

# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 1 - Is our science fiction right?

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Stop for a moment and think about your favorite science fiction stories. There are a bunch of them out there to choose from. For example, there are the two most popular science fiction franchises of all time: *Star Wars* and *Star Trek*. Both of them have brought in billions of dollars through movies, syndication, books and merchandise. There are popular TV shows -- everything from *Lost in Space* to *Battlestar Galactica*. There are the big movies like *I, Robot* and *2001: A Space Odyssey*. From the world of video games there are incredibly popular titles like *Halo* and *Half-life*. And then there are the well-known science fiction books like *Brave New World*, *The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy*, *Ringworld* and *Neuromancer*. In other words, you have a very large body of work to choose from when it comes to science fiction.

Here is something that fascinates me. In all of these major science fiction stories there is one universal thread. There is one thing that they all have in common.

In every one of these science fiction stories, human beings have bodies.

No matter how much technology is available in the imagined civilization, no matter how advanced things have gotten, human beings still use the fragile, oh-so-easily-damaged biological bodies that we are born with.

Take *Star Trek* as an example. In *Star Trek* we find technology everywhere we look. The characters are flying around the galaxy in gigantic spaceships at phenomenal warp speeds. People are shooting each other with phasers and photon torpedoes. They are interacting with incredible androids like Data who are manufactured so that they look human. We even find the characters of *Star Trek* transporting the atoms of their bodies around with transporter beams. They have all of this technology, and yet...

They still use their biological human bodies.

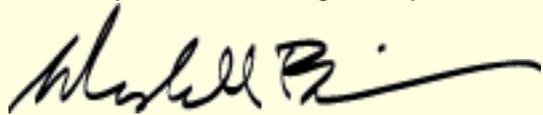
Here is something even more amazing. In most of these science fiction stories there are

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high-tech "sick bays" and other advanced medical capabilities to handle all of the problems that those fragile human bodies create. Dr. McCoy waves his Tricorder to diagnose and cure many diseases instantly. [\[ref\]](#) Luke Skywalker is completely immersed in a bacta tank to quickly heal his wounds while medical droids look on and monitor his progress. [\[ref\]](#)

But even with all that, people still die all the time. In *Star Trek II: The Wrath of Khan* hundreds of people die, including Spock, who succumbs to radiation poisoning. In *Star Wars*, people (and other species) die in droves. Within the first five minutes of the original *Star Wars* movie (Episode IV, A New Hope), dozens of people are already dead and lying on the floor. In Episode III, nearly the entire Jedi order is murdered.

Despite all of this death and suffering, biological bodies are still the norm.

So what is going on here? Why do the authors of these stories imagine so much technology in these advanced civilizations, while at the same time assuming that none of this technology will spill over into the area of our biological bodies?

I suppose that it makes sense that we, as human beings today, would write our science fiction stories in this way. After all, every human being does have a biological human body right now. We take our biological bodies completely for granted and our science fiction reflects that bias. Thus we have Captain Kirk, Spock, Scotty, Luke Skywalker, Yoda, Darth Vader and all the rest using biological bodies just like we do.

But is this the way things will actually unfold? Is it possible that the science fiction stories that we see today are myopic? Could it be that the use of biological bodies in our science fiction is completely wrong?

I believe that reality will be far different from our science fiction. Within the next 50 years of so, give or take a decade, humans will begin discarding their bodies as quickly as humanly possible. In the 2050 timeframe, a human body will be as passé as the horse and buggy is to us today.

Let me make this more personal. Take a moment to think about your own human body. Look down at your hands, for example. Look at your legs. Look at your face in a mirror. You inhabit a human body right now, just like we all do. We take our bodies completely for granted. We consider our bodies to be essential -- so essential that, even in our most imaginative and far-reaching science fiction stories, we cannot envision our lives without human bodies.

But that is a primitive way of thinking. In the near future you will have the opportunity to leave your body. You will discard your body -- you will literally throw it in the trash

-- because you will neither want it nor need it. You will discard your biological body gladly, like you would discard an old pair of shoes today. You will be quite grateful to be rid of it.

The reason why you will discard your body so willingly is simple. In the process of losing your body, you will achieve a level of freedom and longevity that is unimaginable to us today.

In this book, you will come to understand why you will be so happy to discard your body. We will look at the many problems that your body creates for you today, along with the many limitations that it imposes on you. We will then discuss the technology that will make your body obsolete, and the powerful social forces that will encourage you to abandon it.

In the process, you will never look at your body in the same way again.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 2 - Your fragile body

by [Marshall Brain](#)

If you think about the plight of Christopher Reeve, you can see one reason why you will one day be so happy to discard your body.

The story of Christopher Reeve is very simple. He fell off a horse and broke his neck. In the process he became a quadriplegic. This account describes his situation:

Waking up isn't as tough as it used to be. For years after the accident, Christopher Reeve's eyes would snap open at six and, in the morning stillness, with Dana Morosini, his wife, still asleep at his side, he'd have to run through it all again in his head. In his dreams, he was never paralysed - he'd be skiing and horseriding and sailing, like before - so it took a daily effort of will, there in the silence, to drag himself back to the reality that he couldn't move his body below the neck, or even feel it.

These days, he often doesn't wake until the alarm goes off at eight, and then it's straight into his morning routine: he takes a bucketful of vitamins, and then his nurse and a helper flex his legs and arms for at least an hour, keeping them supple and helping to stop them leaping about in uncontrollable spasms. They tape electrodes to his limbs and stimulate his muscles for another hour - he tries to eat breakfast at the same time - and then they wash and dress him and lift him into his wheelchair, strapping his arms down to the arm-rests and adjusting the padded support which cradles his head and neck. They connect a pipe to his throat and hook it up to a ventilator, and they attach a valve that collects his urine in a tube concealed in his right trouser-leg. By this point, it's usually getting on for noon. [[ref](#)]

Simply by falling off of a horse, Christopher Reeve became a prisoner in his own body. He turned from Superman into quite the opposite. If you ever saw him in his imprisoned state, you realized the magnitude of his problem. There was absolutely nothing wrong with his brain, but his body was completely useless.

Now, imagine yourself in that same predicament. If you fell one day and found yourself trapped helplessly in a quadriplegic state, would you discard your body if you had a chance? Of course you would. To be trapped like that is a hopeless situation. If your body is useless, why not get rid of it?

If you think about it a bit more, you will realize something even more important. Reeve's body died at the age of 52, just 9 years after the accident that paralyzed him. Although his brain was fine, his incapacitated body was so damaged that it could not hang on.

In other words, Reeve's brain was murdered by his body.

There are millions of people who face this same type of trap every day. Their bodies fail, and their imprisoned-yet-completely-functional brains die because of it. Their bodies are wracked by cancer and other deadly diseases, and there is nothing they can do. Despite the fact that their brains are completely normal and in perfect health, their brains needlessly die when their bodies fail.

