

The Third Eye

Isaac Wells

"He told how he knew mental arithmetic, and with fractions, too, and the area of the country, and how many inhabitants, and she smiled all the time, till he thought that what he knew didn't come to much."

-Hans Christian Andersen, *The Snow Queen*

"The topic of today's lecture will be augmented reality."

I cleared my throat in a desperate attempt to break the deafening silence that occupied the large classroom; as if today were my inhumation rather than an afternoon class on a Tuesday.

I spun around, revealing the scrawled acronym on the dull blackboard behind me. Sixty faces stared back blankly at me, eagerly awaiting my next words; trying not to glance at the mechanical clock that loomed over my head like the full moon does at midnight over the dark sea.

Trevor was situated practically underneath me; smack dab in the middle of the front row. His arms lay folded across his chest as he slouched against the peach-coloured plastic chair that seemed hell bent on keeping him firmly in place. I could sense him preparing to correct my first mistake before I had had the chance to let it escape from the dry lips that sealed my mouth.

The seat one row back and two chairs to the left of Trevor was graced by the only student I would have ever stopped to smell - Rosie. Her light brown locks gently framed her plump face, her large breasts pressed up against the soft blue fabric of her cashmere sweater and her deep green eyes stared up at me in admiration.

"mhgnMmgghmm" I cleared my throat as if I was Martin Luther King Junior's, Junior preparing to deliver his magnum opus speech.

"Does anyone here know anything about augmented reality?"

A hand darted up in the far right corner of the cramped classroom. I approached to get a better look; a skinny kid with shards of dark brown hair poking out from the black baseball cap that casted a large shadow over his smirking face. "That's peculiar," I thought to myself, "I don't seem to recall him from any of my previous lectures."

"Yes, you at the back?"

"It's like reality but better."

I rolled my eyes, "Okay, did you want to expand on that at all?"

He paused for a moment, formulating his reply (or at least I presumed he was).

"Well, I suppose, in its final form, it has the power to shape its users into the greatest versions of themselves; almost elevating them to the level of superheroes."

"Um ... okay, I've never really thought of it tha-"

"In a sense, augmented reality frees its users from their mental weaknesses.

The dumbest mind becomes the sharpest; the most incompetent man in the kitchen becomes a chef, the most illiterate chef becomes a logician, the most unromantic logician becomes a poet and the laziest poet becomes a businessman.

And yet it fails to make the depressed happy.

Because, as always, there's a catch: it's all fake; an illusion; a figment of the user's imagination.

The kitchen klutz is no Gordon Ramsay, he is simply following instructions; The chef is not *actually* a mathematical logician, he simply has a multiplication table; the logician is *masquerading* as a poet, he is simply reciting the poetry that has been written for him; and the poet's "business sense" is at the same heightened level as everyone else's.

For, augmented reality is but only man's attempt at masking the reality gifted to him by God."

"SILENCE!" it came out as a broken scream, penetrating the quiet room.

The smirk on the boy's face widened, morphing into a sly grin. The rest of the class stared up at me, wide-eyed, ignoring the dusty pens and notebooks strewn across their desks.

From the corner of my eye, I caught the subtle shimmer of a small, transparent square device resting against the lap of a student situated in one of the backmost seats.

I sighed and straightened my collar.

"Listen," I said in the most empathetic voice I could muster, "those are all great, well-thought out points. However, I am going to have to stop you right there as I believe education should remain secular in order to protect the rights of those with differing religious beliefs."

I resisted the urge to hammer my point home by glancing up at Muhammed sitting quietly ... left of center of the room? No, no, no get back to your lecture.

"mHmghmh" I really needed to start bringing a water bottle to class, "Now, one thing we must consider when discussing augmented reality is that it is still largely in its primitive form. Sure, it's evolved from those video games like the infamous "Pokemon Go" that our parents used to play on their ... what did they call them? Mobility devices?"

