

Sunsets and Hamburgers

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1.

My first thought is that I don't remember dying. They tell me nobody does. It's like trying to catch the exact moment you fall asleep; when you wake, it's gone. You may remember feeling tired, you may even remember starting to fall asleep; you just don't remember the transition, the actual moment when you passed from one state to the other.

And then they resurrect you.

One minute you're nowhere, nothing. The next you wake up coughing and thrashing in a tank of blue gel.

2.

My stomach's full of gas and my bowels full of water. My brain feels like melted polystyrene. Every thought hurts and every breath is an effort.

The robot doctors try to reassure me. Everything's going to be okay, they say. And then, just when I'm beginning to wonder if the worst is over, they take me out and show me the sky.

What's left of it.

3.

The doctors tell me that I've been dead for billions of years. They give me pamphlets to read, films to watch.

Billions of years!

I'm struggling to imagine it. Every time I get close, I get breathless and my hands start to shake.

4.

I have a few confused memories: faces, names of places, that sort of thing. I have an image of a sash window on a grey and rainy autumn afternoon, and bass-heavy ska playing somewhere off down the dull street. And after that, there's nothing. I fall to my knees and begin to weep.

The doctors comfort me. They're pleased with my progress.

5.

There's something dreadfully wrong with the sky. They try to explain it but I have trouble understanding.

When I was alive, I worked for a financial software company. I worked in their marketing department, writing letters and making calls. In my spare time, I liked sunsets and hamburgers, movies and bottled beer.

It's something to do with black holes, they say, pointing at the blank sky.

Like everyone else. I skimmed through A Brief History of Time once or

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