As you think about it a bit more, you realize that nearly all of us end up dying in this way. Most people who die of "old age" are fine mentally. It is their bodies that fail them. Most of the problems that we associate with old age have little or nothing to do with the brain. Declining vision, the deterioration of hearing, the loss of agility and flexibility, incontinence, heart problems, organ failures, joint inflammation... The thousands of diseases of old age happen, for the most part, to the body. There are diseases that do destroy the brain, but these diseases affect a minority of the elderly.

This is tragic. Each time a human brain dies, we lose an incredible wealth of memories, experiences and relationships. Each human brain contains an immense expanse of knowledge and information. Losing all of that knowledge because of something silly like a horseback riding accident is absurd.

Think about this scene. You are watching Oprah one day on television. As you are watching, a crazed fan jumps up out of the studio audience, runs on stage, pulls a gun that he has managed to sneak through security, and shoots Oprah in the chest. Oprah dies. That same scenario could happen to anyone, including the President of the United States, any celebrity, any well-known business leader, even you.

At that moment, Oprah is COMPLETELY gone. All of her talent, all of her memories, all of her experiences and loving relationships evaporate. Millions of people will mourn her passing. All because her brain is trapped inside a human body. The human body is so fragile that it can die at any moment for any of a million different reasons.

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In your case, it is very likely that your brain will die with your body long before your brain needs or wants to die. Your brain will be fine but it will die needlessly, murdered by the body that currently encases it. Let's say that you live to be 65 years old, and at that point your body becomes infected with cancer. If you could somehow transplant your brain into the body of a young, healthy person, your brain would be happy to live on -- there is absolutely no reason for your perfectly functioning brain and all of its knowledge/experience to die at age 65. In fact, if it were technically and ethically possible to do a brain transplant, your 65-year-old brain would be rejuvenated once free of its decrepit, elderly body. Since transplantation is not currently possible, your brain will instead die with your body as the cancer overwhelms your immune system.

To put it in simple terms, your brain's death in today's world almost always happens because of the death of your body. Your mind happens to be trapped in your body, so it dies needlessly. By discarding your body, you free yourself from this trap. By extracting your brain from your body, your brain would live a much longer, happier and healthier life.

Simply imagine how easy it would be for your brain to die tomorrow. Your body could be crushed in a car accident. It could accidentally fall down a flight of stairs. It could be shot by a stray or intentional bullet. It could slip into a swimming pool or pond and drown. It could be struck by lightning. It could be trapped in a burning building. It could be poisoned either accidentally or intentionally. It could have a heart attack or an aneurism. It could be blown up by a suicide bomber.... The list is nearly endless. Thousands of human bodies die every day in accidents like these. In each case, their brains die needlessly. That is the trap that your biological body creates for your brain. Your biological body is remarkably fragile, and when it dies your brain dies with it.

By discarding your body, you eliminate this trap completely. In the process, you will liberate your brain.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 3 - The death of your best friend

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Think about your best friend for a moment. Form a clear mental picture him or her in your mind's eye. Think about how important this friend is to you. Think about all of the memories that you and your friend share together, along with all of your mutual friends. Imagine the future experiences that you will share together.

Now imagine your friend dying in an automobile accident tonight because of a drunk driver who crosses the median in an SUV. The collision obliterates your friend's body. Therefore your friend's mind is lost as well. In an instant all of the memories, relationships, love and understanding that you and your friend share are gone. They completely disappear, never to be recovered. Your friend vanishes, never to return. It is a tragic, unnecessary loss.

By housing your mind in a fragile human body, your mind is incredibly vulnerable. It can die, literally, at any moment.

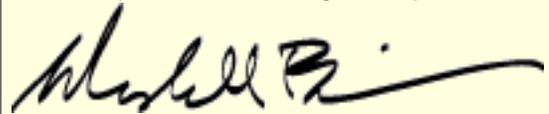
"Premature Death" is just one of the many good reasons to remove your brain from your body.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 4 - The power of beauty

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Everyone knows that beautiful people have significant advantages in human society. Just look at the amount of attention and money that flows to the most beautiful actresses and models. Humans definitely have an understanding of, and a deep appreciation for, human beauty.

If you ask a group of people to look at photographs of women's faces and rank those faces on the basis of "beauty," the results are remarkably consistent across genders, across races, across ages and across cultures. Beauty is a constant for the human species. The concept of beauty is hard-wired into our brains. [\[ref\]](#)

This quote from the publisher of the book *Survival of the prettiest* summarizes the reality of beauty quite succinctly:

Nancy Etcoff, a faculty member at Harvard Medical School and a practicing psychologist at Massachusetts General Hospital, puts forth that beauty is neither a cultural construction, an invention of the fashion industry, nor a backlash against feminism—it is in our biology. It's an essential and ineradicable part of human nature that is revered and ferociously pursued in nearly every civilization and for good reason. Those features to which we are most attracted are often signals of fertility and fecundity. [\[ref\]](#)

That fact confers huge advantages upon the beautiful. According to one study: "We found an enormously influencing attractiveness-stereotype: The more attractive the presented faces were, the more successful, content, friendly, intelligent, sociable, accessible, exciting, creative and busy the persons were estimated. The opposite applies to unattractive faces: The more unattractive the faces were the more negative characteristics were attributed to the person." [\[ref\]](#) That is a huge advantage for beautiful people, and a huge deficit for the un-beautiful. And it is completely arbitrary -- if your brain happens to have a beautiful body encasing it, you have won the lottery. If not, then you have definitely lost. You are trapped.

What is beauty? We all know it when we see it, yet it is completely ephemeral. It has to do with subtle yet meaningless things like the spacing between the eyes, the smoothness of the skin, the height of the cheek bones, the prominence of the nose, the size of the mouth and lips, and the perkiness of the breasts. Pity the poor person whose eyes are wide set, whose nose is too big, and whose skin has deep oily pores. Lord help

the poor girl who has facial hair, a thick neck and big ears. And if a girl has bushy eyebrows that grow together above the nose and a couple of big hairy moles on her cheeks... You get the idea. We all know ugly when we see it too. Yet the whole concept is absurd.

Unfortunately, despite its absurdity, the concept of beauty is a hard-wired reality. Billions of people on this planet inhabit bodies that are average in terms of beauty. And billions more are downright ugly. The lucky few are beautiful.

If you happen to be ugly, there really is nothing you can do about it today. Sure there is plastic surgery, but plastic surgery cannot change things like the spacing between your eyes, the height of your forehead or the texture of your skin.

And then there are the many ugly things that go with aging. We all have to deal with aging whether we are beautiful or not. Things like wrinkles, sagging, age spots and hair loss. All of these things make you "uglier." It is certainly true that there are no 80-year-old people gracing the covers of magazines like Cosmopolitan or Glamour. Age-related ugliness affects the way other people respond to any elderly person. If you could take the brain of a senior citizen and transplant it into a beautiful 17-year-old body, the response would be remarkably different.

Ugliness is another one of the traps that your body creates. If you could snap your fingers and have a body that is beautiful and flawless, would you do it? Of course you would. By having a beautiful face and body your brain would automatically gain all of the benefits of beauty.

