HELLO?

AH, JONATHAN! YOU MADE IT!
Yeah, I was surprised to hear from you.

Thanks for coming anyways. Follow me.

Psh. You know I owe you one.

Haha, well, I hope you find this interesting.
VIRTUAL REALITY, RIGHT? I ALWAYS WANTED A VR SYSTEM, BUT THEY WERE TOO EXPENSIVE IN COLLEGE.

WHAT’LL WE BE PLAYING? BOXING? DRIVING? MINECRAFT?

NOT QUITE.
TAKE A SEAT, JON.
THIS... THIS IS IT?

I THOUGHT THERE WOULD BE LIKE, WIRES AND STUFF.

YOU UNDERESTIMATE HOW QUICKLY TECHNOLOGY PROGRESSES.
WE DID AWAY WITH BODY SUITS AND TRACKERS 7 YEARS AGO.

JON... WHAT DO YOU THINK VIRTUAL REALITY IS?

HUH?
UHM... ISN’T IT LIKE, A FAKE WORLD? SOMETHING GENERATED BY A COMPUTER?

UNTIL RECENTLY, YES. CG SIMULATIONS HAVE HAD A NOTABLE IMPACT ON THE HEALTH AND ENTERTAINMENT INDUSTRIES.

BUT WHAT USE ARE THOSE REALLY?
THEY’VE MERELY MADE REPETITIVE TASKS EASIER TO CARRY OUT. THE SAME GAME. THE SAME SKILL. THE SAME LIFE.

NO REAL HUMAN INGENUITY.

A TRUE SOCIAL REVOLUTION WILL ONLY BE POSSIBLE...

WHEN WE MERGE MAN AND MACHINE...
JON! WE CAN DO THIS NOW! WE CAN ALTER YOUR PERCEPTION OF REALITY FROM WITHIN!

DAMN. THAT SOUNDS KINDA COOL... BUT ARE YOU OKAY, RICHARD? WHAT'S WITH THE NEEDLE?
IN THIS SHOT IS THE REASON WE DON'T NEED WIRES OR DISPLAYS ANYMORE.

MILLIONS OF NANOBOTS. THEY'LL BE INCORPORATED INTO YOUR BODY VIA THE BLOODSTREAM.

LIKE TINY COMPUTERS, THEY'LL RESPOND TO THE ENVIRONMENT AND YOUR INPUT AND STIMULATE SPECIFIC NERVES TO CREATE A SENSORY RESPONSE.
UNDERSTAND?

NOT REALLY...

EMBRACE UNCERTAINTY!
GASP!
Welcome back, Jonathan.

How do you feel?

But also, fuck you.

Um... Alright.

How long was I out?

About 12 seconds.

What?!
WHAT... DID YOU DO TO ME, RICH?

YOU'RE A SUPERIOR HUMAN NOW. THE WORLD IS ANYTHING YOU WANT IT TO BE.
WHAT DO YOU MEAN?

THE NANOBOTS, JON. THEY’LL MIMIC ELECTRICAL AND CHEMICAL SIGNALS IN YOUR BODY IN RESPONSE TO YOUR WILL. SIGHT, TASTE, SMELL, TOUCH, AND SOUND. IT’S UP TO YOU WHAT YOU WANT TO EXPERIENCE. YOUR REAL HUMAN MIND, ZERO DELAY, AND THE PRECISION OF MODERN MACHINES.

THIS IS THE FUTURE OF VIRTUAL REALITY IN REALITY. THIS IS THE SINGULARITY.

LOOK AT ME, JON.

YOU’RE PROBABLY ANGRY AT ME RIGHT NOW, WHO DO YOU WANT TO SEE?
WHO AM I TO YOU, JON?

WELL, JON?

...MOM?
FUFUFU! IS THAT SO? HOW CUTE.

DO YOU SEE THIS TOO?

NO. I SEE WHAT I WANT TO SEE. WE EACH HAVE OUR OWN PERCEPTION OF THE WORLD.

WHY?

BECAUSE WE’RE INDIVIDUALS.
I mean, why would you make this? How does this make us more human? Isn’t everything still fake?!
STACY...

JON...
I HAVE A DREAM.

THIS TECHNOLOGY WILL CONTINUE TO DEVELOP AT AN EXPONENTIAL RATE. WE’LL BE ABLE TO LOAD ALL HUMAN MEMORIES ONTO A DIGITAL PLANE, AND AT LAST TRANSCEND OUR PHYSICAL BODIES.
JON, I AM NOT YOUR STACY. AND AT THIS TIME, I CAN NEVER BE YOUR STACY. HOWEVER, IN THE FUTURE, YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GENERATE AND INTERACT WITH YOUR MEMORIES OF HER, COMBINED WITH THE INFORMATION FROM ONLINE DATABASES.

SOME PEOPLE WILL ALLOW THEMSELVES TO LIVE IN THIS "FAKE" ISOLATION. IT'LL BE LIKE THE DYSTOPIAN FUTURE OF THAT WALL-E MOVIE.

BUT! IT ALSO HAS THE CAPACITY TO BRING ALL OF MANKIND TOGETHER.

OUR COGNITIVE VIRTUOSITY IS THE RESULT OF SOCIAL COOPERATION. BY INCREASING THIS SCALE OF COOPERATION, WE WILL APPROACH THE APEX OF SUM HUMAN INTELLIGENCE.

WITHOUT THE CLOUD OF GENDER, RACE, OR CLASS BIASES, WE BECOME EQUAL AS HUMAN BEINGS...
Jon, doesn't a world with 7+ billion people working in peace sound beautiful?

Even if that world isn’t physical?

Yeah. I guess so...
THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING IN MY STUDY, JON...

...AND FOR BEING MY FRIEND.

YEAH. IT'S NO PROBLEM.
EXCEPT FOR THE WHOLE STABBING ME WITH A NEEDLE THING. WHATEVER.
Haha... sorry about that. I got lost in the moment.

Take it into consideration next time.

Of course, but you were my first subject.

Seriously? Why me?

Because you're a good person, Jon. You chose me over Stacy. I know you won't use the VR nanobots for selfish reasons.
MAYBE YOU THINK TOO HIGHLY OF ME.

MAYBE! WE'LL FIND OUT IN DUE TIME. HAVE A SAFE TRIP HOME!

YEP, BYE!