I let out an awkward laugh and took a quick peek at Trevor; he was listening patiently.

"But AR technology still finds itself nowhere near the level of sophistication necessary for mass adoption by the general public."

I paused for effect; noticing the eyes of a student in the second row fixated on the mesmerizing circle above my head.

"Or at least, that was the case - until now.

You see, class, recently there have been multiple rumors making their way around academic circles that the US government has invented the first strongly augmented device. A pair of glasses that contain the knowledge of the internet, the mathematical ability of a supercalculator, the perfect ice breaker for a first date, the ability to speak and understand any language and, ultimately, a reality mendable to our individual needs and desires. Not to mention the added bonus of perfect twenty-twenty vision."

"Professor, just a small correction."

Ugh, great.

"These rumors of glasses that you speak of," Trevor began gently, "they have been confirmed false. Last year, as I am sure you are aware, an independent audit of the military found no trace of augmented reality research.

Besides, nothing close to what you speak of has ever been demonstrated in public."

Now a sly smirk was forming on my face.

"Absolutely Trevor, you are one hundred percent correct," I was patronizing him and I was enjoying it, "But that's why you come to my class, isn't it?"

I shoved my forearm into the dark recesses of my light brown briefcase and produced a thin, rectangular black case placing it gently on the podium in front of me.

Trevor's face was held frozen in place as if the snow queen herself had kissed his forehead with her cold lips.

"Now class, due to the nature of my research, I was recently gifted a pair of these aforementioned glasses from the United States government." Their faces were priceless. This was a class they were going to remember for the rest of their lives (and I was teaching it).

"The US government did make it very clear in the letter they sent me that I was 'not to tell anyone about these pair of glasses and certainly not to let anyone else try them on.' Well, luckily for us, I'm a bit of a bad boy," a quick glance at Rosie, not enough time to observe a reaction, "and I was never really a fan of the US government in the first place.

So who wants to offer themselves to try these puppies on and see again for the first time?"

Every student in the class raised their hand in unison as if saluting my ability to captivate an audience. My sly smile grew bigger.

"Dante."

A single hand in the far left corner of the back row hesitantly lowered itself as if slightly surprised it had been selected. The entire class turned to stare at the acne-covered face and afro that hopped out of its seat and strolled confidently to the front of the room.

Dante was failing my class - big time. At the end of this lecture, I was going to have to tell him to withdraw and re-enroll next semester.

So I decided to let him have some fun before breaking the news.

"Open up the case and try them on."

He beamed as he turned towards me; I returned his innocent ecstasy with a smug grin of my own.

Dante took his time gently unravelling the black plastic; slowly letting the thin, white light of a thousand emitting diodes on the ceiling reflect over the seemingly ordinary set of brand new spectacles.

My, he was a better showman than I.

He flipped open the thin black arms that were crossed like Trevor's over top of the circuit lined glass; closing his eyes as he let the device rest in between the lobes of his ears.

I looked down in anticipation of his first words...

"Well?"

"You were right prof," Dante began hesitantly. His light brown eyes were wildly darting around the room like a child emerged for the first time from the darkness of his mother's womb, blinded by the bright lights of a brand new world; not yet scarred by the harsh truths that come paired with it. "I can see again. Ha! You were completely right. I know facts and figures, places and dates, states and names - all in real time ... holy shit, I understand how the stock market works!"

He turned to face me, tears were accumulating on the lower lids of his enhanced eyes.

"I used to be stupid professor, I was failing your class, I was failing all of my classes, I was thinking of dropping out of university entirely. But, with these-" he stroked the

left arm of the glasses with the tips of his index and middle finger not unlike a husband stroking the arm of his wife on their day of consummation, anticipating the coming night. "With these, I can be as smart as Einstein. Nay, smarter."

He paused as we stared at each other, gradually coming to the same conclusion.

"No"

"I want to keep them."

"You heard what I said."

