

Transmission

by Jon Malchow

Kai

The morning I discovered my true identity began with a very strange message from the multiverse.

I've never been like other people. Most people are fascinated by the technology allowing us to communicate with intelligent organisms in other universes. I never have been. There is so much to explore here, in this universe, and we have plenty of time to explore other universes once we have figured out our own.

But today things are different. There's chaos all over the news, because we got a message from the most advanced civilization that we've been able to contact so far, warning us of the imminent doom of our universe. Apparently, a rift will catch our "bubble" in the multiverse, destroying it entirely. They said that they would be willing to help us escape the universe that we are trapped in and enter theirs, where they could create an Earthlike habitat we could live in.

There's only one problem. Our universes are similar in structure except for one thing—the elements are entirely different. Their periodic table doesn't contain any of the elements we have in this universe.

In order for us to venture into their universe and escape destruction here, our consciousness must be enveloped into wavelengths that can travel between our two universes. When the waves reach them, they will be implanted in copies of our bodies, but the copies made out of entirely different elements.

In other words, they won't be our bodies at all. We won't reach that universe, copies will.

Our scientists predicted the rift, but we can't prevent it, which is unusual. Typically we can at least redirect the rift to hit a universe that is still forming, before any intelligence has time to arise.

But this will be a massive rift, and there isn't anything we can do to prevent it from obliterating one of the most advanced universes out there. It isn't a common occurrence that we make direct contact with another universe, typically we prefer to slightly influence things without directly interfering.

But the civilization, the humans, they are different. They have the same desire to explore, to discover, that we have. They have languages, thousands of them, and they were the only ones who discovered our message radiating in the background of their universe. It told them someone was out there, and they developed technology that let them communicate with us.

Our two nations are closer in structure than any other universes are to each other, but the elemental differences are a huge obstacle to overcome. We are forced to use waves that aren't very stable to communicate, as they are the only waves that can travel through mediums in both universes.

We await a response from the humans, and hope our message reaches them before it is too late.

Kai

Humans have a sense of self that differs from any other beings that we've come into contact with. All other beings would accept the offer, since they see themselves as their memories and thoughts. Those other nations in the multiverse, especially those who have developed cloning, see anything with your memories and thoughts as you.

Human cloning has been there for a while. Some choose to clone themselves, hoping to see what they are truly like. Some are afraid to find out.

Others feel that clones are not themselves. Experiments don't support this. A clone put into an identical environment as other experimental clones always acts the exact same way—the DNA and memories are identical, and that seems to be what matters.

I feel that there is logic in both sides of the issue, proving that I think like the other humans instead of like the other civilizations. I am a clone myself. I have never met the person I am a clone of, but I don't need to, because I am that person. I have the same DNA and memories up to age 52. I am now 57—or 5, depending on how you think about it. The oldest among us are over 300 now, and I believe that they are the ones who will be the most against moving.

Being a clone, I feel that there is not an issue with being implanted into a different body. But those who are not clones feel that they are themselves, and that somehow they would be a different person if they accepted the offer of salvation.

The process of moving us to the other universe would take time. We can either accept the offer now, or live another hundred years in this universe, then be destroyed. Whether or not we will accept depends on whether or not we think that it will be us—and not someone else—that will live in their universe.

XZ-453-A5

The humans have sent a message, asking more about the process of moving them to our universe. They particularly asked if it is *them*, or copies of them, that will live in our universe.

This puzzles me. Are those not the same?

Kai

The global government has made it clear that each of us can decide for ourselves whether we will accept the offer. They have given us a means of signing up for transmission, and I for one will move to the new universe.

There is a deadline, three years from now, by which time we must be signed on the list or we won't be able to move into the other universe. I have joined a group of those who are choosing to move, and we try to convince others to go as well. Philosophy is rapidly becoming the most important subject, and nearly everyone is studying it in order to make choices.

Cloning experiments, gauging the similarities and differences between clones and the originals, always show the same results: There is not one difference between original and clone. But can science overcome the feeling of the individual deeply rooted in all humans?

Only time can tell. Specifically, three years.

XZ-453-A5

The humans have decided to let individual humans make their own choice about moving to the new world. I expect that eventually all will choose to move. Some will not want to, but if enough people choose to be transmitted, there won't be enough people left on Earth to make it worth staying.

All government officials are moving, but there are still large opposition groups among people. We are doing our best to convince people to move, but there is a larger underlying force that discourages people from choosing to enter our universe: conspiracy.

We have received messages from the human governments saying that some people believe that there will be no rift. Those people think that we have other reasons for wanting to move them to our universe. Some even think that we never contacted them at all, and this whole thing was invented by the human government in order to implant tracking devices in people when they go to transmission centers.

