

DRAFT

Post·Self
a Fate Setting

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Post·Self

a Fate Setting

Madison Scott-Clary

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Qoheleth and other stories

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The Setting

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Uploading

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Story: Après un rêve

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Sylvie Esi — 2178

*Dans un sommeil que charmaient ton image
Je rêvais le bonheur, ardent mirage,
Tes yeux étaient plus doux, ta voix pure et sonore,
Tu rayonnais comme un ciel éclairé par l'aurore;*

Echoes of Grace singing, memories and emotions, clashed with the doctor's words. "I know you've signed the waivers, but I need a verbal confirmation. Do you understand the procedure?"

Sylvie nodded. It was strange not to feel her hair, always so frizzy and buoyant, not following the motion a scant second too late.

"The uploading process will be fatal and irreversible. There is some risk, about one and a half percent, that it won't work." The doctor paused and picked up a pen. She added, "Won't work after the point where your body will have died, that is. Do you understand?"

A swallow, dry, and another nod. "What will happen in that case?"

"Your family will receive a payout of ten million francs CFA. Your body will not be available for a burial, unfortunately." The doctor looked strangely abashed. "The results of the process are...ah, not pretty."

“I understand.”

“One last thing, then. After the uploading process, successful or not, your blood, organs and tissue will be donated — or, well, sold — to a tissue bank in central Africa. Your family will receive ten percent of this, and the Centre the other ninety. This is to help defray the cost of the process.”

Sylvie thought for a moment, rubbed her hand over her smooth-shaven head. “About how much will that be?”

“The cut to your family?” The doctor fiddled with her pen, twirling it across delicate dark fingers. “Lately, we’ve been getting about a hundred million francs, so again, about ten million. Not a bad payout, hmm?”

Not bad indeed. Sylvie had little love for her family, minus her brother, so the payout wasn’t a huge incentive, as it was for others. She just hoped Moussa wound up with a chunk of it.

Unlikely, given her mother.

She nodded her assent.

“So then. Your surgery is scheduled in one hour. You have fifteen minutes before prep, which means fifteen more minutes to back out if you should choose. I’m going to head back to the team and leave you be to think this over.” The doctor gestured to her right, “Dial zero on the phone on the desk if you wish to cancel. There will be no repercussions if you do.”

The doctor stood and leaned forward, offering her hand. Sylvie lifted herself out of her chair and accepted the handshake, feeling as though she needed to be careful of those delicate fingers. The grip was firm, though.

As the doctor stepped out of the room, Sylvie settled back into the chair. She closed her eyes against the sight of all the posters

advertising the procedure.

“Upload today!” they said.

“Experience a life beyond need!” they promised.

“Work without pressure!” they hollered.

Everything was so loud, so loud.

She had them all memorized, anyway. Right now, she just wanted quiet. She just wanted to think of Grace.

Grace with her silvering hair.

Grace with her fair and smooth skin.

Grace with her liquid laughter and lovely voice.

They’d fallen in love within months, shared only a scant few years together, before being separated again. An impenetrable boundary of distance, of emulated sensorium and embodied flesh.

Grace’s decision hadn’t been Sylvie’s. Uploading, the thought of uploading, made her skin itch and eyes ache. To be removed from this world and sent to another, to the system, didn’t appeal to her.

It did appeal to Grace.

Grace with her failing voice.

Grace with her deteriorating coordination.

Grace with her pain, her depression.

For Grace, it was a way to escape her body. That body that Sylvie loved so much, and was such a prison to Grace. A voluntary procedure — “Help combat overpopulation!” the posters howled — but also a way to neatly sidestep the MS slowly claiming her body and mind.

After the upload, Grace had communicated with Sylvie through text, through mails sent to her terminal which she’d pore over at work. She begged Sylvie. *Come join me, come upload*, she said. *The posters, they’re all true, they’re all right.*

The thought *still* made her skin itch and her eyes ache, but all the same, she kept dreaming of Grace. Dreaming of softer eyes, of a voice more sonorous. Her Grace shining like the dawn.

