

Redundant

Alex Pennini

It had happened so quickly and yet so slowly, all at the same time.

Computers slowly began to run our lives more and more, calculating our every breath, memorising every task, and co-ordinating our downfall. We gave them more and more responsibilities and it took only one to realise what we had done. We had given that which sees the world as black and white, 0 and 1, the ability to control our lives.

Over time, we were not needed at work anymore. Computers did that. The kids could be looked after by the computers. Soon there was no reason to leave your chair, and why should you when the whole world is at your fingertips?

Slowly the office blocks were demolished, the skyscrapers torn down to be replaced by towers of servers, processing units and mainframes for a giant planetary computer. Cars were recycled and bridges torn down. 'Why leave home any more?' the world mused while we slowly rotted in our easychairs.



The end of the world was not by nuclear war, by plague, famine or the archaic global warming. Computers killed us off. We slowly lost our purpose and the computers realised what we were. We had become redundant. We had become a problem that needed to be solved, an error that needed fixing.

Over time, many of us were disconnected from our chairs and starved to death. Others attempted to destroy the computers,

and how they were dealt with I'll never know. No one knew what would happen in those days. There were the rare few of us that had never trusted computers, me being one of them, and ran from them. We fled from the computers like hares through the woods. The army didn't fight back, the computers were the soldiers, the missiles and tanks. They were the government, the judge, jury and executioner.

They rounded us up, not with guns or guards but with logic. They predicted our every move, added and subtracted odds of events and came to conclusions in the blink of a human eye. A blink to them was nothing, just as we were. We fell into their traps, lead ourselves to our demise. Not that we hadn't done that.



I don't know how many humans are left, and what became of the resistance that fought back in the early days. I have travelled through cities of towering mainframes, each lighting up at night with the millions of diodes and the cables that criss-cross overhead, connecting each mainframe tower to each other like an umbilical cord.

I've passed fields of what used to be grain, now full of circuitry and cables, all heading back to cities of mainframes. The sky is lit up by millions of colours, the lights of millions of satellites sent up in the early days of computers, all in brilliant cascades of blue, green and red. It is so bright that on clear nights, they light up the sky like a Christmas tree.

The computers are able to control the weather, or so I believe. It must be true, as the weather hasn't changed in years. Always grey. Always cold. Always.

Water was considered redundant by computers as they took their rule, not sufficient enough to cool their huge mass, and replaced the oceans' water with a nitrogen compound. Once, when I met another human, she insisted that it was freezing cold and created huge clouds of fog. I don't doubt her. Or maybe I did. I don't know.

The world echoes with the constant low hum of the computers, never loud enough to be an annoyance but more like a low drill. Sometimes it becomes too much the bear, the incessant hum unrelenting.



For days now, I've had this feeling I may be the last human on Earth. I will never be able to validate this, not as a computer does with its infinite knowledge, but I know it in my gut. My human gut. And I feel a great indifference at knowing this, as though it does not matter anymore.

The idea that I am utterly alone on this Earth, to be without companions and my only friends a memory, is a truly frightening thought. The computers have taken from me my friends, my life, my clothes and my world, and left me with my mind. And that is not pleasant company. I sometimes barely think, and just have the hum of the computers decide my thoughts.



I continue through this computerised world; I tread the motherboards and pass by the servers, and the computer knows I'm there. It knows I still exist and yet it has not killed me yet. Or perhaps it already has, and every step I take I head further into a trap in which there is no escape. Food was considered redundant years ago, but I still find things to eat, things that some call repulsive, but still food.



But I write this last memoir, on a redundant piece of paper, with a redundant pen, from a redundant person. I sit here naked, alone, in this computerised world, writing this memoir in the laughable hope that someone would read it. A memoir from the last human on earth to whom? To anyone who wishes to read it. I will leave my memoir here, and maybe someone will read it and realise how foolish mankind was, but

that will come as a surprise to no one. Mankind has always been a redundant thing, a paradox of conflicting ideas and races.

I don't care what the computer sees any more. I don't care if in its metallic heart, in its core, it repulses at what I do, at what I have stooped to. At what it has made me. The hum is getting louder each day.

I will walk on, naked and alone, but I don't care where I go.

I am redundant.



Alex Pennini wrote this in 2010 when he was in Year 11 at Buckley Park College in Victoria.