

The Death of Science

A Novel Introduction to Rootworld

By Jay Horne

Sample Prologue and Introduction

Prologue

The year was exactly 0000 A.D. when everything went to hell.

You'd have to be Jewish or Druish to enjoy that statement, but let's continue to consider that the audience is normal. Not that Jews and Drews aren't normal. They just wear weird shoes and different kinds of hats.

By normal, let's say generally American and not entirely in the know when it comes to biblical fact. And if you were born on any other continent, then you will already know that this book is going to be upside down from the get-go.

Okay. The Britons might think this all sounds rather realistic, but they will only be fans because they are just as ignorant as us Americans. If man evolved from monkeys, I think we've evolved from Brits. Don't be angry, just say cheers, because we all know that the true measure of intelligence is not how much you can remember, but rather, how much you can remember while imbibing on as many dissociatives, inebriants, or pan galactic gargle blasters as possible.

It all started when Hazeus refused to drink wine at the last supper. That rubbed everyone quite wrong. To be fair though, he was only trying to make a statement that went right over the heads of everyone present. And by present, I mean presently drunk.

He also refused his last meal. Which was a thing unheard of! Even today, the worst of criminals get their last meal just the way they like it. It's considered humane.

But Hazeus was trying to make a point. Bodily desires keep one apart from their Roots. And in everyone's roots there exists a vein of magic.

How terrible it must have been to see the son of God, who'd become flesh, being hoisted up on a cross and subjected to suffering after such a terribly uncomfortable truth being portrayed.

Alas, there was wine there to ease the pain for his disciples though they would quickly begin to wonder just how it was that they used to turn water into it by a simple wave of the hand.

That is because, with the death of Hazeus came another death. The death of magic.

Not many years after Hazeus emerged from his tomb, he would get word that the Roman Catholic Church had begun celebrating his resurrection with a tradition called Holy Communion; an act in which believers partake of wine and bread right at the altar in his holy name!

It was then that the son of God returned home to Mom and Dad and the people of misguided planet Earth falsely witnessed our Lord ascending into Heaven, as it was they, who actually descended...

Okay, okay, we won't go that far!

Earth did not go to hell, per say. God just did the only thing he could to the people of Earth. Hazeus's parents did what any good parents would do with a child's early playthings. They put them in storage.

In a place that mankind could cool down while Hazeus grew up a bit and could better understood the reality of things. A reality that all beings must eventually face.

That certain reality that we put off as long as we can. The reality that we are ourselves ultimately responsible for what happens in our own universes.

There are many epic tales of Rootworld, but the first that is important to understand is one of a man and woman in the late twentieth century who stumbled upon two magic relics that wielded the power of raising the ancient tower of Babel.

The late twentieth century and early twenty first century were a trying time for humanity. They were approaching the point of blooming scientific discovery. A time when the entropy of the universe had become so compounded that science could no longer keep up with explaining things to everyone. Even with a world-wide-web, disinformation was preventing humanity from agreeing on any one belief system.

Some still believed that aliens would invade. Some believed that no God existed at all. Some believed that you could drive three husbands to divorce in hopes that they would pay your bills and going to church on Sundays would wash you clean of sin. Some divorced husbands believed that pan galactic gargle blasters solved all the problems in the universe!

It was an age that Father Time and Mother Earth had been waiting on for a long time. An event that meant their baby boy, Hazeus, was ready to be sent off to college!

It was during this time that something magical happened. And nothing magical had happened on Earth for thousands of years!

Young Jesse and Evelyn, drawn together in Love from different races and continents, succeeded in returning the relics to their origin and the Great Pyramid of Giza twisted up from under the Earth, revealing its true massive form as the tower of Babel that touched the sky.

In this moment, the continents of the great planet Earth were re-converged into one supercontinent, Pangea, and in surviving cities it was declared, firstly by a newly sober Pope, that Science was indeed Magic.

Introduction

Forty years after the Convergence, a girl named Kristen leaned left and crossed over a crumbled part of sidewalk bearing the painted remains of a permanent hopscotch course. The dark clouds had abated and were replaced with the shifting pink and blue of the barrier. Her yellow rain slicker flapped along the bottom edges as she pedaled her rusted bicycle through the intersection of twelfth and twelfth in what was still known as Bradenton, Florida.

