

PREFACE

“Shit Happens”
-Unknown

Preface:

Shit happens...

A professor once asked me to explain time in front of his class of nearly seven hundred chronologically caged students. His name was Nahoto. Nahoto was considered to be the smartest being ever to live on that world. He was also a philosopher and a celebrity. You have no analogue. Nahoto foolishly claimed to be a prophet. I, in turn, mistakenly considered him a friend. He was three hundred and fourteen years old. At that time his people had an average life expectancy of forty-four years.

They were a small race, generally less than four feet tall. Their skin was pale but had a greenish tint to it. They had two arms, two legs, two dark blue button sized eyes and two stubby rather useless tails. They had no noses. Their mouths were smaller than yours and contained many rows of sharp teeth. Most words they spoke would seem more like grunts than language.

They wore no clothes. They were newly civilized. Most of them still lived in elaborate caves. Many of the caves protruded from valleys. The largest valley was where their primary settlement established itself. Two hundred years prior to Nahoto's lecture on time, an entirely purple magnificent manor of boulders, rocks, pebbles, and clay like mud was constructed to be his home in honour of Nahoto's longevity. He was regarded as ancient even then. It was the most beautiful building that had ever been built on that planet. On his world purple was a sacred colour worn only by heroes.

The mud on his planet was purple. Heroes were said to be from the mud: constructed out of need, and destined to return to the mud until needed again.

The boulders, rocks and pebbles on Nahoto's planet were purple, grey blue, white, green and black. On occasion they were even gold and silver.

Most of these rocks were very smooth to the touch, and only seldom would anyone cut himself or herself on a rock.

Like Earth, the solar system containing Nahoto's planet had one medium-sized relatively boring yellow sun.

There were four noticeable seasons, and on the continent where Nahoto's people dwelled only two very short seasons ever achieved extreme temperatures. The two seasons, which both lasted about twenty-five days, were easily met with traditional shelters.

If a death had resulted from these seasons it was probably of the too young, the too old, the feeble or the sick. That world was a veritable Eden.

My voice thundered from the sky that time was change. Nahoto disagreed with me that time was change.

Nahoto instead believed time to be a trap.

He believed that time was constantly trying to kill him and everyone else. I tried to explain to Nahoto that although change often leads to non-existence, existence was once again inevitable, but he laughed at me. He even speculated that I was the one that set the trap. It hurt me when he laughed and accused me so unjustly. This was a long time ago when I was much more naïve.

Nahoto attributed his old age to being cleverer than the so-called trap of time. He explained that because he would allow time no opportunity to kill him he would live forever—barring a natural disaster. On his planet, unlike Earth, catastrophes were rare. Nahoto's students studied every word and habit of his hoping to prolong their lives as well. It worked. Nahoto's more diligent students actually lived longer than usual.

Increasingly, however, Nahoto's lectures were becoming merely a mad man's musings about his obsessive strategy to avoid death. His identity faded as his plot consumed him.

Nahoto never left his palace's grounds. He lectured from a podium fitted to a stage at the tip of his estate into a valley that had been fitted with solid rock benches. Of course his stage and podium were constructed of purple rock.

Nahoto had not left his property in over one hundred and fifty years, and even before then he was weary of travelling far from home. Nahoto encouraged people to view him as long as they did not step, even one foot, onto his property. He pretended that he demanded this isolation for protection of a rare flower that grew on the fields of his garden, but really this request was crucial to Nahoto's state of mind. He feared others to be his primary source of danger.

Nahoto's devoted followers met his request most graciously since the mosquitoes on his grounds were unbearable. Being stung was a common occurrence for his audience, anyway.

Nahoto's obsession demanded that on his land he know exactly, within an inch, where everything was. He thought that this was the only way to protect himself from the clutches of time.

Nahoto once challenged me to a public debate.

It was to be the first philosophical debate of its kind on that world. Before this they had only theorized on topics related to physical needs or simple rights issues. Everyone gathered around the podium eagerly awaiting answers to life's big mysteries. I would not argue with him, as he had become stubborn and pompous. On my opting out of the discussion Nahoto declared himself to be wiser than even I. Fearing an eventual struggle for his power, Nahoto's people's sort-of king's two hearts failed. Although he was generally considered very old the sort-of king had once viewed and loved Nahoto as a caring father figure, and could not stomach living in a world with the thing Nahoto had turned into.

Nahoto declared himself king of his people.

He treated his people unmercifully. He wielded his powers unethically. He called out, "If I should not be your king then why should I live so long?" This was his reasoning to his people for an absolutist rule. It was his reasoning for all of his desires. I called out that it was because of something on his land.

It wasn't the rare flower if that's what you're thinking.

The flower was studied a dozen times over many of the planet's years by the closest thing they had to botanists (they were farmers really) and was grown in five isolated gardens yielding no regenerative effects whatsoever. It did taste good in salads. Sometimes it was even grown with the same soil as in Nahoto's garden. Nahoto knew this. The process used was remarkably sophisticated for such savages.

You must understand that once I really considered Nahoto my friend. Once I thought him to be amongst the bravest, smartest, most moral and compassionate individuals to cross my path. He propelled his people through ages in decades. The emptiness he became was his former person's polar shadow.

Nahoto was special to me, but not for the reason he became special to everyone else.

Nahoto screamed, "Miserable cloud beast, then why am I so old?"

Knowing that I was about to shatter Nahoto's reign I hesitated. I wished right then, as much as I would ever wish, that change would stop. I had loved Nahoto as a younger brother for over two hundred years. I had hoped he would rule his people with a nurturing palm, and not an iron fist.

I should tell you now that Nahoto's land was located on the garden he was most fond of throughout his life. There was once a hole in a field near the flowers, which opened to a fissure in the rocks underneath, which, in turn, ran clear to the cave he grew up in. It had been sealed for an awfully long time since then. Nahoto used the tunnel often as a child to visit the flowers. Nahoto

loved the flowers very much.

Nahoto screamed, "Do you need time to find a convincing lie?"

From the clouds I thundered, "Tyrant: where is the man who led his people to fire? You have endured because I have willed it. Up until now I believed that someday you would shepherd your people to glory. The powers I allowed you to hoard belong to the people you neglect. The mosquitoes on Nahoto's land are actually rare tiny bees, and their sting contains venom that has allowed his longevity."

A great gasp let out across Nahoto's world. Inevitably the bees would be cultivated, hoarded or destroyed. They, like man, were now past the point of establishing equilibria. I knew inevitably Nahoto would lose face. Inevitably, on that world, there would be progression and recession. I can tell you that change continued unabated.

I would not see it though for then I left his world. That was over twenty thousand years ago. I imagined Nahoto simply sank into purple mud.

I tell this story quite often. I tell it to you raw, cold as it was and as simple as it was. I do not tell it normally in English though; that is the only change I have made.

Continue to Part One