So she'd relented.

*Tu m'appelais et je quittais la terre
Pour m'enfuir avec toi vers la lumière,
Les cieux pour nous entr'ouvraient leurs nues,
Splendeurs inconnues, lueurs divines entrevues,*

Sylvie's mind was filled with Fauré, with that rolling, lilting theme. With Grace's voice at the piano.

"We're going to keep you awake, okay? We need to, in order to tell when the upload is complete, but you'll under local anesthesia. It'll make you feel a little dreamy, may have visual disturbances." The doctor's smile was kind. "Some report it to be enjoyable."

"Okay. How long will the upload take?"

"The procedure will be about forty five minutes to prep you for upload, and then the upload will happen in two stages," the doctor said. "You'll be uploaded to a local node at our center, which will give you access to a waiting room of sorts for the system proper. The upload to the system will take several hours via Ansible — it's a lot of data going a long way, you understand — so the waiting room will usually have you fork and the copy will be uploaded."

"Create a copy of myself and let that be uploaded while I watch," she murmured. Sylvie thought for a moment, "What about the copy that remains?"

"It's free to quit, like a program on your terminal quitting. But they — the...ah, sysadmins — usually request that it stay around in

case the upload to the system gets interrupted for some reason. Cosmic rays or whatever technobabble fits that day.”

“And what will I feel if things go wrong?”

The doctor hesitated, looked to her team. It was another team member, a man with a thick French accent, who responded. “We don’t really know. The local node will pick up on it and alert us. Death just looks like death to us.”

Sylvie nodded. Tried to nod, at least. She was firmly strapped down. “Alright.”

There was a pinprick at the crook of her elbow. A feeling of coolness spread up her arm, into her chest. A tightness, there, and then a tightness along her neck. A brief moment of panic as she tried to flex her fingers.

“We are starting the neuromuscular blocker. This will paralyze your voluntary muscles, so don’t panic about the feeling,” the anesthesiologist mumbled, distracted. He tapped her forearm, sending a pins-and-needles flash through the right half of her body. “But it doesn’t numb you. That will be the next one, the anesthetic.”

Sylvie attempted to speak, but only managed a grunt of assent.

The anesthesiologist nodded, “Good. Here it comes, then.”

The chill ache was replaced with a comfortable warmth.

Not warmth, she realized. Nothingness. Floatingness. Leaving-the-earth-ness. Gone-ness.

“Sylvie, can you hear me? You won’t be able to speak or blink or nod, but can you try and take two quick breaths? It may be difficult. We’ll intubate if necessary.”

Sylvie obeyed. Or thought she did, at least. She couldn’t tell if the breaths were actually happening. It seemed to be enough for the anesthesiologist, whose shadow across her vision bowed and

stepped out of sight.

Time wandered.

Voices rang with the timbre of bells, though she could still understand them. Surgeons talking to technicians.

A dull, basso organ note of something grinding, her vision vibrating, blurring the sight of the light above the bed.

The light took the form of Grace, and Sylvie more readily gave in to the effects of the drug.

Grace with her angelic smile. Grace lifting her up, away from the earth. Grace running, running into the ring of that surgeon's lamp. Clouds, clouds parting.

The organ note screamed up through several octaves.

Calm, ringing voices.

That yearning song tinkling through her mind. She was unable to tell whether it came from herself or from one of the techs. Or maybe from Grace. *Dans un sommeil que charmait ton image...* Tinkling and flowing. Rocking. Drunken. Drunken on dreams.

Minutes fled by. Hours. Days, perhaps. Always, in front of her, her angel. Pure white skin that contrasted beautifully against her own, cream spilled in coffee. Always lifting her up. How far did they have to go?

Grace was drifting away from her, receding.

The light flared in intensity. Somehow became black. A shining, blinding blackness amid a field of more blackness.

Tugging, pulling.

Prying.

A snap.

A sense of wrongness, of gravity.

Falling away. Layers of self peeling back, each successive shed-

ding revealing something more raw, more primal. Molting. The boundary between her Self and the blackness complicating, fraying, fading.

