

The Extra

Greg Egan

Daniel Gray didn't merely arrange for his Extras to live in a building within the grounds of his main residence - although that in itself would have been shocking enough. At the height of his midsummer garden party, he had their trainer march them along a winding path which took them within metres of virtually every one of his wealthy and powerful guests.

There were five batches, each batch a decade younger than the preceding one, each comprising twenty-five Extras (less one or two here and there; naturally, some depletion had occurred, and Gray made no effort to hide the fact). Batch A were forty-four years old, the same age as Gray himself. Batch E, the four-year-olds, could not have kept up with the others on foot, so they followed behind, riding an electric float.

The Extras were as clean as they'd ever been in their lives, and their hair - and beards in the case of the older ones - had been laboriously trimmed, in styles that amusingly parodied the latest fashions. Gray had almost gone so far as to have them clothed - but after much experimentation he'd decided against it; even the slightest scrap of clothing made them look too human, and he was acutely aware of the boundary between impressing his guests with his daring, and causing them real discomfort. Of course, naked, the Extras looked exactly like naked humans, but in Gray's cultural milieu, stark naked humans en masse were not a common sight, and so the paradoxical effect of revealing the creatures' totally human appearance was to make it easier to think of them as less than human.

The parade was a great success. Everyone applauded demurely as it passed by - in the context, an extravagant gesture of approval. They weren't applauding the Extras themselves, however impressive they were to behold; they were applauding Daniel Gray for his audacity in breaking the taboo.

Gray could only guess how many people in the world had Extras; perhaps the wealthiest ten thousand, perhaps the wealthiest hundred thousand. Most owners chose to be discreet. Keeping a stock of congenitally brain-damaged clones of oneself - in the short term, as organ donors; in the long term (once the techniques were perfected), as the recipients of brain transplants - was not illegal, but nor was it widely accepted. Any owner who went public could expect a barrage of anonymous hate mail, intense media scrutiny, property damage, threats of violence - all the usual behaviour associated with the public debate of a subtle point of ethics. There had been legal challenges, of course, but time and again the highest courts had ruled that Extras were not human beings. Too much cortex was missing; if Extras deserved human rights, so did half the mammalian species on the planet. With a patient, skilled trainer, Extras could learn to run in circles, and to perform the simple, repetitive exercises that kept their muscles in good tone, but that was about the limit. A dog or a cat would have needed brain tissue removed to persuade it to live such a boring life.

Even those few owners who braved the wrath of the fanatics, and bragged about their Extras, generally had them kept in commercial stables - in the same city, of course, so as not to undermine their usefulness in a medical emergency, but certainly not within the electrified boundaries of their own homes. What ageing, dissipated man or woman would wish to be surrounded by reminders of how healthy and vigorous they might have been, if only they'd lived their lives differently?

Daniel Gray, however, found the contrasting appearance of his Extras entirely pleasing to behold, given that he, and not they, would be the ultimate beneficiary of their good health. In fact, his athletic, clean-living brothers had already supplied him with two livers, one kidney, one lung, and quantities of coronary artery and mucous membrane. In each case, he'd had the donor put down, whether or not it had remained strictly viable; the idea of having imperfect Extras in his collection offended his aesthetic sensibilities.

After the appearance of the Extras, nobody at the party could talk about anything else. Perhaps, one stereovision luminary suggested, now that their host had shown such courage, it would at last become fashionable to flaunt one's Extras, allowing full value to be extracted from them; after all, considering the cost, it was a crime to make use of them only in emergencies, when their pretty bodies went beneath the surgeon's knife.

Gray wandered from group to group, listening contentedly, pausing now and then to pluck and eat a delicate spice-rose or a juicy claret-apple (the entire garden had been designed specifically to provide the refreshments for this annual occasion, so everything was edible, and everything was in season). The early afternoon sky was a dazzling, uplifting blue, and he stood for a moment with his face raised to the warmth of the sun. The party was a complete success. Everyone was talking about him. He hadn't felt so happy in years.

"I wonder if you're smiling for the same reason I am."

He turned. Sarah Brash, the owner of Continental Bio-Logic, and a recent former lover, stood beside him, beaming in a faintly unnatural way. She wore one of the patterned scarfs which Gray had made available to his guests; a variety of gene-tailored insects roamed the garden, and her particular choice of scarf attracted a bee whose painless sting contained a combination of a mild stimulant and an aphrodisiac.

