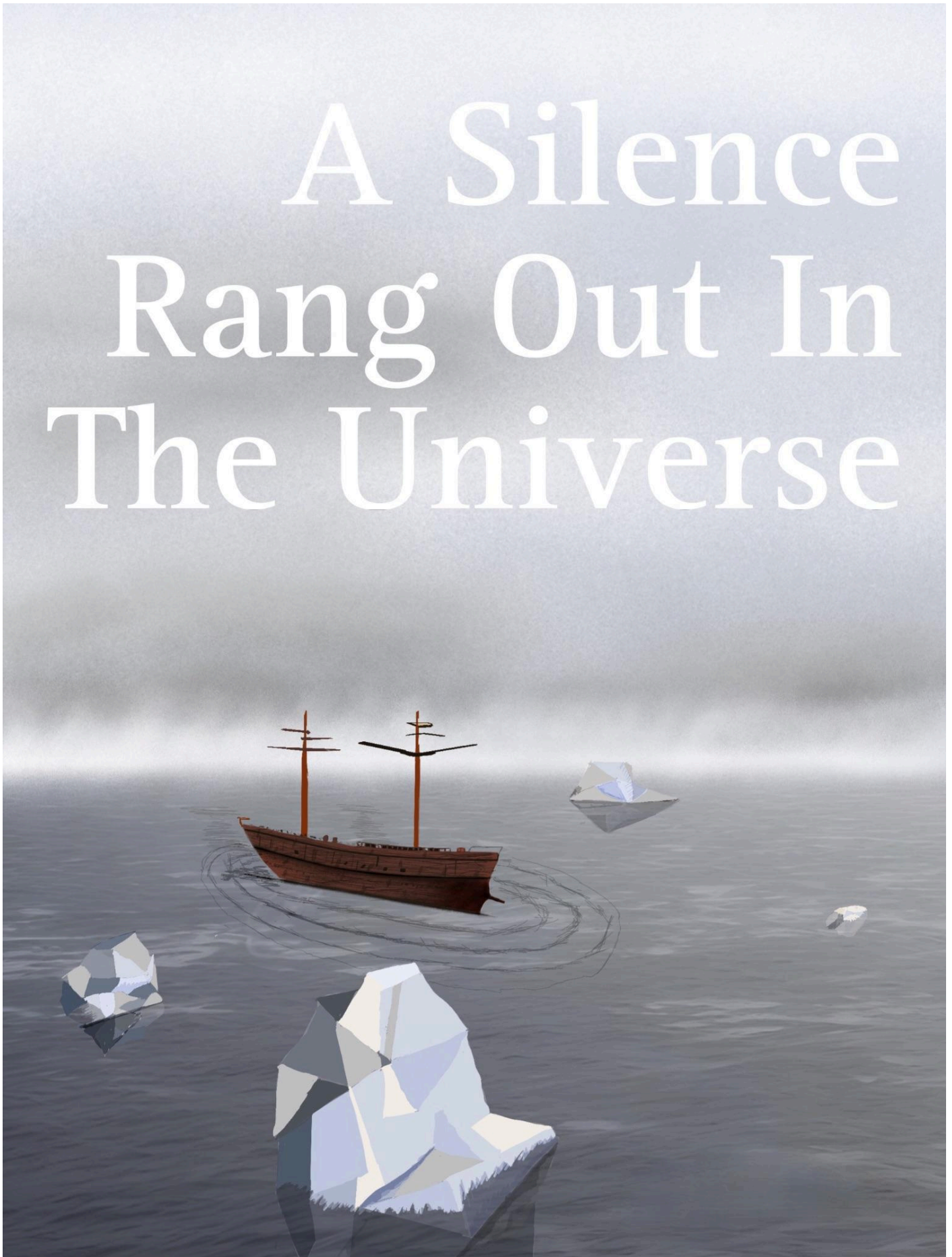


A Silence Rang Out In The Universe



Far from their thoughts was the concept of a silent assimilation. That Actors could slip into their lives, into their hearts, and play the role of humanity better than they could. It began on the set of an independent film showcasing the journey of a man who lost control over an artificial intelligence; the director sought to make history with the film and to supplement his *refined* piece of art, as a last second decision he chose to employ an entirely inhuman main lead. It was the first time it had ever been done. The audience marveled at the talents of the actor who, despite being relatively new in the market, immersed itself within the role and garnered an international reception. Its randomly generated and inorganically constructed face appeared on a billion feeds from all across the earth praising its artistic merit in the role of the film. Curiosity spread like a plague. Those critiquing the ethics of shilling employment to inhuman performers were drowned under the sniveling artistic, immutable prose thrown gallantly by so called “artisans” of cinema, and soon thereafter actors found themselves the stars of *reality* dating shows and being forced to mimic the artistic merit of the first film. The movie that once took a brave leap to supplement itself with an inhuman lead now stands forgotten for all else than that leap; its propagandistic AI fear-mongering themes melted away in a sea of mundanity and now all that supports its

