

ISSUE 1: THERE'S A PILL FOR THAT

[[NOTE: Old exposition has been redacted. Page needs to be rewritten.]]

"To Lucy. From: Your mother"

[black on white]

Dear Lucy

Most of this story will be told by Robin because they've got the bigger picture. But remember, Robin has a lot of me in them, so in a way I'm coming along for the ride, all the way to the end.

[picture of Zoe pregnant]

You were there yourself for a lot of it, but at one point you were just a seed in my belly. And before that, no one knows! Over and over again, I've tried to explain that time before there was you. I think I keep coming back to it because we made so many mistakes, and I'm hoping that the more you understand, the more you'll forgive us.

[/black on white]

In the year 102 AT, by every metric but one, we were a lot better off than our predecessors.

[From the outside looking in. Bunch of babies lined up in their high-tech beds. Quite spacious. All of them kind of creepily just starting at the ceiling (See "Art Direction" doc)]

The graphs and diagrams looked just like we wanted them to.

Through the marvels of science and pure tenacity, we rid ourselves of our handicaps and became perfectly healthy, optimally efficient beings. Just as we always aspired.

[Show interface for the inception of a child, Gattaca style. Giving you a certain amount of skill points to choose between. Like you're making an RPG character.]

We've reached the point when technologically enhanced biology is an altogether safer, less error-prone form of evolution. It's the end of mutations drawing straws in the haphazard game of natural selection.

And yet, numbers fail to paint an accurate picture.

[On top of a skyscraper building, an unknown (unfeeling) individual is mid-step off the ledge. This angle?:<https://cloud.lovindubai.com/images/uploads/2016/01/Screen-Shot-2016-01-30-at-12.36.50.png?mtime=20160130124725>]

The thousand-fold increase in suicides might have raised a few eyebrows under different circumstances.

But under **these** circumstances, there was also a thousand-fold **decrease** in practically all other causes of death.

[That person is now in free-fall, but blurred out. Could we somehow blur the person out with headlines? See the Headlines in GDoc]

One spike nullified the other and all you could see in pure data was ****Exponential Progress****, two words we worshipped like they were holy scripture.

In spite of how well we're doing, something is clearly "off". You did not grow up having this feeling, or rather, that absence of feeling. But I trust you remember our many talks about it.

[Show the parents who are looking in on their babies., the reflection of the babies showing so we know where they're looking into. Their faces are completely emotionless.]

At some point, someone hit the off-switch. Looking back, we were frogs being boiled alive.

[black on white]

As of this writing, I am one of only a few people alive who knows we're worse off for it. No need to tell you that though. I know for a fact that you will fix it. I don't say that to put pressure on you, or prescribe a destiny. I just say it because you're you, and I know you, and you **will** do the right thing. For yourself and for the rest of the world.

Lastly, you'll most likely read this when I have passed on. That's going to be sad for you. Believe me, it's sad for me too! It's terrible news for both of us, especially if you receive this at the young age that I fear you might. But it's okay. I do honestly feel like, even as of right now, I've done my fair share of living. I wouldn't have minded a longer time on the ride, but at the end of the day I'm just thankful I got my turn.

[foetus?]

And it's all thanks to you, my beautiful baby girl.

If you ever miss me - any of us - just remember that there's a connectedness to the world that we're still eons away from understanding. In some way or another, shape or form, I remain in this world. And as far as being "plugged in" goes, you're unmatched. If you ever want to talk to me, just look inwards. Look for that connection.

I love you so, so much. As does your daddy, and Jasper, and everyone else you brought back.

Love,

Mum, Dad, Jasper; all of us.

[/black on white]

>PAGE 1, 4 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1**** (appx. 1.0)

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

It's a tiny, space-efficient apartment. No kitchen. Maybe all-in-one room except for the bathroom. (See "Art Direction" doc)

[[Maybe at some point we could show Zoe "changing her skin"? I.e. actually completely changing all of her body decorations, because it's a completely customisable tattoo. OR just constantly show her with different-looking tattoos? Hahaha, probably too much work. But it could be a "fluid" tattoo. It wouldn't have to change ALL the time, but between bigger time gaps. How many TIMES are we dealing with actually? 1) Pre-Lucy 2) Lucy pregnancy 3) Lucy early childhood 4) Lucy Lucy being raised + a flashback to Lucy early childhood again during Lucy's blackout. Basically there could be a new tattoo for each book, and possibly one extra one for the flashback. This could be the sort of thing ROBIN tweets about. We could do editor answers on TWITTER, ERMAGERD! Example:
ROBIN on twitter: "To those who've been wondering about the tattoo: lucysheart.com/blog/thetattoo" Which would explain that it's a "skin", i.e. an ever-changing tattoo. Basically we should incorporate as much of that futuristic tomfoolery that we can think of, but we don't need any more of it to add to the story. Everything else will be novelties.]]