Grace was gone, too, faded to nothing.

Come back! Sylvie shouted into the nothingness. Her fists, raw and exposed to their very core, to the concept of Fist sans physical representation, pounded at the blackness. Pounded at herself.

Come back! Come back! Grace! She wailed. Screamed. Sobbed.

Grace...

A whisper against building chords, Grace's sweet voice.

And then the wave receded.

*Hélas! Hélas! triste réveil des songes
Je t'appelle, ô nuit, rends moi tes mensonges,
Reviens, reviens radieuse,
Reviens ô nuit mystérieuse!*

The team stood still. There was no written protocol as to what one should do while the local node processed the upload, but they always remained silent. The doctor held her breath every time.

A small pinging noise. The local readout flashed red.

Shoulders sagged around the room.

"Error in processing upload." The tinny speaker sounded impersonal. Perhaps it was designed that way to play down the loss. "Irrecoverable data corruption. Please check all contacts before continuing or contact a system support technician for a full rig inspection."

"Well." The anesthesiologist's voice, so human, contrasted with the words from the speaker. "That's that, then."

“That’s that,” the doctor echoed. She sighed and backed away from Sylvie’s body. It was empty, now. A husk. “I’ll start the paperwork and call her family and the insurance company. Get the payout processed as soon as possible.”

The other team members nodded. None of them looked happy.

“Go on, get her cleaned up and sent to the handlers.” She trudged out of the room slowly, her feet dragging. Pulling off her gloves, one by one, she added, “At least someone will get something out of this. Alas.”

Prayers began around the corpse.

Economy

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Forking

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Merging

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Story: Assignment

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Ioan Bălan — 2303

The sensation of an instance merging state back with em would never *not* make Ioan Bălan#tracker uneasy. It wasn't the differences in experiences, those were to be anticipated, so much as the tiny changes in identity that resulted. Having to internalize a slightly different version of yourself was too close to experiencing a doppelgänger, something so alike and yet with subtle shifts in worldview.

Or perhaps hanging with a sib, fresh home from a semester abroad.

Ioan#tracker had never been abroad, had no siblings. Just new memories.

And yet there was the merge request, waiting. Ey set aside eir work — a simple bit of nothing for a news organization that really didn't matter but nonetheless offered some reputation — and sat back to deal with the squirming, greasy feeling of the merger.

Ioan Bălan#5f39bd7 was forked on suggestion of one of Ioan#tracker's friends as a way to inspect and experience life among a flashcult. Although the lifespan of the group was likely to be measured in months, or even weeks, Ioan figured it was a worthwhile

project. Ey had an investigative journalism gig that could use a story like this.

The forking was as simple as it always was. Ioan#tracker had no reason to expect otherwise, of course, and when the instance was rendered in front of em, the two shared a perfunctory handshake and went over notes one last time before the instance headed outside to hop to as close to the flashcult as ey could get.

#5f39bd7 took little time to settle into life among the cultists. Ioan was affable, likable. It was part of why ey had found the work of investigative journalism, of being a modern historian, easy. And why ey had quickly gained reputation in the field. Enough for a comfortable existence. It was fun work, too, when it came. The problem ey kept running into was boredom, rather than burning out.

Ioan#tracker was left feeling let down, as ey perused what ey had been left of #5f39bd7's state.

Ey used a fairly standard, off-the-shelf algorithm to cut down on the sheer amount of memory and sensation that ey would have to sift through to gain something from the instance's brief — ey checked the date — three weeks, two days of existence. It was enough to gain most of the knowledge and a good portion of the emotional and intellectual slices from the state, which was all ey needed for eir work. A full merge would've taken too long, and may have even been counterproductive.

Ey needed an experiencer, an amanuensis. Someone to live through the project, let it mix around in their head, and come out the other side changed. Ey emphatically did not need a recording device for eir reporting. That is all the forks were.

