

Postsingular Outtakes

by Rudy Rucker

*Story Copyright (C) 2007, Rudy Rucker.
Images Copyright (C) 2007, Rudy Rucker.
3,200 Words.*

1: The Singularity. The Singularity happened when, encouraged by his business backers, President Dick Dibbs sent an eggcase of nants to Mars. Nants were self-reproducing nanomachines: solar-powered, networked, capable of gnatlike flight, and single-mindedly focused on transforming all available material into more nants. In a couple of years, the nants had eaten Mars, turning the red planet into a Dyson sphere of a duodecillion nanomachines, a three-millimeter-thick shell half a billion kilometers across, with Earth and the Sun trapped inside.

The stars were hidden by giant ads; in daytime the ads were a silvery background to the sky. Dibbs's backers were well-pleased. And behind the scenes the nant swarm was solving a number of intractable problems in computer science, mathematical physics, and process design; these results were privily beamed to the nants' parent corporation, Nantel. But before Nantel could profit from the discoveries, the nants set to work chewing up Earth.

At the last possible moment, a disaffected Nantel engineer named Ond Bergman managed to throw the nants into reverse gear. The nants restored the sections of Earth they'd already eaten, reassembled Mars, and returned to their original eggcase—which was blessedly vaporized by a well-aimed Martian nuclear blast, courtesy of the Chinese Space Agency.

Public fury over Earth's near-demolition was such that President Dibbs and his Vice President were impeached, convicted of treason, and executed by lethal injection. But Nantel fared better. Although three high-ranking execs were put to sleep like the President, the company itself entered bankruptcy to duck the lawsuits—and re-emerged as ExaExa, with the corporate motto, "Putting People First—Building Gaia's Mind."

For a while there it seemed as if humanity had nipped the Singularity in the bud. But then came the orphids.

2: Lureen Does Luty. Thanks to the orphidnet, she could see the insides of all the neighbors' houses. She'd always wondered about that Lureen Morales in the mansion at the very top of the hill. Lureen was famous for her coarse sex-vlog, *Caliente*. She'd even slept with the former Nantel CEO Jeff Luty before he'd dropped out of sight: Luty with his crooked smeary-lensed glasses, his greasy ponytail, his thick lips chapped by his nervous tic of licking them every few seconds. Luty was so germ-phobic he'd put a latex

sheet over Lureen's mouth before kissing her. And when they were done, he'd presented her with a boxed and mounted giant beetle. The tape of the absurd encounter was an underground classic.

3: Heavenly Version of Mirrorbrane. She was in the Mirrorbrane, with Chu and Ond beside her, floating amidst gauzy white mist. Yes, the place looked like heaven, with mounds and castles of clouds and pyramidal rays of light, but the three of them were the only angels here. Had they died? Where were the Mirrorbraners? And where was Bixie?

Over and over Jil called her daughter's name until finally —

"I'm right here," came the sweet voice from a cute, puffy cloud directly overhead. A moan of relief escaped Jil; she stretched up her arms and Bixie dropped into her arms, nearly knocking her down.

"It's fun here," said Bixie, leaning against Jil's shoulder, her arm around Jil's waist. "I can fly. I'm glad you came, Mom. I was lonely."

"I want to take you home now," said Jil, hoping this were possible. The orchids on Jil's skin were inactive, if they were still present at all. Certainly the links to Earth's orchidnet weren't working here. So how would she access that magic blue spaghetti code?

Anxiously Jil regarded Ond and Chu. They were peering down through a hole in the clouds at a landscape not all that far below them.

"Hi, Bixie," said Chu, glancing over at them. He favored Bixie with one of his rare smiles.

"Can we go back?" Jil asked Chu.

"Probably," said Chu. "I know the code by heart now. I simplified it. The blue spaghetti pattern was just a special kind of knot." He rummaged in his pants pocket and found a piece of string. "I can make the knot. It'll take a minute."

Leaning over the gap in the clouds, Jil saw a town something like San Francisco, as if seen from an airplane heading in for a landing. The San Francisco Bay geography was the same, but the city sprawl was not so far advanced. The cars were big and curvy, and the "angel" Mirrorbraners looked to be regular people in colorful clothes.

"It almost looks like an earlier time," mused Ond. "Like the Twentieth Century. We'll fly down and check it all out, Chu."

"Won't they chase after us?" asked Chu. His fingers were weaving his piece of string into an intricate Celtic-style knot.

"I'm guessing that *we'll* be the ones who look like angels in the Mirrorbrane," said Ond. "Glowing, hovering, big, hard to see. We'll haunt the locals, we'll make some heavy appearances. First of all we pay back that Mirrorbraner who was poking you, Chu. Teach her some religion! We'll get concessions, make some live-and-let-live deals. I figure to spend a few years here—till things back home calm down. Will you keep me company, son?"