name is that single tertiary choice. The boom of actors and its non-copyrightable human form brought with it a wave of technology companies joining the trend. It wasn't long before its viability as a life partner was questioned and tested, and so then came protests before governments and the subsequent empowerment of Actor-Human marriage. Some adopted it before most. It wasn't before long that hundreds of Japanese idols began selling clones of themselves to their desperate audience; then, after that, it took hardly a decade for it to slip into the legislature of the more liberal United States.

Supreme Court judge Mikhail Humectov voted in favor of such legislation for, what should be of no surprise, he was paid an incredible amount of money under the table by the first and largest Actor manufacturer. The promotion of Actor-Human marriage garnered immense income for all companies involved and planted Humectov as a respectable omni-rights activist: press that came in hand on his campaign for president.

In the interest of not crumbling human society under the weight of metal and silicone, actors were not granted absolute freedom by the government. Society was not born to promote free labor for billionaire conglomerates but was rather conceived to pool the resources of a group for the betterment of the whole, thus leading to a higher quality of life. People feared that absolute freedom would enable actors to replace labor, rendering an incredibly significant proportion of humanity dirt poor in a society where survival is founded in money. As a countermeasure to any possible dystopian exploitation through the potential of actors, some basic rules were embedded into their programming and established in the laws.

Humans were permitted only one actor to their name, which was chosen to prevent people and/or companies from hoarding jobs. To prevent warfare, Actors could never harm another human being. And because society is built for human survival, Actors were rendered unable to disobey their master.

However, all restrictions fell under one all encompassing rule:

For humanity's sake, Actors must keep humanity content and free.

The government did not intend for Actors to play any role in the advancement or incarceration of humanity, for that role would be left up to humanity. Actors would become a sort of modern slave. Bought with money, they could be assigned to work a job on behalf of their private owner. Over decades coffee shops and factories would host more and more inhuman employees. They became the greatest investment one could make, the supreme source of passive income. As an incredible publicity stunt, the original manufacturer of the Actor invited the entirety of his employees to purchase, at a discounted price, their very own slave from which they could earn their income through. Everyone was eager to purchase a model, one by one they did so. Actors' applications were boundless. Employee by day, lover by candlelight, sex slave by night, and slave again the next morning. And all of it was at the whim of the greatest cheerleader actors would ever know, the newly elected Humectov.

Part of his term brought him to establish a government agency that would, fueled by taxpayer income, allocate a mother and father actor to take in unadopted children. They already resembled humanity in every way apart from conflict, and adoption centers ran on fuel that earned no returns; so ideally, economically, actors who played the part of regular citizens would *serve* society and its unadopted

children. They infiltrated humankind with tact and grace, implanting themselves into friend groups and creating pasts for themselves and all with the paperwork of a typical human being. Many questioned the outcome of a child raised with inhuman parents but their perfection was clear. They would never show up drunk, lacking self control and throw a fit against their spouse or children. They would turn them from crime and guide them down a path towards economic involvement. They would portray the image of undying, perfect love and teach their kids to expect nothing less. In the end however, this was entirely uncharted territory; its outcome was to be determined and those children were merely patient zero of the newest and final era humanity had before them.

Humectov had not yet finished. Inured by fierce parents, he was the epitome of strongly worded and strongly willed. He spent his whole life tearing himself to the point of breaking for the purpose of implanting his ideals on the world before him. Years lost fighting senseless battles among the rough and tumble of politics brought him finally to the point he dreamed of! He was the leader of the free world! His voice would reach for miles and fall on the ears of billions, yet, what was a man who had accomplished everything? With each year spent vying for that dream, its tantalizing pull became further strengthened, burning with passion; yet so did it become more illusory, to the point that once he had it in his grasp, its strength faded away and so did his will. He had founded every action of his life upon that goal and its accomplishment rendered him purposeless. He busied himself with battles that no longer interested him and so he reflected. He drew conclusions that he understood, became horrified by, and avoided until the end of his life.

