“Ready?” Yao inquires from the control bank, already sounding distant.

“Ready,” I reply, remembering at the last moment to spit out a piece of gum.

“*Auuurgh*,” notes Mbetethi.

STAND BY FOR TILES, flashes my visor.

The DMT hits my bloodstream almost immediately. This is the strong stuff, completely overkill for almost anything but a passage through the Deng bridge. It’s like being shot forward on a thousand tiny roller coasters at once, branching, merging and looping around each other in curious ways, all at incredible speed. My being, my *I*, is squishy, now gelatinous, now molten white-iron pixelated-starfire hot. All around me I hear music like Shephard’s tones in a Phygrian scale, the blackness before my eyes positively blooming with geometry, waves upon waves of soft curves sloshing with neon, the simple truth of myself a womb —

And then, from the visor, light. Solid turquoise like the chair God gets his teeth checked in. It fills my field of view so totally, so urgently, that I can’t help but fall into it, bask in its hum, think about what it might be trying to tell me. It’s such a beautiful color, *and the next ones must be...orange, maroon, a deep pine.* The thought occurs unbidden, and in this precise moment those three colors *pop!* into my field of view, chorded along with the turquoise across four quadrants of the screen. I open my aperture, letting the message of these colors wash over me, and *— pop! —* they divide again into nearly the precise pattern I had in mind, and then — *pop!* — wherever my mind and the computer agree on the next tile it subdivides into four more. Now the pattern on the screen is curious, it seems to rush into me through familiar and deepening grooves, it’s trying to tell me something — if you look at how the colors line up it — *pop!* — I’m starting to see it now. It all feels very familiar. The tiles, spanning the rainbow in a thousand different shades, are *telling* me something, if I can just listen in and — *pop!* — a thousand doubled doublings in a breath’s span, and my visual field is filled with these pixel-fractals waving gently like shoreline trees.

I feel my consciousness start to extend a little...outward. The tiles are the carrier wave for a mode of thought that’s new? Or just forgotten? And I start to remember the building blocks of this foreign language, impossible nouns and strange verbs clicking together like glossy golden-emerald Lego blocks that build sentences, then whole paragraphs, poems like programs, rhymes like quines. This never gets old. I’m thinking like the computer, and the computer is thinking like me — in billions of tiny symmetries between neurons of my brain and the memristors of the computer’s RAM, something altogether new is beginning to take shape.

Far below I feel my thumb trembling at the controls. It has one last job, just one big dumb button to press — *now*. Allocation: a glimpse at the magnificent architecture of my new self; raw stimulation of the optic nerve; more color than I can bear. Then my thought loop closes around the computer’s in an immensely satisfying double-knot, and suddenly, spontaneously, I start to *compute*. Conway’s Games of Life and Lisp interpreters not just abstract concepts that I’d struggle to simulate with pen and paper but concrete and tangible things, arrays of bits that I can see and touch as if with my own hands. The tiles, now solid and high-dimensional but still raggedly geometric, are the medium and the material; I can soar through them just as easily as I can stack them, into beautiful self-assemblages that are both plaything and instruction manual, input and output, thought and code. I have no field of view — I can see with perfect clarity in all directions at once. This is loop-lock.