The assignment, such as it was, had been straightforward, and Ioan#tracker had expected little of interest from the state dump. The flashcult was strange, but not too out of the ordinary, so ey sped up eir perusal, skimming.

A sharp jolt of fear.

A pain that stretched from physical to existential.

EOF.

Ioan#tracker sat up straighter, brow furrowed. Ey skipped back through a few chunks of state to where ey had started to get bored.

The flashcult was strange, but not too out of the ordinary. Ioan#5f39bd7, with no journalistic duties, found emself getting into the swing of things with ease.

It was a strange sort of vacation, in a way. Performing weird rituals that slowly began to make a weird sort of sense, knowing that at some weird moment, ey would either get too bored and quit or receive a request to do so from #tracker. Until then, rituals it was.

Rituals, yes, but mostly lots of loafing around.

As work, being an amanuensis was, ey decided, inoffensive. Not super interesting, kind of relaxing, and maybe something interesting would happen that eir tracker could turn into a story.

It was during one of the rituals — a call-and-response prayer wherein the members seemed to be working on memorizing progressively longer digits of numbers — when the co-cultist beside em let out a soft sigh that turned into a quiet giggle.

Then she turned to em, smiled beatifically, and winked.

Winked!

Ioan#5f39bd7 watched her raise her hand and call the ceremony to a halt, speaking almost dreamily. “I found them.”

Faces turned toward em, all smiling that same kind, peaceful smile. Ey sat dumbly, looking from face to face.

“I...yes?” ey managed.

“You’re the one,” a voice chimed in.

Another added, “The reporter. You’re the reporter.”

A thrill of fear ran up #5f39bd7’s spine. It had never been a strictly undercover operation, but neither had ey been forthcoming about why ey was there in the first place.

Ioan#5f39bd7 lifted eir hands from eir lap, palms up in a placating fashion. “Well,” ey began. “I suppose I am a reporter of sorts, no denying, but I’m not here on offic-urk!”

There was a sharp blow to the back of eir neck that knocked em flat to the ground, then a weight settled solidly onto eir back. One of the other members had sat on em.

“Congrats, Ana,” said the cultist on eir back.

“Three weeks and a day, getting better,” another grinned, and others soon chimed in, reaching in to shake hands with the young woman who had originally pointed em out.

Ioan#5f39bd7 picked out the face of the lector in the crowd, an older person of indeterminate sex who had struck em as being rather vacuous. It was a difficult task, from eir viewpoint on the ground, and since all the adherents wore identical clothing, there were few clues.

“This is the tenth iteration. As we discussed before you arrived, we’ll tell you, now.”

The fear continued to well within #5f39bd7, growing in intensity.

Ioan#tracker set eir usual algorithm aside for the merger, requesting that the entirety of the instance's state, from that last ritual on, be merged with em. Merged blithely. Ey wanted the whole thing.

While it wasn't the first time ey had done such a thing, it was still rare enough for em to do so that ey had to look up how. Despite a career depending on it, ey had never been all that good at the whole dissolution thing. Ey never bothered to figure out how to name eir instances, relying instead on the random string of digits that the system generated for em. Mere signifiers

Once that had been organized, ey moved out onto the deck and settled into one of the Adirondack chairs out there. Such things, ey suspected, were built primarily for thinking.

Ey closed eir eyes, and let memories wash over em.

The fear continued to well within #5f39bd7, growing in intensity.

"We're practicing, you see." The lector paced a slow circle around Ioan#5f39bd7 as they went on. Any sign of vacuousness was gone. "We start something interesting, wait for a reporter, and find them out. That's what we're practicing. Finding out who's watching, who's the reporter."

Ana giggled once more. "It's a class, get it? An experiment, a dissection. You're the subject."

The lector nodded and, having completed their circuit, leaned down to meet #5f39bd7's wide-eyed gaze. "And now we've got it re-

liably under a month. Time to make it known. What's your signifier?"

"Ioan Bălan#5f39bd7," ey stammered. "Bu-but why are you...what are...why are you doing this?"