"Ask me what thirteen thousand two hundred and seventy four to the power of thirteen is."

"Take off the glasses, Dante."

"Ask me. I'm pleading you."

"Dante, take off the glasses then we can talk."

More square screens were watching me, visible only as glimmers and shimmers in the rays of filtered sunlight slowly creeping through the slightly open blinds hanging from the cramped windows on either side of the back of the classroom. Were they encouraging me to glance at their genitals?

This was getting out of hand. I pressed the red emergency button hidden on the underside of the worn, oak podium.

"I'm not taking them off until you ask me. Thirteen thousand two hundred and seventy four to the power of thirteen. Ask me what the answer is."

I rolled my eyes again, a bad habit after this many years of teaching. "Fine, what is it Dante?"

"Three decimal nine-hundred and seventy-two multiplied by ten to the power of fifty-three! Hoh! it felt good to say that! I'm sorry sir I cannot take off these glasses." he looked up at me in wild realization, "You're going to have to make me."

This was going to go viral again, I could feel it.

"Calm down Dante. How about you take off the glasses and we can talk this through together, in the real reality, not your artificial augmented one," I stretched my hand out, pleading, begging for him to give me back the glasses; I prayed Rosie was distracted.

"You do make a compelling case," was he getting smart with me? "I'll make you a deal. How about I take off these glasses and give them back to you right after I am crowned king of the world," he turned towards the door, "For now, I'm withdrawing from your class."

I looked down in reflection. On the one hand, I was moments away from losing top secret US military property but, on the other, things worked out kind of neatly; I certainly wasn't looking forward to that uncomfortable convers-

"The hell you are," declared Hank sternley as he burst through the door ending Dante's great escape. "Give me those glasses boy and get back in your seat."

He ripped the spectacles off of Dante's face and started towards me.

"Listen man," Hank issued his warning in the form of a gentle whisper as he placed the spectacles in the palm of my hand. "I'm rooting for you, but one day you're going to mess up, bad, and I'm not going to be there to save you."

Dante was rubbing his eyes as he stumbled back to his seat.

"I know, I know, thanks Hank." I patted him on the shoulder and he left the room; a scowl was painted on his otherwise stoic face.

"Well class, I certainly think we learned a lot in this lesson. What do you say we call it quits for today and finish this thing off on Thursday?" I began packing up my materials, looking down in an attempt to ignore the sixty students sitting still in front of me.

"Yes Rosie."

I had forgotten something. I had to have. But what?

"Professor, wasn't our midterm supposed to be today?"

Shit.

"Um, yes it was, Rosie - excellent catch. Um, mmmMGhmm, uh, you know what?" I clasped my hands together and mustered a sympathetic smile, "Just for attending our roller coaster of a lecture today and listening patiently, I have decided to give you all one hundred percent."

The class seemed satisfied with my decision.

"Are you fucking kidding me?"

His tired blue eyes, creased with the wrinkles that are the inevitable companion of experience, still glowed fiercely like melting copper in the dark night.

They were currently burning a hole through the top of my head.

The dean was a tall man but he looked small sitting behind the giant white mahogany desk; the soft wood surface visible only through deliberate cracks between neat stacks of treasured classics, dense binders and assorted memorandums. He leaned forward, his clean shaven mug, crew cut and ... axe ice chill? ... inching closer; a king cobra coaxed from its refuge by the shrill tones of an Indian flute, ready to strike at any moment.

"How in your right mind did you think it would ever be a good idea to, not only openly display classified United States government property, but, on top of that, to let your students model it for each other like some 'Edison's Secret Fashion Show' instead of Victoria's?"

"Damn it!" I thought to myself, silently, "If only I had chosen Rosie to test those glasses instead of that retard."

"Are you even listening to me? Look," he leaned back again, "I get that you're trying to make your lectures interesting and that's great, commendable even, but the first time you went viral I warned you, remember? What did I tell you?"

