



VERSALITY

A NOVEL BY

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PREVIEW

Selections from 4 of the 56 chapters

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CHAPTER 1.01

Trillions of individual digital snowflakes flew, ever so perfectly, as Rai and her number one involuntarily whooped their way from the top, down the start of a pristine, calm, Alpine slope. The clouds had just cleared to reveal the full moon after delivering half a metre of new powder. Moonlit snowboarding was to prove an experience like no other.

Not far from the top of their swift bubble lift the pair escaped from the unnatural light of the single floodlit piste, and from the handful of like-minded but less-foolhardy time-travellers it contained. Rai knew these particular mountains well, and took her partner – partner in what must surely be crime it was so enticing – through a reassuringly narrow line of trees.

Going slowly now, dodging deep black shadows at every turn, they emerged through a few final, stunted trees to a glorious viewpoint, framed by giant boulders, with enough sandy yellow in them for extreme contrast with the deep shades of blue – sky, snow, and everywhere else around.

“Really...! How do you find these places, Rai?”

“You’re not meant to know. It’s best you don’t. If it were real and now it would break every single environmental rule,” said Rai, pensively.

“No decadent thoughts allowed.”

“Absolutely,” she replied. “It may not exactly look like it, but this is the underground. You’d be okay, but I could be sanctioned just for bringing you here.”

CHAPTER 1.02

Art stood, watching huge waves half the height of the cliffs outside his windows – approaching, crashing, booming, spraying. Something he did with studied regularity.

“I don’t understand why you insist on being here, in this reality. It makes it so much harder for me to be with you.”

He turned to Rai with a distinct but pleasantly-surprised start. She had arrived in Art’s living room, on the level a few steps up, and to him looked positively radiant, even while ‘insufficiently’ shielded from the light of its abnormally large windows. “I presume you beeped me first?”

“Of course I did. You must have been in too deep,” Rai said with a careful smile.

“In the deep. To answer your question for the 59th time,” he went on, unseriously, then rapidly becoming serious, “I need to believe we still have some connection with all that, out there. All that we wrecked.”

“Not us. And why in this dangerous place that won’t even be here in a few years?”

“That self-seal glass is almost 800 mil thick. All the land in front of it went fast but this cliff is solid granite, and the house probably still has twenty years or so. I like to hear and feel the force of wind and waves, twice what they once were. Like mini-earthquakes every few seconds, sometimes. They can’t be escaped even while we’re somewhere else completely. Hello, by the way.”

CHAPTER 1.08

“For more than 150 years it has been a known problem that General Relativity’s description of gravity cannot be mathematically reconciled with Quantum Mechanics, at the smallest of scales. I now say that gravity and spacetime have been misunderstood also at the largest of scales. Dark matter and dark energy were called into existence by physicists now long dead to explain the accelerating expansion of the universe, and the nature and spin of observed galaxies. No particles were ever found to justify these inventions, and my theory says that that’s because they do not exist. Likewise, String Theory, and many other attempts, were completely unnecessary diversions.”

“More radically still, I say that we can unify and complete Quantum Mechanics and General Relativity simply by taking a new perspective. Gravity is in fact one and the same thing as quantum entanglement. Imagine that any two particles with entangled properties, whatever distance they are apart in our three dimensions of space and one of time, are in fact in the same place. Being in the same place, in some sense – perhaps the very same sense in which the entire universe started from a single point – greatly helps to explain how it is that communication of shared properties can be instantaneous.”

Given a slight pause by Art, Xeen quickly interjected, “So... but... what would that change?”

CHAPTER 2.09

Once blipped, there they were, barefoot in full wetsuits, on a warm broad curving sandy beach, boards in hand, pointing skywards. Not quite a normal beach – not in geometry, scale or light. Somehow, without quite seeming too overwhelming, behind them stretched most of the African continent, with the Elevator visible on the horizon. A glow beyond, within, lit all of it, but the sky was a deep moonless night, stars and Milky Way in brilliant detail, closer and more vivid than life, and rotating visibly fast, as the small world turned.

With their backs to the sea, it was almost above them. As they turned to the sea, now the land was above them, and the sea an approachable surface, full of dramatic glowing waves. The water was as if in sunny daylight, and yet, magically semi-transparent, the strongest of stars shining right through it, well below the ocean’s peculiarly infinite and non-curving horizon. White crests atop the waves were spacy – almost darkly – translucent.

“This looks pretty fantastic, Xeen. So we surf here, now?”

“Ooh no, Emi, we go places. Surf places. You’ll see! First we have to get out through the breakers.”

Boards lowered to their sides, they ran into the waves. As they paddled themselves out, dipping under crests, Emi called excitedly to Xeen, close by, “This is no normal non.life water. This is the real thing!”

“Yes. Problem now solved. But look behind for a moment.”

As they moved away from it, the beach, Africa – the world was becoming a globe. Soon enough, it was complete – a jewel-like Earthly sphere was floating there in the broad ocean, two fifths still slightly visible beneath the surface, turning. The beautiful night sky above them no longer appeared to be moving. They were in the deep – in deep sea space.