"We're looking for reliable ways to find out the reporters, the ones that don't belong, because—" They paused, withdrawing a syringe from the billowy sleeve of their tunic. "Because some day we may not want to be seen."

That wellspring of fear turned to a geyser.

In-system, there was no real need for an actual syringe, so they had taken on a new, codified meaning. A symbol of something that would modify an instance in some core fashion. Intent was thick in the air, so Ioan#5f39bd7 had no doubt that this was some sort of symbol of destruction. A virus, perhaps.

"Wait," ey gasped, finding eir breath coming in ragged, erratic bursts.

There was no time to continue in any coherent fashion. No words, only a hoarse shout. Eir fear spiked beyond what it felt ey was capable of containing as ey watched the hand bearing the syringe slide calmly toward them to efficiently slip the needle behind eir ear.

Ey came apart. Seams ey did not know ey had began to tear. The fabric of eir being ripped, shredded.

Eir final thought before eir instance crashed was surprise at just how much it hurt to die. It was a pain that spread from eir head through eir body, from the physical reality of the sim to some existential plane.

Ioan#tracker found emself clutching at the arms of the deck chair, eir own breathing shallow and fast. Ey felt the same fear that eir fork had felt.

What should ey do?

A quick search showed there was no way to turn over the instance to what little the system had in the way of authorities. What data was actually ‘recorded’ was not done so in a useful fashion. The instances were eirs and eirs alone.

Ey certainly didn’t want to confront the cultists, either as emself or through a fork. Ey didn’t know how to change eir forks like some others did, so ey would just look like Ioan#5f39bd7 back from the dead.

Ey realized that all ey could really do was what ey knew how to do best.

Be a reporter.

It was what the cult wanted, but ey felt the words and experiences stirring within em already.

Hell, it’s what ey wanted, too. Finally, an interesting assignment.

Dissolution Strategies

DRAFT

Story: Jonas Clade Digest

Jonas Clade Digest

Systime 305+168 0600

Ar Jonas writing here, would like to give a small update about the family. Things have been going well. Lena#tracker and I are getting by with some impatience as the investigations into a child continue. We've explored many of the options around child templates and found a few that we think will provide a good base for what aspects of our sensoria we can provide. It's got Lena's quick wit and my dashing good looks.

Ha ha.

Anyway. Been wondering if any of you cross-tree/up-tree instances have heard of anything that might help? I know there's a lot of research being done throughout the system that might provide some help, and we're doing a lot of digging ourselves, but you know, a lot of it is just the published stuff. If any of you has even heard anything, we'd love to pick your brains.

I'm pretty sure we — the clade — are all on the same page about this, but we've run into some friction from others. "Less-than-

human monsters,” was, I believe, the phrasing used to describe the kiddo. How quaint. Still, if you’ve heard anything about the social ramifications, that’d also be nice.

Ar out.

Ku Jonas reports that there has been some dramatic things going on in his sim. However, he also reports that it’s all incredibly boring, and that he is far too lazy to look up the specifics. Or to even write this. His long-suffering partner remains faithfully yours.

De Jonas here. Just writing to inform you that I have once again decided that the clade was too small. I know that some of you think that I fork too easily, but your perennial complaints fall on perennial deaf ears. Many of you have your families, and I have mine.

De-14 was forked from De-4 recently in order to explore a relationship with a friend from out-sim, a young woman in the form of a cat. We’ve never had a cat in our little polycule, and it tickled many of us to see how that would work out. Plus, as the friendship grew, as friendships do, it became harder and harder not to keep petting her. She’s quite delightful.

Jean and Finn are doing well and send their love, and many of the other De instances and their partners do as well. Sorry for being such crazy romantics, but it is what it is. Hope you’re all well, love you all.

Jonas Prime reminding you to keep up on your updates. You're all far too weird to merge with.

DRAFT

Jonas Clade Digest

Systime 305+178 0600

Di Jonas politely requests that De Jonas chill the fuck out. We're not in the business of running harems. You're polluting the D* subclade.

Kidding. Congrats.

