

How many of me is there today

D. R. Fairday

It was really awful the first time. I was stupidly caught out of the tent during a storm. I was shivering and was all in some sort of fever. Far too late I remembered that the tent was on a bad spot and that I can expect a flood in half an hour. I went out to dig a ditch. Those fools took almost all the tools with them, so I dug with a pickaxe. It felt utterly stupid, pickaxe on a terrain which can be plowed with a spoon, but, what can one do, I raised it high, took a good swing and...

Later, when I thought better, I realized that it was really stupid. As first, the tent was all plastic, there were no trees, so the first lightning struck my pickaxe. And me. Fools don't live long.

So I got killed the first time. It is really embarrassing the first time around, because it hurts a lot until you die. It was all as they tell: first darkness, then a flash of light far away. Then I saw three lights. A strong one in the middle and two on the sides. Our vehicle was returning. The plastic spade with which I dug the ditch I leaned to a tree. We had to use these plastic things exactly because of these sudden storms with thunder (so those insurance guys required). The tent was well grounded. As far as my memory serves, our vehicle has two lights, not three, and I just died because of a metal pickaxe and now I have a plastic spade. The rain is warm. The tent has a metal skeleton and is grounded.

My zoologists have arrived. I thought they were geologists. No, that was before. When before?

And then it dawned in front of my eyes. Those parallel world gimmicks do have some foundation in reality, except there's obviously no way back, and I'm not amazed that nobody returned. If the kicking the bucket is the ticket, I'd rather refuse... anyway, a second world is still better than nothing. I should better look around and see where I fell in.

• LATER

Not bad. The differences are not big. Luckily I possess both memories and both personalities. My other character is just slightly different. I'm (finally) somewhat freckled and I adore jazz (oh no) and I don't have such a good opinion on Beethoven anymore. To what god's sins has he succumbed here? A plagiarist? And the god is named Sain, Jesus is Petar, Peter is Hesio, Ulisses is Oliet, money is money, Marx wrote everything alone because Engels was a victim of assassination. My watch still runs correctly. You moron, this is your other watch. Right. My buttons are buttoned the wrong way. No, that's how left-handers wear them here. Matter of style.

Alright, and what now? Nothing, we go to base. The storm has finished, we picked the samples. Nobody notices anything about me and me. I'm even on good terms with me. Brotherly souls. That's it: I are two brotherly souls. Go home now.

The name of the city is entirely different. The suburb is almost the same, just the even numbers are on the left. Though, still driving on the right side and the traffic regulations are the same...

They weren't the same. The road vehicles have priority over track vehicles because the latter have a better automatic braking, namely the train calculates the speeds for the first dozen approaching vehicles and adjusts its and theirs passthrough times. Not knowing that, I slammed on the break (you fool, nobody does that here), and thoroughly surprised those behind me. The only casualties: me (1) and me (2). Lights from afar...

I (1), I (2) and (3) I am(are) stopping on time. Just like the regulations of the world(3) provide, I signal those behind me and wait for the train to pass. Hello, I (3), you see (I see?), your (my?) situation is so and so. A-ha, alright, here(3) the things stand like this: I am returning from a movie set (!) location, and this is not a terrain but a rental vehicle. The draught still holds. This is where I (1, 2) got worried, and I (3) got puzzled. The point being that the first two times it was a rainy season, and now a long draught. Significant difference. Here (3) the weather is very different. Good thing that I(3)'m capable of enduring dry heat, it even feels good to me(3). We're stopping by a restaurant. Inside is pleasant enough. A chance for me(us) to exchange thoughts. Who is who. Parents: all the same, just he has one black grandmother. Education: 1 dropped many times, passed a video installer course, 2 and 3 drivers, regular school, just 2 had to bribe the exam board once. First divorced, second a bachelor, third married, we go to the phone so I (3) can call my(3) wife. Nice wife you got. Sure, what else would you think of yourself? I am bad with numbers. Your numbers are with me: 47-77-33-09. Exactly. What's that metal square you got? That's money, if you didn't know. So it means we're even farther away. From what? Don't play stupid but make that call and make sure she doesn't notice anything. What's there to notice, the voice is mine(3). And what is there to hide. Okay, then explain to anyone that you are not alone, because you have guests in your head. Much guests, all three are me with minor variations. All the same, try to explain to someone. You are right or I am or we are, let's go. Hello, dear. Yes, I'm coming in half a khour, no more than .85 cents. What cents? Well each khour has hundred cents. Is that for time? Yes, it's 7.72 now. Wow, a decimal day. Which day is it today? 1986,624. How does it read? Six-twenty-fourth. Year, month, day. Just reminded me to go to TB. What? Oh, a WC.

