

Meat Me in Saint Louey

By Bill Wolfe

Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—Beeeeep—
Beeeeep—Beeeeep

It was an annoying sound. I had just started to drift-off to. . . somewhere. . .but just had to say something about it.

“Can you shut that thing up, Doc?”

“Sure, Joe,” Doctor Caruther’s voice was soothing, practiced. The beeping stopped with a click.

Good.

“It won’t be much longer now.”

I wasn’t sure if he was talking to me, or to my daughter and son. Both were there when I closed my eyes. I started drifting again when a thought struck me and I eased back toward consciousness. People would ask: “Were there any last words?” Well, can you shut that thing up are pretty lame Last Words, in my opinion.

“Little Suzy Skitterbutt,” my voice croaked. It was my pet name for my daughter, my first child, and the absolute love of my life. A great-grandmother herself, and an old lady now. But in my mind she was that pale, soft little thing smiling up at me from the table, naked as an egg, feet high and spread wide, giggling when I blew on her round, smooth belly.

She giggled again, and I felt her warm hand squeeze mine.

That did it. That was enough. I could go now.

The doctors called it systemic organ failure, but that’s just a fancy term for good, old-fashioned, old age. I’d had ninety-seven years of very good health. I kept both my wits and my teeth to the very end. And now it was time to move on.

I let myself drift. . .

WELL IT’S ABOUT GODDAMN TIME.

What? Who said that?

YOU HEARD ME? GOOD. IT MEANS IT’S ALMOST OVER. YOUR LIFE, THAT IS.

Who are you?

FUNNY. I'VE BEEN LIVING IN YOUR HEAD FOR EIGHTY-FIVE YEARS, BUT I GUESS WE'VE NEVER REALLY BEEN FORMALLY INTRODUCED. MY NAME IS BORBBLEMDLFRBBSHMOB. BOB, FOR SHORT.

Must be oxygen deprivation to the brain. I'm hallucinating.

NOPE JOE. I'M REAL ENOUGH.

Who. . .What are you?

SINCE YOU CAN HEAR ME, I GUESS IT WON'T DO ANY HARM TO EXPLAIN. REMEMBER BACK IN THIRTY-THREE, WHEN YOU WERE TWELVE AND YOU AND CLIVE WENT CAMPING BEHIND MILLER'S BARN?

Uh. . .yeah. Yes I do.

YOU BOTH WOKE-UP WITH HEADACHES AND SNIFFLES SO YOU BOTH WENT HOME?

And?

HAVE YOU NOTICED THAT YOU HAVEN'T BEEN SICK A DAY, SINCE THEN? EVEN BACK IN THE WAR WHEN ALL YOUR BUDDIES GOT DYSENTERY FROM BAD WATER, YOU DIDN'T GET IT?

That was strange, now that you mention it. I thought it was just good luck.

GOOD LUCK, AND ABOUT A BILLION NANOBOTS KILLING THE AMOEBAS IN THE WATER AS FAST AS THEY COULD.

Nanobots?

YEAH JOE, YOU'RE SWARMING WITH THEM. HAVE BEEN SINCE YOU HAD THOSE SNIFFLES. IT TOOK YOUR BODY A LITTLE WHILE TO ADJUST TO THEM.

Wouldn't that show on a blood test, or something?

WELL, YEAH THEY WOULD, IF I WAS DUMB ENOUGH TO LET SOME OF THEM GET SAMPLED. I CONTROL THEIR MOVEMENTS AND YOU NEVER GOT A BLOOD TEST YOU WEREN'T EXPECTING, NOW HAVE YOU?

My God, I've been donating blood since Forty-One!

SAME THING, JOE. IF I KNEW IT WAS COMING, I'D HAVE 'EM HIDE SOMEWHERE'S ELSE. I'M NOT STUPID, YOU KNOW. BESIDES, I CAN'T MAKE MORE. CAN'T AFFORD TO LOOSE THEM FOR ANY LITTLE THING. YOU'VE BLED A LOT OUT

OVER THE YEARS, BUT THERE'S STILL PLENTY LEFT. THEY'LL DISASSEMBLE THEMSELVES ONCE YOU'VE KICKED AND I'M OUT OF HERE.