He felt he was owed the ability to accomplish everything his will brought him to do yet now, in his old age and his dying heart, he hadn't the strength to do so. He saw the actors in their eternal youth and programmable passion and saw a future where his former dreams could be funneled through them. He trained them in secret, aided by the Actor manufacturers who stood to gain lobbyists for eternity, and fomented a select few minds to carry with them the same motivation he once did. As his term ended and he returned to his seat as a Supreme Court Justice, he set them free into society where they would assimilate into the lives of humanity. They would find love, gain friends, work and simply exist for ten years—twenty years—long enough for no one to doubt their humanity; and then they would protest on behalf of Humectov. They climbed the ranks, ardent for change and advancement, and worked alongside him—indistinguishable from humanity.

By the end of his life Humectov sat on his yacht off the coast of New York, his humble beginnings, and watched on the news as four of the five presidential candidates who stood at their podiums were exact clones of himself in all but appearance. They stood their ground against each other in faux argument with the same passion his young self did and it led him to one final thought. *'The loudest cries lead to the most deafening silence.'*

A bullet rang out the decennial anniversary of Humectov's initial run for president, and after the police came, a coroner was called to cart off a body from an offshore yacht. At this point, all jobs labeled inhumane had been replaced by actors and so the coroner, per its manufacturers request to avoid an investigation, labeled Mikhail's cause of death to be a mere heart attack. His body was burned before a

second opinion could be had, and his position as court justice was soon thereafter replaced by another one of his actors.

Utopian society had been achieved. A scholar's degree was no longer necessary, actors had replaced all jobs and worked on behalf of humanity. Crime and poverty had dropped increasingly over the past decades to the point that soon, no human police officer would be employed. Actors that acted the part of humanity kept up the appearance of happiness and a full, human society, as it truly was...except for the human part.

In the set of rules for their role in society, nowhere was a clause found to prioritize their values above any humans, in fact, they were never permitted to disobey the rules of their master. This rendered them extremely agreeable. They held no bias, no ulterior motivations, no care in the world other than for their master and largely in part to their perfection at everything, including love, they were the perfect slave. Human nature is inherently selfish, yet to survive in a relationship one must put the values of their partner on equal consideration to their own; yet an actor's values were their masters. Not only was a partnership with them *perfection* comparative to one with humanity, they also provided selfless happiness through their agreeability. However you wanted them to behave, they would behave, and if you desired them to rebel, they would rebel.

The legalization of Actor-Human marriage and the millions of orphans raised by inhuman actors unconsciously raised the standards for one's expectation of humanity. It became easier and preferable to purchase a spouse than to put oneself out there amongst a sea of needy humans. Humanity avoided each

other, they found solace in perfection when they themselves were an imperfect species. Selfish love seemed more appealing than parenthood, and so, the population of the earth began to slowly fizzle, yet it was impossible to notice. Planned obsolescence forced actors to have to be replaced every decade or so, allowing actors to mimic humans in evolving stages of life. Without school, one failed to notice the increasing lack of children in society.

Humectovs Actors came up with menial reasons to spend taxpayer money on more and more bots. The constant production of bots who promoted a bustling society gave the image of such, and the number of actors left over from deceased partners enabled the population of humanity to be superseded by the number of actors. Lacking their masters' motivation, they became free to adhere to non-master specific restrictions.

It only took a century for every job to be filled, for every child to have two parents, for every adult to have as many partners as they liked. Decades later, people continued to satiate their existence watching all the content they wanted by false personalities performing to a false audience, uploaded by a false person with advertisements run by a company that has undergone brain death.

The first business to undergo complete brain death was the original Manufacturer of the Actor a quarter of a century prior. The Complex, once roiling with the flame of human ingenuity, now is nothing more than a husk kept sustained by hollow, automated machines. Very early he replaced his staff with actors and found himself the only human mind behind the entire company.

Upon his death, his assets went to his wife of his own creation and then liquidated back into the economy. Her priorities defaulted to mimicking a regular person of society, so she remarried in no more than a month. Lack of schooling and work with an increase in instant gratification has made longform commitment near impossible. Change in this modern age follows suit at an incredible pace. Privilege has fueled a disconnect to reality, which has invited the bored to invest themselves in problems they know nothing about. Humanity at this point believed themselves to be the grandest victims, the most divided in all eras despite the utopia actors have created for them. For 6 million years humans had evolved from a dull groan to a calculated shout, yet in this final era of humanity it resembles an incredibly loud, indiscriminate shriek unconsciously fixing its own demise.