He shrugged. "I doubt it."

She laughed and took his arm, then came still closer and whispered, "I've been thinking a very wicked thought."

He made no reply. He'd lost interest in Sarah a month ago, and the sight of her in this state did nothing to rekindle his desire. He had just broken off with her successor, but he had no wish to repeat himself. He was trying to think of something to say that would be offensive enough to drive her away, when she reached out and tenderly cupped his face in her small, warm hands.

Then she playfully seized hold of his sagging jowls, and said, in tones of mock aggrievement, "Don't you think it was terribly selfish of you, Daniel? You gave me your body . . . but you didn't give me your best one."

Gray lay awake until after dawn. Vivid images of the evening's entertainment kept returning to him, and he found them difficult to banish. The Extra Sarah had chosen - C7, one of the twenty-four-year-olds - had been muzzled and tightly bound throughout, but it had made copious noises in its throat, and its eyes had been remarkably expressive. Gray had learnt, years ago, to keep a mask of mild amusement and boredom on his face, whatever he was feeling; to see fear, confusion, distress and ecstasy, nakedly displayed on features that, in spite of everything, were unmistakably his own, had been rather like a nightmare of losing control.

Of course, it had also been as inconsequential as a nightmare; he had not lost control for a moment, however much his animal look-alike had rolled its eyes, and moaned, and trembled. His appetite for sexual novelty aside, perhaps he had agreed to Sarah's request for that very reason: to see this primitive aspect of himself unleashed, without the least risk to his own equilibrium.

He decided to have the creature put down in the morning; he didn't want it corrupting its clone-brothers, and he couldn't be bothered arranging to have it kept in isolation. Extras had their sex drives substantially lowered by drugs, but not completely eliminated - that would have had too many physiological side-effects - and Gray had heard that it took just one clone who had discovered the possibilities, to trigger widespread masturbation and homosexual behaviour throughout the batch. Most owners would not have cared, but Gray wanted his Extras to be more than merely healthy; he wanted them to be innocent, he wanted them to be without sin. He was not a religious man, but he could still appreciate the emotional power of such concepts. When the time came for his brain to be moved into a younger body, he wanted to begin his new life with a sense of purification, a sense of rebirth.

However sophisticated his amorality, Gray freely admitted that at a certain level, inaccessible to reason, his indulgent life sickened him, as surely as it sickened his body. His family and his peers had always, unequivocally, encouraged him to seek pleasure, but perhaps he had been influenced -

subconsciously and unwillingly - by ideas which still prevailed in other social strata. Since the late twentieth century, when - in affluent countries - cardiovascular disease and other "diseases of lifestyle" had become the major causes of death, the notion that health was a reward for virtue had acquired a level of acceptance unknown since the medieval plagues. A healthy lifestyle was not just pragmatic, it was righteous. A heart attack or a stroke, lung cancer or liver disease - not to mention AIDS - was clearly a punishment for some vice that the sufferer had chosen to pursue. Twenty-first century medicine had gradually weakened many of the causal links between lifestyle and life expectancy - and the advent of Extras would, for the very rich, soon sever them completely - but the outdated moral overtones persisted nonetheless.

In any case, however fervently Gray approved of his gluttonous, sedentary, drug-hazed, promiscuous life, a part of him felt guilty and unclean. He could not wipe out his past, nor did he wish to, but to discard his ravaged body and begin again in blameless flesh would be the perfect way to neutralise this irrational self-disgust. He would attend his own cremation, and watch his "sinful" corpse consigned to "hellfire"! Atheists, he decided, are not immune to religious metaphors; he had no doubt that the experience would be powerfully moving, liberating beyond belief.

Three months later, Sarah Brash's lawyers informed him that she had conceived a child (which, naturally, she'd had transferred to an Extra surrogate), and that she cordially requested that Gray provide her with fifteen billion dollars to assist with the child's upbringing.

His first reaction was a mixture of irritation and amusement at his own naivety. He should have suspected that there'd been more to Sarah's request than sheer perversity. Her wealth was comparable to his own, but the prospect of living for centuries seemed to have made the rich greedier than ever; a fortune that sufficed for seven or eight decades was no longer enough.