I stared into the endless stacks of white, resisting the urge to roll my eyes again.

"What did I tell you?" He was leaning forward again. I noticed him fiddling with something underneath the massive, perfectly polished table.

"That if I went viral again you would have no choice but to let me go."

"Right, and how many views do you think your little stunt pulled on crapshute.com, huh?"

"Look sir, I don't know, maybe a couple thousand? I got a bunch of papers to mark and I'm running behind on my research, I really should be going." I began to rise from my seat.

"Two billion views in two hours."

I stopped in midair; my butt hanging out while my arms gripped the rigid plastic sides that guarded the soft cotton swivel chair.

A twitch transformed into a smile which evolved into a slow chuckle emanating from the darkest depths of the dean's throat.

"It really is a global village nowadays, isn't it? Hank, get in here!"

He burst into the office like Kramer entering Jerry Seinfeld's apartment. An exhausted look painted his tired face, wrinkled even more than that of the dean's.

"Escort this man out of the building immediately. He has been fired," the dean looked down at his papers nonchalantly.

"C'mon," Hank said firmly. I begrudgingly followed him out of the spacious office with the enthusiasm of a young child forced on a family road trip to Cheyenne, Wyoming.

We walked alongside each other through the large hallway in silence; two strangers, wrapped in separate realities.

"Hank, you gotta let me grab my research," I pleaded with him as we passed the slightly ajar door offering a glimpse into my cramped closet of an office. He stopped walking but did not turn to face me.

"Fine, but be quick."

A smile lit up my face. "Thanks man! I'll be back in a sec."

I entered the dim, windowless room glancing remorsefully at the volumes I had bought, borrowed, been gifted and stole over the years; the volumes I had sweat over, cried over and bled over; the result of thirteen years in academia. But, alas, I tore my eyes away from them instead grasping a small kit and dropping it into my briefcase.

I closed the door gently behind me and followed Hank through the majestic entrance way providing a portal between the centuries old institution and the rest of the world. As I stepped outside, I turned and waved one last farewell while the bitter winter wind whipped my face.

"To the heart and mind, ignorance is kind. There's no comfort in the truth, pain is all you'll find."

"I'm never gonna dance again, guilty feet have got no rhythm. Though it's easy to pretend, I know you're not a fool."

George Michael's *Careless Whisper* soothed me as I tinkered with the tiny graphene circuits embedded within the clear, convex glass circle in front of me.

My little invention had everything: a built in gps, an artificially intelligent personal assistant, internet connectivity, sensors recording everything from ultraviolet light to daily conversation, the ability to communicate with any device containing a central processing unit, endless power from embedded solar panels the size of a handful of atoms; a super computer with the power to rebuild reality in real time. All condensed into a tiny contact lense the size of a thumb nail.

I called it the third eye.

If only the anal-retentives over at the FDA would take the sticks out of their asses and approve my ingenuity, I would surely find myself the richest man in the world.

I stared at the tiny glass extension of man resting in the palm of my hand then placed it gently in the petry dish next to my cryogenic, electron microscope.

"On the bright side, I guess I don't have to go to work tomorrow."

I smirked to myself, as I pushed my dusty office chair underneath the scattered papers and books that littered the stained, dark grey desk. With a sigh, I plopped my body down on the soft, worn cushions of the chocolate colored couch. It molded itself around me, caressing my back while the flame of the lighter filled the dark apartment with a weak orange glow. The tetrahydrocannabinol infused smoke tickled my throat as the weight hanging over the world suddenly became lighter and time slowed but did not stop, for time never does.

I imagined I was emperor of the galactic universe and had appointed Hari Seldon as my chief advisor.

My eyes began to feel heavy.

My right eye flickered open in response to the bright yellow rays of daylight drifting in through the drawn curtains.

Something was different.