4: Who Made Who? “The angels made our world,” said Craigor, the words jumping unbidden into his head. “Oh, that’s creepy. The big angel messaged that to me. Gladax. She says we shouldn’t try to go to their land.”

“We made *their* world,” shot back Jil, quick as a knife. “I said that. We can do whatever we want to. Don’t let them get to you, Craigor.” She had a quick mental image of two sheets of reality caressing each other, each of the parallel branes causing the other to glow.

5: Attack Ad Against Lampton. A flicker, a pop, and control of this particular President Bernardo icon had shifted into the hands of his political rivals. Wearing a slack, imbecilic grin, the President dropped his pants, squatted on the sidewalk, took a crap, wiped his ass with a pocket-sized American flag, and then fumbled in his crotch to begin—

“Hurry up!” called Kittie, looking back at them. “We’re gonna lose the pancakes. Oh, what is *that* supposed to be?”

“Homesteady Party attack ad,” said Jayjay, looking away from the degraded President Bernard Lampton. “They’re pumping out all this viral adware for the election.” Lampton’s image duck-walked towards Kittie, the President leering up at her as he fondled himself.

6: Gnarly Food. Like other loyal viewers of *Founders*, the Posse occasionally rooted through the garbage cans at Puff. Some of the entrees came in emulsified form, resembling pastel blobs of whipped cream. The chicken and spinach foam had tasted good, but the yam and shrimp aerogel had been fairly nasty—thanks to the fact that, Jayjay had realized to late, the aerogel had been touching an emptied-out cabernet-enema tube.

Jose started a competing restaurant down the street called MouthPlus. Ripoff copycat that he was, he took most of Nektar’s new ideas with him and, pig that he was, he pushed them over the edge. You could order an intravenous food drip at MouthPlus, a food or wine enema and certain of the wait-persons were even willing to provide customers with appetizers pre-warmed in their own body cavities—actually this only happened a few times before the Board of Health shut the practice down, but the buzz gave MouthPlus an annoying amount of heat.

7: Thuy Quotes Leary. “She’s rehearsing a metasymphony with the Kazakhstan orchestra,” said Thuy loftily, her high pigtails swaying. “I’m going to sample it for *Metotem*. Don’t look so insultingly blank, you know damn well I’m talking about my metanovel. I’ve been collaging in all these great sounds and images and ideas. I’m just not ready to show it to anyone yet. Tune out, turn in, drop on.” It was typical kiquie to fuck with the word order of clichés, especially typical for Thuy, who thought about language all the time. She stuck out her tongue at Kittie and wagged it. “Am I ‘hot’ yet?”

8: Mirrorbraner Snatches Corpse. And now he was seeing Grandmaster Green Flash lying there dead. Sucked dry by the Big Pig.

“Leaving his sheltered palace, the unworldly twenty-nine-year-old Prince Siddhartha met four divine messengers that were to change his destiny,” intoned Thuy, getting all arty. “The first three were an old man, an invalid, and a corpse. The fourth messenger was a wandering ascetic, who revealed the path of non-attachment, whereby all suffering can be transcended.”

“Short version,” said Kittie. “(1) Life sucks (2) and then you die; (3) get over it and (4) chill.”

“Shut the fuck up,” said Sonic, kneeling beside Grandmaster Green Flash. “This guy was the best.”

Jayjay teeped into the orphidnet, looking to understand what was going on. The computational space of the Grandmaster’s corpse was a massive nest of virtual beetles—already evolved into a state resistant to the beetle-fleas. The beetles looked more and more like prototypes of the deadly nants, somehow being modeled by viral software in the mutant orphids devouring the corpse. Within the orphidnet, the healthy orphids were like tiny fighter planes attacking the amok nanomachines.

Jayjay felt a warm breeze on his face; in the orphidnet a thirty-foot-high figure was standing over them all. A Mirrorbraner! The glowing humanoid form reached down and cupped her flickering hands about the corpse.

The body shrank—first to the size of a child, then to the size of a dog and then to the size of a rat. The smaller the corpse got, the faster the colors swirled and then—*pop*—Grandmaster Green Flash was gone, and so was the Mirrorbraner.

“An angel!” screamed a fat woman on the sidewalk. “An angel carried him away!”

“Hypertunnel,” said Sonic, staring at the spot on the sidewalk where the body had disappeared. “The Mirrorbraner carried the Grandmaster away into the fourth dimension. In Doodly Bug that’s what it means when someone shrinks.”

