

Gamers

By

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A tribute to the book *Sum 40 Tales of the Afterlives* by David Eagleman.

God despairs of Her creation, humankind. To provide them with greater opportunities to express their creative nature She created the fully immersive, interactive, real-time game Life. She spent millennia on it, first creating it with a huge bang and then gently nudging events to create a sun and a beautiful, water filled world. She was so careful to ensure that she never broke the rules of her universe, working only at the quantum level. She carefully selected the direction of this photon to just one of the many acceptable options, or ensured that when two molecules collided it was at just the right angle. Eventually, with enormous subtlety and galaxy spanning patience, the first replicating molecules appeared.

After that She was able to relax a bit as the next stage did not need so much detailed and controlled intervention. She still always worked in the areas of uncertainty and chaos where She could choose which of the many equally valid events occurred but She always chose carefully. Gradually, she shaped up molecules into single cells, then she encouraged the cells to divide and compete but always in ways that created a bit more complexity. Adding mitochondria to cells and giving them the energy they needed was a special development.

Over the millennia cells formed into colonies, groups and then organisms. The organisms competed and backbones appeared. No miracles were needed – all she needed to do was choose the right option from all of those statistically equivalent choices.

But God also has an artistic sense, and so she created a beautiful moon, grasses, flowers and trees. As always, it was done with a deft and subtle touch so that you could believe it had all happened by accident. But something this beautiful could never happen by accident in just the few billion years that it took God to create it.

She had to make some terrible decisions, though. Whenever life got stuck or entered into an especially dangerous path She needed to deflect a huge natural disaster onto Her beloved earth to remove the dead growth. She kept the damage to a minimum and mourned the loss of life at every terrible event. The dinosaurs were too fierce and too uncaring to be allowed to continue to the fearsome danger of developing intelligence. They needed a balance from a creature that could love both its own young and those of other creatures.

Eventually, She managed to create an intelligent and caring being that could love others, but, because She had always used natural means and had always kept within Her rules, Her beautiful humans were flawed. To create them She had to allow natural selection to choose the best, the most intelligent and the most socially aligned, but competition could also cause a creature to become arrogant and pushy. Humans were dangerous and desperate to survive, even at the expense of others.

But She accepted this as a natural consequence of Her choices. Humans had bodies and senses. Because She had kept to her own laws, the humans had also learnt to create some beautiful objects and artefacts based on the physics of the world.

She made sure that they knew She was there, of course. She had given humans souls so that they could know that She was present and that there are greater things around them than could be detected with the senses alone. She had appeared to them in ways that they thought were magical, but they were actually incredibly subtle manipulations of statistical events. She always spoke to them through adjustments to natural phenomena. Someone would throw some coins and she would ensure the pattern chosen would be just right for her message. A prophet would ask for guidance and she would ensure that enough of the neurons in his head were fired to allow him to see Her answer. And she could always communicate directly through their souls, but souls don't have voices and so these message was always amazingly subtle and could easily be ignored in the tumult and roar of the senses.

And this was Her problem. The humans had always tended to ignore Her requests to love and respect others. They had even used Her as an excuse to kill others, and She was particularly angry whenever that happened, but lately, they had become so obsessed with their senses, so caught up in their arrogance that they decided that they had all the answers and there was no need to include Her in

their lives. They even started to say that chance alone was sufficient to explain everything and that She was not needed, nor wanted.

She was becoming increasingly frustrated with them and their toys. They were playing life all the time, now, turning more and more to gratification of their senses, claiming more and more understanding without realising just how carefully those rules had been created. They were ignoring Her subtle attempts to influence events and claiming they were accidents only – mere happenstance. Even the ones that claimed to believe in Her were starting to claim that their own petty and one sided writings were Her definitive word and using them to justify hate and bigotry. Wars were being held in Her name.

And no one was listening to Her anymore.

She felt like a mother standing at Her errant teenage son's door asking him to put down the computer game and get on with what really mattered. Sometimes humans ignored Her completely, sometimes they said the equivalent of “whatever” and sometimes they were even angry at Her. Several times the terrible words “I never asked to be created” were spoken in sullen defence but they never hurt as much as the statement “I don't need you anymore”.

Well, She was fed up. It would not be long now before She decided She had had enough and she pulled the plug on the whole game.