Fa Jonas. Work continues apace. Mysterious Project #382 launches soon.

Just kidding, book's almost ready. I'll send it out for some in-clade beta-reads in a bit.

De Jonas. De-14 and little miss kitty have moved in with De-3 and De-4. A household of seven, three of which are De instances, is a busy place. I stopped by the other day to pet the cat and say hi to the others. 3's partner, Llewellyn, is so wonderful, I really ought to spend more time with them.

Actually, that's kind of why I'm writing. How the hell do you deal with jealousy and unrequited feelings? I like Llew perhaps more than is good for me. 3 made a good choice. We're pretty much the same, so it's kind of obvious that such a choice would also appeal to me, right? Part of the De subclade's rules, though, is that a down-tree instance can't mess with an up-tree instance's partners. Even then, I don't think 3 and Llew would welcome another De.

I don't really want to fool around, or anything, but, you know...we run the mutation algorithms, but they only mess with our

tastes and proclivities so much. It's not surprising that I'm kind of falling for Llew.

I don't want to get hurt, and I don't want De-3 or Llew to get hurt. I'm just trying to figure out how to work this, you know?

Ku's still a lazy bastard. Said I should update you all about the kerfuffle. Some old clade had some shit go down, but it appears to have been fairly well contained. Apparently there'll be a report by a historian/journalist person. Murder makes for good news, I guess.

Ku sends his biggest 'meh'.

No here. News from the frontier is that it's mostly empty and still under construction. A lot of the folks in this sim are pushing boundaries, and getting quite frustrated at the limitations from the sysadmins. We're pushing for a petition. They say it feels like progress on the system itself progressed while progress within the system has accelerated.

Myself, I just want to see what I can do to help. The system is neat, but it's starting to show it's age.

Anyone out there running into anything?

-No Jonas

Jonas Clade Digest

Systime 305+188 0600

De Jonas.

Well that went...poorly. 3 got quite upset at my last update, said we should have talked about it in person before broadcasting in the digest. I get that, and he's right, I apologize. But I don't feel it was quite as far out of line as he's saying.

Anyway, it spun out into a little argument, which turned into a big argument. De-3 is frustrated and upset because he doesn't feel like his boundaries are being respected. I understand, but he took it further. He says he's sick of all the forking, sick of just how many Jonases there are and how many relationships are in place. He says he thinks the whole poly thing that our branch did was a stupid idea and caused more trouble than it was worth.

He moved out with Llewellyn. Switched sims and wound up digging his own place in a rural area. Says he needs some time to himself, and wants to focus on his relationship, says he and Llew are getting married and going exclusive.

So my plan not to hurt anyone basically didn't work at all, and now I feel like shit for alienating both of them, and feel doubly weird that 3 went mono. Makes me worried for the rest of our subclade. Is that something we'll all discover sooner or later? That all these relationships are more trouble than they're worth? Is poly just compensation for not finding someone we really want to be with?

Fuck fuck fuck.

Ugh, anyway. Going to go pet the cat and have a chat with 14. Those two are doing well, at least, and I'm wondering if up-tree in-

stances might have more insight. Meanwhile, down- and cross-tree folks, do you have anything? My fucking heart hurts.

No Jonas.

Petition accepted. About to get extraordinarily busy. Will keep you up to date as best I can.

Ar here. Things are going better. We're working with some techs about how best to do this, and it sounds like it could happen before the next digest. We're both so, so excited! A kid of our own! We're opting for no gender for now. Will discuss with them later. Looks will be a mesh of both of us. Will start at about fourteen years old, appearance wise, and a bit older mentally, based on the template. Again, we'll discuss with them later.

Just one thing. A lot of folks have this when they do the child thing, and it feels like there's as many solutions as there are people dealing with it.

What do we name the kid?

Like, I want to keep Jonas in there somewhere, but I don't want to keep the same scheme, because they'll be out-clade, right? So I'm not going to snag the W* namespace. Neither Lena nor I want their name to be *just* a Jonas name, either. She wants something of hers in there, and I want something of mine, and we both want something new, to denote a new being.

