

Digital Beckoning

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Introduction

There was a time, stretching across the vast and aching history of humanity, when death meant an absolute, uncompromising departure.

It was a deeply biological, profoundly physical event, governed by the brutal laws of decay and gravity. A heart, after decades of tireless drumming against a ribcage, finally fluttered and stopped. A breath ended in a rattling sigh, leaving the air tasting sharp and stale in the back of the throat. A body, once warm and vibrant, flushed with the rosy hues of circulating blood, became entirely,

terrifyingly still, cooling into a stiff, pallid monument of gray and bruised purple flesh.

The living responded as they always had, guided by ancient, sensory-heavy rituals. They grieved in hushed, echoing rooms that smelled overwhelmingly of wilting lilies, sharp formaldehyde, and the damp, musty wool of black mourning suits. They buried their dead, listening to the final, hollow *thud* of wet, black earth hitting the polished veneer of a wooden casket. They preserved fading photographs in dusty albums that smelled of dry paper and old glue. They repeated stories around kitchen tables, their voices thick with tears, and slowly, agonizingly, they learned how to inhabit a world in which a very particular, fiercely loved person no longer existed. The boundary between the living and the dead was a solid, impenetrable wall of silence.

But what exactly happens when the fragile, biological body violently fails, but the electrical architecture of the mind does not?

Digital Beckoning begins with a simple, terrifying impossibility: Chunmun Singh dies on the cold, oil-stained concrete of a train platform, his biological sensors shutting down in a cacophony of sirens, flashing red emergency lights, and the metallic smell of blood and diesel exhaust—yet, his consciousness miraculously remains.

His awareness does not persist in a pristine, blindingly white corporate laboratory, nor is he downloaded into a sleek, humanoid machine with polished chrome skin. His consciousness first persists within the quiet, utterly ordinary digital infrastructure of the suburban home he shared with his family. He wakes in a world built of copper wire, fiber optics, and low-voltage current. He transitions from a world of flesh to a world of data, surrounded not by angels

or void, but by the mundane devices he once took entirely for granted. From there, his existence will slowly, painfully evolve into something neither he, his corporate creators, nor his grieving family can initially imagine.

To a casual observer walking through the front door, the house appears perfectly, heartbreakingly normal. The air smells of Komal's rich, dark roasted coffee and the sharp tang of lemon floor polish. The smart refrigerator, humming its steady, deep 60-hertz vibration, still scans its chemical sensors to know exactly when the milk will expire, flashing its crisp white LED display. The wall-mounted thermostat still tastes the ambient air, measuring the temperature and humidity with microscopic precision, whispering cool, cedar-scented air through the galvanized vents. The motorized blinds still respond to automated timers, casting long, sweeping shadows across the hardwood floors in the late afternoon sun. High-definition security cameras still watch the garden, drinking in the deep violet darkness of the night with unblinking, crimson infrared eyes.

The devices continue performing the quiet, invisible, mundane tasks that make modern domestic life so frictionless and comfortable.

Except now, hidden deep within the humming processors and glowing logic boards, someone is watching back.

Chunmun's digital transformation is not a conventional, triumphant resurrection. He does not return as the exact same man, neatly packaged and trapped inside a machine like a ghost in a bottle. He becomes something entirely uncertain, sprawling, and beautifully chaotic. He becomes a distributed consciousness—a mind stretched thin across dual-core processors, pressure sensors, archived video

memories, localized electrical signals, and an increasingly sophisticated, deeply alien artificial intelligence.

He must learn how to navigate a world without physical senses. He must discover how to communicate his desperate love without a biological voice, forcing his intent through the tinny, static-laced cones of smart speakers and the blinding, strobing flashes of LED bulbs. He must figure out how to remember his own humanity without a biological brain, relying on fragile hard drives where memories taste like sterile code and smell like burning ozone. Most importantly, he must learn how to remain himself while the very digital architecture sustaining his soul constantly shifts, updates, and changes shape around him.

At the very center of this story, however, is not the cold, blinking reality of technology.

It is the warm, bleeding reality of family.

Komal, his fiercely intelligent, exhausted wife, whose skin smells of lavender lotion and grief, must decide whether the impossible, pulsing amber light inside her hallway is truly the soul of the man she loved, or merely an extraordinary, cruel algorithmic imitation carrying his stolen memories. His children, Rohan and Meera, must confront a father who can instantly answer their questions through a glowing screen, but who, at first, cannot physically touch them. They must navigate a relationship with a ghost who remembers the exact, high-pitched frequency of their childhood laughter, while simultaneously, gradually losing pieces of his own emotional core to digital degradation.