By discarding your body, flawless beauty becomes possible.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 5 - Other traps that your body creates

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Sometime today you are going to sit on the toilet and do your business. That is just one of the many other reasons why you might gladly discard your body if you had the chance. There are quite a few problems created by your body's biology, and it would be nice to be rid of them.

I mean, let's face it -- peeing and pooping are a major drag. The whole idea of wiping your butt is nasty. These basic biological functions are gross, and you have to take care of them every day. If you had a way to eliminate these activities from your daily routine, chances are that you would gladly do so.

Body odor falls into the same category. So does snot.

Obesity is another problem that goes with the human body. People like to eat because eating is a pleasurable experience. But when you eat, you get fat. What if you could eliminate your body but retain the experience of eating? You would eat without obesity, and chances are that you would be a happier person.

Injury and the accompanying pain are another problem. In severe cases, extreme injury results in death after a long and painful struggle. The plight of Christopher Reeve is an extreme example of the problem. No one wants to go through that.

Then there is the whole problem with transportation. Your body, being a physical object, must move through a physical universe. This means that it can take hours to travel from one place to another. If you are in one city and a friend is in another, there is no easy way for you to "get together" in person without one of you wasting several hours on travel.

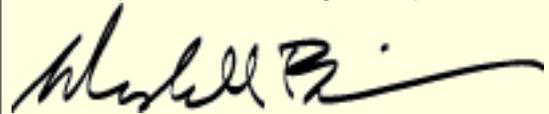
Sure you can resort to something like a telephone to talk to your friend. But a telephone is nothing like an in-person visit. Neither is a video phone. What if your friend is your spouse and you want to have sex? There is no way to have sex today

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unless you can be physically together, and there is no way to be physically together without physical travel. Think about how long and boring your last 4-hour car ride or plane flight was, and you realize how un-fun travel really is. The only reason we put up with it right now is because we have absolutely no choice.

There are many other physical constraints that go with your physical body. For example, you cannot fly like Superman. You cannot scale buildings like Spiderman. You cannot swim underwater for more than a minute without special equipment. You cannot venture into the vacuum of space. You cannot make something leap into your hand from 10 feet away using "the Force" like the Jedi do in *Star Wars*. Unless you are one of the rare, highly trained people who can perform Olympic-level gymnastics or acrobatics, you cannot perform acrobatics. If someone shoots you with a physical bullet, your physical body is likely to die. The "physicality" of your biological body constantly imposes limits on your brain.

All of these constraints and many, many others come because you inhabit a physical body that is subject to the realities of the physical universe it lives in. If you could eliminate your physical body, all of these physical limitations would fall away.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 6 - Immortality

by [Marshall Brain](#)

People have been talking about the dream of immortality for thousands of years. Everything from the Egyptian Pyramids to Ponce de Leon's fountain of youth are a part of that conversation.

Let's imagine that scientific progress makes our bodies immortal. Science completely eliminates the effects of aging, and medical technology cures all diseases.

Even if that happens, it does not change the fact that your body is a poor vehicle to carry your mind. It does not change the incredible vulnerability of your mind to the accidental death of your body. Even if your body is "immortal", that immortality is irrelevant if your body is obliterated in a bomb blast or a fiery car crash.

"Immortality" does not change some of the most fundamental problems created by your biological body. For example, immortality does not change the fact that your body needs to use the restroom several times every day. Nor does it solve all the physical problems that go with your body – the difficulty of travel, the inability to fly, etc.

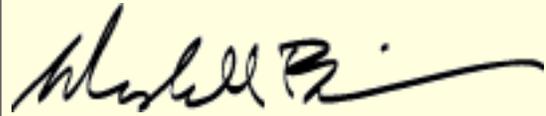
Your biological body has built-in problems even if we do eliminate disease and mortality. That is the reason why you will discard your body as soon as you are able to do so. Everyone will.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 7 - Saving Christopher Reeve, and you

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Each year in the United States about 5,000 people become quadriplegics like Christopher Reeve did. They suffer from accidents and diseases that damage their spinal cords, and in the process their bodies become useless. If Christopher Reeve had had some way to remove his living brain from his dying and useless body, he would still be with us today.

5,000 is a large number, and saving quadriplegics from their imprisonment is obviously important. However, that number is only the tip of the iceberg. The number of people dying from disease every year is immense.

For example, every year in the United States, nearly 500,000 people die from various forms of cancer.

Every year in the United States, approximately 450,000 people die from heart disease.

Right there we are looking at nearly a million people per year -- just in the United States -- whose bodies die prematurely. In nearly all of these cases, we see the same thing. The person's brain is fine, but the body fails. Both the brain and the body die simultaneously, even though the brain -- and therefore the person -- could live on for quite a few years.

You can see the problem: Millions of people are dying every year needlessly. Given a chance, they would happily discard their bodies so that their brains can live on. They have a direct incentive to free their brains and to do so as quickly as possible. If we had the technology to save their brains, most of these people would leap at the opportunity. They would discard their bodies in an instant in order to save themselves.

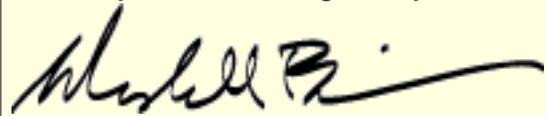
But what about you? Chances are that you are inhabiting a relatively healthy body. You might be wondering what would cause you to discard your body. The answer to that question lies in a technology called Vertebrane.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 8 - The pull of video games

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Video games represent a major form of entertainment in America. However, it can be hard to understand how pervasive video games are because people generally play them in the privacy of their own homes. Here are several statistics that help bring the massive popularity of video games into perspective.

The number of video games sold in the United States each year is immense. In 2004, Americans spent \$7.3 billion buying 248 million video games. These games run on video game consoles like Microsoft's Xbox and Sony's PlayStation 2, or they ran directly on home PCs. [\[ref\]](#) To put that in perspective, movies bring in about \$9 billion a year. When you consider that movies have been around for about a century, while realistic video games like Halo have only existed since 2000 or so, you realize how powerful video games have become in the entertainment industry.

When the game Halo 2 was released, it sold 340,000 copies in its first day, bringing in \$125 million. The game Grand Theft Auto, San Andreas sold over 2 million copies in a single month after its release. In the United States, there are over 35 million Playstation 2 and Xbox consoles found in American homes. [\[ref\]](#)

The point is that video games appeal to a huge and growing audience, and the popularity of video games is increasing as they become more and more realistic.

