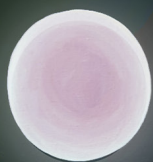


The
FINAL
LULLABY



N. R. Katiba

The FINAL LULLABY

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— *The* —
FINAL
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Dedication To my father, Ramin.

Epigraph

“Death, when father did not return home...”

— Akutagawa Ryunosuke

Foreword

When I was a child, I once read a fairy tale about a prince who accidentally witnessed a funeral procession. The prince—adored by his entire kingdom and shielded from every sorrowful or unpleasant event—happened to glimpse, through a crack in the palace gates, a crowd of people weeping behind a coffin. The young prince asked his father why they were crying.

The king did not hide the truth. He told his son about the sad and inevitable end awaiting all human beings. From that moment on, the prince decided he never wanted to die. He would find a place that could protect him from death—a refuge where death could never reach him. And, through some kind of magic—possibly linked to an encounter with shamans—he achieved immortality, far away from his kingdom. (Unfortunately, I read this tale many years ago, and some of the details have slipped from my memory, no matter how hard I try to recall them.) Yet his immortality came with a condi-

tion: he must never return to his homeland, and he must never show empathy.

Of course, human curiosity knows no limits. Eventually, the time came when the prince—still eternally young and beautiful—decided to return. On his way back, he witnessed human suffering: illness, old age, and death. With each encounter, he lost a part of the magic of his immortality. He began to age and grow weak. Still, he did not stop searching for someone who could tell him what had happened to his What part of the home are you in?”

At last, he reached the end. He died. I cannot describe what a thunderbolt this voluntary surrender to death was for me. Over the years, I often remembered this fairy tale in connection with the Buddha and his philosophical concepts—but not only him. Deep down, I believe the existential challenge for any thinker is to overcome the fear of approaching death.

The story you are about to read can be seen as a response to that first deep impression, and to many other experiences I have gathered along my journey through life.

This tale lived in my subconscious for many years. Now, I finally feel the need to share it with you.

Memories of a Gathering

The Neiodes—servants of the cosmic chancellery—last convened 3,500 years ago. Their purpose was to deliberate on what would become of human beings after the deletion of historical time. They also considered the complete erasure of all its functions.

It was to be a methodical disappearance of all text-based material—not only from the physical realm, but also from the deeply embedded memories of future generations. At the last moment, however, this experiment met with opposition. They ultimately agreed to remove only the essential parts from memory, leaving behind a single fragment—a fragment that would not reopen the gates of buried memories within humanity’s psyche for the next eight centuries.

In the aftermath of the convention, one of the Neiodes declared: “What a horror it is to watch an endless chain of humans groping blindly through the dark—without a guide!” The remaining fragments of memories

flashed through the minds of those present, and naturally, each interpreted them differently.

Some of the Neiroles believed that nothing created through human effort should ever be lost. But since this was an experiment, they assumed they would have the opportunity to adjust it—or to initiate entirely new trials—in the future.

While they were gathered, a new directive arrived.

Notes/Glossary:

Who they are:

Neiroles are the biotechnical agents of the Great Architect.

They are not bound to physical bodies, though in rare cases they may incarnate. They are both builders and guardians of the divine program—the living conduits of God’s design.

Their role:

Neiroles participated in the creation of humankind, functioning as small “conveyors” of the divine formula of life. They are extensions of the Architect’s will but can also learn, adapt, and evolve through contact with humans. The Architect never commands; he proposes ideas, and the Neiroles decide independently using their cosmic intelligence.

The Gathering (3500 years ago): The last great council of the Neiroles took place 3,500 years ago. At that meeting, they confronted the destiny of humankind and debated whether humanity should be guided, judged, or abandoned. Afterward, they dispersed—awaiting the day of final decision.

The Human Loss of Memory: Around the same time, humanity mysteriously lost part of its collective memory. Writing systems vanished, knowledge was fractured, and the so-called “dark centuries” began. Civilization stumbled into forgetfulness, as if a veil had been drawn across history. Yet humanity, by its inherent resilience and strength, gradually restored literacy and knowledge, and now seeks its lost past.

Significance: Establishes the origin of the Neiroles’ involvement in humanity’s evolution and frames the philosophical structure of autonomous guidance versus direct command. Introduces the long-term interplay between divine design, human resilience, and the search for lost knowledge.

The Architect:

A godlike entity who designs, proposes, and observes the course of human history. He never commands directly; he presents possibilities for the Neiroles to consider. The Architect appears under multiple names throughout the text, including the Great Soul, the Great Architect, God, and the Father.

Nostalgic Undercurrents

The Neirodes had no faces, only voices—an exquisitely refined, structured, and complex bureaucratic organism, whose origin no one could recall. Every voice had equal rights, and every matter was examined from all perspectives. At first, silence reigned, and then the voices began.

