

Through the Eyes of a Dead Man

The sky was unusually dark, absent of even the slightest hint of moonlight. Only a few clouds looming overhead glowed with a bluish iridescence from the neighboring light of Cleveland's metropolis. Outside of Wright's rented domicile, the light from the front room was seeping out around the edges of the window coverings.

Wright was seated at his primary computer workstation, methodically keying in a sequence of commands. Each sequence created a reaction of numerous windows and popup menus randomly appearing and disappearing on the computer screen in front of him. As his entries neared completion, the activity on the screen decreased. Finally, with a single keystroke, the screen resolved into four equal quadrants. Each containing a graph-like image with numerous buttons and entry points.

Turning to his left, he reached for the small black device and attached a thick interface cable. The device reacted instantly with a series of flashing numbers scrolling across the small glowing display. Looking towards the computer monitor again, he pressed a single key. A small window with the word, "**DOWNLOADING**" and a progress bar appeared in the center of the screen. The progress bar slowly filled as the information transferred from the device to the computer's hard drive.

Wright could feel the anticipation stirring within. He had waited three years for this moment and still had no idea what to expect. “This could answer so many questions,” he thought. “Then again, it’ll probably create many more.” Whatever the case might be, he knew it was only a matter of minutes before his suppositions could finally be addressed.

His eyes lit up as the progress bar was nearly filled. Finally, the computer made an audible beep indicating a successful download of the information. Wright paused for a moment to contemplate the impact of his accomplishment. Whatever he had recorded was now sitting on his hard drive. “My God,” he uttered. “I’ve actually done it!”

Tapping away at the keyboard once again, more urgently than before, he wore an enthusiastic grin. Numerical information began to flood the quadrants on the screen. As he continued to key in the crucial data, one by one, the quadrants resolved into graphical representations. Waveforms and visual static danced within the quadrants. There were obvious, discernable patterns within the data.

“I knew it,” he shouted with excitement. “I knew it!”

As he completed yet another sequence of entries, the four quadrants began individually compiling numerical data and flashing the message, “**PROCESSING.**” Notably, the activity within the quadrants decreased significantly. At this point, he realized the shear complexity of the data he had captured.

Reclining back in his chair, he prepared himself for a long wait as he stared rather blankly at the computer screen. He couldn’t help but to momentarily fantasize about the social notoriety that would ensue from his discovery.

As the minutes passed, each quadrant exhibited only minor changes in the overall completion of the compilation process. Rationally, Wright knew, considering the magnitude

and complexity of the information he was trying to extrapolate, a few hours was very reasonable. But his impetuous nature made the wait more agonizing.

He began to reflect on the previous week's events. Only a few days earlier he had been sitting in this very room making modifications to the device—a device that could potentially unlock one of life's greatest mysteries. Wright considered this prospect very exciting indeed, but also very frightening. The repetitive nightmares had left him with an unsettling sense of foreboding.

His thoughts then turned to the men who had nearly destroyed the device in their haphazard attempt to ascertain its capabilities. "What morons," Wright mused. However, his real anger was focused on the ringleader of his most recent woes. Bradford had been a thorn in his side from the very beginning, but within the last week, his devious activities had pushed Wright to his absolute limits.

Suddenly, a muffled sound began to emanate from the computer's speakers. It was indiscernible at first, but as Wright adjusted the volume, he was astonished by what he was hearing. Only slightly above a whisper, he could hear the single syllable of his own name.

He tapped on the keyboard a few times trying to establish that what he was hearing was actually coming from the recording. The waveform dancing on the screen left little doubt. The voice was part of the transmission.

A tingling chill shot up his spine. Tapping away rapidly at the keyboard once again, he watched each graph with perplexity. Focusing on the graph in the upper right-hand corner, he noticed a very faint image materializing within the quadrant. Pressing a single key, he expanded the quadrant to fill the entire screen and magnify the image. Still unable to

ascertain what it was, he drew his face closer to the screen, hoping to find a recognizable pattern.

