

Transmit Only

By Richard Tornello

Within the whole of the planet Aeternitas, a highly amplified effeminate voice, with a slightly detectible lisp, reverberates off the deep inner structures:

ACHTUNG, ACHTUNG, ATENCION, YOUR ATTENTION, PA-LEEEZE.

WE ARE APPROACHING AN IMPORTANT POINT PEOPLE, LISTEN UP.

IN 4.32×10 to the 20th femtomoments MAXIMUM UNIVERSAL EXPANSION WILL HAVE OCCURED, And THE BIG CRUNCH WILL, ta-da, BEGIN.

WE WILL BE CELEBRATING THIS EVENT EVERYWHERE IN TIME-SPACE and ESPECIALLY FOR ALL OF YOU! HERE WITHIN THE, fill in the, OOPS, I MEAN, THE AETERNITAS ORB!

It's only 4.89921276×10 to the 36th femtomoments to go from there to crunch time, and, WE LOOK BACKWARD TO YOUR CHALLENGE IN UNMAKING YOUR PAST MISTAKES, again. DETAILS TO FOLLOW, again.

Fugio, unmoving, is entombed in a plaster cast from head to foot, and lying in a hospital bed. The only visible openings are two eyeholes, a mouth hole, and various apparatuses connected to tubes emerging from different parts of his body. Not a sound is uttered. Monitors mark time with his vital functions.

Ignarus ignores the message and is speaking to Fugio in a monotone, with absolutely no inflection or letup:

"...Wandering in life, no real aim, no real goals, here we are, and then we're not, and look at you, lucky you, all your life is taken care of, no worries, me I'm stuck here, within this dark orb, floating aimlessly, possibly forever, I'm here because of a snafu, it was a simple mistake, a technicality, I'm sure it will be taken care of, hey, hey you're not talking, well never mind, you're the silent type, it's okay, you're recuperating, I know that, I can see you're all wrapped up, so I said to the Gatekeeper there must be some mistake, the actions don't add up to a negative balance, I'm sure, I've lived a good life, everything I did was good, just look back, that's what I said, you know, he just looked at me and said nothing, can you imagine that, nothing, so I assumed I had more time to make my case so I elaborated, I was good to animals, children, I helped the old folks, I entertained relatives, donated to good causes, and...Hey you're not speaking don't you have a thing to say? Well never mind, I'll let you know that the Gatekeeper kept looking at me so I went on, I asked him when was the last time he had the scales of life calibrated by the certification board, I think he really appreciated that one, my representative says I made a real case and he's sure that, hey you, Fugio, you moved? You want to say

something? No? Well I'll go on with my story, the gatekeeper summoned some of his people, I remember he was pointing at me and he was smiling, well I think it was a smile, he kept pointing up, and looking up to somewhere and said something about someone helping him please and I think someone got it wrong, he must be overworked and made a mistake, because here I am and I know this is not where I'm supposed to be, no not here, why should I have to go through a crunch to redo my life again, what mistakes have I made, none that I can tell, I kept a diary of my exploits every day I wrote it in there and I presented it to the Gatekeeper too, you know this crunch thing is a real pain, you know what? In 4.89921276×10 to the 36th femtomoments, we'll be a singularity again and we get another get-go to correct our past mistakes, well, that's well and fine for the others but you you're blameless just lying there in white, what did you do to deserve that, hey, come on tell me."

Fugio utters not a sound.

Ignarus continues, droning on,

"... Well I'm sure they made a mistake with you too, me I know this will be corrected soon, my representative states that this will all be made right in due time, do you ever get the feeling you've been here before? I mean I'm sure it's not true but I swear I've met you before in a past life, now that's funny, really now, I don't see a smile, come on, a past life, really? You think you would remember something like this aimless wandering all over creation, and me doing good helping the sick and hurt just like you, I'll be here to cheer you up until you're able to walk again and talk, won't that be great then maybe the two of us can help others to feel better, that is until my representative get me a hearing because I know they made a mistake, I should be one with Theo you know, and not here waiting for the big crunch, that's insane you know that, me of all people, bureaucracies they can really make your life miserable, it just takes persistence on your part to make the corrections and then things will be made right, that I do believe, that's a law of the universes, yes it is, I said that when my time in front of the Gatekeeper was up, yes he was sad to see me get such a mistaken ruling, he was crying the tears were streaming down his face as I explained my situation again and that the scales need to be recalibrated and maybe he could use some time off, having to do this for an eternity, and maybe I could help, if he needed it."

Fugio opens his eyes and but cannot recognize Ignarus through a haze, the voice... THAT voice... that story again, oh my god, he screams in his head, he's still here, and he never leaves and passes out. The monitors go blinky.

Ignarus glances up at the monitors, shrugs his shoulders and drones on,

"... You know I think you may have an issue with your monitors, you should get it looked at, but as I was saying, the Gatekeeper had tears of joy running down his face...."

The End