Some skirmish in the teebee. Some whiteskins quarrel about money. I pretend to notice nothing, but the first lost bullet reaches me and I am dead again. This becomes as boring as flipping channels on the teevee. What's a teevee? Oh, for shert's sake, I mustn't tell anyone that I heard the voices. Jobs get lost for less than that. Fear not, this is no hallucination, we'll explain to you later. Button up and let's go out of here. Sit, order something and pretend to be in deep thought. So. Ergo, you're me the fourth.

And that's the whole story. Now let's see where are we. Everything's decimal? I'll miss the money with twelve govor's of sixty pertz each. And yes, how come you got no television? Nobody needed it. So what do you do all day? We got text on liquid crystals. What kind of world(4) is this? As it gets. At least it's good that the trouble in the veesee settled down. Is any of the present a homosexual? I'm not (1, 2, 3, 4). Alright, let's see what a nice kitty awaits me tonight. Hey, fourth, avoid danger, there's too much of me already.

• MORE LATER

Let us calm me down a little. Let me do in head count. How many

of me is there today? Seventeenth, don't think aloud. Who is the host? I, 61. I pass the lead to first. Thank me. I take this as bearing the consequence and responsibility, because I one am the fool who started these migrations. For the sixtieth time I say "as it gets" and "let me look around the situation". As I have found, it is as the 49 says, I are the medium and one of us me's had to be the first one. At least that is the one rule we have noticed. Shut up 32, what do I care how I speak. Terminological confusion remains in force until someone invents a sufficient supply of different forms of first person uniplural. Where have we left me off? Yes. The second regularity I have observed is that I am moving toward the worlds where I have more and more education and a relatively lower position. Furthermore, the political situation is getting all the worse, which fits with the theorem about a proportional ease of pass through an unstable system. How many of me historians? What do I say? Yes, worse and worse. Last twenty times I was dying in wars each the more stupid, each more far away from my home end... shut up a little, the meeting proceeds fast enough anyway. We communicate directly through synapses, and if this is not fast enough for you... where was we... don't worry, you will have time for mocking around, just let me see first how would it be feasible that all of me get our forces together and seize power. I'll vote for you, old pal. No drumming, 26! You know I can't vote for myself, besides, what does one ballot mean. All in all, power is not the point, but rather that rich as we am, in experience I think (therefore I am, and a multiple at that)(oh shuddup) that if I had power enough, I may influence one world from unstable into a stable and thus interrupt this series. Did I have enough of dying? Then do this way: as 51 has calculated it, I have room for hardly two hundred deaths and inhabitations more, but to prevent going mad from factions inside a brotherly soul, I have to stop on time. Which means, we pick a suitable world, stabilize it, yes, principles, nonviolent methods, as much as turns out feasible, of course, I don't want a murderer in my head, so negotiate... WATCHITSABULLET!

Hello, sixtysecond, we are just you and you are also we, that is we are all I and you are an I too and your body is my host. Today, including you, there's sixty two of me, all of me the same person in local-temporal multicharacter variations. First of all, we have all died many times so far so we warn you to start paying a little DUCK noooo, is it again?

Hello, sixtythird, we are all from first to sixtysecond also me that is first take cover and let me talk with I then. I knew that even I 63 am a smart guy and can't be confused. Are you an officer, 63? Fine, what's the mood? Good, then watch here: starting tomorrow I gather young officers, yes, a coup then negotiations and then a truce then negotiations end then the new law... you'll have to, 63, no choice there, so, and then peace, no attack treaty, the law on taxation of military-industrial complex, I've died times enough for their money, do they give a damn, just roll the coins, main thing then comes peace renewal and continuous life for a longer time. I've had enough of dying, my head is this big from it! What am I now? Doctor of psychomanipulation? Missed that one! Who is the guy over there? Young obentye? Is that some rank? A-ha, sorta captain. Is he reliable? You know what to tell him. Go with good luck... and stick to the plan.