9: Carla Standard’s *Fun Bums*. Intense, lipsticked, nail-biting Carla Standard used what she called a godseye viewpoint, showing multiple points of view as seen in the mind of a single omniscient observer. Her tightly plotted *Fun Bums* was about a runaway girl’s coming of age after the mysterious disappearance of her kiquie boyfriend. Rather than cutting between characters, *Fun Bums* included continuous tapes of all the main characters’ lives. With a bit of practice a user could master Carla’s fused godseye view, experiencing all the characters at once, seeing simultaneously through the simulated minds of mother and daughter, lover and beloved, cop and fugitive, alien and abductee. As an extra twist, Carla had made all her characters look like famous cartoon characters. In order having to animate the cartoons from scratch, Carla had sampled the data streams of homeless street kiquies, beezie-processing them wrap her designs around the armatures of the unwitting players’ orphidnet meshes. When Thuy had gone through *Fun Bums*, she’d found that Carla had used data streams from Thuy and Jayjay’s romance, making them look like Donald Duck and *ugh, ugh, ugh* the infantilized anime girl Sailor Moon. Carla had repurposed, for instance, the moment last spring when Jayjay and Thuy had stood under a flowering plum tree off Mission Street, Jayjay shaking the tree to make the petals rain down on Thuy. Where Jayjay had been funny and cute, now he was a comic orange-beaked waddler, and where Thuy had been full-lipped and tender, her *Fun Bums* mouth was an immobile triangle of witless joy. Nosy Carla had included their breakup as well, Thuy hung-over from the Big Pig, her leg-warmers in disarray, hysterically screaming at Jayjay in an alley, poor Jayjay’s tailfeathers nervously twitching and his fingers adjusting his little jacket. Thuy was miffed that Carla had made Jayjay more sympathetic than her; she suspected that Carla had done this as an oblique way of flirting with him. Not that Thuy any claim over Jayjay anymore. Oh, why did she miss him so much?

10: Dusty Ballsack. “I’m glad you didn’t watch Jayjay and me on *Founders*,” said Jil. “The kids saw some of it, which was horrible even though, in a way, it shouldn’t have been that much worse than them peeping at Craigor and me, which I know they’ve done a few times. It’s hard to imagine how the new generation will end up. Jayjay and I stopped having sex after Bixie had a screaming fit and slugged him in the crotch. She was yelling, ‘Gross dusty ballsack.’” Jil shook her head and laughed. “Bixie’s eleven,” she added. “Girls are wonderful when they’re eleven. Remember that age? It’s before life beats you down.”

“Why dusty?” said Jayjay. “I never understood that.”

11: A Beak From A Higher Dimension. For a fish drifting calm beneath a glassy water ceiling, what could be more unexpected than a darting bill from above? The beak symbolizes terror from a higher dimension.

12: Electric Shock for Shoon Ant. “I’m teaching that plastic ant a lesson,” said Thuy. She took the beer-ad lamp off the wall, unplugged it, cut the electric cord right by the lamp, split the two wires apart at the cut end, peeled an inch of insulation off the two wires, stuck the plug back into the socket, and sat down, holding the two charged copper fangs at the ready.

The ant came in on the heels of a sloppily dressed white guy, who was wildly surprised to have a four-foot-long plastic ant push past his legs and into the restaurant like a hungry dog. The man shouted, and the diners looked up, some of them jumping to their feet and heading through the kitchen for the back door.

“Here I am,” Thuy shrieked at the ant. “Come and get me, motherfucker!”

Jayjay understood Thuy’s plan ; he stood behind her, watching with an expectant grin, ready to jump in if things went badly.

But things went well, at least for Thuy, although, yes, rather badly for the ant. When the ant reared up to attack, Thuy poked the two bare electric wires into the ant’s yielding piezoplastic belly. The creature’s body twitched and danced; her neural system shorted out; she fell over dead on her back, with a foul-smelling puddle dripping from the tip of her abdomen.

13: How Teleportation Works. “How does teleportation work?” she asked Ond.

“Teleportation works by getting mixed up about where you really are,” said Ond. “In quantum computation, we use the word ‘coherent’ to mean mixed up. The usage is opposite of what you might expect. It’s like if you’re sufficiently coherent you can’t talk at all. If you’re sufficiently coherent your whole body folds up into a single wave function. As if you were this one exceedingly complex electron.”

“I’m not an electron,” said Chu. “I’m a Higgs particle.” He giggled and made pig noises. “*Oink, squeal, wheenk.*”

“Alright,” said Ond. “And I’m a quark. Thuy can be the electron.”

“I’m dark matter,” said Thuy, getting into the silly jabberwocky game. “So what’s that ocean?”