Close-up on Zoe who is fast asleep in her bed. Zoe is a 23-year old scrawny, nerdy looking girl with short hair.

The smart-ink-tinted windows are turning translucent, letting the sun in.

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

She squints as the sun hits her eyelids.

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

Zoe's now awake, and becomes unaffectionately aware of the naked man lying next to her, facing away.

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

She shakes the man's shoulder to wake him up.

ZOE

(completely detached)

Get out.

===

>PAGE 2, MISSING

>PAGE 3, 4 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

Naked and unashamed, they get out of bed.

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

The man doesn't seem to mind the abrupt eviction -- his equally detached facial expression should be the focus. They both get dressed at the same time. Only "comfy-wear" in Zoe's case. Like loose shorts and a top or PJs.

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

The man leaves through the apartment's front door. He could be alone in the shot, or maybe we're looking over Zoe's shoulder as she watches him leave.

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

Facing us, Zoe walks through her apartment with a look of apathy on her face.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Hello World. This is ZOE. Like every other person on the planet right now, she is practically void of emotion.

(V.O. means voice-over)

===

>PAGE 3, 7 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

Half dressed, ZOE grabs a shiny, smooth-edged cube with the word "Mold" engraved in it. It's about the size of a rubik's cube.

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

She walks into her tiny dining room with the Mold in her hand.

COMPUTER

(not visible. speaks through a loudspeaker)

"Today is Sunday. Time is 09:05. You slept for 6 consecutive hours. Recommended bed time today is 23:30.

You are running low on credits. Time to work?

ZOE

Yup.

****Panel 3 - 1/4****

Zoe sits down, holding the Mold between her hands

****Panel 4 - 2/4****

and then she presses her fingers into it like it's play putty (i.e. clay)

****Panel 5 - 3/4****

As she's stretching it wide and thin like a dough, elevated keyboard letters are starting to appear on its surface.

****Panel 6 - 4/4****

Moments after, the stretched dough takes the form of a keyboard.

((Sources of inspiration:

-

<http://www.fastcodesign.com/3026020/meet-paddle-the-incredible-shapeshifting-smartphone-of-the-future>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xK54Bu9HFRw>

- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=XqxFFD2QSL4>

end))

****Panel 7 - 1/1****

A transparent monitor is projected via the Mold at eye-height.

===

>PAGE 4, 9 PANELS, 5 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

We're looking over Zoe's shoulder. On her monitor is a dayplanner. It's showing 5 days: Sunday (today), Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday.

****Panel 2 - 1/2 (narrow)****

Day planner: Monday. Current activity: Jogging.

****Panel 3 - 2/2 (wide)****

Zoe is outside, jogging.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Physically speaking, exercise affects ZOE's body just like it always has through the history of mankind. Muscles are energised, blood is flowing and endorphins are released into her system. She knows this is good - it brings her some sense of contentment - but to say it *makes her feel good* would be overstating her emotional ability.

Panel 4 - 1/2 (narrow)

Day planner: Tuesday. Current activity: Reading

Panel 5 - 2/2 (wide)

ROBIN (V.O.)

Compared to the emotional spectrum of a happy individual living in the 21st century, Zoe is merely doing her best impression.

Panel 6 - 1/2 (narrow)

Day planner: Wednesday. Current activity: Sexual encounter

Panel 7 - 2/2 (wide)

ROBIN (V.O.)

One would think if you'd never experienced the real thing, you wouldn't miss it. Yet, somehow, she knows there ought to be more to this life.

Zoe is buttoning up her shirt, leaving a stranger's bedroom. The stranger (not visible) calls out from the other room.

STRANGER

Bye

ZOE

Bye

[[maybe split this in two, one bedroom scene one good bye scene]]

Panel 8 - 1/2 (narrow)

Day planner: Thursday. Current activity: Gaming

****Panel 9 - 2/2 (wide)****

ROBIN (V.O.)

She'd considered suicide several times. Thinking rationally about it, life wasn't doing much for her, and she wasn't contributing much of significance back to life at large either...