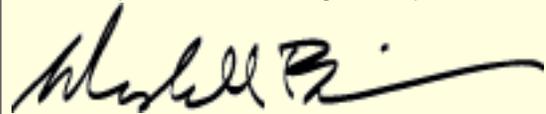
You can get a perspective on how far and how fast video games are progressing by looking at these two screen shots. The first is Pac-Man, one of the most popular video games in the world in 1980:

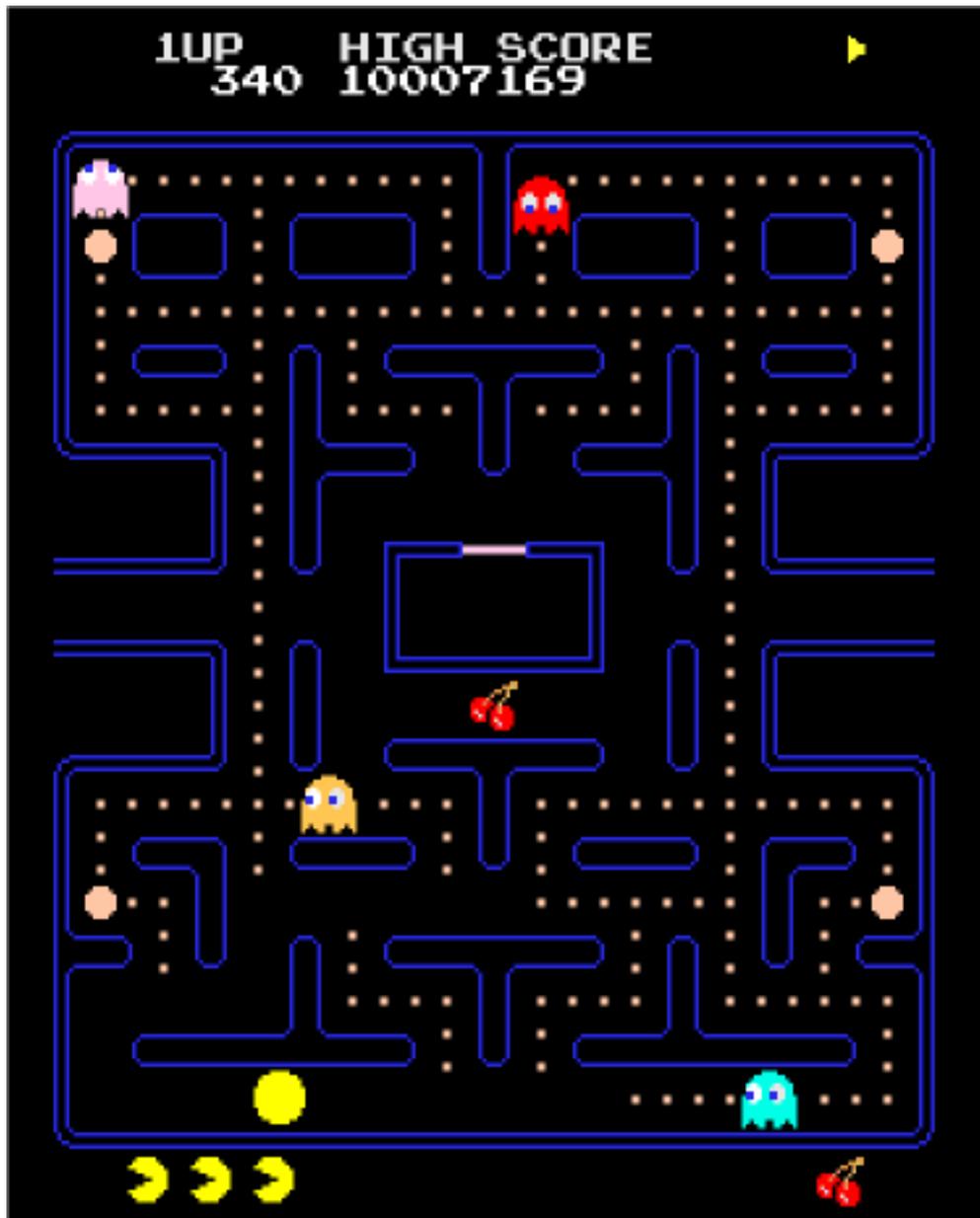
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The second is from Half-Life 2, released on 2004:



These two games are separated by only 25 years, yet they look like they are from completely different planets. One is a flat, pixelated, handful-of-colors-on-a-mostly-black-screen game. The other is a photo-realistic real-time romp through an artificial world of incredible depth and detail. The two games cannot be compared. It would be like comparing a backhoe to a spoon.

The progression is remarkable, and the realism keeps increasing with the release of newer game consoles. This quote offers a perspective on just how realistic things can get:

Bizarre Creations, developers of the forthcoming Project Gotham Racing 3 for Xbox 360, have hit back at accusations of faked screenshots, following last week's Studio Update. After the posting of an incredibly detailed screenshot of buildings from the game's New York level, some people believed it was so realistic as to accuse Bizarre of posting an actual photograph. [\[ref\]](#)

Video games will become more and more popular as they become more and more realistic. However, there is a problem with video games.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 9 - The problem with video games

by [Marshall Brain](#)

The big problem with today's video games is the human interface to the game. Video games use a TV screen to display moving images from the game. They use a set of speakers to create the game sounds. And they use a video game controller to allow the player to move around inside the game. This arrangement seems completely normal to us because that is what everyone uses. But if you step back and think about it, you realize that it would be nearly impossible to design a more unnatural interface for a human being to use.

Consider how you experience the physical world around you with your biological human body. For example, take a walk around your home right now and look at how you experience its interior. As you walk around your home you can see hundreds of objects. You can look at them at a distance, or move up close and see individual dust particles clinging to their surfaces. In the real world you hear sounds as you move those objects around. You can feel their weight, texture and temperature instantly and naturally. You can grasp any object in your home without thinking about it and you can move it around effortlessly.

As an example of just how limiting the video game experience is, imagine the following scene. You walk into your kitchen and find a can of soup. You take off the label, fold it into the shape of a paper airplane and fly it across the room. Then you open the can. Inside the can is soup that has a unique smell, taste and texture. You can pour the soup out of the can and into a bowl. You can heat the bowl in a microwave oven and it will actually get warmer. Then you can eat the soup. It will make your stomach feel full. It may make you burp. That is how reality works. Video games, obviously, are nowhere close to that right now. The distance between today's video games and reality is immense.

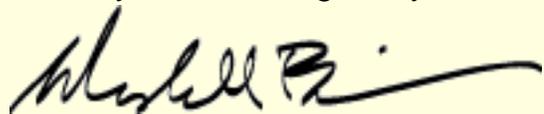
You can also see the chasm between video games and reality by looking at the way that video games make use of your sensory systems. Take, for example, your vision system. When you look at the objects in your home, you see them at a resolution of

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millions of pixels. Your eyes have 120 million black and white sensors on each retina along with 5 million color sensors. For comparison, a typical TV today displays about 200,000 total pixels. Even the best high-def TV can display only two million pixels. And neither a TV nor a HDTV does anything to activate your peripheral vision system.

Today's video games offer nothing for your sense of smell. Taste is impossible. You cannot feel wind or temperature. There is nothing happening with your sense of balance. Imagine the experience you have when you ride a real roller coaster in terms of sights, sounds, motion, wind, touch. A video game experience of a roller coaster is pathetic compared to the real experience.

It is in the video game controller, however, where you find the biggest deficits. Think about how naturally you walk in the physical world. You stand up, balance and think about walking forward. Hundreds of muscles respond to your desire in an entirely effortless fashion. You move forward in a way that is smooth, graceful, natural and almost completely unconscious. If you need to step over or around an object, you do it without thought. Climbing stairs is easy. Changing from a walk to a jog to a sprint is trivial.