On her back, wedged between her shoulders and her school bag, was a paintball gun loaded with enough ammo to bring down the house. She'd do battle with the boys at three o'clock behind the elementary side of the school, but she had played hooky this morning in order to go jump off the bridge with two of her other friends; they'd stood her up.

Ditching solo was the pits, but she'd already called in as her mother so was stuck riding things out till closing bell this afternoon. She was just going to have to try her best to stay busy and not think about her father. He probably would have let her ditch if it would have made her feel better.

The Village of the Arts used to be a happening place thirty years ago. History said there was a circus, a gem mine, and a mildly successful rejuvenation attempt of the area back in two thousand twenty, but now it was as vacant as a graveyard here. After the great flood, nothing really put back down roots in the area.

But the buildings were all still there. Even the old multi-directional sign, with its parrot on top, stood like a fossil. Petrified there like some old dinosaur bone sticking up from the tar pits.

She passed by the sign, which was now unreadable, and saw what she was looking for up on the hill. It was an old well behind what used to be Nan's curiosities. The decorative roof long gone. The top sealed with thick iron doors and a chain.

Nan's curiosities used to be town center to the Village of the Arts. Now, it was just, well, center, minus the town, and everyone knew to stay away from it. What was left of it existed beneath the all-encompassing roots of a giant banyan tree, which she pedaled cautiously up toward.

The real reason you stayed away was because of the squatters. According to her mother, there were probably meth heads, and child molesters living in it now.

There wasn't an honest job in the area for miles, besides at the K-12 learning facility, and the only safe place to live was directly across from it in the campus condominiums. Education was the only blue-collar job inside of the barrier, if you counted out carpentry, hospitality, and a handful of social services. Private sector stuff was pretty much nil unless you crossed the Memorial Skybridge, and for that you needed a visa.

At least she didn't see any perverts yet. Just a bunch of dirt and roots. And the road was mostly torn to hell. Not that anyone used these roads anymore. The school watchman had a motorized six-wheeler but you could see it coming from a mile away with its one ultra bright headlamp that could literally light something on fire if turned to its high-beam. As of yet, the sun hadn't gotten too high so the humidity was keeping the sand from kicking up into plumes like it ordinarily would.

There weren't any curbs since the Continental Convergence caused the flood, as no clean-up effort had made it this far out, so all of the mud that settled along the gutters and against the structures had just been left there to weather itself away over the years. By noon, things would be drier and get a lot more dusty, even though it was still cool.

It used to be considered a beach town. The gulf had been only ten or so miles to the east, evidenced by the sediment, made up of a lot of crumbled seashells.

She dropped her bike, pretty confident that the rumors her parents had told her had been bull crap.

Who'd squat out here? What would you survive on?

She passed by a few sickly-looking palmettos as she strode up to the giant legs of the banyan. After ducking under the strange tendrils hanging from above and into the shade of the underbelly of the great behemoth, she could see the brick making up the backside of the forgotten shop of curiosities. It had been tagged with spray paint. What could be seen of the wall was now a giant skull with its mouth open, reminding her of a print she'd once seen of the Grateful dead.

Pretty impressive, she thought, then wondered if the graffiti had been intentional or vandalism. It did have a freshness that didn't jive well with the rest of the hideout though. Well, she couldn't have suspected that she'd be the only one to ever play hooky back here, could she? She poked her head back out from the tree's hanging vines and looked around again. Then decided this would do.

She ran down and grabbed her bike and lifted it up over the small rise from the road onto the abandoned backlot, then made her way back to the hiding place. Spread the vines and pushed her bike inside. Then she took off her bag and slung it down by the brick wall, parked her bike in front of the huge skull mural and took off her slicker. It was a little warmer in here.

She decided to fold up the raincoat and use it as a cushion to sit on while she did a little art of her own.

She placed her cushion next to her bag so she could lean against the wall and pulled her backpack into her lap, being mindful of the paintball gun. Yeah, she could have a hell of a time shooting up this place, but that's not the kind of girl Kristen was. She liked art, illegal or no. Besides, she was set on spending at least half of her ammunition on John, who had shot her directly in the nipple last weekend.