Never knew this'd be so hard!

Anyway, shoot us your thoughts.

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+190 0600

Prime here. De, be careful, man. You're exploring some things that I've dreamed of, but don't have the courage to actually tackle. Maybe that's what you got from the algos: all the crazy required to actually run a big, happy, poly family. Or one you'd like to be happy, at least.

Don't have any real answers for you. Not just because I don't have any experience, but also because I don't think anyone has it figured out. Poly works well for a lot of people, and not so well for others. Some folks just don't want it at all and stick with monogamy.

Only real thing I can give you is advice. I think we all know that 3 probably wants some down time. I also know that we'd all be super anxious in your shoes. Leave them alone, though. Let them take some time and figure things out. Always works for us, you know that.

Meantime, take care of yourself.

Ar: keep us up to date. I'm really excited for you.

Ko Jonas. Partner's pouting in the corner.

Ar! Shit, man! That's wonderful news! I'm super happy for you and Lena. Lets hook up some time, celebrate.

De-8 Jonas here. Just a small update to let folks know that the rest of the subclade is doing well, if only because we're scared of what

De and 3 are going through. We're doing what we can to keep all of us safe and take care of Jean and Finn as well while De takes care of this.

De-* send congrats, Ar.

Lu Jonas. Heart goes out to you, De. I know you've dived into this far more than any of the rest of the clade, but it's obviously something that we've all thought about. Just stay safe, yeah? Keep 3 and Llew in a good place as best as you can, even if that means staying away.

Cheers, Ar. Keep us up to date.

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+194 1343

Ar here.

Welcome Lee Ar-Jonas-Helena Sprout.

Neither Lena nor I had kids prior to uploading, but other than the legal (well, “legal”) and social barriers, this was ridiculously easy, far more so than embodied world birth. We signed some papers, decided on a time for creation, and then just picked Lee up from the sim.

They’re a little confused and disoriented still, as their sensorium starts working properly, but they’re doing well. Attached is a photo.

We decided to only refer to ourselves in Lee’s middle name, the rest being something new.

We’re going to take them out for a meal in a bit here, but I just wanted to update and thank you all for the well-wishes.

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+195 0236

De-3 quit.

Merged with 2, who forked and is merging down to me. Will update with details.

DRAFT

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+195 0359

I never knew someone could be so depressed. I know we did some experimental forking and mutating when we first uploaded just as Prime to get rid of some of that, and I know that we all occasionally get hit by a big chunk of sadness, but what 3 went through goes far beyond that.

Can't stop crying.

The sheer amount of worthlessness he felt is overwhelming, and pales in comparison only to the emptiness, the void of feeling that ruled his life.

He didn't become mono, he just couldn't handle anything, any relationship, and it's only due to Llew being such a saint that that worked out as well as it did.

3 rarely forked. There were no instances around at the time that he quit. That line has ended.

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+195 0504

I've gathered many of the De-*s and their partners to my place and sent out an invite to Llewellyn to see what we can do for him. He sounds terrible.

I'm sorry, Ar, I'm really happy for you, and I'm glad things went as well as they did. Don't mean to trample your joy.

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+195 0600

Ar here. Don't worry, De, take care of yourself. This stuff's no less important.

Prime. Sorry to hear that, De. If you need more of the clade, we'd be happy to help. Just send us a note and we can fork or visit ourselves. Help Llew as best you can.

From what I gather, the forking I did before really starting the clade only worked so well. It made me less likely to be completely steamrolled like it sounds De-3 was. I think we all use similar mutation algos, so maybe this is something the whole clade would do well to keep an eye on. Maybe those can undo some of the changes I worked for early on.

Congratulations, Ar. We're basically the same, so it's silly of me to think of myself as a happy grandfather, but here I am. Really happy for you and Lena.

Ko Jonas. De, take care of yourself and your subclade, okay? It's really important. Partner sends their love and support, says if you need to talk about depression, they will help how they can.

Congrats, Ar! That's delightful news.