Zoe is playing a game on virtual reality. She's wearing Virtual Reality goggles. She should be sitting at an angle so that we easily see the monitor in the background, which shows a picture of what she's simulating:

<http://i.ytimg.com/vi/7rqTehEb9ks/maxresdefault.jpg>

Jumping down from a skyscraper.

===

>PAGE 5, 4 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

ROBIN (V.O.)

...but the positives marginally outweighed the negatives. There were, after all, days like these.

COMPUTER

Good work! How about some extracurricular activities this Friday evening?

Zoe is staring blankly at her screen, showing no sign of the "Friday spirit".

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

COMPUTER

You have sufficient credits for an Emo to enhance the enjoyment of today's activities. Would you like to purchase one?"

Zoe looks into the air as if addressing the computer's omnipresence.

ZOE

(with a hint of disdain)

No. Turn on my printer in a locally encrypted instance then go to sleep.

((A “printer” in this case is a modern version of today’s 3D printers. They can be used to create any kind of basic object, provided it has the chemical elements. So instead of “blue and red ink”, this printer would have cartridges with “H (Hydrogen), Li (Lithium)” and so forth. We don’t go in depth into this though. Readers will be expected to make the logical leap.))

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

Zoe makes a long, cat-like stretch, cracking her fingers above her head.

COMPUTER

Printer turned on in locally encrypted instance. Omnipresence shutting off in 2.., 1...

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

We’re presented with a “Print Page” where Zoe has added the substances of her choice:

“Substances ready for printing:

- GLHF - Emulates a feeling of well-being and euphoria. Increases (read more...)
- Fruits of Nature - Inspired by an all-natural blend. Can work as an excellent sensory enhancement in smaller doses. Bigger doses can induce powerful hallucinations (read more...)
- Earth to Brain - Kicks in during REM sleep. A simple hard-reset for your brain. Removes the effects of nearly any substance (Emos not included) (read more...) ”

===

>PAGE 6, 5 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/3****

Zoe hits a key. “*tap!*”

****Panel 2 - 2/3****

The printer, a matt grey square box in the corner of the room, starts making whirring sounds.

****Panel 3 - 3/3****

A small tray appears with 3(?) colourful tablets inside (or maybe double-up)

****Panel 4 - 1/2****

She pops the most colourful pill right away...

****Panel 5 - 2/2****

...and leans back in her chair, just as there's an incoming message.

COMPUTER

Your delivery has arrived.

===

>PAGE 7, 6 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

Zoe opens the door to greet a delivery bot (a flying drone for instance) with a bucket of chicken wings.

****Panel 2 - 1/2****

She discards one. With her mouth full and chewing, she looks unimpressed, almost disappointed (but still quite emotionless)

****Panel 3 - 2/2****

Then she closes her eyes and inhales deeply.

****Panel 4 - 1/3****

She grabs another wing, smells it first this time

****Panel 5 - 2/3****

then bites into it, still with her eyes closed.

****Panel 6 - 3/3****

With a mouth-full of chicken, she smirks.

===

>PAGE 8, 5 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

Zoe is sitting in a hallelujah-like pose: hands stretched upwards, bits of chicken flying out of her mouth as she exclaims:

ZOE

So... fucking... GOOD!

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

She laughs so hard she falls backwards onto the floor and knocks over the bucket of chicken wings, spilling it all over the floor.

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

She keeps on laughing.

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

Looking at the ceiling, she calms down a bit and thinks out loud.

ZOE

Now why is that only funny on drugs...

****Panel 5 - 1/1****

Still lying down.

ZOE

MUSIC! Computer, wake up! I'm going out. Get me pumped! Make it one of the classics.

===

>PAGE 9, 2 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

Zoe is getting dressed.

COMPUTER

Will you be requiring a contraceptive pill?

ZOE

Nah, just going dancing.

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

She heads out the front door.

ROBIN (V.O.)

Running on a time-tested mix of what was once popularly known as LSD, MDMA and N20, Zoe hits the town.

===

>PAGE 10, 4 PANELS, 4 LEVELS<

INT. BIG CLUB - NIGHT

There are many ways to do this. We could easily do it with a single panel containing 4 talking-bubbles. Or with a lot of silhouettes. Open to suggestions.

[[NOTE: Old exposition has been redacted. Page needs to be rewritten.]]

