

# Genesis, Inc.

by Danielle Coles

## Day One

I don't know why Luc and I were taken off of the Renewal Project – neither of us are particularly model programmers. And maybe that's the answer in itself. Hopefully the new project will be something a bit more exciting. Or at least something with a bit more room for creativity. It's hard enough having to come work for the Man every day without having my thoughts and actions curtailed as well.

They set us all up in one of the conference rooms. There's talk of expanding the corporation so we workers can actually have desks, but there's always been talk. Seven other coffee-infused, bleary-eyed office drones are already seated around the conference table; portable screens have been set up at each chair surrounded by basic components. Various makes and models; this whole enterprise has an air of half-assedness about it that makes me feel I'm being given the brush-off. But who knows.

My earlier perceptions are only exacerbated when nobody bothers showing up to explain the project. One of the office boys stops by with a manual and outline for each of us; Luc and I claim the remaining chairs, and I toy idly with the keyboards as I glance over the specifications. Nothing too stringent. But still, more that I'd rather deal with.

I flip on the screen, the standard white noise filling the rectangle before me. An already pulsing migraine pounds harder against the backs of my eyes and I fiddle with the light switchboard until the black and white pixels cool to a dim grey.

"Hey, didn't you read?" Luc asks, waving the outline in front of my face.  
"Enforcement and regulation of basic light and heat patterns.' You let them see a standing grey-wash as the preliminary step of the program, you'll be out on the curb."

Mumbling under my breath, I readjust the light 'board to allow for a cyclical alternation of white-wash with the grey, on a rotary schedule that would keep the program at grey whenever I worked. Bearing the five seconds of test rotation was almost more than the pain in my head could take, and I pinched the bridge of my nose while I waited for the cycle to finish its second test run.

"Drink too much last night?" Luc winds the joystick on his light 'board, and his screen dims to a cool red glow.

“You were still at the bar after I left – I don’t know how you can stand even a dull red-wash like that. I can’t even *look* at it.”

Luc contemplated his screen. “I’ve managed to acclimate myself to red-washes, no matter how severe the hangover. My last assignment ran three different programs off of a basic red-wash, so I guess I got used to it. Besides, this job sure isn’t fulfilling enough to keep me out of the bars and away from the parties at night, hangover or no.”

“I guess you’re right.”

Day Two

“Na, Luc, can’t you make it to work on time? I’m starting to think the hassle of dragging you home every night would be less stressful than trying to cover for you when you don’t show up here!”

“Shut your yap. Believe me, last night was well worth it!” His screen flares red as it turns on, and he winces. “Well, mostly.”

As I glance over, I notice his wrinkled paisley tie. “Are you wearing your suit from yesterday? Do me a favor – skip the bar tonight and go to the Laundromat. You know you’re running out of clothes when you have to wear that tie two days in a row.”

“I like this tie...” Luc adjusts the focus on his screen, keying a quick line of code into the bank of keys to his left. The light flashes, condensing, solidifying in the center and rounding itself out, haloing itself about the sphere that now dominates the screen.

“... you didn’t end up making it home last night, did you?”

“I guess you could say you really *did* leave me at the bar.”

“Na?”

“Did you not notice the barmaid last night?” Luc demands, staring at me like I’d grown a third ear.

“No, I noticed the clock that said ‘2:30’.”

“Sometimes I wonder about you...” His eyes catch my screen as he turns back to his work. “You know they’re requiring a spherical body – solid composition – as part of this project...”

“Aw... seriously? I wanted to try a nebulous mass this time – my last three assignments have been spherical body, solid comp.”

“Yeah, well, this is the wrong job for ‘I wanted’.”

I key in the codes, and a bluish sphere generates out of the grey-wash on my screen.

“One sphere in a background of grey. Yeehaw.”

Day Three

“You weren’t at the bar last night.” The paisley tie is gone, but Luc obviously didn’t have time to shave this morning.

“I was doing my laundry. How’s your barmaid?”

“Oh, you know barmaids. They come and go.” He tries to sound nonchalant, but I haven’t listened to his breakroom gossip for the pass six years without learning anything.

“You got rejected, na?”

“Shut your yap.”

I feel a sort of malicious glee at Luc’s failure – generally it’s me who comes out at the bottom, in whatever contest or comparison one chooses. It’s nice not to be the loser every once in a while. I revel in my new-gotten status, knowing it is likely to be short-lived. “Na, Luc, aren’t our programs supposed to contain a permanent, functional liquid source?”

“I have an ice cap!” He jabs exasperatedly at the pale dome topping the red sphere.

“A program with a red-wash base, red solid-comp. sphere, and your permanent source is an *ice cap*?”

“Hey, you want liquid?” Luc reaches over, flicks a dial on one of my control panels. Darker blue washes over my sphere. By the time I realign the dial, almost three quarters of the sphere is covered in liquid.

Payback’s a bitch. I hope the Man likes liquid programs.

“Excess of liquid or no, one ice cap is not gonna fly,” I tell Luc. He sighs.

“I’m adding another – bipolar symmetry, and all that. The system likes it. Maybe I’ll add some more liquid later.”