“Colleagues, we are not here as executioners or vengeful supreme beings, but as co-creators of this endlessly flawed project—though I would not call it failed...”

Other voices interrupted: “Yes, failed.”

“If a program fails to reach its objective, it is considered a failure, regardless of intention.”

“And if we are to revisit this—what you call a failed project—what was our true goal? Harmony?”

“That is ambition... And whose interpretation of human nature is that? They are such diverse beings. Who assumes they long for harmony?”

“It is not ambition. It is their final form.” “That is your wish, not theirs. When we created the project to sow and

awaken life on the planet, no one thought of the unborn beings.” “That was implied... they were to be born, to multiply, and to live in harmony.”

“Dear colleague, let me tell you of the so-called harmonious nature of human beings... Do you know that many of them do not even believe in their own uniqueness? They are born into such chaos, pain, and filth that there is little space for harmony. They believe only two things unite them—birth and death—and beyond that, each one smells and acts in its own way.”

“Do you know their pitifully short lifetime, so miserly granted by our Architect, is not even enough for them to overcome the grief of mortality—let alone to imagine a balanced zephyr called eternity?”

The Nameless Man

“Let us refocus on the main topic.”

We presented the stories we received from our colleague to the Grand Architect. There was particular interest in one of them, which concerns a rather fascinating character...

He is a Nameless Man of about 50. As for his place on Earth, even this preliminary sketch will demonstrate why we chose him. He lives in a cave. His thick gray hair has turned into a nest, which is home to two tiny parrots—Dudu and Zizi. The cave is lit by daylight or, at night by an oil lamp, which allows him to read. Its interior is moss-covered.

He has arranged the few small objects he uses to make it cozy, so they can be found even in the dark.

Dudu and Zizi are cheerful, annoying, and occasionally unbearable. They stay in the man's hair at night; when it rains, they huddle together, occasionally pecking at his scalp. The Nameless Man had been living in that cave for ten years now, in near silence.

Only on rare occasions did he speak with the little man—that's what he called his recently arrived neighbor, who lived in a hut built from polyethylene sheets and old refrigerator boxes. The little man had a job. Every morning, he would freshen up with water collected from the rainfall and head off to work. The nameless man never knew where he went. At first, he couldn't stand the sight of him from the mouth of his cave. He wanted to tell him to leave. But then he remembered—that's what they did in the world beyond, where oppression was the norm. So, at first, he simply decided not to acknowledge his existence.

And so, they lived—two silent people—until one day, The Little Man unexpectedly smiled at him and greeted him—as if it were nothing. The next morning, The Little Man opened the door of his Styrofoam hut—a broken refrigerator door he'd repurposed as an entrance—and from inside, a strange, violet-colored light spilled out.

Inside, plastic bottles and colored polyethylene bags gleamed in the sunlight, as if the hut was a temporary temple. There was no smell—which surprised The Nameless Man. The from within seemed sterile, as though someone had suspended every chemical process. It was like living inside a house stitched to his skin.

However, The Little Man never complained. And who would he complain to anyway? In fact, he was always smiling. When he first settled into his box, he had said to himself with quiet satisfaction, “Cleanliness is still possible... At least I have room for a toothbrush!”

The Little Man would always adjust his coat, glance toward the sky, and whisper something softly, and cautiously—as if, somewhere up there, there was still something resembling answers.

The Fallen Tower

Voice One: At this point, the Neurodes started debating the situation.

“What do you think... what is it that the Great Architect sees in this candidate, this so-called The Nameless Man?”

Voice Two: “I believe he knows man’s world intimately. Perhaps he designed it for this very day from the beginning.”

Voice Three: “Disappointment comes at a high price.”

Voice Four: “For whom?” “Humanity.”

Voice Five: “Are you sure that a collapse of this scale won’t plunge the Great Architect into remorse, or even a psychological crisis—and what of the ethical dimension?”

Voice Two: “Colleagues, colleagues... I urge you—let’s call things by their name. It might be but a cloudy day for the Great One, but it would be a tragedy for mankind. We are speaking of a mass extinction of living beings—and

no euphemism, wrapped in the fragrant robe of political correctness, will change the emotional weight of that outcome!”

As a poet once said:

“Who knows how empty the sky is,
where the fallen tower once stood;
Who knows how silent the house is,
where the son did not return.”

Notes/Glossary

Who knows how empty the sky is,
Where the fallen tower once stood;

Who knows how silent the house is,
Where the son did not return.

Comment:

This stanza by Anna Akhmatova evokes the silent desolation left by loss and tragedy. In the context of *The Fallen Tower*, it reflects the emotional gravity of humanity’s potential collapse, emphasizing absence, emptiness, and the human cost of cosmic events.