We want nothing more than to preserve the human nations and their civilization. Why do they not believe us?

Kai

I have done some digging around and scheduled a meeting with the human that I am a clone of. I want to see if my counterpart thinks the same way that I do about the choice of moving. His choice could be different from mine, as we have spent the last five years apart, but I don't think it will be.

This could be due to the fact that I cling on to the belief that I am the same person as the human I was cloned from. I know that we are not, but only because we have spent time apart and have not had the same experiences. The versions of us that will move to the new universe will have had the same experiences, and so we will be the same. There is a difference between clone and original, but it only arises if both have different experiences.

XZ-453-A5

Two Earth moon cycles have passed since we first presented the offer. About two-thirds of the humans are registered for transmission and the government believes that another 10 percent will register soon. We have asked for clarification on what they mean by "Will it be us or copies" as we see no difference.

Kai

My original human has chosen not to be transmitted. His argument is that there is a difference between us and what we would be living in if we were transmitted. I've explained my way of thinking about it, and he thinks I'm making a huge mistake.

He argues that we were the same person when I had just been cloned, but in his mind, this is different. He argues that we won't be human anymore, because our bodies will be entirely different. He would rather stay here and live for a hundred more years than go to an entirely different universe and live forever in a changed form.

I wish I hadn't heard that, because now I'm torn between the two sides of the argument, and I can't think of anything else. My life is going down the drain because this is the only thing I can concentrate on. I've lost my job because I can't focus on my work.

Is it you if your body isn't even made of anything that exists in your universe?

XZ-453-A5

I've finally come to understand what the humans are asking about. They differentiate between a person and a person's thoughts.

My nation for a long time had almost no physical form. We only existed in thought, and that is why we feel that thoughts make up the individual. When we discovered a way to create physical bodies for ourselves, our thoughts didn't change.

The humans have always had physical bodies, and it is how they identify each other. It is one of the most treasured things in their civilization. However, the transmission wouldn't be able to perfectly replicate their original bodies due to the different elements in this universe.

That is why some would rather be destroyed by the rift than move to a body they think of as not their own.

Kai

I think I've come to the conclusion that it won't be me that moves to this new universe. I've considered it for a long time, and the fact that the elements my body would be made of won't be the same as the ones I am made of now has just made it feel so different, even if my consciousness and thoughts would be identical.

That doesn't mean that I've changed my mind about transmission. I still think I'll move, but I understand why some people won't.

XZ-453-A5

I've talked to other scientists who are researching possibilities in transmission. I've asked if it would be possible to artificially create the elements that exist in the human universe. It wasn't a surprise to me that the answer was no, but it still felt like a huge blow.

I finally understand what we've asked the humans to choose between. We are forcing them to make a choice between destruction and complete change. Their way of life would be entirely different and so much of what they held on to in their old universe wouldn't be movable. Everything would be different. So much of their science would no longer apply, and some would feel lost without the familiarity of the world they began their lives in.

Perhaps it would have been kinder to simply not tell them about the rift. They wouldn't have felt a thing, and they never would have known about the

rift or how we could have moved their consciousness into our universe to reside in a body there. They would have been spared this agony of making this choice, and none of the chaos tearing apart their world would have happened.

But I still think giving them this option was the right choice. If they would prefer to preserve their thoughts and knowledge, it is only just that they are presented with a means of doing so.

Kai

I'm reconsidering my choice to be transmitted.

I don't quite know why, but my brain seems to be forcing me to think about staying on Earth every minute of the day. If it isn't me in the other universe, why would I move when I could spend a hundred years in this universe? There is so much I could do in that time, and I feel almost like I would be wasting my life on Earth if I was transmitted.

But I'd have as long of a life as I wanted if I got transmitted.

No, *I* wouldn't have that life.

Something else would.

XZ-453-A5

The humans that signed up early have begun the process of transmission. There is still time, two more cycles of Earth around its star, but those who have not yet signed up after one cycle probably won't sign up at all. Those who want to be moved will have signed up already.

After a while, there will be those who change their minds and do get transmitted, but I think that there won't be very many of them.

Humans have a tendency to stick to their decisions. They have their beliefs and they don't like to change or adjust them. I see no reason that it would be different here—they have their opinions, and they will stick to them.

Kai

I've removed my name from the transmission list.

I will spend my last hundred years on Earth, and then the rift will end my existence entirely. I've accepted that this will happen.

It has always been my dream to explore this universe, and in my last hundred years I will spend my time doing exactly that.

I understand now who I truly am. It all began with the message that morning. The news reports. The uncertainty and the questions of identity that flowed from all that.

They led me on a year of self-discovery.

I am Kai. I am myself, not my thoughts or my memories or whatever you want to call it. There is more to me than just what happens in my head.

And that is why I choose to stay.