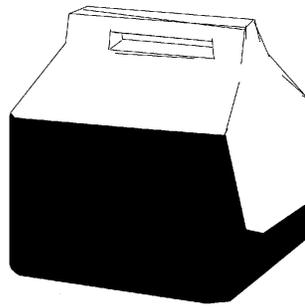


DO NOT RESUSCITATE

DO NOT RESUSCITATE

or

The Monkey Parade



Nicholas Ponticello

 BOOLEANOP, WOODLAND, CA

Copyright © 2015 Nicholas Ponticello

First Edition

ISBN-10: 099082473X

ISBN-13: 978-0-9908247-3-2

Library of Congress Control Number: 2015902743

Nicholas Ponticello, Woodland, CA

All rights reserved.

For permission to use, copy, or reproduce the contents of this book,
please send requests to info@booleanop.com.

www.booleanop.com

Cover Illustration by Nicholas Ponticello

To Nico—for bringing me to life

FOREWORD

ANCIENT ALCHEMISTS, despite having accomplished nothing for which history has any reason to remember them, became legendary for their tireless quest to conceive a magic formula that would take an ordinary substance, like iron or lead, and transmogrify it into yet another ordinary substance, gold, which humans have, incidentally, singled out to be of more value than all the other ordinary substances in the universe.

It was a futile endeavor, however, for it turns out ordinary substances such as lead and iron are composed of tiny little particles—namely protons, electrons, bosons, and so on—invisible to the naked eye, but which are so tightly linked arm in arm that the process of taking them apart and putting them back together again in any coherent manner takes a

NICHOLAS PONTICELLO

great deal of energy, which, as it turns out, takes a great deal of gold. A conundrum.

Incidentally, scientists today are trying to do the same thing as these ancient wizards, but instead of making gold out of lead, they are trying to make something potable, like freshwater, out of something toxic, like the ocean.

Here, again, a lot of energy and gold must be applied with great persistence for anything to get done.

The lesson: some things, once altered, are not easily undone.

Ancient alchemists, moreover, concerned themselves with an even higher aim. They sought to develop an elixir capable of granting the drinker the gift of immortal life. One might argue pharmaceutical companies are the distant cousins of these prehistoric potion masters.

They called the alchemists' quest for immortality the *Magnum Opus*, the Great Work.

In the following true account, the author refers with regular occasion to the *Magnum Opus*. While the staging of these references is sometimes confounding and tends to interrupt the flow of the narrative, it was in the better judgment of this editor to let the text alone, for who can say what profound implications may be lurking in the flotsam and jetsam of a dying man's last words? —NP

CHAPTER 1

MY NAME IS JIM LORENZO FROST, and at the end of April, I will download my brain to a microchip no bigger than a thumbnail. The microchip will be stored in a titanium canister in a warehouse at Humanity Co. until the specialists there figure out a tidy way to get my brain off the microchip and back into a human body, preferably my own, or at least a copy of my own.

It isn't my idea of a good time. My daughter Eliza talked me into it. She says it is common practice now to back up your brain. She has hers done every year or so, like a teeth cleaning or a routine trip to the doctor. She says almost everybody does it nowadays. I don't know what everybody thinks they've got up there that's so important.

Nevertheless, I agreed to it. Not because it makes any

NICHOLAS PONTICELLO

sense to me. I still remember the phone number of my best friend in elementary school, little Frankie Mahoney: 310-746-2275. Undoubtedly the number has changed, or Frankie is dead. So who needs a microchip for that kind of thing? Useless information.

Nevertheless, if downloading my brain onto a microchip will help Eliza sleep at night, well then that's that. My dear Eliza needs all the sleep she can get. She has what they used to call a nervous condition. Today they call it generalized anxiety disorder. I think that's the same thing my mother had. She just called it the jitters.

The motive for backing up your brain is simple: to live forever. At the present moment, the said objective is impossible. They can get everything out of your head, or so they say, and package it nicely in a shiny titanium canister that you can put on your mantel, or in a trophy case, or bury in your attic. But they don't have the foggiest idea how to get all that hogwash back into your head if, say, you suffer from memory loss or Alzheimer's disease, or you die and you want to upload your memories to a clone. For now everybody's memories just sit in a warehouse somewhere gathering dust. And that's what Eliza would like for me, too: my very own dust-gathering microchip. As if the graves of the dead don't gather enough dust already.

DO NOT RESUSCITATE

Eliza has three girls of her own. The eldest has just graduated college: Stanford. I was a Berkeley man myself, but I managed to get through my granddaughter's commencement without hissing. That's what we Berkeley Bears do when we come across a Stanford Cardinal: We hiss. And sometimes we make a chopping motion at our necks. But I try to keep such impulses to myself.

Eliza's eldest girl is named Marilee after my deceased sister, may she rest in peace. And goodness knows my sister Marilee is resting in peace somewhere, or resting nowhere at all if that's how it goes after you die. But at least she's not buzzing around on a microchip waiting to be brought back from the dead. The technology for that kind of thing wasn't around when she died. So I think it is safe to say my sister Marilee is gone for good. Done. Finished. Kaput.

Which brings me to my point. I cannot say I want to be gone for good. And although I am not wild about putting all my memories onto a microchip, I can't say I'm opposed to putting a few of my memories onto paper so that little Marilee Junior or whoever else happens along might hear from me from time to time and know that I was once futzing around on this planet.

Seventy-three years I have been futzing around on this planet. And that's how I suppose most people begin their

NICHOLAS PONTICELLO

biographies: I was born seventy-three years ago, on February 26, 1983, to Jonas Frost, the owner of an antique shop, and Anita Lorenzo, his pretty Italian wife.