On principle, Gray instructed his lawyers to take the matter to court - and then he began trying to ascertain what his chances were of winning. He'd had a vasectomy years ago, and could produce records proving his infertility, at least on every occasion he'd had a sperm count measured. He couldn't prove that he hadn't had the operation temporarily reversed, since that could now be done with hardly a trace, but he knew perfectly well that the Extra was the father of the child, and he could prove that. Although the Extras' brain damage resulted solely from foetal microsurgery, rather than genetic alteration, all Extras were genetically tagged with a coded serial number, written into portions of DNA which had no active function, at over a thousand different sites. What's more, these tags were always on both chromosomes of each pair, so any child fathered by an Extra would necessarily inherit all of them. Gray's biotechnology advisers assured him that stripping these tags from the zygote was, in practice, virtually impossible.

Perhaps Sarah planned to freely admit that the Extra was the father, and hoped to set a precedent making its owner responsible for the upkeep of its human offspring. Gray's legal experts were substantially less reassuring than his geneticists. Gray could prove that the Extra hadn't raped her - as she no doubt knew, he'd taped everything that had happened that night - but that wasn't the point; after all, consenting to intercourse would not have deprived her of the right to an ordinary paternity suit. As the tapes also showed, Gray had known full well what was happening, and had clearly approved. That the late Extra had been unwilling was, unfortunately, irrelevant.

After wasting an entire week brooding over the matter, Gray finally gave up worrying. The case would not reach court for five or six years, and was unlikely to be resolved in less than a decade. He promptly had his remaining Extras vasectomised - to prove to the courts, when the time came, that he was not irresponsible - and then he pushed the whole business out of his mind.

Almost.

A few weeks later, he had a dream. Conscious all the while that he was dreaming, he saw the night's events re-enacted, except that this time it was he who was bound and muzzled, slave to Sarah's hands and tongue, while the Extra

stood back and watched.

But . . . had they merely swapped places, he wondered, or had they swapped bodies? His dreamer's point of view told him nothing - he saw all three bodies from the outside - but the lean young man who watched bore Gray's own characteristic jaded expression, and the middle-aged man in Sarah's embrace moaned and twitched and shuddered, exactly as the Extra had done.

Gray was elated. He still knew that he was only dreaming, but he couldn't suppress his delight at the inspired idea of keeping his old body alive with the Extra's brain, rather than consigning it to flames. What could be more controversial, more outrageous, than having not just his Extras, but his own discarded corpse, walking the grounds of his estate? He resolved at once to do this, to abandon his long-held desire for a symbolic cremation. His friends would be shocked into the purest admiration - as would the fanatics, in their own way. True infamy had proved elusive; people had talked about his last stunt for a week or two, and then forgotten it - but the midsummer party at which the guest of honour was Daniel Gray's old body would be remembered for the rest of his vastly prolonged life.

Over the next few years, the medical research division of Gray's vast corporate empire began to make significant progress on the brain transplant problem.

Transplants between newborn Extras had been successful for decades. With identical genes, and having just emerged from the very same womb (or from the anatomically and biochemically indistinguishable wombs of two clone-sister Extras), any differences between donor and recipient were small enough to be overcome by a young, flexible brain.

However, older Extras - even those raised identically - had shown remarkable divergences in many neural structures, and whole-brain transplants between them had been found to result in paralysis, sensory dysfunction, and sometimes even death. Gray was no neuroscientist, but he could understand roughly what the problem was: Brain and body grow and change together throughout life, becoming increasingly reliant on each other's idiosyncrasies, in a feed-back process riddled with chaotic attractors - hence the unavoidable differences, even between clones. In the body of a human (or an Extra), there are thousands of sophisticated control systems which may include the brain, but are certainly not contained within it, involving everything from the spinal cord and the peripheral nervous system, to hormonal feedback loops, the immune system, and, ultimately, almost every organ in the body. Over time, all of these elements adapt in some degree to the particular demands placed upon them - and the brain grows to rely upon the specific characteristics that these external systems acquire. A brain transplant throws this complex interdependence into disarray - at least as badly as a massive stroke, or an extreme somatic trauma.

