeat.

The main contradiction of the epoch before the birth of Aztoria was an economic one, the resolution of which was a world-wide war. Out of this end to the epoch birthed 3 things:

1. Unification of humankind, where they found refuge in Oceania. The end of Imperialism and Nationalism.

2. The automated Factory Array - the disappearance of scarcity and currency.
3. The study of Societal Evolution Dynamics.

Other than that, it has left Aztorians the primary contradiction of today: the stability offered by a bureaucracy versus the desire for progress by the people.

Eventually, the bureaucracy loses its standing. What used to be a guardian of the new civilisation has long ceased to being a progressive force. It will eventually lose to the people and disappear from history. Thanks to the SED they developed, the people now have what they need to lead a future of never ending progress. The dreams of humankind are crying out.

However, should the bureeaucracy continue to resist, the people will fall, and the bureaucracy along with them. A common ruin to the contending parties. Older forms of society will return. Life will return to prehistoric violence, and all will be lost.

6 Characters

6.1 Lucca

Early 30s. Wears shirt, windcoat, glasses. New member of the Institute that Director Alma takes a liking towards. Used to be mechanical engineer at the Factory Array, promoted to a member of the bureaucracy for sincere performance. Practical, logical, a bit cruel in humour. Underneath the cold practicality is a warm sincerity. Carries unease and terror for abandoning his mum.

6.2 Aloh

Late 80s, but healthy due to the abundance and great living conditions of Aztoria. Wears jumper over shirt, glasses. Runs a communal space that serves drinks and desserts, with a band performing in the background. Used to perform at the army band, prior to the collapse. Secretly visits the flower grown battlefield where his fallen comrades lie, and play the trumpet for them. Secretly part of the revolutionary movement, and a member of the old order of scholars. Feeds his visitors insomniac medication in preparation for the coming synthesis plan of the Institute.

6.3 Director ALma

Late 60s. Fluffy hair like Einstein. Always seen wearing uniform of the CPI. Highly respected director of the Institute. Mischievous at times, serious at times. Guides Lucca towards the truths of this city. Likes listening to “Get on the A Train”. Secretly member of the revolution.

6.4 Professor Lambda

Late 90s. Head of neuroscience of Aztoria University. Contributed to technologies such as a loophole-free lie detector, mind reader, and chief engineer of the Plague. Stubborn and sharp.

6.5 Kaito

One of Lucca’s highschool classmates. Early 30s. Wears shirt. Teacher, just like his own teacher whom he admired. Secretly the next “First Director” selected by the Institute, and acts as such. Intense love for education and the next generation. Hatred towards the possible darkness of human nature.

6.6 Nerezza

Doctor who wanders the outer rims of the city. Wears black trenchcoat, carries a suitcase. Appears to be in her early 30s. Mischievous, cryptic, cruel, sophisticated, well-read on history. Secretly an attractor, and Lucca's mum. Laughs when she sees suffering. Seems to always know what events will happen.

At the end of the story, as the superstructure is annihilated, her existence is scattered across spacetime. This causes still-images of her to appear at various points in the story.

6.7 Emma

Lucca's highschool classmate, early 30s. Wears casual clothes, loose and comfortable. Computer at the Government, later turned singer at Aloh's shop. Playful and sharp - one of the top performing students all through her education. Childlike. Enjoys seeing rain for unknown reasons - the image brings her joy. Believes the Institute has taken away her memory of a normal life, a mundane and peaceful life with Lucca.

At the end of the story, we realise that her memories are from the future.

6.8 Tom

Lucca's highschool classmate, early 30s. Wears plain suit typical of a physicist. Astrophysicist at the Aztorian University.

7 Acts

7.1 Act 1 - Wanderings

7.1.1 Beneath the City Lights

In Aloh's communal dining space, Lucca partakes in a psychological operation by the Civil Protection Institute to lure out a murder confession.

7.1.2 Monster in District 14

Monster is sighted in District 14 at night in front of a tree.

7.1.3 New Plague

As a part of standard procedure of the Institute, Lucca helps Professor Lambda retire from the position of Head of Neuroscience at Aztoria Uni. At the end of the day, Lambda announces a plague to the city.

7.1.4 Encounter

Lucca attends highschool reunion and his friends task him with finding their missing teacher, who left the school for unknown reasons right before their graduation. Lucca meets a strange doctor wandering the outer rims of the city.

7.1.5 The Ground Turns Orange

The ground turns orange, the air smells nice. Orange dust is being blown by a west wind and a great fire is approaching Aztoria from the west. The Institute efficiently manages the situation, and disbands the inadequate government later, putting Emma out of job.