A list of light blue facts and statistics accompanied the left side of every inanimate object in the cramped apartment. I swiped the air and my emails appeared before me, flagged in order of importance. Suddenly, I was aware of the arguing between the couple situated to the left of me; to my right I could hear the quiet moans of Skye covertly trying to satisfy her morning sexual urges.

The latter was the perfect target.

I swiped furiously at the air in front of me, remoting into her pocket square to intercept the pornography she was streaming ... oh ... I quickly blinked twice to clear it from my field of vision. I was suddenly glad I had chosen a pet free apartment building.

Everything was acute, clear - *augmented*.

I couldn't have.

I rushed over to the curtains and pulled them open, the sky was a deep violet.

I had.

But there was no time for me to think about it.

My stomach was growling at me as the result of a night-long fast that needed to be broken - soon. I looked at the shiny silver fridge and instantly knew what to make.

Crack! The yellow yolk of the second egg mixed with the half a teaspoon of cinnammon, dash of salt, pinch of vanilla and two-thirds of a cup of milk that I had mixed into the small steel bowl. I twisted my hand in the air, flipping on the electronic stove at a medium high heat as I spread the slippery butter around the

skillet. Each slice of white bread was delicately covered in the slimy mixture, transferred for searing only after I had deemed it sufficiently soaked.

"A third eye that can cook," I chuckled to myself as I poured the thick maple syrup over top my piping hot french toast.

As I enjoyed the sweet sensations that flooded my mouth, I felt my newfound power beginning to course through my veins.

"No wonder Dante went crazy," I chuckled to myself. "These stupid little devices can give any asshole the power to do whatever he wants, whenever he wants to. This is a leap in intelligence as great as the realization of consciousness itself."

Then a lightbulb went off in my head, bringing a bright glow to the white walls of my dense skull.

"You know, I could probably use this thing to swindle my way into getting my job back."

I stormed into the office that was larger than my cramped apartment.

"You have five minutes and this better be good." The dean managed to state it without ever looking up from the scattered papers in front of him.

"I'm sorry."

He scoffed at the white pages "You're gonna have to do better than that."

"Sir, I would appreciate if you looked at me while I said this."

He ... rolled his eyes at me? ... threw down his paper and began to finish his construction of the hole in my head.

It was enough time for the sensors to scan his facial expressions.

"You know what?" I said it out loud as if speaking to myself. The neatly tucked swivel chair bumped into its neighbour as I yanked it out from underneath the magnificent desk. "Let's cut the bullshit." I plopped myself down, sighing as the soft cotton compressed into place underneath me, "I messed up - big time. If I were in your shoes I would have fired me on the spot."

He was sitting still; he was listening.

"But, let's be honest here Martin, you don't find guys with my credentials walking around on the street. If you fire me, it's going to take you a long time to find a suitable replacement.

So let's compromise.

Give me one more shot, just one more, and, this time, I won't fall flat on my face, I'll fly."

He sat there in silence, slowly nodding while the reverberations of my words bounced around in the prestigious room.

"What are you going to do that's so different this time around?"

"No more cheating. No more blurring the lines. From now on, I play by the book. Your every wish will be my command. No student will be humiliated under my watch ever again! Instead, my students will prosper! I shall become known as the greatest professor who ever taught in this very sch-"

"Five minutes are up son." the dean had been seduced by his primitive piles of papers again; if there was ever someone who required the auto-organization of the third eye's distributed ledger file system, it was him.

"And, of my job?"

The dean threw his papers dramatically onto the glorious wooden table in front of him and pointed his blue pupils skywards as if consulting God himself for the answer.

"Can't you see that I'm busy?! Now, get out of my office!" I sighed to myself and turned towards the sliding glass door. As I was leaving, he added "Besides, did you yourself not tell me you had papers to mark and research to conduct?"

A slow smile, a universal one - the kind prompted only by an act of genuine kindness, slowly spread across my face in an exponential arc not unlike that of a global pandemic.