Sometimes, two or three years of extensive physiotherapy could enable the transplanted brain and body to adjust to each other - but only between clones of equal age and indistinguishable lifestyles. When the brain donor was a model of a likely human candidate - an intentionally overfed, under-exercised, drug-wrecked Extra, twenty or thirty years older than the body donor - the result was always death or coma.

The theoretical solution, if not the detailed means of achieving it, was obvious. Those portions of the brain responsible for motor control, the endocrine system, the low-level processing of sensory data, and so on, had to be retained in the body in which they had matured. Why struggle to make the donor brain adjust to the specifics of a new body, when that body's original brain already contained neural systems fine-tuned to perfection for the task? If the aim was to transplant memory and personality, why transplant anything else?

After many years of careful brain-function mapping, and the identification and synthesis of growth factors which could trigger mature neurons into sending forth axons across the boundaries of a graft, Gray's own team had been the first to try partial transplants. Gray watched tapes of the operations, and was both repelled and amused to see oddly shaped lumps of one Extra's brain being exchanged with the corresponding regions of another's; repelled by visceral instinct, but amused to see the seat of reason - even in a mere Extra - being treated like so much vegetable matter.

The forty-seventh partial transplant, between a sedentary, ailing fifty-year-old, and a fit, healthy twenty-year-old, was an unqualified success. After a mere two months of recuperation, both Extras were fully mobile, with all five senses completely unimpaired.

Had they swapped memories and "personalities"? Apparently, yes. Both had been observed by a team of psychologists for a year before the operation, and their behaviour extensively characterised, and both had been trained to perform different sets of tasks for rewards. After the selective brain swap, the learned tasks, and the observed behavioural idiosyncrasies, were found to have followed the transplanted tissue. Of course, eventually the younger, fitter Extra began to be affected by its newfound health, becoming substantially more active than it had been in its original body - and the Extra now in the older body soon showed signs of acquiescing to its ill-health. But regardless of any post-transplant adaptation to their new bodies, the fact remained that the Extras' identities - such as they were - had been exchanged.

After a few dozen more Extra-Extra transplants, with virtually identical outcomes, the time came for the first human-Extra trials.

Gray's parents had both died years before (on the operating table - an almost inevitable outcome of their hundreds of non-essential transplants), but they had left him a valuable legacy; thirty years ago, their own scientists had (illegally) signed up fifty men and women in their early twenties, and Extras had been made for them. These volunteers had been well paid, but not so well paid that a far larger sum, withheld until after the actual transplant, would lose its appeal. Nobody had been coerced, and the seventeen who'd dropped out quietly had not been punished. An eighteenth had tried blackmail - even though she'd had no idea who was doing the experiment, let alone who was financing it - and had died in a tragic ferry disaster, along with three hundred and nine other people. Gray's people believed in assassinations with a low signal-to-noise ratio.

Of the thirty-two human-Extra transplants, twenty-nine were pronounced completely successful. As with the Extra-Extra trials, both bodies were soon fully functional, but now the humans in the younger bodies could - after a month or two of speech therapy - respond to detailed interrogation by experts, who declared that their memories and personalities were intact.

Gray wanted to speak to the volunteers in person, but knew that was too risky, so he contented himself with watching tapes of the interviews. The psychologists had their barrages of supposedly rigorous tests, but Gray preferred to listen to the less formal segments, when the volunteers spoke of their life histories, their political and religious beliefs, and so on - displaying at least as much consistency across the transplant as any person who is asked to discuss such matters on two separate occasions.

The three failures were difficult to characterise. They too learnt to use their new bodies, to walk and talk as proficiently as the others, but they were depressed, withdrawn, and uncooperative. No physical difference could be found - scans showed that their grafted tissue, and the residual portions of their Extra's brain, had forged just as many interconnecting pathways as the brains of the other volunteers. They seemed to be unhappy with a perfectly successful result - they seemed to have simply decided that they didn't want younger bodies, after all.

Gray was unconcerned; if these people were disposed to be ungrateful for their good fortune, that was a character defect that he knew he did not share. He would be utterly delighted to have a fresh young body to enjoy for a while - before setting out to wreck it, in the knowledge that, in a decade's time, he could take his pick from the next batch of Extras and start the whole process again.