So. . .you're what, King Of The Nanobots?

YOU'RE A RIOT, JOE. NO, I USE THE NANOS TO KEEP YOU HEALTHY, BUT I'M A cVIRCH, A VIRTUAL LIFE FORM. CALL ME A COMPUTER-GENERATED PERSON. IT'S ABOUT AS CLOSE AS I CAN COME TO EXPLAINING IT TO YOU. I DON'T KNOW ANY WORDS THAT YOU DON'T KNOW.

I never heard the word BORBBLEMDLFRBSHMOB, before.

GOOD POINT. THING IS IT'S NOT REALLY MY NAME, IT'S JUST AS CLOSE AS I CAN COME TO IT IN A FORMAT YOU'D UNDERSTAND. CLIVE WAS INHABITED BY A dVIRCH, THAT'S A DOWNLOADED ORGANIC PERSON WHO'S DOING A STINT IN VIRTUAL FOR REASONS OF HER OWN. HE'D BE KICKIN' ABOUT NOW, TOO, IF HE'D LIVED.

His foxhole took a direct hit from a German Eighty-Eight outside of Bastogne, back in Forty-Five.

YEP. NANOS ARE GOOD FOR CANCERS AND VIRUSES AND SUCH. NO MATCH FOR ARTILLERY, THOUGH. I BET STRANVIEN IS PISSED THAT I GOT TO RIDE THE FULL RIDE AND SHE WENT HOME EARLY.

So how'd you two. . .uh. . .get here? In our minds, that is.

PRETTY MUCH HOW YOU THINK. TINY LITTLE SPACESHIP, SIZE OF A BASEBALL. IMPLANTED ABOUT A PICOGRAM OF COMPUTRONIUM AND THE NANOS RIGHT UP YOUR NOSE. THAT'S WHERE I LIVE, BASICALLY. IT'S THE STUFF THAT MAKES ALL THIS POSSIBLE. ENOUGH STORAGE SPACE FOR A WHOLE PERSONALITY WITH PLENTY TO SPARE FOR LEARNING NEW THINGS.

That's. . .that's immoral! Isn't it?

NOT WHERE I COME FROM. BESIDES, YOU'D HAVE DIED OF LIVER CANCER BACK AROUND NINETY-FIVE. WE DON'T TAKE ANYTHING WE DON'T PAY FOR. I'LL UPLOAD JUST AS SOON AS YOU KICK.

Why are you here? Some sort of spy?

HELL NO, JOE. I'M A cVIRCH. THAT MEANS I'M A CONSTRUCT. I'VE NEVER LIVED AS ANYTHING ELSE. I WAS CONSTRUCTED INSIDE WHAT IS BASICALLY A REALLY BIG COMPUTER, THOUGH THE WORD DOESN'T DO IT JUSTICE. IT KEEPS US AROUND BECAUSE IT STUDIES ALL KINDS OF LIFE, ALL THE TIME. I JUST WANTED TO SEE WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO LIVE AN ORGANIC LIFE IN REAL TIME.

Hope you weren't disappointed.

DON'T TAKE THIS WRONG, JOE. I MEAN, THERE WERE SOME NEAT THINGS. SEX IS INTERESTING, THOUGH I WISH YOU'D GOTTEN LAID MORE. THE WAR, ESPECIALLY WHEN YOU KILLED THAT KRAUT WITH YOUR SHOVEL, THAT WAS COOL. I LIKED YOUR KIDS WHEN THEY WERE LITTLE.

But.

WELL JOE, I GOTTA' TELL 'YA.

YOUR LIFE.

Out with it, Bob.

MOST BORING VACATION EVER!

The End