I skipped down the hallway like a schoolchild; for I was back at school.

The students stared at me in shock as I strolled into the packed classroom. That's funny, I didn't recall this many students last lecture.

"Yes, Rosie."

"Um, sir, I thought you were *fired*," she spoke the word in a hushed tone, "as of yesterday morning?"

"Yes, yes, um, well that decision has actually been reversed as of later that same day ... I'm fairly sure.

So who's ready to continue with augmented reality?" I picked up the chalk and began scribbling on the board while a loud chorus of groans erupted from the restless students.

I turned around to face them my eyes resting on each one of their fresh faces long enough for the third eye to give me a little insight into their individual feelings.

I stopped and looked down, as if in deep reflection.

"Why does augmented reality bore you?"

A student of mine once told me that augmented reality had the power to turn an ordinary man into a super-man. I scoffed at him then but I believe him now.

You see class, Iron man, the hulk, that sexy black widow, they are not fairy tales nor are they fantasies; they simply are stories of our posterity; stories about future generations to come.

For I have a great vision, a vision that every human will be augmented, a vision that every human will become super human, a vision that every human will have the power of nations at the tips of their fingers: a vision that the proletariat will rise again.

But for that vision to become reality, we need engineers, we need scientists and we need researchers who understand the technical requirements of AR well enough to properly build the technology that will make us greater than ourselves.

So who wants to become an engineer?"

I glanced over at Rosie, her head was resting at an angle in her hands while a smile lit up her fair face. A glance at trevor and ... what's this?! Was he taking notes?

With the audience's attention, I divulged into my topic in a succinct and sequential manner. Starting with prescence and aura, moving to projection mapping and spatial augmented reality and ending with a brief overview of every design type and every model of sensor currently in production; I even managed to squeeze in a quick aside on Augmented Reality Markup Language.

Five minutes before the end of the lecture period, I stopped myself and let the students leave a little bit early.

I did feel slightly guilty about the fact that it was a script that I had been reading the entire time and that none of it was done on my own merit. But then again, wasn't there an antiquated saying that went something like "you have to break a few eggs to make french toast"?

"Rosie, can you stay for a second?"

"Am I in trouble, sir?"

Oh yes Rosie you're in very big trouble. You've been naughty, baby, teasing me with those sweater puppies this semester.

"No Rosie, it's nothing like that. I just sensed that you were struggling a little bit with the material so I wanted to extend an invitation to reach out to me anytime for clarification. Just swing by my office."

"Oh," she said a little bit flustered. "Um, thank you sir, that's really kind of you," she reached out and placed her hand on my right shoulder. I froze and turned to lock eyes with hers; I saw a light green valley in the summertime littered with fresh bushes of red roses.

"Sir, I have to say you sounded really smart today."

"Thanks Rosie, I thought the same myself."

The bright yellow graphene door bolted firmly to the left side of the *Lamborghini Volare* automatically lifted itself as I approached and sat inside. I fiddled with the unmarked knobs in front of me until a colorful dashboard came to life, lighting up the inside of the vehicle with every color imaginable. The dials, jargon and metrics immediately became clear. I selected my speed, destination and route and pushed down the bright green "start" button.

The vehicle jumped vertically into the bright purple sky, stopping only once the ground had become a veil of milky grey clouds and the ceiling an endless ether. I felt a light kick as the *Volare* shot forward at hypersonic velocity, darting left and right as if following an invisible road until it slowly descended onto the helicopter pad that had recently been installed into the side of the university.

"Morning, dean"

"Kassandra." I flashed my carefully maintained veneers.

"Good morning, dean."

"Sherry." She was like a mother to me.

"Hey daddy."

I paused at the sliding glass doors upon view of Amanda lounging in my prized chair; her long legs spread open on the giant mahogany desk in front of her. The black thigh-highs that hugged her toned legs did not rise nearly high enough to cover their pantiless median.