There were "failures" amongst the Extras as well, but that was hardly surprising - the creatures had no way of even beginning to comprehend what had happened to them. Symptoms ranged from loss of appetite to extreme, uncontrollable violence; one Extra had even managed to batter itself to death on a concrete floor, before it could be tranquillised. Gray hoped his own Extra

would turn out to be well-behaved - he wanted his old body to be clearly sub-human, but not utterly berserk - but it was not a critical factor, and he decided against diverting resources towards the problem. After all, it was the fate of his brain in the Extra's body that was absolutely crucial; success with the other half of the swap would be an entertaining bonus, but if it wasn't achieved, well, he could always revert to cremation.

Gray scheduled and cancelled his transplant a dozen times. He was not in urgent need by any means - there was nothing currently wrong with him that required a single new organ, let alone an entire new body - but he desperately wanted to be first. The penniless volunteers didn't count - and that was why he hesitated: trials on humans from those lower social classes struck him as not much more reassuring than trials on Extras. Who was to say that a process that left a rough-hewn, culturally deficient personality intact, would preserve his own refined, complex sensibilities? Therein lay the dilemma: he would only feel safe if he knew that an equal - a rival - had undergone a transplant before him, in which case he would be deprived of all the glory of being a path-breaker. Vanity fought cowardice; it was a battle of titans.

It was the approach of Sarah Brash's court case that finally pushed him into making a decision. He didn't much care how the case itself went; the real battle would be for the best publicity; the media would determine who won and who lost, whatever the jury decided. As things stood, he looked like a naive fool, an easily manipulated voyeur, while Sarah came across as a smart operator. She'd shown initiative; he'd just let himself (or rather, his Extra) get screwed. He needed an edge, he needed a gimmick - something that would overshadow her petty scheming. If he swapped bodies with an Extra in time for the trial - becoming, officially, the first human to do so - nobody would waste time covering the obscure details of Sarah's side of the case. His mere presence in court would be a matter of planet-wide controversy; the legal definition of identity was still based on DNA fingerprinting and retinal patterns, with some clumsy exceptions thrown in to allow for gene therapy and retina transplants. The laws would soon be changed - he was arranging it - but as things stood, the subpoena would apply to his old body. He could just imagine sitting in the public gallery, unrecognised, while Sarah's lawyer tried to cross-examine the quivering, confused, wild-eyed Extra that his discarded "corpse" had become! Quite possibly he, or his lawyers, would end up being charged with contempt of court, but it would be worth it for the spectacle.

So, Gray inspected Batch D, which were now just over nineteen years old. They regarded him with their usual idiotic, friendly expression. He wondered, not for the first time, if any of the Extras ever realised that he was their clone-brother, too. They never seemed to respond to him any differently than they did to other humans - and yet a fraction of a gram of foetal brain tissue was all that had kept him from being one of them. Even Batch A, his "contemporaries", showed no sign of recognition. If he had stripped naked and mimicked their grunting sounds, would they have accepted him as an equal? He'd never felt inclined to find out; Extra "anthropology" was hardly something he wished to encourage, let alone participate in. But he decided he would return to visit Batch D in his new body; it would certainly be amusing to see just what they made of a clone-brother who vanished, then came back three months later with speech and clothes.

The clones were all in perfect health, and virtually indistinguishable. He finally chose one at random. The trainer examined the tattoo on the sole of its foot, and said, "D12, sir."

Gray nodded, and walked away.

He spent the week before the transplant in a state of constant agitation. He knew exactly which drugs would have prevented this, but the medical team had advised him to stay clean, and he was too afraid to disobey them.

He watched D12 for hours, trying to distract himself with the supposedly thrilling knowledge that those clear eyes, that smooth skin, those taut muscles, would soon be his. The only trouble was, this began to seem a rather paltry reward for the risk he would be taking. Knowing all his life that this day would come, he'd learnt not to care at all what he looked like; by now, he was so used

to his own appearance that he wasn't sure he especially wanted to be lean and muscular and rosy-cheeked. After all, if that really had been his fondest wish, he could have achieved it in other ways; some quite effective pharmaceuticals and tailored viruses had existed for decades, but he had chosen not to use them. He had enjoyed looking the part of the dissolute billionaire, and his wealth had brought him more sexual partners than his new body would ever attract through its own merits. In short, he neither wanted nor needed to change his appearance at all.