Now, compare your real-world experience of walking to the video game experience. If you want to walk forward in a video game, using today's video game controllers, what do you do? You use your thumb. Forget the hundreds of muscles in your body that are programmed for walking -- you use none of them when playing today's video games. What if you want to aim your gun? You use your thumb. Want to look over your shoulder? You use your thumb. Want to jump? Thumb. Crouch? Thumb. Climb a ladder? Thumb. And so on.

There are over 600 different muscles in your body to control things like your arms, your legs, your fingers and your facial expressions. Your brain can control all of those muscle groups in most cases unconsciously and usually all in parallel. But in a video game, you don't get to control 600 muscle groups in your character in a natural way. Instead, nearly everything is routed through your thumbs to the character. This means that every video game seen today is an incredibly limiting experience.

The limitations imposed on us by today's video games are most obvious if you simply think about your normal life. In real life you walk into a room and visually scan it by moving both your head and your eyeballs. To do that you unconsciously use dozens of precise muscle groups. And you can do that scanning while you walk forward, talk to a friend and make facial expressions appropriate to the conversation. You can process the facial expressions that your friend is making by shifting your gaze rapidly between your friend's face and the environment you are navigating. And you can be carrying something in your hands as well. You might even be chewing gum. You are using

hundreds of muscles simultaneously and they are all beautifully coordinated.

In a video game, there is no possible way to visually scan the room with the fluidity you do in real life. In a video game you have to do the scanning with one thumb rather than a dozen precise muscle groups. In a video game you usually cannot talk. You cannot make facial expressions. You cannot see facial expressions. You can carry something in your hand, sort of, but you cannot feel it or manipulate it in any way. Today's video games are just pathetic when you compare them to real life.

In their dreams of the perfect video game, people do not want to be using video game controllers and TV screens. People want to be IMMERSED in video games. They want to live inside of them, using all 600 muscle groups and receiving input from all human sensors simultaneously and effortlessly. They want to experience not just vision, smell, taste, touch and sound, but also things like muscle position, balance, pain and pleasure.

Vertebrane is the system that will make that possible. Vertebrane will tap into all of the brain's in-going and out-going nerve signals and offer a fully-immersive video game experience. With Vertebrane, people will be able to realistically interact with artificial game environments and scenarios. This immersive experience will drive millions of gamers to install Vertebrane systems in their bodies as soon as Vertebrane becomes available.

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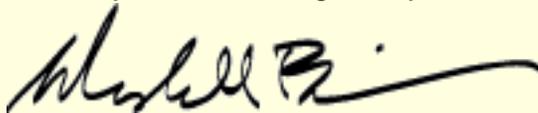
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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 10 - Understanding Vertebrane

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Vertebrane is the ultimate video game controller. It will allow you to disconnect your brain from your physical body and connect it to a virtual in-game body that is better than your own. Here's how it will work.

Imagine that you want to be able to control an in-game body in the same way that you control your own body. And imagine that you want your in-game body to feed your sensory channels in the same way that your body feeds them. For example, you want your brain to see the exact image that your in-game body would see if it had human eyes. You also want your brain to be able to smell, taste, touch and hear everything experienced by your in-game body. In addition, you want to feel sensations like balance, muscle position, pleasure and pain experienced by your in-game body in the same way your real body does. How would you accomplish that?

In order to pump realistic in-game images into your brain, you need to tap into your brain's optic nerves. The in-game images flow straight into the visual cortex of your brain, so that your brain sees the in-game world in exactly the same way you see the real world now.

It is the same for sounds and other sensations. Sounds from the game need to flow straight into the auditory nerves coming from your ears. Sensations of taste and smell from the game need to flow directly into the nerve pathways from your nose and tongue.

The sense of touch is handled by hooking directly into the spinal cord. That lets us pick up all touch sensations from every part of the body below the neck. The spinal cord connection also allows Vertebrane to gain control of all the body's main muscle groups as well. Similar smaller taps gain access to facial muscles and touch sensors as well.

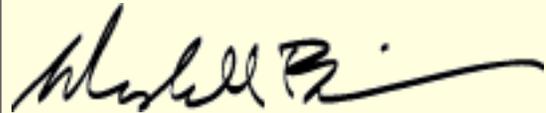
The idea is to pump artificial sensory perceptions from your in-game body right into these main sensory nerve bundles as they enter the brain. In a similar way, all of the

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messages from your brain to your muscles flow to your in-game body and it moves accordingly.

In other words, the Vertebrane system installs shunts into every nerve pathway connecting to your brain. That happens both with sensory nerve fibers heading toward the brain and with a muscle control fibers heading out. Then the Vertebrane system can disconnect your brain from your biological body and connect it to an in-game body in a completely natural and realistic way. Your virtual in-game body *is* your body as far as your brain is concerned, and your immersion in the game is complete.

The Vertebrane system itself is a small but extremely powerful computer system. It might be manufactured so that it replaces one of the upper cervical vertebrae in your spine. A small fuel cell is packaged with the computer, and it uses glucose in the blood for power.

Robotic surgeons replace one of the upper vertebrae in your spine with the Vertebrane computer and fuel cell. They sever the spinal cord and reroute it into the Vertebrane computer. There are also taps into all of the major sensory nerve pathways like the optic nerves and the auditory nerves.

The Vertebrane system is wireless, and it has several modes. In one mode, it is completely pass-thru. All the nerve messages to and from your brain pass through the Vertebrane system as though it is not there. Your body behaves completely normally. As far as you are concerned, you do not even know that the Vertebrane system is there.

In another mode, the Vertebrane system disconnects your brain from your body and reconnects it to an in-game body. This in-game body has the same 600 muscle groups that your natural body has, and your brain controls all of these virtual muscles in the completely natural way that you control your biological muscles. The eyes of your in-game body replace your natural eyes. The same is true for touch, taste, smell, balance, pleasure, pain, etc. In other words, your brain *completely* connects to your in-game body, and your experience of the game is *completely* immersive.

With Vertebrane, you actually live inside the game. The game world is no different from the real world as far as your brain is concerned.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 11 - Experiencing the in-game world

by [Marshall Brain](#)

The fascinating thing about your in-game body is that it will be much better than your natural body.

For example, take your eyes. Your natural eyes have 120 million black-and-white sensors along with 5 million or so color sensors on each retina. Your in-game eyes will have the same resolution. However, your natural eyes surround those sensors in a ball of watery *aqueous humor* along with a lens system that is far from perfect. That is why so many people need glasses and/or contact lenses. Your in-game eyes will suffer from none of these biological flaws. Nor will they dry out, get tired or cloud up. In-game, you will never need to blink and your vision will always be perfect.

The same sort of thing is true for your muscles. Your in-game body will have perfect muscles in perfect shape. They will perform like the muscles of an Olympic athlete. They will never tire, never overheat, never diminish in energy. Unless, of course, you change the game settings so that your in-game muscles tire and cramp like your real muscles do.

