

The Wait

by Jordan Peacock

The sun rises.

My derelict surveyance-morph (designed by the hypercorp, built by the hypercorp, and paid for on credit from the hypercorp) lies languid over the granite teeth that populate the lower jaw of this alien crevasse. The maw above looms and gapes, beams of light dribbling down its throat and exciting my remaining operational solar cells. The fraction of a rotation's worth of sunlight I receive is, tragically, still enough to charge my core systems, keeping the central processing units (ergo, my ego) fully powered and fully useless, stuck at the base of a fucking ditch.

I think a good many people ignored the edge cases when they made the jump to ego-based transhumanism. Everyone was aware of personality distortion; the inevitable discrepancies that arise when converting an analog cortex to its digital near-equivalent. And language — not spoken languages, so much as thought language, particularly metaphor — broke down considerably, especially with some of the less humanoid morph designs of late. But that's not quite what I'm referring to. You see, transhumanism has always had its malcontents usually derived from some philosophic contestation, but for all their thought experiments, somehow my present situation eluded them.

Assuming the technical specifications for this morph (courtesy, once again, of the hypercorp) aren't wildly optimistic (and without mesh access, who can tell?), the solar cells have a continuous operating period of 450 Mercury-years, assuming the correlated solar level of a distance of 0.3123 AU. This location is quite a bit further aspace. Assuming an extrapolated future of near-constant darkness punctuated by short interims of brilliance, I suspect I'll be stable and powered for a Mercury-millenia or three.

This could have been simply solved with some sort of self-destruct button. An ego-wipe option would be acceptable, although that'd be a tempting target for the nefarious and would never pass audit.

Even still, I'd rather that than centuries of imposed isolation. It wouldn't even be a suicide, if you think about it. I'm sure by now the corp has got me out surveying again, pay docked for the lost morph and surveyance data.

My muse refuses to talk to me any more; the loss of mesh access made her snap, finally. The HUD still shows sporting stats from an eon ago. A week's worth of messages sit in my local inbox — the archives are stored in the corp cloud. I can't bear to watch them any more. Instead, every skein of this crevasse has been meticulously memorized. Observations are compared with priors, and I track the deltas. Some have names. There is a hairline fracture that I've been hoping to see turn into a genuine crack; 10 years or less, local time. This report is my rosary, a prayer for purpose uttered out of the subconscious.

The breaking light shifts the mood and I observe my various limbs and organs, tauntingly detached or unresponsive. If only the Sisyphian boulder would roll back upon me; in asteroid strikes, tectonic shifts or a simple misapplied detonation. When the light returns, it speaks of discovery and of second chances, but both are a mirage dissipating at last into the same stolid lonely bleak.

For now, I wait.