So, in the end it came down to longevity, and the hope of immortality. As his parents had proved, any transplant involved a small but finite risk. A whole new body every ten or twenty years was surely a far safer bet than replacing individual organs at an increasing rate, for diminishing returns. And a whole new body now, long before he needed it, made far more sense than waiting until he was so frail that a small overdose of anaesthetic could finish him off.

When the day arrived, Gray thought he was, finally, prepared. The chief surgeon asked him if he wished to proceed; he could have said no, and she would not have blinked - not one his employees would have dared to betray the least irritation, had he cancelled their laborious preparations a thousand times.

But he didn't say no.

As the cool spray of the anaesthetic touched his skin, he suffered a moment of absolute panic. They were going to cut up his brain. Not the brain of a grunting, drooling Extra, not the brain of some ignorant slum-dweller, but his brain, full of memories of great music and literature and art, full of moments of joy and insight from the finest psychotropic drugs, full of ambitions that, given time, might change the course of civilisation.

He tried to visualise one of his favourite paintings, to provide an image he could dwell upon, a memory that would prove that the essential Daniel Gray had survived the transplant. That Van Gogh he'd bought last year. But he couldn't recall the name of it, let alone what it looked like. He closed his eyes and drifted helplessly into darkness.

When he awoke, he was numb all over, and unable to move or make a sound, but he could see. Poorly, at first, but over a period that might have been hours, or might have been days - punctuated as it was with stretches of enervating, dreamless sleep - he was able to identify his surroundings. A white ceiling, a white wall, a glimpse of some kind of electronic device in the corner of one eye; the upper section of the bed must have been tilted, mercifully keeping his gaze from being strictly vertical. But he couldn't move his head, or his eyes, he couldn't even close his eyelids, so he quickly lost interest in the view. The light never seemed to change, so sleep was his only relief from the monotony. After a while, he began to wonder if in fact he had woken many times, before he had been able to see, but had experienced nothing to mark the occasions in his memory.

Later he could hear, too, although there wasn't much to be heard; people came and went, and spoke softly, but not, so far as he could tell, to him; in any case, their words made no sense. He was too lethargic to care about the people, or to fret about his situation. In time he would be taught to use his new body fully, but if the experts wanted him to rest right now, he was happy to oblige.

When the physiotherapists first set to work, he felt utterly helpless and humiliated. They made his limbs twitch with electrodes, while he had no control, no say at all in what his body did. Eventually, he began to receive sensations from his limbs, and he could at least feel what was going on, but since his head just lolled there, he couldn't watch what they were doing to him, and they made no effort to explain anything. Perhaps they thought he was still deaf and blind, perhaps his sight and hearing at this early stage were freak effects that had not been envisaged. Before the operation, the schedule for his recovery had been explained to him in great detail, but his memory of it was hazy now. He told himself to be patient.

When, at last, one arm came under his control, he raised it, with great effort, into his field of view.

It was his arm, his old arm - not the Extra's.

He tried to emit a wail of despair, but nothing came out.

Something must have gone wrong, late in the operation, forcing them to cancel the transplant after they had cut up his brain. Perhaps the Extra's life-support machine had failed; it seemed unbelievable, but it wasn't impossible - as his parents' deaths had proved, there was always a risk. He suddenly felt unbearably tired. He now faced the prospect of spending months merely to regain the use of his very own body; for all he knew, the newly forged pathways across the wounds in his brain might require as much time to become completely functional as they would have if the transplant had gone ahead.

For several days, he was angry and depressed. He tried to express his rage to the nurses and physiotherapists, but all he could do was twitch and grimace - he couldn't speak, he couldn't even gesture - and they paid no attention. How could his people have been so incompetent? How could they put him through months of trauma and humiliation, with nothing to look forward to but ending up exactly where he'd started?

But when he'd calmed down, he told himself that his doctors weren't incompetent at all; in fact, he knew they were the best in the world. Whatever had gone wrong must have been completely beyond their control. He decided to adopt a positive attitude to the situation; after all, he was lucky: the malfunction might have killed him, instead of the Extra. He was alive, he was in the care of experts, and what was three months in bed to the immortal he would still, eventually, become? This failure would make his ultimate success all the more of a triumph - personally, he could have done without the set-back, but the media would lap it up.

