

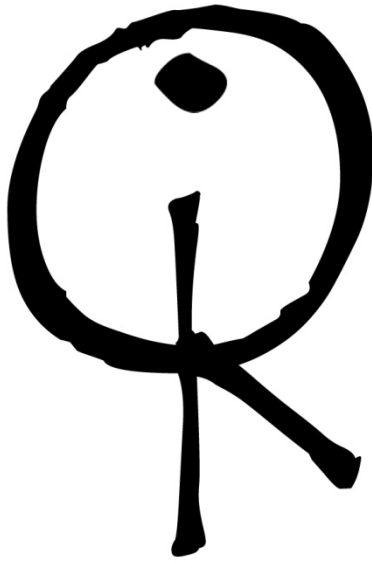
**MY MIND IS A HOLE IN THE UNIVERSE**

by

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## ABSTRACT

Today, science and creative fiction are closer than ever. The current unified theory of physics is bringing parallel worlds and infinite realities into the light of truth, proving that we have the creative power to build worlds with grandiose landscapes, uncanny characters, and miraculous events that exists throughout the vast plane of reality.

My life experiences become a skewed alternate reality absorbing all of my thoughts, fears, and fascinations without control. As I glimpse into my own mind, I record the imagery of my imagined worlds and chronicle its events. I am not conceptualizing; I'm not asking *what if*. I am giving you a looking glass allowing you to see for yourself.

**To My Parents:  
Charles and Delilah Gramling**

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## INTRODUCTION: THE SCIENCE OF IMAGINATION

Today's scientific community has reached the closest thing to a unified theory of physics in decades. M-Theory features a spectrum of 11 dimensions of reality; 10 space and 1 time. We are all familiar with time and the first 3 space dimensions which our universe as we know it exists, but as we move up through the remaining unfamiliar dimensions we eventually come to the 10th dimension. Inside of this 10th dimension resides all possible timelines, and all possible universes. In M-Theory, the 11th is the final space dimension where this 10th dimensional material exists in *Membranes*.

With this new information we can begin to deduce that there is theoretically an infinite number of universes within a single multiverse and within reality itself. Our next logical conclusion would be: if there is an infinite number of universes, what we imagine must exist. Even more astonishing is that M-Theory goes on to claim that these membranes create a new universe every time they collide. Our imaginations being somehow connected to these collision may not seem so farfetched a concept.





Figure 1: The Mourning Machine

## FOREWORD: FRAGMENTING LIFE

The presence of narrative is extremely important while building and expanding upon the universe I am creating. The following story fragments are no less important in understanding why. The early events of my life gives insight into the foundation of my mind and expresses the passion I have for using the powerful mechanism that is the human imagination.

These separate fragments of my life stand as individual markers which aid in the comprehension of my artistic vision, while also working together as an empirical structure elaborating upon such things as influences, inspirations, artistic processes, and themes. Some of these fragments take the form of brief moments in my life as I remember them, while others provide explanations of how I presently feel about the topics. The INSPIRING LIFE fragment depicts a skewed perspective of normal life while signifying a brief view of an alternate world.

## FRAGMENT 1: FOUNDATION

My earliest memories take place in the bed of a blue Chevrolet pickup truck. It had an aluminum *topper* for protection against the elements and a twin-sized mattress in the bed for comfort. Though we were never out of the authoritative grasp of our Mom and Dad, this is where my brother and I lived. I have never been quite sure why my parents decided to take their road trip but I am thankful that they did. It was that "let's get rid of everything we own and drive across the country and back" split-second decision that became the catalyst igniting my young imagination. This was the greatest adventure of my life, and my life had begun just a few years earlier.

Unfortunately, the road trip didn't last forever: we eventually made it back to this end of the nation and our accommodations were upgraded slightly. We started building the house that would become my home for the next 15 or so years, but in the mean time, we would sleep in a single-room camper trailer and use the local Florida swampland for our other various personal needs.



Figure 2: The Amenities

These were the years that impacted me the most. I found myself imagining strange things and seeing things even more strange. That old truck often took the form of an alien spaceship and often encountered things beyond the world as I knew it.

By the time I started preschool, I had seen more places, heard more uncanny stories, and met more interesting people than my young mind could contain. I had to do

something with this information and though we had few luxuries and little technology, we did have paper and pencil: these became my creative outlet. Though I was far from this realization at the time, narrative storytelling through visual art would become my primary tool for creating my own universe.

## FRAGMENT 2: FASCINATIONS

The notion of influence and inspiration was something I never quite understood until my college years. I always wanted to be influenced by some great ideal and often consciously sought out inspiration but never quite comprehended what it was or how to use it. However, like most treasures of the world, I finally found what I was looking for only when I stopped specifically looking for it. I realized that I was being inspired and influenced no matter what, whether I sought it or not. Being fascinated by just about everything I came in contact with was a great boon to my creative life.

My earliest fascinations consisted mostly of running around the swamps pretending I was somehow saving the world by climbing trees, and beating on palm fronds with my homemade wooden sword. However, if I wasn't partaking in heroic journeys of that sort, I was either in school or church. Church for the most part was my own choice for many years and not for the gift of salvation or repentance, but for the great stories that were told there. Even though I have long since developed my own spiritual beliefs I still feel deeply connected to the stories of the Bible and the Apocrypha.

The next natural step for me was of course comic books. I still remember my first being an issue of "The Real Ghostbusters" where the characters battled a slew of giant cockroaches. I became obsessed with comics for many years. It drove me to begin writing and illustrating my own stories, and eventually I began to search for even more imaginative stories, worlds, and characters. Novelists such as Dan Simmons, Larry



Niven, and Robert A. Heinlein revealed to me the amazing concepts of multiple dimensions, time travel, and artificial intelligence. Upon quenching my thirst for these fascinations, my visual art ascended to a new level and took on a *life* of its own.



