

# *stimulus* → *respond*

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# HUMAN-MACHINE

A reengineering by Ian Truelove and a machine of 'brown-study works'.

Do beginnings really start out worse than endings? Let's see.

I think that we need to consider the effects of both beginnings and endings on ourselves. If we don't take the time to consider both the start and the end, I'm not certain we can understand either.

Some rules to consider at the beginning:

1. We are responsible for our own actions.
2. People often make negative statements in reaction to acts we perform.
3. Not everything has to be about us.
4. This is not a rivalry between two people.
5. "YOU DID IT" is not a valid argument.

Every story begins the same. You meet your hero, or a person who will become your hero. You see their greatest triumphs. They show you the same affection and pity they would give to their friends. You begin to know the best things about them and their abilities. Maybe you even fall in love with them and want to marry them.

One of the main things we think about when we imagine the journey of a great hero is what they were like on the day that made them. Or, at the very least, the week before. What were they like the week before the day that made them?

The way we answer that question, from what I've heard in the world, is to first build your life around personal relationships. There is not going to be a better love and relationship for you on earth than the one you build with your future hero. You need to build a life around them in order to have a wonderful relationship with them. I haven't heard that in this world, though: I have heard it in another world.

Each might be faulty, but here we have two artists' universes building and binding in front of our eyes, juxtaposing a soul-crushing rage and grief with an androgynous smile. The results are disturbing and at the same time arousing. But which is which? Who is who? Which world is this world and which world is 'another' world? Are our lovers' universes parallel, or is one contained within the other? Contemplate this radical imagery for a moment: the relationship is a black hole with two human souls passing through it.

If all the stories do not contradict each other then, by definition, there are no contradictions. But why is this necessary? If all the stories about relationships contain logical contradictions, then you cannot deny the plausibility of the entire set of stories. As mentioned above, if there are no contradictions then what you are dealing with is a lie that gets repeated over and over again. My lie is about the day I first met my hero, one week after the day that made him. We shared coffee.

At first it tasted of beans, dried fruit, and raspberries. It was mild, and it was complex but pleasant. When I took a little bite into this coffee, I came to realise how fantastic it was. The faint bitterness wasn't great at first, but when you tasted how good it really was, it all came out with the sip. I was so happy that I couldn't bring myself to consume more coffee and the hunger lingered for the rest of the day. When the cravings hit, I would try anything and everything. When I craved coffee, I craved my hero. I craved eternity.

"I didn't want to think that... but it really is.", I said.

"It's like a coffin!", said my hero.

We shared another look. Finally, he nodded, shoulders heaving, and spoke.

"It is real. I'm not really sure what to think."

"And that's the best you can do?", I asked.

I opened my arms, keeping the object of my desire close. We heard the muted crackle of the flames, the trickling and swirling, and the final, faint creak of the spirit binding the two of us together. My hero, my partner, my soul-mate, looked down at the flame and said, "I thought you'd like it." I felt my heart cramp.

The colour had changed, like a sunset across the horizon. Its distinct, indigo hue has become smoky and subdued with age, moving from a rich purple to a low light, an olive-green hue. Its beauty was like a vibrant painted face, like a tattoo artwork on the insides of the wrists, like honey-coloured wisps hanging from an angel's wings. The shimmering orange skin of the flame was more than enough to accentuate the complexion of my hero's face.

Night after night I kept looking at my love. Day after day we looked out into the world together. On the broad roads we felt the spring breeze, and the familiar trees and bushes all lined up. I had had a sense of dread for weeks, but it was no longer there. I smiled. I wanted to explore. When we arrived at the spot where the stones of the highest room were laid, we saw the stilt bridge with the dozens of hand-pipes that linked part of the tower to the rest of it, and we could easily hear the kung-fu sounds. We sat down at the bridge and breathed. I took out a camera and captured myself and my lover, my hero, my eternal flame.

I dreamt about it, and then it was real. It was my dream ending, and my reality beginning. The beginning was better than the ending.