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>PAGE 11, 5 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. BIG CLUB - NIGHT

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

Across the dance floor from Zoe, a man is being extremely loud and obnoxious. He's nicely groomed and expensively dressed. Clearly pleased with himself.

****Panel 2 - 1/2****

Zoe has a look of mischief on her face as she gets herself a drink from a dispenser.

****Panel 3 - 2/2****

Having walked up besides him, she feigns a fall and spills her drink all over his pristine suit.

****Panel 4 - 1/2****

Yet he doesn't seem at all upset about the incident.

****Panel 5 - 2/2****

ZOE

What are you so happy about?

ABE

I just chose to feel happy today, that's what I'm so happy about. I also chose to feel adventurous, which brought me here.

===

>PAGE 12, 4 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

She gets it now.

ZOE

(smugly)

Emos eh. You rich fuck...

ABE

(motions with his hand to his ear)

What?

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

loudly into his ear...

ZOE

YOU RICH FUCK!

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

ABE

Wow, quite the mouth on you.

ZOE

I'm not gonna help you make blowjob innuendos so give it a rest. So.., Emos, is it all it's cracked up to be?

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

ABE

Never tried it?

ZOE

Look around genius. Half the people in here pay rent that costs less than a day's worth of that stuff. And why bother? We can make our own Emos for free.

ABE

Drugs? Like the stuff you find on the recipe sites? Not the same thing.

ZOE

How would you know? Have you even had a taste of *the dark side?*

===

>PAGE 13, 4 PANELS, 4 LEVELS<

INT. BIG CLUB - NIGHT

Panel 1 - 1/2

ABE

You wanna try it? Emos?

ZOE

What, you wanna buy me one, rich boy?

ABE

Yes.

ZOE

Tell you what. I try yours, you try mine.

Panel 2 - 2/2

ABE

You mean.., I dunno, isn't it kinda dangerous?

ZOE

Wake up half-a-brain. Every single person in here is on something, and it's sure as hell's not your FDA approved Emos. You see anyone lying on the ground foaming at the mouth?

ABE

Actually I did see a guy outside who looked pretty--

****Panel 3 - 1/1****

ZOE

Oh shut up, there's always some amateur around to give it a bad rep. Just look at me. I look fine don't I?

ABE

Mighty fine indeed!

ZOE

Well fuck you very much Mr. Slick.

(maybe have her flip him off, Spider Jerusalem style)

Let's do this.

****Panel 4 - 1/2****

She hands him three pills identical to the ones she printed earlier.

ZOE

You gotta take 'em right away to give it time set in.

Abe looks at the pills he's receiving.

ABE

If I die a horrible death, that's on you.

****Panel 5 - 2/2****

ZOE

Less complaining more swallowing.

He grins and chugs it down.

===

>PAGE 14, 4 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

INT. BIG CLUB - NIGHT

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

Then they're at a dispenser where Abe pays for an Emo.

ABE

Same combo as mine. It needs your DNA now.

He points at a designated spot on the dispenser.

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

ZOE puts her finger on the dispenser and it pokes her.

ZOE

Au!

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

Quickly afterwards, a pill pops out. (it should look like the friggin' iPhone of pills)

ABE

You're in for a serious ride, he he.

ZOE

(didn't quite hear)

Say what?

ABE

Nothing.

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

ABE

Go on, pop it.

ZOE

How long does it last?

ABE

Almost exactly 8 hours.

ZOE

Your phrasing sucks...

She swallows the pill and...

===

>PAGE 15, 5 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

(Smaller panel of the two). the effects are immediate. She's completely dumbfounded at first, staring around in the room, eyes wide open.

ZOE

holy. effin'. eff.

ABE

Told you it's different.

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

Bigger panel, focusing on Zoe's sheer joy.

ZOE

WOOOOOOOOOOOOO!

(big grin)

===

>PAGE 16, 5 PANELS, 4 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

ZOE

Hey, what's your name?

ABE

Abe.

ZOE

I'm Zoe. Come dance with me Abe.

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

For the rest of the night, as far as they are concerned, they're alone, dancing the night away together on an empty floor. (once again, feel free to take advantage of that by only drawing vague silhouettes around them)

****Panel 3 - 1/1****

Dancing continues. There's a connection forming between them. Simply put, without using words we should be painting a very clear "they're falling in love" picture.

****Panel 4 - 1/2****

A few hours in, ABE is clearly somewhat disoriented. The drug cocktail is having some adverse effects on his psyche.

****Panel 5 - 2/2****

ABE falls on his ass, grasping into the air, breathing heavily.