Figure 3: Little Green Man

### FRAGMENT 3: INSPIRING LIFE

*I jog around my living compound, as ethereal white and grey giants stare down at me from above. The nearest star, a yellow dwarf, is so close and hot it burns my eyes when I catch it in my field of view; a reminder that I must finish this outing quickly or my skin will begin to sear. I return to my quarters after the jog and the giants go about their business fighting and colliding with each other. I think to myself: the grey's must be winning, I can hear them roar.*

*I remember that some of my software packs have available updates, so I jump online and let them download as I check communications. Other than mass advertisements, there is nothing of importance in the communications directory; there is however something interesting happening on the news feed. It's spitting out information about our newly elected political leader and how he is going to deal with the War, but what peaks my interest the most is the discovery of distant planets that are very similar to our own. I quickly make a data entry reminding myself to read them later because right now I have to go meet some friends at the pub.*

*I park my transporter at the pubs docking station. It's now night and as I step outside I feel a sense of accomplishment. I was right about the greys; they've won and they're celebrating. My friends aren't here yet, so I sit at the bar and order a drink. A gangly big-headed creature with crooked teeth sits down beside me. I've never seen his kind before but he seems friendly enough to talk to. He introduces himself as Eddie*



*and I tell him about my rather ordinary day. He says to me in reply, "That ain't no ordinary, that's bizarre. I couldn't make up a story that strange!"*



Figure 4: Eddie

## FRAGMENT 4: CONSTRUCTING A UNIVERSE

There are some who would say one form of media is always preferable to another. They would say creating something physical and tangible is more real, more artistic, and more accepted than something virtual and conceptual. I can't accede to this school of thought.

I'm no stranger to building things with my hands. As a child I helped build the house I grew up in and as a young adult, I worked with my father building all sorts of structures. If there is something I want or need, the first question I ask myself is: can I make it? If it's broken, can I fix it? It wasn't a trait that came naturally to me or something I enjoyed doing; it was just one of those great things that we pick up from our parents and the people we look up to. My father would make things, and if I was to be as great as him, I had to make things; it was just that simple.

In high school and in the early years of college, I sought to be a traditional media artist. I took every drawing, painting, and sculpting class I could. I enjoyed the clay crusting on the tops of my fingers as I sculpted and I still consider linseed oil to be one of the most pleasant scents in this universe, but I always felt a barrier impinging upon me. I wanted my sculptures to come to life; I wanted to go inside of my paintings; I wanted things to move; I wanted my characters to speak. I realized that I wasn't trying to create mere objects and representations of characters: I wanted to create them, I wanted to make them real.

It was my fascination for film and technology that introduced me to the world of computer animation. Though many would tell me that this path would lead to detachment from true creative expression, I saw it differently. I saw it as an advancement: I was now moving objects with my mind and flicks of my fingers, allowing nearly unbridled expression. I could think things into existence, make physical objects virtual, and make virtual objects physical. This was the best technology could offer my imagination, and I wanted to take advantage of it.



Figure 5: A Layered View



Figure 6: Physical to Virtual

## FRAGMENT 5: DARK CLOUDS

My childhood was full of fun, and I would not trade it for the world, but it didn't come without hardships. As you already know, I grew up in near poverty on the coast of Florida so the concept of a dark cloud is something I know very well figuratively and literally. Thus, it's something I try very hard to make present in everything I do.

I have often referred to this dark cloud element as the *looming presence* in my art work. While growing up, my family was always concerned with what may happen or if something has already happened; what repercussions would it have? Something as miniscule as a flat tire would send us into a financial crisis and an actual dark cloud would make things far worse.

In the summer of 1993 my home town of Steinhatchee was hit by a devastating storm that would be known as the storm of the century to this very day. Even though I consider what happened to my family to be a minimal affliction compared what happened to many of the other people we knew, these events are still etched into my memory as if they are a recent dream.

I was lying on the floor of my parents room wide-eyed and face up when unfortunate events began to happen. I saw the ceiling open up before my eyes and heard the cries of panic. Despite the leaves and grit falling into my eyes, I remained there in shock staring at the dark sky. Though we all managed to escape with no more than emotional and monetary damages, we were clueless of the devastation that was being caused to our other family and friends. The next day we saw the terror first hand;

the whole town was in ruins. The floods and winds had placed cars on top of houses, boats upside-down in the streets, and buildings drifting in the river. Many people we knew were missing, and worse, some had died.

These dark events are represented in everything I do, whether it be a scene of a dead landscape, a character with the look of despair, or one looking as if to warn us of some great danger. I feel that there is always a looming presence in my life; thus in my art work, there is also a looming presence.



Figure 7: Storm of the Century





Figure 8: Dead Planet

## RETROSPECT

All of the fragments and memories I have divulged here and many others I have experienced have contributed significantly to the creative art work I produce. In retrospect, I have learned that influence and inspiration is not something to be sought out but rather something to be absorbed into our imaginations from our everyday lives.

The human imagination is the most profound feature of Mankind's intellect, and perhaps among the powerful mechanisms of the universe. We use it every day as if it were a reflex; it can be strengthened with exercise and weakened with lack of use. With the use of this powerful mechanism, I have journeyed from being an arch-positivist to finding that the truth is always out of reach; that reality may not be built upon the solid foundation our own physical senses give us, and though we may never know the truth about our universe we will never stop trying to find it. I hope that by experiencing my creative work, my audience will join me in my journey; that they too will find their minds altering reality.