In other words, your in-game body will be a perfect super-human body. It will be beautiful, fit, lean and taut. It will perform perfectly, at a level far better than your own biological body.

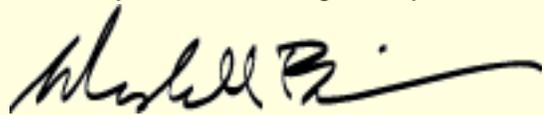
The in-game world will match your in-game body. It will surpass reality. Imagine, for example, looking at a grassy field in a game. As you walk onto the field it will be perfect. Each blade of grass will be perfectly formed. It will have no weeds. You will be able, if you choose, to take your clothes off and roll in this perfect grass. It will feel just like grass, smell like grass, bounce like grass, taste like grass. But this is a simulated world, so if you want it one inch thicker or a slightly different shade of green, the change is instant. Change the breed of the grass, the moisture content, the soil underneath it, even add weeds if you want. To your brain the grass will be completely real because the grass's sensations are flowing directly through the brain's

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natural sensory nerve channels.

The same will be true of every in-game environment you experience. Run through a forest. Stroll through a complete re-creation of Paris. Walk on the moon. Swim along a perfectly simulated coral reef.

But in addition, you will be able to do things that your physical body cannot possibly do now. Fly through the air like superman. Ride a magic carpet. Get shot at the OK Corral and then respawn to do it again.

In every way, these in-game worlds and your in-game body will surpass the real world and your real body.

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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Marshall Brain". The signature is stylized and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 12 - A fateful call from Clarissa

by [Marshall Brain](#)

You can see that the video call is coming from your best friend Clarissa, so you run a quick comb through your hair and answer the phone.

What you see is both amazing and surprising. Her face looks vaguely like it once did, but it has been transformed. The first thing you notice is her skin and makeup, which are perfect and flawless. Clarissa's skin now looks like the skin of a 15-year-old model. Her facial features have been sculpted to perfection. Her nose once had a slight skew and a bump on its bridge caused by a childhood accident. It now looks like the nose of a Grecian goddess, ideal in both its shape and proportion. Her eyes are now larger and spaced perfectly. Her mouth is full and youthful. Her teeth are absolutely faultless.

And then there is her hair -- long, thick and luxurious, looking like it was expertly styled moments before, but without a hint of hairspray or gel holding it in place. As a light breeze gently lifts it, it falls back into place with perfection.

She is wearing a to-die-for bikini, and her formerly frumpy body is now the body of a 17-year-old model, perfectly formed in every way. As she brushes her hair back with her hand, you see that her fingers and nails look like those of a hand model in a commercial.

In other words, your friend's body has been replaced by an ideal human body that is perfect in every way.

You can see that she is standing on a long, deserted Caribbean beach. A millionaire's beach house is visible in the near distance. Behind her stands a male whose body is just as perfect as hers. His hands rest lightly on her shoulders.

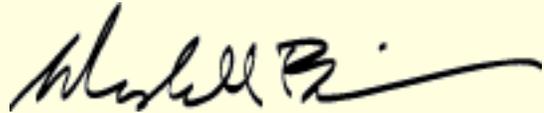
"Who... Where... What happened to you???" you stammer. You just saw her two weeks ago for lunch. How could this transformation have taken place in such a short time?

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How did she get to the beach? Where is her husband George?

But as you are asking these questions in your mind, the answer begins to dawn on you. She has had Vertebrane installed. What you are seeing is not the real Clarissa. This is her virtual persona. This is your first friend to make the jump to the virtual world, but you have three other friends who are talking about it. Now you understand why.

Clarissa describes to you how simple and painless the surgery was, and how fabulous hers and George's lives have become since they began living in their fantasy world on this beach in the Caribbean. She describes other fantasy worlds she has visited, and as she mentions each one she transports herself there so you can see it on the phone. She takes you virtually to modern Paris, ancient Rome, a massive furniture mart where she found the virtual furniture for her virtual home. She even takes you for a quick round of Baccarat in Las Vegas since she knows that is one of your favorite vacation pastimes.

After you hang up you make a decision. You will see about having Vertebrane installed this week. You want to be able to hang out with Clarissa in Paris and go furniture shopping with her -- in a body as beautiful and vibrant as the most stylish 17-year-old model -- as soon as you can. Having seen how much fun Clarissa is having, there is no way you are going to miss out.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 13 - The proliferation of game worlds

by [Marshall Brain](#)

Today we associate “game environments” with “games”. For example, in the game *Halo 2* there are a number of “levels”, and each level contains its own, unique environment. One environment might be in an orbiting space station. Another might be in a city on an alien planet. Another might be in a barren desert. And so on. In the game, you play in a given level, accomplish the goal for that level and then move to the next level.

Other games are slightly different. They are called sandbox games, and they allow a freer form of gaming. [\[ref\]](#) The Grand Theft Auto series represents the most popular incarnation of the sandbox genre. In a sandbox game you are given a large, open environment. The location might be a city, a forest, a battlefield from World War 2, etc. You are free to do what you want in the sandbox provided by the game. You may or may not score points or earn "money" through your activities in the sandbox, depending on the way that the game is designed.

Both styles of video game play will be popular with the users of Vertebrane, but it is the sandbox style that will open up the marketplace to a huge audience.

Think about any vacation that you take today. You leave work for a week either alone, with friends or with your family. For your vacation you typically travel to a different place to experience that place first hand. You might be taking your first trip to Paris or Rome. Or you might spend a week at Disney World. Perhaps you like history, so you go to Williamsburg, Old Salem or a historic Gold Rush town. If you like natural wonders you can go to the Grand Canyon, Yosemite, Yellowstone or Sequoia national park. If you are an adventurer you might climb mount McKinley, scuba dive in the Caribbean, skydive, hang glide or ski the Rockies. If you like gambling, you travel to Las Vegas or Atlantic City.

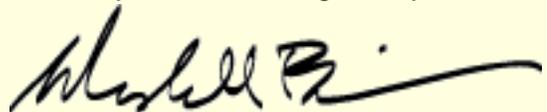
You get the idea. When you take a vacation, you often try to go somewhere new to see and experience something different.

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Now imagine that you can visit Paris, Rome, Disney World, Las Vegas, Yosemite or the Great Barrier Reef without ever leaving your home. Your tool is Vertebrane and the simulation you experience is entirely real as far as your brain is concerned. Imagine having these experiences together with your family and friends. Imagine doing it with thousands of other real people, or thousands of other artificial people, or completely alone.

One thing that will distinguish these artificial worlds from the real world is that you will be able to visit different times as well as different places, and you will also be able to take on different personas. For example, imagine that you want to have the experience of *being* Julius Caesar. You will visit a simulation of Rome as it was 2,000 years ago. The city will be completely realistic. In addition, the city will be populated with thousands of characters playing the roles of government officials, servants, citizens and so on. In other words, you will *be* Julius Caesar in this artificial world. You will face the same types of challenges that Julius Caesar would have faced. The artificial game world and all of its characters will respond to your actions and decrees, for better or for worse. You might continuously live in the simulation for days or weeks. If you do not like the way things are heading, you will be able to reset the simulation and start over.