He was ill prepared for the claws that emerged from the monitor. Composed of a luminescent static, they stretched out fluidly from the screen. As they pulled his head closer, a face morphed from the glass and drew within inches of his own. The face was composed of static as well, but the features were unmistakable. It was the same evil form that had plagued him in his last nightmare.

“I told you to *leave it alone*,” it hissed coarsely.

Wright was terrified, and could not find the strength to break free of its grasp. As if literally smelling his fear, it laughed insidiously and then proceeded to open its mouth to an unnatural state. The inside of its mouth was also composed of luminescent static, but the razor sharp teeth were unmistakably real. Completely engulfing Wright’s head within its mouth, it took one swift bite.

Wright fell backwards in his chair, striking his head on the hardwood floor. Only slightly fazed by the blow, he jumped up and screamed, “Damn it to hell!” Highly agitated, he panned from side to side and finally focused in on the computer monitor. The four quadrants were still quietly compiling the information.

Retreating to the bedroom, he decided to take a cold shower and prepare himself for a long night. The frigid water provided the necessary shock to his system and ultimately assured him that he was completely awake.

To further prepare for the evening’s events, he brewed a fresh pot of coffee and poured a steaming hot cup into an oversized mug. By the time he had finally returned to the computer screen another fifteen minutes had passed. Although

the data were still compiling, a significant amount of progress had been made since he had first started.

Observing the clock in the lower corner of his screen, he estimated that well over an hour and a half had past. Returning his chair to an upright position, he sat down and began slowly sipping his coffee. After a few minutes, he heard a very muffled sound coming from the speakers once again. He glanced around nervously at first, but had much greater confidence that this was not a dream.

Each quadrant on the screen illustrated a specific area of the human consciousness. In the upper left-hand corner, all audio related information such as hearing and vocalization were graphically displayed. Visual information was displayed in the upper right-hand corner and tactile and pain sensations were charted in the lower left. The remaining quadrant contained information about oral and olfactory stimulation.

Wright's attention was primarily focused on the audio quadrant. The sounds he was hearing this time were much less intelligible and seemed to be overlapping. He adjusted several values on the screen in an attempt to isolate the individual sounds.

Within a few minutes, the sounds were becoming clearer. They were obviously that of human voices. Wright could identify at least two or three, but there was something rather unusual about the voices. They all seemed to have an urgent intonation to them. Further isolating the individual vocals, Wright was beginning to discern a few random words.

He strained to hear something intelligible and then it finally happened. "*Come on peop—let's—him stabil—.*" The voice was unmistakable. Dr. Belcher's garbled words rang out through the speakers. Wright was listening to the events of only a few hours past.

Piece by piece, he reconstructed the events within his mind, trying to anticipate the action. The point at which the defibrillation occurred was approaching. He could clearly hear Belcher's demand for the paddles and turned his eyes to the lower left-hand quadrant. A small graph illustrating pain receptor input was fluctuating only slightly. The word, "Clear!" rang out and within moments the waveform on the graph shot off the scale. Wright winced in response. The pain must have been staggering.

Wright bowed his head recalling the events and thinking of his friend's grief as he watched his own father die before his very eyes. The reality of what he was hearing was becoming very disturbing. To witness John's death was difficult enough, but to experience an instant replay was simply unbearable. Yet, Wright knew that he had no choice but to continue. The most crucial part of the recording was approaching.

The pain receptor graph spiked several more times until finally the sound of the cardiograph beeping could be heard through the speakers. It was at this point that Wright noticed an increase in the activity of the visual quadrant.

Slightly nervous, he leaned back, distancing himself from the computer monitor. But the image was materializing much more rapidly this time and within moments a final image fixated on the screen. Wright's jaw dropped as he looked on in horror at the image. His own figure was centered within the frame just as he had been standing in the ER with monitor in hand, but to the left of him stood the image of a horrific apparition.

Wright nearly leapt out of his chair as the computer speakers emitted a single chime. The words, "**PROCESSING COMPLETE**" flashed in the center of each quadrant. Taking a

deep breath and finally exhaling, Wright leaned over to the keyboard, cursed it and violently struck a key, clearing the entire screen.