7.1.6 The Synthesis Project

Chaos erupts in the Aztorian University neuroscience labs. Lucca discovers the existence of newons. The first synthesis event happens, and ends, with the revelation that the Institute's plan of synthesising humankind is to avoid "precession".

7.2 Act 2 - Precession

7.2.1 Precession

What is precession? Emma joins Aloh's dining space. Lucca uses a go-board to act as a binary language, and obtains information out of Professor Lambda without the threat of a lie detector test. The message reveals the nature of Precession.

7.2.2 For the Happiness of All Humankind

Emma and Lucca try to deduce where Aloh goes during the day. It turns out he plays trumpet for his dead comrades on a flower field full of buried corpses.

7.2.3 The Human Archives

Emma and Lucca study historical records at the Archive of the Institute.

7.2.4 The Things Troubling Emma

In front of Tom, Emma voices her concerns of a forgotten past.

7.2.5 Relic From Early Centuries

Secrets of Director Alma revealed at the lighthouse. A true treasure - an early textbook on Synthesis Mechanics.

7.2.6 Once More Beneath the City Lights

Tragedy befalls Kaito's class. Emma and Lucca wander the city, take the Aztorian Train, and come to a shelter, in which the two realise they are on the cusp of a revolution.

7.2.7 Interpretations of a Dream

Lucca meets an old woman with dementia at a nursing home, who needs help understanding strange dreams she has. The woman is actually Lucca's mum. Second confrontation with the strange doctor Nerezza.

7.2.8 Mystery in the Aztorian Sky

Lucca investigates an amateur astronomer's observation that a star has disappeared. Third confrontation with strange doctor Nerezza. A huge object is approaching from the northern hemisphere.

7.2.9 The District is Westward

In journeying west, Lucca finds district 47 empty, and meets the first great attractor.

7.2.10 The Spaceport Revolution

Incident at Ocean Spaceport sparks a revolution.

7.3 Act 3 - Evolution

7.3.1 Once More the Synthesis Project

Institute's plan come true - Lucca's mother is Nerezza, and she will act as the great attractor for the synthesis event.

7.3.2 Birth of the Superstructure

The superstructure is born, Lucca examines his life within the collective psyche of all humans. Nerezza appears in front of each character and give them resolution, after which they dissolve into newons.

7.3.3 New Human

A chance of evolution is real. Lucca finds himself awake, insomniac, along with regular visitors of Aloh's dining space.

7.3.4 Aztoria

They figure out how to use the weapon planted by the old Century Order to destroy the superstructure. The newons rain down towards earth, returning to human bodies.

7.3.5 The Warm Currents of Time

Nerezza and Lucca share one final moment.

7.3.6 Stars on the Ground are City Lights

Lucca walks among the rubbles of the city.

8 Songs

8.1 Get on the A Train

For good vibes everywhere

If you have feelings they can't tame

Hop on board without a care

Just come get on the A Train

The century bells have begun

So take a shelter before the rain

There is only us all else is none

Just come get on the A Train

You better hurry, hurry to get on the A Train

The train will carry, you away from the rain

Find yourself in strife

Your surroundings quite insane

Don't approach it with a knife

Just come get on the A Train

A Train...

8.2 Anthem of the Earth Federation

Stand up! All people of the earth!

Stand up! You prisoners of war!

Ma-chines! Have given us abun-dance

Now let us make them work for good!

The old world, crumbles into no-thing

All people, arise! Arise!

And then, the vanity of em-pires

Makes way for humankind!

This is the final struggle!

Solidarity till tomorrow!

A new Earth Federation

Unites the human race!

This is the final struggle!

Solidarity till tomorrow!

A new Earth Federation

Unites, the human race!

There never ever was a saviour,

nor do we rely on gods and kings.

Gotta create a happiness for humankind,

relying on ourselves!

No more heart to kill each other,
century bells ring loud and clear!
The earth is ready for eruption,
for a reborn humankind!

This is the final struggle!
Solidarity till tomorrow!
A new earth federation,
unites the human race!

This is the final struggle!
Solidarity till tomorrow!
A new earth federation,
unites the human race!

8.3 Strides of History

It's time to grow out of infancy
For the bureau fears mankind!
The real theory of history
Reveals at its end one more fight!

Government, Uni and Institute
The three pillars of our world
Thanks to you, we have all the things we need
To advance humankind!

This is the final struggle!
Solidarity till tomorrow!
The dream that we are crying out!
Unites, the human race!

This is the final struggle!
Solidarity till tomorrow!
Mankind spread across the stars
It now begins on earth!

8.4 City Lights

Born out of ancient stars

A future no one has seen

Stars on the ground are the city lights

And the night becomes a silver screen

Precession of history

Evolution of human deeds

City lights have a tale to tell

And an end is a start as well