*The following story is a reengineering of words by Alan Dunn by an artificial intelligence machine enslaved by the human Ian Truelove.*

I was sat on the sofas in our Fine Art studio waiting for Hillary, a student, who – after three years of artistic experience – still gave me headaches. The messy attacks she and her friends regularly inflicted on themselves had left me with a lot to deal with. I would say things to this student like, *“Yes, take a room with wooden furniture.”* and, *“Yes, it is also a public building that needs cleaning, but if you want it to feel like a modern Bauhaus, you need to say that you’re in a private Bauhaus”.* Hillary would look at me with a blank expression which would slowly morph into a look of vague malice. *“Create a stairwell with solid granite stairs, looking outside at the city’s Grand Boulevard! Feel relaxed in the presence of a painting! Perhaps imagine a wooden carriage full of cyclists!”*, I would suggest. *“Try to listen to another party piece with one piano in the middle. Critically reflect on all of this, please, I’d really rather pass you than fail you. I’m on your side!”*, I would passionately express, never quite sure if I was really helping. Instead of following my faux-wise advice she would delve into old Delia Smith cooking shows and create nonsensical vernacular artworks filled with even more bee noises than an industrial hive. I would have to listen to all these ‘fun antics’ week after week, gently weeping inside whilst smiling on the outside. Hillary’s misplaced notion of Delia Smith had led to her becoming possessed by the demons of despair. Having an embarrassing image of her friend Cynthia leaked on the Internet hadn’t helped matters.

Cynthia had had some success in the development of her studio practice when she had subverted the North American anime Blu-ray release of Tenchi Muyo, in which all the seven girls (except Dr Albedo) were replaced by men via a crude Adobe After Effects montage effect. Cynthia’s attempts at themed web comics had been less successful, but all that seemed irrelevant now that she had tragically gone viral.

Stung by sharp words about her ‘illustrations’ in a soul-destroying studio critique, Cynthia had firmly committed to experimental filmmaking, largely because her favourite tutor felt film had more potential for her, and she desperately wanted his approval. In the final act of her next film, ‘Ice Cream for Crows’, Cynthia had cynically cut together footage from a 1970s iced-cream delivery service promotional film, and it was this development of her art practice that had inadvertently led to her unfortunate exposure online.

*“Crystal is ready! The Crystal ice-cream delivery service is the best place to go for ice-cream!”*, squeaked the semi-professional narrator. *“Whether you prefer the sweet, creamy taste of fresh custard or if you prefer the crunch of candied almonds, our mouth-watering ice-cream selection is sure to satisfy all tastes! The taste of our ice-cream is so distinctive that you’ll be sure to find the perfect treat right away!”*, purred the unsettlingly colloquial voice-over man. *“Keep an eye on our Ice Cream advertisements for special offers and discounts, which we’ll apply on any orders placed before the final date!”* The dialogue was ironic in an obvious sort of way, but when Cynthia’s thoroughly decent but disturbingly contorted torso flashed up on screen momentarily, the juxtaposition was both mildly effective and entirely inappropriate. Cynthia’s fatal error was to upload the film to her YouTube channel. A Boston-based ‘mash-up’ artist called &Duzt\$ had taken Cynthia’s video and, with help from some open-source audio manipulation software, had constructed a cruel mockery of the poor girl. &Duzt\$ had appropriated an obscure drum and bass track and overdubbed

it with a heavily processed treatment of the ice-cream man's narration. He was made to scream, *"Layers of cream, sugary toppings and indulgent toppings"* as Cynthia's innocent awkwardness was mocked over and over and over again.

Hillary arrived. *"Hahahaha, I'm depressed..."*, she said. *"Why not take a look at what's on offer?"*, I said back. *"It's so cold inside the warehouse. If I make someone cry from being so cold, it will always put me at ease... even if it's the adults I love"*, she laughed. Baffled, but not showing it, I decided to change tack. I launched into a monologue about an avant-garde film I had half-watched about fifteen years ago.

*"You should watch 'The World is Gonna Have It – You're Welcome'. This film is about a scientist who is dying of ichthyosis. He is in one of the most prestigious establishments of medicine, the St. Louis University Hospital – let's call it 'the building'. The doctor in charge of him is a brilliant doctor, a gentile devout Protestant. He becomes angry when the doctor tries to make him drink a case of alcohol as an experimental cure for his ichthyosis. 'This is blasphemous!' he says to the doctor, 'you will never cure me of the disease which God created in me!'"* Hillary looked interested. I went on. *"In his fury he starts throwing dishes at the wall and starts speaking violently to the doctor. But the doctor can never utter such vulgar language without angering the patient..."* Hillary interrupted. *"What do you want from me?"* she asked. Jolted out of my zone of proximal bluster, I paused and tried to think. After what seemed like an age but was probably only a few seconds I said, *"I just want you to respond."*