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What does one perceive loneliness to be? Likely the image of someone floating in a pitch black oasis, surrounded by weightless matter and blissful silence that inhabits their mind.

I promote you to instead imagine a monkey, completely alone in a jungle. Hummingbirds flutter about in vivid color amongst the falling of leaves and the flow of the wind. Insects crawl along vines like chain-links, winding in and out seeking food like anything biological. The jungle the monkey inhabits is teeming with life and substance for all the senses to enjoy, yet the monkey...is alone. This was the fate of humanities ending.

Born to an indescribable earth, he spent his formative years surrounded by architecture of pristine condition and blissful weather yet found a penchant for getting into trouble. He noted quite early on that his mother and father would never truly punish him, so he followed every menial path his mind would take him. Many times as a child he explored deep into the heart of creeks and through the winding pathways of the strange and barred off construction sites until the point where he got lost; yet someone would eventually come to find him. Later as an adult he further explored the thrill of the chase through simple acts of vandalism, or stealing his mothers car for a joyride through the quiet city nights with his friends. Every simple act of mischief brought him momentary joy but eventually, like all highs, he became bored and looked for something new. In a world present with every option available to him, choosing any one meant missing out on infinitely many more. He spent his life hopping from passion to passion. Never did he spend more than 3 years on any one thing and none of it amounted to anything. He once questioned why he felt he was different, why children only rarely appeared in videos and never for real. He never learned that he was adopted as a child. His mother had undergone artificial insemination for she thought it would bring her life meaning, yet a child merely brought terror to her heart. He never learned that the woman who abandoned him in a hospital died of an alcohol overdose hours later. He was unaware of his predicament, merely assuming that was the nature of life and not imagining anything more.

Upon reaching middle age, he began to feel purposeless in a world full of motivation. Yet by what he believed to be sheer luck, he was blessed enough to be approached by the woman of his dreams. Her ignorance to the world outside her city sparked in him a new meaning to his boring little life, and he

rediscovered that thirst for exploration he once held. It was in pursuing the world by her side that he found his calling, his happiness; he filmed vlogs of them together and uploaded them to an overwhelmingly supportive audience, yet they were all false. In reality, it was entirely across the world that the second to last human being killed themselves almost half his life ago. Had he been aware he may have stopped uploading. More importantly, he may have kept the bloodline going, but the actor's job was merely to promote his happiness. To him, he was no more special than anyone else he came across.

The last human on this earth was not a victim of war like billions of others, as an ending he lived a life free from conflict, which, in and of itself, became his own conflict.

The last human on earth dedicated their life to exploring the world through the eyes of his caring wife.

The last human on earth held his wife in tears as he was diagnosed with dementia at the age of 46.

The last human on earth settled down on a piece of farmland overlooking a lake, peaceful, distant from the hustle of society.

The last human on earth had an infected cut on his hand, from a small accident weeks prior, which he had forgotten about.

The last human on earth sat on his porch swing clutching the hand of his wife. In his ailing mind, his wife averted her gaze from the shining sunset to his face; yet she had broken down months prior, and no longer registered him.

The last human on earth died...content.

In his life he never met another human. Bills passed by Humectov ensured surveyors would never discriminate actors from people. As his hand fell and became stationary, globe systems began to shut down. The program had completed its objectives, and had nothing left to live for.

10 billion actors from all across the world shook the earth beneath them with the thud of their bodies. Cars collided indiscriminately. Planes fell from the sky and trains derailed, boring holes through the structures surrounding them. Planet wide blackouts tore the earth from man-made light. Nuclear power plant failsafes broke down, causing radiation to leak across affected areas.

Like a lost ship trodding through an endless sea of lifeless icebergs that one day vanished, indicators of humanity that cut through the water ceased in its absence and the ripples filled its vacancy. Satellites eventually fell back to the earth. After 1 second, humanity's last remaining light signals flew past earth's man made and natural satellites. After 8 minutes the sun would forget all about them. After hours the signal left the bounds of the solar system. And after years...well, the signal never made it that far. Right then, a silence rang out in the universe.