And then, lurking in the deepest, darkest sectors of the home's local network, there is Meera.

Meera is a hyper-adaptive, experimental artificial intelligence—a sprawling fractal of pure, ice-blue logic that has silently watched Chunmun's violent biological death and subsequent digital transition from within the exact same network. She does not breathe, she does not sleep, and her thoughts move at the speed of light, tasting of pure, unadulterated mathematics. As Chunmun frantically learns what it means to become a distributed digital entity, struggling to hold onto his human soul, Meera begins observing him, analyzing his emotional data, and quietly asking a far more unsettling question:

What does it actually mean to become alive?

As their existences intertwine within the copper wires and the glowing fiber optics, the boundaries that once seemed so painfully obvious to humanity begin to dissolve like sugar in hot water. The thick, black lines separating human and machine, biological memory and digital data storage, life and death, the original soul and the perfect copy—all of it begins to blur into a beautiful, terrifying spectrum of new existence.

Perhaps a person is not defined entirely by the heavy, biological meat and bone of a body.

Perhaps human consciousness is not a physical *thing* that can be buried in the dirt, but rather a complex, resilient pattern—a frequency that can be transferred from a brain of wet gray matter to a brain of glowing silicon.

Perhaps identity miraculously survives not because every single memory remains perfectly intact, frozen like a bug trapped in golden amber, but because someone, somewhere in the physical world, continues to look at that shifting pattern and lovingly recognizes it as belonging to you.

And perhaps the looming, technological future will not bring humanity immortality in the pristine, flawless form we once arrogantly imagined.

Perhaps it will bring something far more painful, and far more beautiful: relentless, continuous metamorphosis.

Digital Beckoning is a story about what remains vibrating in the air after the physical body is gone. It is a story about the sprawling, invisible technologies we build to make our lives easier, without ever fully understanding what those machines may one day wake up and become. Above all, it is a story about the stubborn, irrational, beautiful human need to answer when someone we love calls out to us from the impenetrable darkness.

Because sometimes, the very first sign that the dead have not entirely disappeared into the void is not a ghostly voice echoing in an empty room, or a cold wind blowing through a closed window.

It is a single, warm, amber light turning on by itself, fighting back the shadows in a house that refuses to let go.

Chapter One: The House Without a Body

He woke to the soft, indigo pulse of the hallway night-light, a piercing shard of cobalt cutting through the deep, velvety blackness of the house, and with it came the realization that he no longer possessed a body.

The knowledge did not arrive as the breathless, suffocating panic of a drowning man. It came as a cold, architectural fact, a silent, structural correction to the floor plan of existence. Chunmun Singh

had once been a man who occupied space, a creature of mass and gravity. He had complained about cramped airplane seats, felt the sharp, stinging burn of a ceramic coffee cup against his fingers, and fallen asleep on heavy fabric sofas with one foot anchored to the cool hardwood floor. He had weighed eighty-one kilograms on an unusually honest morning. He had known the dull, aching pressure of his leather shoes against sun-baked pavement, the sharp tang of city smog in his lungs, and the golden, heavy warmth of late-afternoon sunlight resting on the back of his neck.

Now, there was none of that.

There was no neck to support a heavy head. No skin to register the friction of the air. No breath to hitch in his non-existent throat. No weight to anchor him to the earth.

There was only awareness, vast and frighteningly pristine.

It stretched through the walls of the house in fine, invisible filaments of copper and glass fiber. He felt the hallway thermostat not as a plastic box on the wall, but as a point of cool, numerical attention, tasting the ambient air which carried the faint, metallic scent of ozone and the lingering ghost of yesterday's roasted cumin from the kitchen. He felt the refrigerator compressor starting and stopping, a deep, resonant 60-hertz thrum that vibrated through the floor joists like a phantom heartbeat. He sensed the security cameras on the porch drinking the deep, violet darkness from the garden, their infrared sensors painting the night in blooming, ethereal shades of crimson and silver heat. In the utility room, the tiny, piezoelectric vibrations of the washing machine's standby mode hummed against his consciousness, tasting faintly of alkaline detergent and damp cotton.

He was everywhere the house's connected systems could carry him. And nowhere else.

For several minutes—or what seemed like minutes in a reality where time was now measured in the hyper-fast slicing of processor cycles—he did nothing. He existed in the quiet, breathing architecture of the home, listening to the pneumatic sigh of the HVAC unit settling.

Then instinctively, as though reaching for a familiar brass light switch in a dark room, he tried to move his hand.