"Ugh, Amanda, please." I lifted my hand to my temple in an attempt to conceal the sight in front of me.

"What's the matter, hun? I'm just less subtle than those other girls." She closed her legs, letting her short black skirt fall over her thighs and sprang up out of my chair. "I need money."

"More? What for?"

"I'd like to apply the theory of intersectionality to study oral health inequities among indigenous Australians."

"Why?"

"Because I have this crazy notion that in order to end discrimination we need to begin by understanding it."

I rolled my eyes at her, "Okay, fine, whatever. How much do you want?"

"A cool milli should suffice." she was looking down, examining the tips of her fingernails.

"Can you remind me how in the world you were ever awarded a PhD?"

"Um, rude, my dissertation was an absolute banger bro," she was standing close to me now, her towering height obscuring my view of my beloved work station. "So, come on, what do you say?"

"I'll give you ten thousand, if it makes you leave."

"Really? Yes! Thank you! Thank you! Thank you! No, actually, thank you. You are not going to regret this." she cupped my face in her hands and planted a soft kiss on my forehead.

"Amanda!" I was certain my face had gone red; I could feel the blood coursing through my body. "How in the world did you ever survive when Martin was dean?"

"Easy," she turned to face me as she stepped outside the spacious office, "I was his favorite."

And, with a wink, she was gone.

"You're late. Again."

"You know, Rosie, for all the fancy restaurants we feast at and all the lavish gifts I buy you, you never seem grateful; one could say you're a *petty* bourgeoisie."

"Oh yeah," she put down her pocket square, "And what do you think you are, the proletariat? The only reason you bring me to these fancy restaurants in the first place is so that you can flirt with the waitresses. I see how you gaze at them, snapping your little mental photographs; getting your little highlight reel ready."

You know, you used to love me, you used to treat me with respect. Now? Now you treat me like I'm your personal whore!"

I looked at her in semi-shock, "Rosie, have you been reading Marx?"

"Oh shut up; your attention span is less than that of a goldfish. You still haven't figured out the reason I brought you here, have you?"

Look around, all of the servers are robots!

Good luck trying to flirt with metal! Asshole!" her voice was increasingly beginning to emulate a shriek; her eyes were wet like the fountains in a water park, ready to explode with geysers of tears at any moment. I felt the eyes of a thousand annoyed diners digging a hole in the back of my head.

"Hello and welcome to *The First Byte*, a restaurant run by robots." I looked over at the metal body encasing my ... *waiter*. "Are the two of you ready to order?"

"We need some more time. Uh, also, can I get a menu, please?"

"Our menu can be holographed on your pocket square sir."

"Yes I am well aware of that but I don't have mine on me at the moment. You wouldn't happen to have any of those *paper* menus still lying around would you?" I winked at Rosie, her green eyes had frozen over and looked like deep glaciers now as they glared back at me.

"No, sir, we've gone fully digital - as of last month. Menus can still be accessed on legacy mobile devices."

"Mobile devices! Why those haven't been in circulation for-" I glanced over at Rosie. I didn't need the third eye to notice a vein in her forehead beginning to bulge. "You know what, I'll just have a steak sandwich. You make those right?"

"Absolutely sir. And for the lady?"

She didn't hesitate.

"I'll have the prime rib with lobster tail, shrimp and scallop oscar, sauteed mushrooms and the most expensive bottle of cabernet sauvignon that you carry."

"Absolutely ma'am. I'll be back with your meals right away."

"Woah, woah, woah, wait a second, just hold it. She'll have exactly what I'm having," I glared at Rosie, "there's no way in hell I am letting you order all of that."

"I'm sorry, sir. Once an order is placed it is final."

"Yeah, no takesies-backsies."

I squinted at Rosie in acknowledgment of the childish remark and focussed my attention back to the hunk of metal standing over me.

"You know what? Ever since you rolled over here, you've offered nothing short of the worst service I have ever seen. I would like to speak with your manager, immediately. Please."