Instead, she put the semi-automatic air rifle down beside her and rummaged through her sack to find her creative writing journal.

"Where in the hell?" she said, digging. Then she paused, thinking she heard something.

Was that laughter? Was someone laughing at her irritation?

She thought better of it and continued on. She pushed aside her Magic is Science textbook, her folder where her assignments are marked daily, which she was planning on forging sometime this morning, her facemask for paintball, her pencil box, her cell phone. She pushed it all back to the other side and heard the jingle of the co2 cartridges at the bottom of the bag. She reached all the way to the bottom—and then paused.

There it was again. Someone was laughing.

"Damn it!" she said and dumped the bag out on the ground along the wall.

The stationary piled out of the bag onto the packed shelly sand and the aluminum co2 canisters jingled down after them, careening off one another.

She gave the bag one last irritable shake and a final cartridge came down hard, striking the butt of her gun. She went rigid when the cartridge ruptured.

For a split second she thought she might have been bitten by a snake! Sand had blasted her all over and a loud sharp puffing sound filled her ears with cotton and then sent them ringing. She hardly had time to yelp before she realized what had happened. Instinctively, she began knuckling her eye sockets before a gentle laughter started up from inside of her.

The cartridge had shot clear out of the tree fort!

Then she was blinking the sand free from her eyelids, and when she realized she was okay she started laughing and dusting off her textbook and other little things. My god, it wasn't a snake, she thought as the ringing subsided. And Jesus, what if it had been the gun going off? She coulda shot her own eye out like that kid in the old Christmas show! She stood up under the banyan's embrace and dusted off her shorts and shirt. Then pulled out her ponytail holder and shook out her wavy red hair.

Little did she know that she wasn't the first carrot top to sit right here and see what she was about to discover.

While Kristen was pulling her hair back into a pony, she was looking at the spot in the sediment that the cartridge had blasted against the wall, inevitably sending itself flying free. There was a horseshoe shape of dirt missing against the base of the brick, and instead of more brick, there was something else there.

Kristen knelt and pushed away the sand on either side of the void with her palms. She put her face down by her red sneaker and looked at her own reflection. It was a dingy reflection, but it was definitely a reflection.

She went to work digging away what she could and before too long she had an entire arc of plate glass and its rotting wooden trim exposed. A window!

She tried rubbing the mildew off of the glass with her fist. No good. She looked around for something to wipe it clean with. She wasn't ruining her shirt. Then she cupped her hands against the filthy glass and tried her best to make anything out but could see nothing. Then she did something that she wouldn't have done, had it been a few minutes ago and had her writing journal been in her bag. She actually surprised herself when she did it. And she did it without thinking.

She rolled over on her bottom and kicked the glass with the heels of her tennies.

The sound startled her. It was like breaking ice cubes from the tray in the freezer, and it felt naughty, as if her mother might come home and find that she'd broken the bathroom mirror or something. Then the glass hit the ground inside of the old building and a spray of twinkling noises came up to her from the hollow, making her imagine the pieces shatter into sand below.

A cool air enveloped her calves then danced up the front of her legs as she drew them back to turn on her knees and peer through. Her t-shirt billowed as she braced herself on the brick above and beside the window considering ducking her head inside.

She breathed out and then in. It was the smell you'd expect from an attic not a basement, but she supposed it was Florida, after all. Then, after a moment's consideration she got up and went and parted the vines, letting some of the light flood in from the east.

After tying them back to leave a split in the dry tendrils, she crossed back over to the opening, watching her shadow shorten against the wall into nothing as she knelt back down and peered inside.

Now she could see the spacious interior illuminated by an antique orange light, giving her the unique experience an archeologist may feel while glimpsing the inside of an ancient Egyptian pyramid for the first time in centuries. There were piles of dusty, yet organized junk all around the room.

The back wall and floor were fashioned of sandstone with yellow and red inlaid tiles, all of it ancient. But there was something stark and clean that stood out from all of the other things down there. It was standing in the center of the room, a six-foot pile of tarnished rubbish behind it, a chest-high table at its side, and it was looking back at her from under a hooded cloak of pitch.

END OF SAMPLE