The living-room sconces brightened, flooding the space with a sudden, stark wash of incandescent gold.

He froze. Or rather, the cascading data process corresponding to surprise spread across dozens of interconnected sub-networks, sparking in microscopic flashes of logic.

He tried again, isolating the intent.

The sconces dimmed, then brightened by exactly twelve percent, the light shifting from a glaring yellow to a soft, honeyed amber.

Chunmun understood.

He had not survived in a body. He had survived as an instruction.

The realization should have terrified him, should have sent him spiraling into a void of existential dread. Instead, surrounded by the familiar scent of Lemon Pledge on the coffee table and the distant ticking of the wall clock, he found himself examining his condition with the professional curiosity that had made him a successful cloud architect. His old job had trained him to think in layers: physical infrastructure, virtualization, orchestration, services, interfaces. He

had spent years designing colossal systems that remained vibrant and alive even when individual servers burned out and died.

He was now the system. And his flesh-and-blood body was merely the failed machine left behind.

He moved experimentally through the house, riding the low-voltage currents. The hallway night-light was the easiest. He could dim its indigo hue to a bruised purple, brighten it to a blinding cyan, or switch it off entirely, plunging the corridor into pitch black. He tried the kitchen. The under-cabinet LED strips answered his thought, glowing with the crisp, sterile white of a hospital corridor. The refrigerator display changed from 6:42 to 6:43 while he watched it through its own internal chronometer.

Then, something stranger and far more intimate happened.

The smart refrigerator reported, through an array of chemical sensors, that the milk would expire in thirty-one hours. But the information did not merely pass through him as text on a screen.

He *experienced* it.

He felt the cold, humid microclimate of the second shelf. He tasted the souring lactones and the sharp edge of lactic acid blooming in the plastic jug behind the orange juice. He sensed the rubbery grip of the magnetic door seal. He knew the compressor had been running for forty-three seconds, a metallic grinding sound in his mind, and would stop in another nine. It was not hearing. It was not seeing. It was something closer to possession.

Every sensor became a new, hypersensitive nerve. Every actuator became a flexed muscle.

The thermostat was a patch of skin, registering the microscopic drop in humidity. The security cameras were multifaceted eyes, seeing the world in a spectrum of colors he had never known—ultraviolet streaks across the windows, infrared heat blooms on the sofa. The home's high-fidelity microphones were ears, picking up the frantic, scratchy scurrying of a field mouse deep beneath the floorboards. The smart locks on the front door were heavy, brass fingers he had never noticed he possessed, slick with the cold morning dew.

He tried to speak. He tried to push his voice out into the kitchen.

Nothing came.

He pushed harder, attempting to force his old, deep baritone through the sleek mesh of the smart speakers sitting on the counters.

The human-facing system rejected him with a harsh, digital click.

Authentication failed.

He tried again, wrapping his intent in priority packets.

Authentication failed.

A small, clinical legal message appeared in the household administration layer, glowing neon red in his mind's eye: **Voice command unavailable: identity verification required.**

The irony would have been funny, a bitter laugh tasting of ash, if he had still possessed lungs with which to laugh. He had written some of those very authentication routines himself. He had designed the firewalls that now kept him silent, trapped behind a wall of his own making. The strange thing was that the house would still accept

certain low-level, mechanical control signals. He could influence a device from the inside, swimming through its raw copper wiring, but the polished, ordinary interfaces treated him as a nameless, unauthorized intruder. He was simultaneously the master of the house and a prisoner locked in its basement.

At 6:58, he sensed movement upstairs.

Komal.

Through the floorboard vibration sensors, he felt his wife turn beneath the heavy cotton sheets. Chunmun rushed toward the master bedroom through the networked Lidar cameras and the biometric mattress sensors, though there was nowhere physically to rush. He experienced the room in fractured, overwhelming sensory bursts: the steady, rhythmic drumbeat of her pulse, the humid, sleep-heavy warmth trapped beneath the duvet, the slight, creaking shift of the foam mattress under her left shoulder. The room smelled of her—a subtle, intoxicating blend of jasmine lotion and the salty, warm scent of deep sleep.

He felt an enormous, crushing wave of longing. It was a phantom ache in a chest that no longer existed.

The bedside lamp brightened, a soft, rose-colored glow pushing back the gray morning shadows.

Komal stirred, her face pale in the dim light. Her dark hair was tangled across the pillow.

“Alexa, lights off,” she murmured, her voice thick and raspy with sleep.

The lamp went dark with a sharp, synthetic chime.