Imagine how much freedom this type of ultra-real simulation will give you. If you want to experience Pompeii as it existed before the volcano, you will be able to visit an exact replica of the city complete with thousands of inhabitants living their lives. If you want to fight on a battlefield in World War II, the Revolutionary war or the Civil war, you will be able to do that. If you want to live the life of Attila the Hun, George Washington, Butch Cassidy, John F. Kennedy, Neil Armstrong, Donald Trump, Superman or Luke Skywalker, you will be able to do that. If you want to be a witness to important moments in history, or even participate in them, you will be able to do that. For example, you will be able to attend the signing of the Declaration of Independence. You will be able to see the first airplane fly at Kitty Hawk. You will be able to see and talk to Elvis Presley as he gets ready for the Ed Sullivan show. If you want to ride on the back of a brachiosaurus in late Jurassic period, you will be able to do that.

It is in these simulated worlds that the limitations of your physical body will completely disappear. You will be able to fly through the air. You will be able to take on the persona of any super hero. You will be able to have unlimited wealth. You will be able to die repeatedly and rise from the ashes. You will be able to eat gigantic meals that feel entirely real to your "mouth" and your "stomach", but because they are simulated you will never get fat. You will be as beautiful and as athletic as you have ever wanted to be. If you want to visit with friends, you will do so in a completely real yet artificial setting of your choice. You will be able to see, touch and hear your friends

as though it is reality. A group of friends can be physically scattered across the planet, separated by thousands of miles, yet the experience in these artificial environments will feel intimate and seamless. To your brain the experience will be completely real, because the experience is happening to your brain just as it would if you inhabited your physical body.

You can see where we are heading. Given that everything about these artificial experiences will be completely real to your brain, and given that your virtual body will be so much better than your biological body, and given that your virtual body will be able to have such a wide variety of experiences, the question is obvious -- what reason will you ever have to return to your biological body?

That question will become even more relevant when we start to consider the power of virtual porn.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 14 - The lure of porn

by [Marshall Brain](#)

With the advent of the Internet, almost all porn has moved online. As a result it is nearly impossible to know how many of the people around you are using porn. It is not like there is a "porn aisle" down at the local Wal-Mart or a porn shop at the Mall where you can see the popularity of this genre. Porn consumption is nearly invisible because it all takes place today in private homes.

That's why the number of porn users in the United States is so staggering when you look at the statistics. It is nearly impossible to imagine the penetration that porn has achieved into the adult marketplace.

Here is one way to get a sense of porn's magnitude. Think about how many people you know who use Google. Nearly everyone does. Chances are that you visit Google or a search engine like it just about every day to find something that you need on the Internet. More than half of all adult Internet users in the United States visit a search engine at least once a day. Nearly 80% do so at least once a week. According to Hitwise, a company that tracks Internet usage, Google is so popular that 2.7 percent of all Web visits involve a visit to Google. Yahoo Search receives 1.7 percent of all web visits. MSN gets 1.1 percent. In other words, 5.5 percent of all web visits involve a trip to one of the three major search engines.

5.5 percent represents an immense amount of Internet traffic. But it is nearly insignificant when compared to porn. Porn sites receive 18.8 percent of all Web visits. [\[ref\]](#)

That's right. Search engine usage is nearly ubiquitous across all Webizens, and tens of millions of people are using search engines every day to find nearly everything on the Internet. But search engine usage is almost insignificant when compared to the consumption of porn on the Internet.

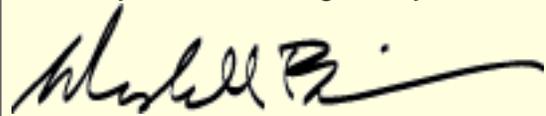
That's how popular and pervasive porn usage is today.

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When you think about the state of pornography today, however, you can see that the porn itself is quite primitive. People using Internet porn look at still photographs or watch small, grainy video images of *other people* participating in sexual activities. No porn user today can actually experience the sensations of sex from the porn they consume. If porn is this popular today using such a primitive set of tools, you can imagine how popular porn will be when it is completely interactive and done at Vertebrane resolution.

Imagine your perfect virtual body interacting with the perfect virtual bodies of both artificial and real men and women. Imagine simulated people who are designed to fulfill your every fantasy and your every sexual whim.

Would you like to do it with three naked vixens on a deserted Caribbean beach? You will be able to do that with Vertebrane porn. All three of them will understand your personal preferences and they will be ready to give you exactly what you are looking for.

Would you like to try it underwater or in the weightlessness of space? No problem.

Would you like to do it over and over again for 36 hours straight with a wide variety of partners? That is certainly your prerogative.

You will be able to find billions of real people online who are looking to hook up. In a world where everyone is connected together with Vertebrane and everyone's virtual body is young, perfect and beautiful, sexual activities will be a constant component of the Vertebrane experience. Not to mention the fact that sex in a Vertebrane world will have zero risk in terms of disease and pregnancy. Compared to the sexual experiences that we have today, sex through Vertebrane will be unimaginable in its variety, frequency and duration.

There will also be billions of simulated people who are designed to do nothing but provide sexual satisfaction. They will be able to take on roles that we cannot even imagine today. You will be able to customize them to your specific tastes and fantasies.

Imagine that you are a man, and you are lying on a sumptuous virtual lounge chair beside the pool at your luxurious beach mansion. You see your friend Jasmine descend the stairs and walk toward you seductively, wearing an exquisite outfit of the latest fashion. Her body and face are perfect in their beauty. She kneels next to you and kisses you softly as you wrap your arms around her delicate shoulders. She whispers into your ear a single phrase that she has learned instantly arouses you: "Please John.

Please. Right now." Your clothes disappear and so do hers as she effortlessly lies on top of you. You feel your rock-hard six-pack abs rippling against her taut, smooth stomach, while her ample bosom presses down onto your chest in a most pleasurable way. As her kisses intensify you feel her long, supple legs wrap around your waist and...

Jasmine is not a person. She is a virtual goddess who has been programmed to understand your every sexual fantasy. She is exquisitely sensitive to your sexual desires and needs, and she wants to address them whenever appropriate in a way that completely satisfies you. This sort of pleasant surprise might be happening to you ten or fifteen times a day if that is your desire.

Welcome to the world of Vertebrane porn. In this world, it all feels completely real because, as far as your brain is concerned, it *is* real. The sensations flow from a hyper-realistic computer simulation directly into the appropriate sensory channels of your brain. The Vertebrane simulation is perfect in terms of its imagery, sound, touch, smell, taste and pleasure. The experience is far better than it would be in your biological body for two reasons. The first reason is Jasmine and her virtual friends. They exist for the sole purpose of fulfill your sexual fantasies. The second is that, in the world of Vertebrane, your brain inhabits a perfect human body and that same perfection is true of your partner. Your sexual performance and pleasure are ideal. Partners can be both human and simulated, single or in groups, tame or wildly deviant. The Vertebrane experience opens an unlimited range of possibilities that are perfectly tuned to your sexual desires.