Lu, Li, and Lo here. L*s started to gather for our own thing, but if you need, De, we can head over there.

Na Jonas: Shit, Ar, congrats! I'm so happy for you both. Send more pictures! I want to say 'of the bouncing baby', but they aren't really a baby, are they? There's so much bullshit about created children, all these conversations about whether they're real people or whatever. Always felt like abstract bullshit, though, until now.

Gonna have to talk to the hubby and see if he would be interested in this. Hadn't crossed my mind until you went ahead!

Jonas Clade Digest

Systime 305+198 0600

Pe Jonas here. Sorry for not keeping more on top of these. Just been burying myself in work lately. Congrats on the kid, Ar, they're cute. Sorry to hear about all that happened, De. I got the short end of the depression stick, too, and I know how crushing it can be. Stay safe!

llew left the sim. he asked that we not contact him unless he contacts us first. don't blame him. we're all feeling really bad about what happened, but i'm a total mess. i can't believe i sent that update without talking to llew and 3 first. it was so fucking stupid of me, should've just talked about how i felt with them. they're the ones involved, right? it's just all so bleak, it feels like i've got the weight of 3's line ending on my shoulders, along with llew's pain. fucking hell

Ar. De, really hoping things are okay. Wishing you the best. Just as a note, we're settling in well here, getting used to having someone else in the house.

Na, you should! This was one of the most fulfilling things we've ever done together as a family.

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+198 1249

Prime. De, can I come over? Can anyone else join me?

DRAFT

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+199 0455

Prime.

Things are okay, but rough. For the rest of the clade who couldn't make it, De is having some trouble with the memories involved in the merger with 3. The combination of having weeded out some of that depression with having it reintroduced is causing a lot of conflicts. I don't think De was quite ready for those, and didn't resolve some of them as elegantly as he could've.

One wouldn't expect a sensorium to drift that far in two generations, but here we are.

Llew sent me a message; he's okay, but needs some space from De-* space.

Be safe, y'all, okay?

Jonas Clade Digest — Supplemental

Systime 305+200 0127

De here.

I'm sorry everyone. I wrote down a bunch of notes and then performed a fix from before 3's quit. I just couldn't have all of that in my head. Echoing Prime's statement of being safe. The algos only work so well, you know? And conflicts can make you crazy.

We'll patch this up and move on, though. Just give us some time.

DRAFT

Jonas Clade Digest

Systime 305+208 0600

No here.

De, man, sorry to hear about all that. I'm glad you're finding ways to work with it.

Petition is going well. Things outside have changed a lot. Maybe we should start reading a newspaper other than our own.

Fa. Done! Can I get some beta readers?

Ko is a lazy fuck. What's new, though?

Ko's partner is a scheming bitch and I love them loads.

Ar here. This is so weird. Lee's like...an instance, but not, you know? Enough of me in them to feel like me, and enough of Lena to feel familiar, but still so different. Feeling all overwhelmed with love.

No one ever told me having kids was like this.

Prime, back home. The De subclade is alright. They'll patch things up. They send their best wishes, and mention that they'll be quiet for a while.

In other news, welcome Ra, first of the R subclade. Got the exploration itch after reading a thing on abandoned sims, so he's going on with that and will merge regularly. Will keep you all up to date.

Ra Jonas saying hi and bye! I'll post updates, probably through Prime.

Conflicts and Fixing

DRAFT

Skills and Stunts

DRAFT

Fate Core

DRAFT

OGI

DRAFT

About the author

Madison Scott-Clary is a transgender writer, editor, and software engineer. She focuses on furry fiction and non-fiction, using that as a framework for exploring across genres. She has edited and written for [adjective][species] since 2011, and edited *Arcana: A Tarot Anthology* for Thurston Howl Publications in 2017. She is the editor-in-chief of Hybrid Ink, LLC, a small publisher focused on thoughtful fiction, exploratory poetry, and creative non-fiction. She lives in the Pacific Northwest with her cat and two dogs, as well as her husband, who is also a dog.

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