"Absolutely, sir. I will go grab the manager while your meals are being prepared."

I turned back to Rosie.

"God, you are such a little bitch. Can I get one day without having to deal with your childish outbreaks?"

"I'm a bitch?!"

Uh-oh.

"I'm a bitch?! You know, I just can't figure you out!" Her voice was rising again and she wasn't making much of an effort to control it. "You used to be the dumbest professor, then one day you suddenly show up and you're the smartest? You used to be the biggest fucking loser, now you're head of the entire school?"

Well, whatever you did to get where you are, one thing has never changed in you and that is your complete lack of interest in anyone else except for yourself."

"Rosie-" I leaned forward.

She threw her napkin onto the table and stormed out of the restaurant.

"Hello sir, welcome to *The fi*-"

"No more fucking robots! I want to speak to your goddamn manager, NOW!" I snapped.

Out of the corner of my eye, I noticed an older gentleman slowly shaking his head while his fork pierced through the plate of printed pork he had been served.

"Sir, *I am* the manager. What is your complaint?"

The mass of metal looked down at me with emotionless, red eyes. Almost as mighty as my own, but not quite; for no creature's eyes were as mighty as mine.

"Nevermind, I don't have any."

"Excellent. Here is your food, sir." the manager stepped aside.

Our robot server from earlier was standing behind him balancing what looked like a king's feast on his arms. It slowly lowered the plates of food one by one onto the table in front of me while I watched its every movement like a hawk.

"Is there anything else I can do for you sir?" the server asked innocently.

"Yeah, you can go the read the liar's paradox. Then you can go read it again, and again, and again." I paused for a moment.

"And also, I'm going to need some boxes for takeout."

I closed the door quietly behind me.

Her beautiful figure was a black outline in the dusk, lit only by the soft glow emanating from a holographic copy of *Sex on The Beach* magazine.

"I'm an asshole, you're right. I don't respect you enough either, you're right about that too.

But don't ever sit across from me and tell me I don't love you, Rosie.

I have loved you since the first moment my eyes found themselves captured by yours and my love has not wavered since. A ruler deeper than the deepest trench and taller the tallest mountain cannot begin to describe the lengths I would go for you-"

"Shh!" she had put down the magazine and was standing an inch from my face; her right index finger was pressed softly against my lips. "I thought wives were the ones that talk too much, not husbands!"

And with those words she kissed me passionately, pulling me with her into the warm embrace of the soft bed.

The lights clicked on automatically as I strolled into the bathroom. The leftmost knob of the sink turned itself to the right gushing out the steaming water that I splashed on my face. I held my finger an inch from my eye and the brown contact lense popped off revealing my now grey pupil.

The third eye had made me blind in my right eye; I could no longer see without it.

I stared at myself in the mirror and began to ponder the same nagging question that consumed most of my nights nowadays.

"Was it all fake; an illusion; a figment of my imagination?

Was Rosie my wife because she truly loved me? Or did she really love the eye?

Was I the dean of the school because of my leadership skills? Or was the eye leading me?

Did my students truly admire my genius? Or did they revere the genius embedded within my little invention?

Had reality become an extension of my imagination? An extension that would disappear with the removal of a silly contact lense?"

Then I laughed to myself.

The answer to these questions didn't matter now - the third eye was a part of me forever. For better or for worse.

I popped the innocent looking supercomputer back onto my eyeball and walked out of the bathroom while the door held itself open, the sink magically stopped pouring and the lights turned themselves off.

I crawled back under the warm reprieve of the duvet, wrapping my arms around Rosie's cushy waist, rubbing my lips gently against her ivory cheek. Her lips curled upwards while her eyes remained shut.

I envied her. For, though she dreamt that night, my eyes remained open; my mind remained active, accompanied only by the endless stream of data from the third eye.

And, of course, the recurring thought of Amanda's kiss.