

## Think

The world is expanding as it gets smaller. It used to be that the people came to New York to see the skyscrapers. To look up with gaping mouths at their sheer 'bigness.' They wanted everything 'big.' Big was alluring. Now everyone wants small. Now, they come to New York to see computer chips the size of your fingertips that hold more knowledge than the entire human race combined. They want to see robots, the size of flies, that know directions and math solutions and speak with an almost human intelligence. They want to see the tick-sized robotic healthcare professionals, traveling through one's bloodstream, detecting any and every problem, relaying information through one's bite-sized computer every second of the day. Now everything is about smallness. As the world expanded in people and knowledge, everyone became desperate for space, anxious to fit entire universes into a single atom.

Meanwhile, humanity is getting smarter as it gets more ignorant. Leviathan Mink is only 6-years old, but he knows every planet in the galaxy. He learned Einstein's theory of relativity when he was only four-years old. He knows how to build a computer. He knows about supernovas and black holes. He knows more at six-years old than Stephen Hawking or Einstein ever knew in their life-times.

Every six-year old born in the 23rd century, in fact, knows these things. However, unlike Leviathan, they are slowly getting more and more ignorant. Knowledge was fed into their brains from the moment they first saw the world. They got to watch, in perfect HD graphics, the birth of a star in a galaxy five thousand light-years away from them before they could even talk. They fell asleep to tiny robots whispering mathematical equations in their ears and had access to every piece of the universe from their bite-sized tablets, tucked safely inside their indestructible,

nuclear-proof, and impenetrable houses. They never knew what it was like to have to work. To have to search for knowledge. To have to persevere through challenges. To have to think for one's self. Now the wires and computer chips and screens do it all for them. Yes, they can read by four-months of age, but they cannot comprehend. They cannot state an opinion or a thought that is their own, that did not come from a voice inside a metallic box. They cannot tell you right from wrong based on their *own* definitions of morality.

Only Leviathan thinks. He's six-years old, but, somewhere buried inside him, he has the genes and spirit of someone who once refused to be anything but fully and completely one's own independent self. He does not *just* read, he *thinks* about what he reads. He keeps a little notebook of his questions, his opinions. He believes in gods because he decided he believed in them, not because the people inside the screen told him to believe it. He decides what is right and what is wrong.

He loves, too. He was smarter than his grandparents, but he visited them every day, despite the fact that their minds were no longer useful in expanding the universes. He doesn't believe the different mind of a down-syndrome child is a mind wasted. He doesn't believe that the elderly are merely people who take up space. He cares. Now he must learn.

His face is one of 20 six year-olds from a variety of universes, compacted into a single atom. Some, like Leviathan, are privileged and intelligent. Others have seen no more than water in their lives, knowing neither how to read nor write. Others have minds that can't quite keep up. All 20 faces stare expectantly at me, waiting to be taught.

We are of a new universe. Humans took up space, so we opened up universes in every atom, searching every pore of the earth to squeeze human life into. We tore into the very fabrics

of the universe. We tore straight into other universes, combined worlds, and peoples and times, until time and place was no longer a concept. Now, there is only *now* and *us*. No tech. No laws of physics. We have hearts that don't quite beat, but at least exist. We have lives that don't quite live, but at least exist. It is a universe of mere existence. A universe that cannot be understood according to our laws of science and of physics. A universe with no meaning.

This is what I must teach them. *Meaning*. Every mind, naturally, searches for significance. Even in universes that are not significant, that are nothing, that cannot be understood - the mind searches for something to mean something. I must teach them meaning. To make meaning out of nothingness. To make meaning out of nothing more than human life.

Leviathan stands out among the rest of the students. They are all different, hailing from all parts and times and places of the universe, but he is the most different. Why? Because he thinks. No matter one's knowledge, no matter one's experiences, one can still think. One can still be one's self. One can *make* one's own self. One can make one's own entire universe. By thinking.

"We are going to think," I say, softly.

20 pairs of eyes turn to me. Leviathan's light up. Others' dim. Some look confused. We are going to think to learn what this universe means. If nothing it means, then something we will, at the very least, *think* it to mean.

"Think," I repeat. "Think."