ABE

I... feel like I'm losing touch with reality...

ZOE

Oh, crap.., It's okay. Stay calm, I'm right here with you. The noise tends to get to you the first few times. Let's go some place more quiet.

===

>PAGE 17, 5 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

Abe wakes up in Zoe's lap, in her apartment.

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

ABE

Ugh. Wow.., did I faint?

ZOE

Nah nah nah, you just fell asleep on the way over after exhausting yourself with your infinite wisdom. The last few hours have been a real eye-opener for you, don't you recall? Apparently you "know too much" now. Poor thing.

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

Abe looks up as if trying to see the back of his own skull. He touches his head.

ABE

What the-- Did you curl my hair?..

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

Zoe is beaming.

ZOE

I was feeling adventurous!

****Panel 5 - 1/1****

Abe stares dumbfounded at the lively girl in front of him.

ABE

You are so fucking beautiful!

ZOE

Ho, and here I was even starting to self-censor to accommodate your delicate senses.

===

>PAGE 18, 5 PANELS, 4 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

He leans in and kisses her and she kisses him back.

****Panel 2 - 1/2****

Zoe has her arms crossed, grabbing the bottom of her top, preparing to take it off.

ZOE

(suddenly self-conscious)

Ehm.., would you mind looking the other way.

(This is an important turning point, as there was clearly no sense of embarrassment involved in the opening scene.)

ABE

Oh, yeah, of course.

****Panel 3 - 2/2****

Looking out of the window whilst undressing, Zoe becomes transfixed with the night sky. It's late, nearing dawn, and there is a beautiful shimmer of light across the horizon.

****Panel 4 - 1/1****

Then Abe embraces her from behind and kisses her neck, bringing a big smile to her face.

****Panel 5 - 1/1****

She flips around in a hurry and latches on to him.

ABE

I wasn't actually planning to... do this, tonight.

ZOE

Me neither. Makes it better somehow, don't ya think?

===

>PAGE 19, 4 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. ZOE'S APARTMENT - MORNING

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

The sunscreen goes up. They're lying on their sides, facing one another. Their hands meet in the middle.

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

They both wake up. Zoe stares at Abe point blank for a while.

****Panel 3 - 1/2****

ZOE

Can you leave now?

(exactly like in the previous scene)

ABE

Sure.

****Panel 4 - 2/2****

They both get dressed and he leaves. The computer voice fires up and Zoe continues her usual routine.

COMPUTER (V.O.):

"Time: 10:30. You only slept for 4 consecutive hours. Recommended bed time today is (...)" .

===

>PAGE 20, 5 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

INT. ABE'S MANSION - MORNING

Panel 1 - 1/2

ROBIN (V.O.)

30 weeks later.

It's a big and expensive-looking room. Abe is in the middle of watching something when his phone rings.

Panel 2 - 2/2

ABE

He he, heh, hii?

ZOE

It's ZOE. We had sex 30 weeks ago. We need to talk.

ABE

Oh really? Wa-- phfff *snicker* ... Was I any good?

ZOE

No-- what? I'm outside your house. Just get down here.

ABE

Ha ha, really? That's so weird. Alright, I'm coming out.

Panel 3 - 1/2

EXT. ABE'S MANSION - MORNING

ABE comes walking out the front door of the small mansion of a house.

Panel 4 - 2/2

The gate opens and ZOE rushes in. She's fuller looking, having gained a lot of weight. And she's got a big round stomach.

ZOE

Why have you got such a stupid smile on your face?

ABE

Funny-pills, hi hi hi! They're awesome.

****Panel 5 - 1/1****

ZOE

Shit.., well listen, I'm pregnant--"

ABE

Well duh, haha!

ZOE

Shut up. It's yours, and weird stuff is going on.

ABE

Ahah, you're kidding me right?

ZOE

No.

===

>PAGE 21, 4 PANELS, 4 LEVELS<

INT. ABE'S MANSION - MORNING

****Panel 1 - 1/1****

ABE

Aaaaaooooooooh.., I thought you had taken one of those, like--

ZOE

I thought I had. I forgot somehow. Anyways, I figured you'd taken one, but obviously you didn't either.

ABE

I.., I guess maybe not.

ZOE

Guess not ey. Yeah well, doesn't matter who or what screwed up at this point.

ABE

... So, what now, you want money to get rid of it?

****Panel 2 - 1/1****

She slaps him HARD.