Thuy followed Jayjay’s link to the gently rocking deck of the barge-like *Merz Boat* with its central cabin like an oversized loaf of bread. She had a moment of double vision: water waves flowed across the alley walls. And now Jayjay linked her to a striped, silk-spinning caterpillar weaving a web from point to point, binding the alley and the seascape together. The network of links encased Thuy, wrapping her up like a pupa. She was neither here nor there, all of her particles were synch with each other, temporarily free of the outside world. She felt very tiny, she was falling—where? The pupa casing split open. With a thump, Thuy and Jayjay landed on the soft deck of—Jil and Craigor’s boat.

In the long cabin, Jil and Craigor’s voices were rising in argument.

“Come on, smart guy,” Thuy told Jayjay. “Entangle our butts outta here.”

“We’ll do the hop like before,” Jayjay messaged her. “You visualize both places: your source location and your target. Thanks to the orphidnet you can get the real-time target images just right. And the secret sauce is this algorithm of mine that generates the metamorpher for a particular hop.”

Thuy focused on her calm, dry room in Nektar’s garage. She overlaid it with the dank, crooked hut Jil had lodged them in. Jayjay passed her a metamorpher: a glowing larva that darted all over the images, sewing them together. Thuy’s bedroom door was the igloo’s window; her kitchen sink was a bump on one of the little hut’s curving walls; the street sounds of San Francisco were nanomapped into the splashing of the sea. The metamorpher sprouted feathery antennae and buckeyed wings, then drew the links tight around Thuy. She felt herself folding in upon herself, becoming a single hypercomplex particle. Somewhere in the distance she seemed to glimpse an endless sea. Where was she? Her mind and body blossomed out.

14: Big Pig as Burning Bush. The burning bush seemed to grow to an immense size. A crystal sea of waves crashed violently at its roots, sending up wobbly drops of foamy spray, each drop ideally rendered. Above the bush were dark clouds enlivened by bolts lightning. A million beasts of the sea and the sky and the fields circled the burning bush, singing the praises of the Big Pig.

15: Why Mirrorbranners Want Cuttles. “We don’t have cuttles in the Mirrorbrane. That’s one of the funky little diffs between our worlds. The meat’s good and chewy. And cuttle ink has that sepia tint, you mind, but it’s also got smell-numbing tyrosinase, feel-good dopamine, and iridescent rhodopsin, all in a base that lets it soak through a Mirrorbranner’s skull. The mix is a special tonic, makes you glow. I’ve been checking out if maybe some of your rogue nanomachines could replace cuttlefish extract—like those ones on Grandmaster Green Flash? But so far, nothing gets you as starchy as cuttlefish ink.”

16: Where To Put the H-Bomb. “We’ll set the bomb up somewhere else, though,” said Thuy. “How about Houston, Texas? I wouldn’t want to trash a valuable place like Easter Island.”

17: Jayjay’s Sixty-Year Dream. So what the Big Pig did was to run a simulation of Jayjay in a virtual world, complete with the requisite third-order mental model of Jayjay watching himself reacting to the simulated events.

Less skilled people got along selling software services to beezie agents: performing tasks like pattern recognition and predicting other people's behaviors. You could even pick up some bucks by making your life's memories available for repurposing: anecdotes, emotions, visions and the sounds. But some people were having trouble making any money at all.

The beezie agents were perpetually engaged in intricate hacking maneuvers to take over more nants, as at the bottom-line level, crunch and mem were based on the processors and solar cells of the nanomachines that Earth had shattered into.

In this dream of a virtual world, Jayjay became a physicist and he was, incredibly for a high-school drop-out, awarded a Nobel Prize—at this point people were still keeping up many of the old Earth traditions.

18: Jeff Luty Morphs into the Author. His face rippled like a puddle in the wind, then settled down to an alternate version: his glasses symmetrical and horn-rimmed; his hair clean and cropped; his lips clear of balm and chapped skin; his wrinkles gone; his skin pink instead of gray.

About the Author

A founder of the cyberpunk school of science-fiction, [Rudy Rucker](#) often writes SF in a realistic style known as transrealism. In his latest novel, *Mathematicians in Love*, two Berkeley grad students woo the same woman and open a gateway to alternate worlds. Two other recent books are his story anthology, *Mad Professor*, and a reprint of his historical SF novel, *The Hollow Earth*, which stars Edgar Allan Poe.

In Rucker's next novel, [Postsingular](#), nanotechnology augments human mental powers and the heroes prevent Earth from becoming a cloud of nanomachines. Rucker is currently writing a sequel, *Hylozoic*, in which every object on Earth comes to life. The selections for this *Flurb* piece are indeed outtakes drawn from his working notes for *Postsingular*...these just happen to be bits that didn't make it into the final cut.

[Back To Flurb Home Page...](#)