The physiotherapy continued. His sense of touch, and then his motor control, was restored to more and more of his body, until, although weak and uncoordinated, he felt without a doubt that this body was his. To experience familiar aches and twinges was a relief, more than a disappointment, and several times he found himself close to tears, overcome with mawkish sentiment at the joy of regaining what he had lost, imperfect as it was. On these occasions, he swore he would never try the transplant again; he would be faithful to his own body, in sickness and in health. Only by methodically reminding himself of all his reasons for proceeding in the first place, could he put this foolishness aside.

Once he had control of the muscles of his vocal cords, he began to grow impatient for the speech therapists to start work. His hearing, as such, seemed to be fine, but he could still make no sense of the words of the people around him, and he could only assume that the connections between the parts of his brain responsible for understanding speech, and the parts which carried out the lower-level processing of sound, were yet to be refined by whatever ingenious regime the neurologists had devised. He only wished they'd start soon; he was sick of this isolation.

One day, he had a visitor - the first person he'd seen since the operation who was not a health professional clad in white. The visitor was a young man, dressed in brightly coloured pyjamas, and travelling in a wheelchair.

By now, Gray could turn his head. He watched the young man approaching, surrounded by a retinue of obsequious doctors. Gray recognised the doctors; every member of the transplant team was there, and they were all smiling proudly, and nodding ceaselessly. Gray wondered why they had taken so long to appear; until now, he'd presumed that they were waiting until he was able to fully comprehend the explanation of their failure, but he suddenly realised how absurd that was - how could they have left him to make his own guesses? It was outrageous! It was true that speech, and no doubt writing too, meant nothing to him, but surely they could have devised some method of communication! And why did they look so pleased, when they ought to have been abject?

Then Gray realised that the man in the wheelchair was the Extra, D12. And yet he spoke. And when he spoke, the doctors shook with sycophantic laughter.

The Extra brought the wheelchair right up to the bed, and spent several seconds staring into Gray's face. Gray stared back; obviously he was dreaming, or hallucinating. The Extra's expression hovered between boredom and mild amusement, just as it had in the dream he'd had all those years ago.

The Extra turned to go. Gray felt a convulsion pass through his body. Of course he was dreaming. What other explanation could there be?

Unless the transplant had gone ahead, after all.

Unless the remnants of his brain in this body retained enough of his memory and personality to make him believe that he, too, was Daniel Gray. Unless the brain function studies that had localised identity had been correct, but incomplete - unless the processes that constituted human self-awareness were redundantly duplicated in the most primitive parts of the brain.

In which case, there were now two Daniel Grays.

One had everything: The power of speech. Money. Influence. Ten thousand servants. And now, at last, immaculate health.

And the other? He had one thing only.

The knowledge of his helplessness.

It was, he had to admit, a glorious afternoon. The sky was cloudless, the air was warm, and the clipped grass beneath his feet was soft but dry.

He had given up trying to communicate his plight to the people around him. He knew he would never master speech, and he couldn't even manage to convey meaning in his gestures - the necessary modes of thought were simply no longer available to him, and he could no more plan and execute a simple piece of mime than he could solve the latest problems in grand unified field theory. For a while he had simply thrown tantrums - refusing to eat, refusing to cooperate. Then he had recalled his own plans for his old body, in the event of such recalcitrance. Cremation. And realised that, in spite of everything, he didn't want to die.

He acknowledged, vaguely, that in a sense he really wasn't Daniel Gray, but a new person entirely, a composite of Gray and the Extra D12 - but this was no comfort to him, whoever, whatever, he was. All his memories told him he was Daniel Gray; he had none from the life of D12, in an ironic confirmation of his long-held belief in human superiority over Extras. Should he be happy that he'd also proved - if there'd ever been any doubt - that human consciousness was the most physical of things, a spongy grey mess that could be cut up like a starfish, and survive in two separate parts? Should he be happy that the other Daniel Gray - without a doubt, the more complete Daniel Gray - had achieved his lifelong ambition?

The trainer yanked on his collar.

Meekly, he stepped onto the path.

The lush garden was crowded like never before - this was indeed the party of the decade - and as he came into sight, the guests began to applaud, and even to cheer.

He might have raised his arms in acknowledgement, but the thought did not occur to him.

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