

The Next Step

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I bought myself “The Band” for my birthday. I’ve been tracking its development for years. The first attempt at the technology happened around twenty-ten. Now, nearly sixty years later the total technology package had been nearly perfected.

The Band is a thin piece of blue plastic with embedded electronics. It’s going to record my brain activity. Every sensation, every sight, every sound, every thought I have will be recorded and transmitted to a server where it will be dumped into what they call The B Node AI. Over the next few years, I’ll perform a series of mental exercises to help me remember as many of my past memories as possible. I’ll watch old videos, look at old pictures, read old posts from my media pages, and have conversations with friends and family to recount old events. This will allow the memories I had from before I put on The Band to be entered into the memory record.

The ultimate goal of The Band is physical immortality. When you have a clustered server, it exists on two or more nodes with one node being the primary or active node. If the primary node ever had a problem, functionality would transfer to the B node and no one using the server would be the wiser. In my case, my biological brain is the A node. My plan, along with everyone else who buys The Band, is that when I die, my consciousness will simply come online in The B Node AI.

It’ll know everything I know, act the way I act, think the way I think. Because I’m not great at mental math, despite the fact that I’ll be a computer, I’ll still be bad at mental math.

Anyway, I’ve got a plan. The Band is just the first part of that plan. After death, Band users have options. They could become AR (Augmented Reality) Avatars capable of walking around in the world, visible and able to interact with those with AR Cast devices. An AR Avatar would be intangible, though. A hologram. For those who could afford it, the company that produced The Band could download a person’s B Node AI into an analog. A human body replica. A robot.

The technology has made many great improvements over the years. The biggest hurdles are the battery and the appearance. It’s still not perfect. The best human analogs still looked not-quite-right and the batteries have to be charged constantly. I’m hopeful, though. I’ve watched the progress of the engineers for years. By the time I need to use my B Node, the analogs will be near perfect and the batteries might go days between charges. Even better, by that time the price may have come down far enough to be able to afford a decent model.

Whatever analog I can get my AI into will be the second part of my plan. I'll need an artificial body to participate in the space program. Biological beings fare poorly in outer space. It's fine for short trips, perhaps to Mars, but for long-term travel, a human body would wither and die long before it reached its destination.

I was a Marine when I was younger. By the time I retired I'd seen pretty much every place on Earth. Once I get into my analog, I want to visit all of the planets and moons in our solar system that won't destroy me. I want to climb the mountains of Ganymede, to watch the slow sunset on Pluto, to be one of the first people to set foot (even if it was a robotic one) on an exoplanet in another solar system.

March 2133

I was fading fast, surrounded by four generations of family. Thanks to improved medicine and nutrition, I was able to remain active and healthy into my hundreds. However, after a bad accident left me partially paralyzed, I decided one-hundred eleven years was long enough to cling to my flesh. My doctor gave me something to ease me into my next life.

I looked up at my children for the last time, then closed my eyes. A moment later, I opened them again. This time, I was in the corner of the room looking at the backs of my family. One by one they turned from the bed and welcomed me back. One by one I embraced my children and their children, thanking them for staying with me during my transition. I was no longer the old man in the bed. My analog was made to replicate the version of me that traveled the world while I was still a Marine.

I'd lived long enough that they'd had time to perfect the analogs. My body was completely lifelike and I'd rarely have to worry about my battery. There were passive charging stations in my home as well as some public places. I just need to be within twenty feet of a beacon for the charge to take. My batteries were good enough that even without a charging station I could go for weeks without a top-off.

I'd already missed the boat on being one of the first people to visit the various other planets and moons of our solar system. They did that years ago, already. They had even established a few analog colonies where they found valuable mineral resources. These resources helped to advance the technology by leaps and bounds over the last couple of decades.

Luckily for me, they still had plans to send people into deep space. They had sent out advanced probes years ago to gather better data to transmit back. I was keeping my fingers crossed that soon they would find a suitable exoplanet to attempt to visit. The death of my flesh triggered an auto-application to the space programs at half a dozen competing companies. My service as a Marine would ensure priority review.

There was one company, in particular, I wanted to join. They wanted to find an exoplanet in a Goldilocks zone. They had hundreds of thousands of frozen human embryos and the technology to birth them through artificial means. They wanted to be the first company to set up a true human colony around another star. I wanted to be one of the people to raise the first generation of humans on that planet. I

loved raising kids. Teaching them and watching them grow into adulthood was the most rewarding experience of my life. I want to be able to do that for many generations to come.

August 2144

They canceled my mission. Something's coming from our proposed trajectory. Our probe in that sector stopped reporting. A ship is an expensive piece of equipment. They don't want to risk sending us toward whatever it is that's coming. They'll be sending another probe instead. It's still pretty far out so we have time to collect more information.

May 2145

Our probe sent back images and intel. Whatever it is, it's big. It's moving at a fraction of the speed of light but it's decelerating. It won't be long before it arrives.

There's fierce competition in weaponized after-market analog upgrades. People are starting to freak out about the possibility of an alien invasion. Biological humans want the analog population to be conscripted into service because we're more durable than they are. True as that is, we don't want to die any more than they do. There's a lot of analogs who've never even held a gun before. If I had to pick a team, I'd gladly take an experience bio with a pair of brass balls over some posh analog any day of the week.

For now, I've resisted the temptation to get a bunch of weaponized upgrades. I don't want that to be who I am. Not if I don't have to be. Instead, I've decided to go another route. I've purchased a top-of-the-line sensory upgrade package. I can see in every direction with multi-spectrum filtering. My microphones have been upgraded as well. Not only can I hear with clarity out to great distance but it also functions as a sort of passive echo-location out to about thirty feet. If I clap my hands or stomp, the louder sound wave can extend it further.

October 2147

We've been losing the war since day one. We managed to capture one of their attack ships today. I was on the team that went in to pull out the pilot. It was already badly damaged when we went in. Despite the damage, it killed fourteen of the twenty of us who went in. It looked like a man at first but its

flesh was destroyed during the fight. Below the flesh was a robotic body. We took samples of the flesh. It seems to be made of the remains of humans it had previously killed. Somehow the robotic core has the ability to revive the flesh and integrate it with other scraps to create a disguise.

We have the alien robot in our lab now trying to figure out how it works.

January 2148

We cracked the software and figured out how to access the operating system. There were fail-safes in place, though. Once it realized we could get anything we wanted it wiped its own programming and fried some of the components. Luckily, we'd taken enough scans of it already. We know how to manufacture the parts we need to make it work again.

February 2148

We repaired the robot and we've been attempting to code an AI to operate the hardware but it looks like we've run out of time. They found our base and they're breaking in right now. It would take another month of round-the-clock coding to get the AI into a minimally functional state. In the absence of a better option, I volunteered to transfer my own AI core into the alien robot. It's the only way we'll get it up and running in time.

The tech tells me the procedure should be simple enough. He'll power me down, remove my core, and plug it into the interface they integrated into the alien's own central control core. When I boot up again, my consciousness will be in the alien.

Well, here goes nothing.