On the far side of the Bridge, though, the rest of me has been waiting.

A large, jagged polyhedron of tiles, coal-black and glossy yellow, comes floating lazily out. I send it to the voxelite printer. Once I would stand vigil for the diving-bell, hoping against hope for the strangest kind of reunion; now I slam the Deng Bridge shut with no hesitation. Time to go home. How? Right. *Thumbs.*

*Right thumb.* I slam the big dumb button. The drip stops, the tiles become larger, slower, simpler, I can feel my whole being flattened into a single plane of pixelated color, reaching for combinators, lenses, callbacks, pointers, registers and feeling only blind, dumb, organic chaos. Remembering on hard-won instinct not to panic here, *it's okay, you'll be back.*

I'm blinking. I'm biting hard on my tongue, my whole mouth tastes like iron. The UTMS bed is slick with sweat.

I can hear the printer running already, constructing a voxelite shard, a death mask of Mbetethi’s debris projected downward into three dimensions. A memento. A desk toy. Contraband. I can never anticipate what these will look like, and yet I'm never, ever surprised.

The visor is black now, save for four softly pulsing characters: *INVERSION COMPLETE.* I lift it from my face to see Mbetethi staring dumbstruck at me. Freed from a dozen tiny paralyses, his expression looks much more natural now.

"W-w-w-what did you do? What happened in there?"

The neikonaut's first and last question. Our oldest and saddest joke. Mbetethi asks through heavy breaths as though he really wants to hear the answer, waits for just a tick, then turns on his heels and flees the clinic without waiting for the punchline.

"I have absolutely no idea," I mumble.