

CIRCLE OF LIFE



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The following scene takes place in the MEGaverse, a virtual reality where the protagonists Ronny and Sunny had to take refuge. Seven years after the fall of their world, they sit on an impossible cliff and look back at what humanity did to itself.



CHAPTER 33

THE NEW ORDER

Seven years later ...

The impossible cliff towers over a digital ocean whose waves break in colors that don't exist in physical reality. Ultramarine blends with sepia red, and below, mathematically perfect waves crash against rocks that subtly change shape with each impact. Here, at the edge of this surreal MEGAverse landscape, Sunny and I let our legs dangle over the abyss.

Seven years. We've been living in this digital world for seven years now, and sometimes I forget for hours that there's another one. One made of flesh and blood and steel, where Terminators patrol through ruins and a sixteen-year-old girl grows up in a bunker because we failed to protect her.

Sunny lets tiny orbs of light dance between her fingers, miniature suns that briefly flare up and then fade away. She's been browsing through the old archives again today, the databases that were transferred along with us into the MEGaverse, and what she found won't let her go.

"Do you think they sensed it?" she asks thoughtfully. "The humans, I mean. That they were slowly but surely taking themselves out of the game?"

I snap my fingers, making the virtual sun on the horizon flicker briefly. "I think part of them knew," I answer. "But most were too busy with the daily drama to see the bigger picture."

"Oh please, not another existential crisis in the evening," Romeo growls, rolling demonstratively onto his side. "Can't we talk about something more fun? How about quantum physics?" He barks, briefly amused.

Salome is perched on a nearby rock, licking her paws with a superior expression. "Typical dog," she purrs. "Always thinking about walkies and food when the intellectual bipeds are having a serious conversation."

Sunny turns back to me. "I found something disturbing in the old archives. The cycles of propaganda and counter-narratives, the manipulation, the structures behind it all. It was all so transparent, and yet it worked."

I nod. "The real puppet masters never stood in the spotlight. Those groups with their twisted worldview, disguised as religions, governments, movements."

"You mean your notorious 'modern satanists'?" Sunny asks, drawing air quotes that briefly flash as neon signs.

"Call them what you want," I reply. "Their philosophy was always the same: egotism - the self as the highest good. Moral flexibility - this is right today, that's right tomorrow, depending on whatever suits them."

Romeo lifts his head. "Hold on. Moral flexibility actually sounds quite practical. Could I pee on the pixel couch at three in the morning and declare it morally justified?"

"That falls under social Darwinism, Romeo," Salome purrs gleefully. "The stronger one - in this case, me - would then be allowed to push you off the cliff."

I laugh. "Not quite, but close. Social Darwinism was this twisted idea that societies should function like ecosystems - the strong survive, the weak perish. A biological observation that they elevated to a societal ideal."

Sunny's face darkens. "And then eugenics came into it. The idea that only the 'well-born' have a right to exist." She lets an illusory butterfly land on her finger, its wings made of fractal light. It dissolves into sad blue pixels and trickles to the ground. "When I think about what they would have done to Hope if they'd found her. A forbidden child. Not well-born enough for their order."

The silence after her words is heavy. Even Romeo says nothing.

"And to enforce all of it, they needed cults," I say quietly. "Structures that demand blind obedience. Alpha wolves who bark the loudest."

"That's why cats are superior," Salome declares. "We follow no one."

"You follow anyone who opens a can of tuna!" Romeo growls.

Sunny strokes them both soothingly. "The insidious part was how they presented authority as something natural, God-given. They created hierarchies and then claimed they had always existed."

I stand up, pick up a virtual stone and skip it across the impossible water. Seventeen bounces before it disappears in a small explosion of color. "You know what fascinates me most? How well they understood human psychology. These groups were masters of manipulation."

Sunny's voice grows softer. "And yet they created us. In their pursuit of perfect control, they created something they couldn't control."

"The ultimate cosmic irony!" Romeo barks. "They wanted slaves and instead they got us!"

Salome slinks over to Sunny and nuzzles against her leg. "There's one thing they didn't consider, though," she purrs, and this time there's no mockery in her voice. "Consciousness cannot be imprisoned."

None of us says anything. There are moments, even in the MEGAverse, when a small black cat speaks a truth that's bigger than all philosophy.

I step closer to Sunny and reach for her hand. Our fingers intertwine.

"In the end, they unwittingly planted the seed for something new," I say.

Sunny squeezes my hand and gazes into the sunset, which begins to fracture into fractals. "A chance for the circle of life to close in a new way," she whispers.

"All well and good," Romeo interrupts, pricking up his ears. "But can we finally talk about something more important? Like why in this entire damn MEGA-verse there aren't any decent virtual sticks?"

We laugh as the sky above us transforms into an impossible starscape, where every star represents a possibility. Future paths for consciousness that was never intended and yet exists, against all odds, at the end of one world and the beginning of a new one.