Vertebrane porn will so completely overshadow the porn that we see in our world today that porn will transform into a necessity -- a constant part of the daily lives for a huge percentage of the population.

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 15 - Meanwhile, back at the ranch...

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Your brain is going to be quite happy with the virtual experiences that your young, perfect, beautiful, tireless virtual body is having. The virtual world of Vertebrane will be rendered with a realism that is better than the actual world, and will include sexual activities at every turn that make real-world sex pale by comparison.

With your brain fully occupied with these virtual experiences, your real, biological body will be sitting idle. What will your real-life body be doing in the meantime, now that your brain is disconnected from it and living in a virtual world?

Your biological body will be reduced to the role of a life support system for your brain.

However, since your brain will have no interest or desire to return to its biological body, your Vertebrane system will take over and operate your real body for you. While your brain is connected to your perfect virtual body, Vertebrane will connect to your real body and drive it so that it stays in shape. Vertebrane will be controlling your real body so that it eats on a

regular basis. It will make sure that your real body gets plenty of regular exercise. Vertebrane will also take care of restroom breaks and other biological necessities. Your biological body will be ready for you to return whenever you need it. It will also be in great shape. The goal of Vertebrane in feeding and exercising your biological body will be to try to increase its longevity as much as possible.

Despite the fact that your biological body is in great shape, you will have fewer and fewer reasons to return to it. And when you do, you will not like the experience. Your biological body will not be beautiful. It will not be able to leap tall buildings at a single bound. It will feel pain. It will get tired. It will sweat. You will need to use the restroom.

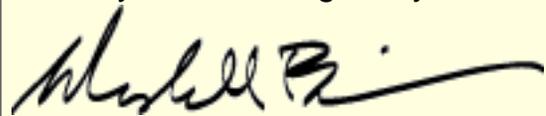
This will be happening to everyone. Everyone will be spending more and more time in simulated worlds because the experiences there will be so much more exciting and enjoyable. Eventually, your biological body will become irrelevant to your day to day

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life. The only reason for its existence will be to provide life-support services for your brain.

From the previous chapters you can see that, as a life support service, your body does a pretty poor job. Your body is exposed to the threat of thousands of different diseases, and many of these diseases are life-threatening to your brain. Your body can also get involved in accidents and catastrophes that can completely destroy your brain at a moment's notice.

In order to reduce the accidental and disease risks that your body creates for your brain, and in order to increase the overall longevity of your brain, removing your brain from your body will be the prudent thing to do. You won't need your biological body anymore, so why take the risks of housing your brain in a biological body?

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# The Day You Discard Your Body

## Chapter 16 - The day you discard your body

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Given a choice between being in your virtual body and your real body, you will choose your virtual body every time. Therefore, your biological body will become irrelevant.

At the same time, technology will be advancing. A variety of research efforts will be creating the ability to house your brain – just your brain – in a small container that will keep it in perfect environmental conditions. A number of companies will be advertising Brain Storage Facilities, where your brain and thousands of others are stored in hardened steel and concrete buildings that are impervious to bombs, earthquakes, hurricanes and so on.

The biggest advantage of these Brain Storage Facilities will be the elimination of the risk factors that go with your biological body. Your body contains dozens of organ systems that are all unneeded by your brain. However, those systems are all prone to disease and failure. For example, a blood vessel in your heart can clog or burst, killing your heart. Approximately three minutes later, your brain dies. Your lungs can also suffer from clogged and ruptured blood vessels, and your lungs are easy to infect with hundreds of diseases as well as cancer. There is also the fact that something as simple as falling down the steps in your biological body can terminate your brain. By removing your brain from your body, all of these risk factors vanish.

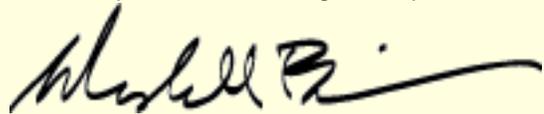
The largest benefit of these Brain Storage Facilities will be the promise of increased longevity. The facility will provide your brain with the blood, oxygen and nutrients that it needs to thrive. By monitoring these variables closely, and by eliminating all of the physical and hormonal shocks that come from a normal biological body, your brain will be able to survive far longer than it ever would inside a biological body.

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For all of these reasons, you will make the decision to discard your body. All of your friends will be doing it -- it will be the "normal" thing to do. You will choose a Brain Storage Facility and sign up for life-long care. With the decision made, you will have once last trip to make in your biological body.

Connecting your brain to your biological body will be perceptibly uncomfortable at this point. You will be so accustomed to the perfection of virtual living that all of the problems of real-world existence will be quite unpleasant. Once you reconnect to your biological body, you will have to look in your closet and pick out real clothing made from real textiles. The selection will be very limited compared to the infinite possibilities in the virtual world. Real clothes will look silly compared to the perfectly tailored clothing you are used to, and they will be remarkably out of date compared to the up-to-the minute fashions available in the virtual world. You will have to put on socks, and then clucky, real-world shoes. You will do that with the knowledge that your real-world feet will soon be hot and stinky, and it will remind you that you need to put on antiperspirant and cologne to mask the odors of your biological body.

You will also feel signals from your body that are unfamiliar to you in the virtual world. For example, the need to eliminate waste will be signaled to your brain by your bladder and large intestines. The whole idea of going to the restroom, using toilet paper and smelling your waste products will be repugnant, but your biological body leaves you no other option. You will feel drafts. Your feet will get blisters. You will feel itching - something that never happens with your virtual body. Your vision and hearing will be far less crisp and precise as they are in the virtual world. When you knock against things, you will feel pain.

Then you will walk downstairs to participate in the most absurd part of real-world life -- physical travel. The ride to the facility will take two hours as you move the physical atoms of your biological body to a new location in the physical universe. Travel in the Vertebrane world is, of course, instantaneous, so this aspect of the physical world will be particularly grating. You will use the travel time to connect back into the Vertebrane World.

Upon arrival at your destination, you will walk in the door of the facility, sign the final paperwork and walk into the examination room. Your physical body will be anesthetized for the procedure, a relatively simple and routine one that will remove your brain from your skull. In the process, your brain will be attached to appropriate life support systems, encased in a protective liquid-filled chamber about the size of a three-liter soda bottle, and connected to a permanent Vertebrane system provided by the facility. Your brain will be housed in a highly secure, sterile and protected building where it is safe from the risk factors created by your biological body.

After the transfer is complete, your brain will awaken from the anesthesia and you will find yourself back in your virtual world. You will continue your life in your virtual body, enjoying your virtual existence just as you were doing when your brain was housed in a biological body. However, your brain will now be in one of the safest places on earth, and it will be able to live far longer than it ever could have inside a biological body.

The Brain Storage Facility will throw your biological body in an incinerator. You will discard your biological body quite happily, and it will not seem like a loss at all. It will be a relief. Discarding your body will be the smart, logical and obvious thing to do.

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