****Panel 3 - 1/1****

his gums are bleeding, but he's jolly as ever.

ABE

Hah, aaau, what was that for? I may be on the funny pills, but, come on! us having a baby together would be plain stupid.

ZOE

You're fucking stupid! You've no clue what's been happening. I feel different, something's not right. Like I'm on every conceivable Emo all at once! And recently it's all the time, no breaks.

ABE

Pfft, Emos don't work like that. I remember now. At The Composium club right? You did some heavy drugs that night. If that was like any other weekend for you then I'm not surprised your brain's getting fried.

ZOE

I know it's not the Emos. It's definitely not the drugs either. I know everything there is to know about'em, they don't work like that.

****Panel 4 - 1/1****

ABE

Eheh, so what then?

ZOE

The baby.

ABE

Uh?

ZOE

It's the only unknown in this equation.

(alt dialog: "I've ruled out every conceivable possibility, leaving only the inconceivable as the most rational answer)

ABE

... that's dumb.

===

>PAGE 22, 4 PANELS, 3 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

Zoe swiftly grabs hold of Abe's hand

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

She forces it to her stomach.

ABE

Ey! Stop it!

****Panel 3 - 1/1****

He tries to pull back but ZOE holds on so tight he just pulls her in close.

ZOE

You stopped laughing

ABE

(erratic)

No kidding? You're really freaking me out here, why would I be laughing?

****Panel 4 - 1/1****

ZOE

Because you're on Emos, and Emos don't stop working just like that.

ABE tries to fashion a sensible argument but he's hitting a wall. He frantically looks around, trying to come up with some retort.

===

>PAGE 23, 3 PANELS, 2 LEVELS<

****Panel 1 - 1/2****

Then his eyes lock on her stomach, and he spreads his palm over it.

ABE

What in the...

****Panel 2 - 2/2****

ZOE

(desperate)

Help me

****Panel 3 - 1/1****

They embrace one another.

ABE

Ok.

===

"To Lucy. From: Your mother"

Dear Lucy

Most of this story will be told by Robin because they've got the bigger picture. But remember, Robin has a lot of me in them, so in a way I'm coming along for the ride, all the way to the end.

You were there yourself for a lot of it, but at one point you were just a seed in my belly. And before that, no one knows! Over and over again, I've tried to explain that time before there was you. I think I keep coming back to it because we made so many mistakes, and I'm hoping that the more you understand, the more you'll forgive us.

In the year 102 AT, by every metric but one, we were a lot better off than our predecessors. The graphs and diagrams looked just like we wanted them to. Through the marvels of science and pure tenacity, we rid ourselves of our handicaps and became perfectly healthy, optimally efficient beings. Just as we always aspired. We've reached the point where technologically enhanced biology is an altogether safer, less

error-prone form of evolution. It's the end of mutations drawing straws in the haphazard game of natural selection.

And yet, numbers fail to paint an accurate picture. The thousand-fold increase in suicides might have raised a few eyebrows under different circumstances. But under *these* circumstances, there was also a thousand-fold decrease in practically all other causes of death. One spike nullified the other and all you could see in pure data was "Exponential Progress", two words we worshipped like they were holy scripture.

In spite of how well we're doing, something is clearly "off". You did not grow up having this feeling, or rather, that absence of feeling. But I trust you remember our many talks about it. At some point, someone hit the off-switch. Looking back, we were frogs being boiled alive.

As of this writing, I am one of only a few people alive who knows we're worse off for it. No need to tell you that though. I know for a fact that you will fix it. I don't say that to put pressure on you, or prescribe a destiny. I just say it because you're you, and I know you, and you will do the right thing. For yourself and for the rest of the world.

Lastly, you'll most likely read this when I have passed on. That's going to be sad for you. Believe me, it's sad for me too! It's terrible news for both of us, especially if you receive this at the young age that I fear you might. But it's okay. I do honestly feel like, even as of right now, I've done my fair share of living. I wouldn't have minded a longer time on the ride, but at the end of the day I'm just thankful I got my turn.

And it's all thanks to you, my beautiful baby girl.

If you ever miss me - any of us - just remember that there's a connectedness to the world that we're still eons away from understanding. In some way, I remain in this world. And as far as being "plugged in" goes, you're unmatched. If you ever want to talk to me, just look inwards. Look for that connection.

I love you so, so much. As does your daddy, and Jasper, and everyone else you brought back.

Love,

Mum, Dad, Jasper; all of us.