I glance at the clock. Now that Luc has prematurely flooded most of my sphere, all the time I would have spent on preparatory calculations is mine to play with. I establish ice caps of my own on the poles, in hopes that some of the liquid will recede, though the best I can do is reduce coverage to seventy-one percent. The blue of the original sphere blends with the liquid that now covers it; to emphasize that there is still solid surface area, I initiate a simple vegetation program. Though growth is necessarily sparse near the ice caps, fading to sallow grey at the edges, it fills in to a lush, green expanse at the median.

The effect of the blue, green, grey, and white sphere is calming to the eye; despite the heavy restrictions laid out for us, I find myself pleased with my progress on this project. It may not be as exciting as a nebulous mass, but it certainly has its good points.

Day Four

Shaven, cologned, and sporting a snappy new suit, Luc saunters in just as one of the office boys finishes rewiring our equipment.

“What’re you doing, walking in late?” I hiss. “The schedule lists today as the first integration phase; what if someone from Upper Management had come?”

Luc rolls his eyes “You know, they always *threaten* to audit on integration days, but they never actually *do*. Besides, guy’s gotta look good.”

“Na, you got a date after work or something?”

“Maybe...”

“Barmaid?”

He nods, then winks at me. We run checks on our programs, then release our personal commands to allow for the first level of integration.

“Na, if this relationship has progressed from I-didn’t-leave-the-bar-last-night to first-date-in-a-truly-awful-tie, maybe you should tell me her name already.”

“Her name is Lilith. And I like this tie.”

“It’s pink.”

“It’s silk.”

“It’s *pink*.”

“Pink is all the rage now. As you’d know, if you didn’t spend every night at home ‘doing your laundry’.”

I turn back to my screen as the nine programs are linked into the master framework, which seems to involve most prominently a basic internally-run lightsource/gravitational sphere. When the first level of integration is completed, one of the systems administrators runs a project-wide check, then releases the project commands for the second level of integration. I sit back and sip my coffee as the project’s master framework links itself into the corporation’s universal framework. Spheres and lightsources from other projects appear slowly in the grey-wash background of my screen; the sparkles draw attention to the serenity of my sphere, and for once I feel a connection with the rest of the corporation, as though the universal framework existed only to make my project look good.

“You know, your grey-wash is going to fade into a complete black-wash if you don’t add a secondary lightsource; you’ll end up unable to see your sphere at all.”

Luc’s twitting draws me out of my happy place of contemplation, and I glare out of the corner of my eye. “That’s to say nothing of your red-wash.”

He raises his hands in an acknowledging gesture. “I’m already on it.”

Disgruntled now, I establish a simple reflectively-run lightsource – easy code, minimal effort. As an afterthought, I attach a low-level gravitational field. With luck, it will help vary the massive liquid coverage from which my sphere still suffers.

I glance over at Luc’s program; to facilitate his red-wash, he’s added two additional lightsources. Both are reflectively-run as well, and thus not particularly bright, but still – having two extra spheres in his program emphasized the brilliance of the large, red main sphere. If Luc is good at anything, he is good at presentation. I keep telling him he should apply for a transfer to the PR department – he’d be able to use his skills, plus the pay’s better. But he always insists that a mindless job like this one better facilitates his nightlife, and that so long as he’s not pressed for cash, it’s not worth the effort for more responsibility.

Day Five

Half an hour after most people start work, Luc still hasn’t made his appearance. While this is not unusual, it *is* unusual for him to remain absent an hour later, an hour and a half later, two hours later. Luc may not be known for his punctuality, but he seldom misses work entirely.

Which likely means that his evening with the barmaid was either *very* successful, or very *un*-successful.

Today we've entered the creativity phase of the project; though projects aren't generally assigned such a phase, Gabe wanted to try combining a pre-formed nebulous mass program with her sphere, and since the corporation didn't have any new projects to put us on anyway, they extended the project's timeline by a couple days to see how Gabe's program would turn out.

Mike, Raph and Uri jump on Gabe's bandwagon, as usual. This will probably be the closest I'll ever get to a nebulous mass project, but I'm not going to bother with it now. Gabe is one of the best programmers in the pool – there's talk that she'll be promoted at the next auditing period. Whatever I or anyone else does will just turn out shitty in comparison.

But Mike, Raph and Uri always follow along regardless. Mike and Raph have some chance at relative success at least, but Uri's program is already unbalanced proportionally, and apparently contains some sort of huge meteorological disturbance. As usual.

I hear she has an uncle in Upper Management.

I kill some time by evolving some higher-level biological entities in the liquid of my sphere – with seventy-one percent liquid coverage, my sphere will be *very* boring if I don't give the liquid some characteristics. The program takes less time to write than I thought it would, so after lunch I write a second program evolving higher-level biological entities with basic aerodynamical abilities.

I consider writing a third program governing the non-liquid twenty-nine percent of my sphere, but the coffee's cold and it's boring as anything here without Luc to talk to. I'll do it tomorrow.

It's not like the Man will notice I've left early.

Day Six

As the minutes tick by, I wonder if Luc will grace the project with his presence today. I write that third program I'd been planning, then sit back in my chair, sipping lukewarm coffee and pondering what to do with the remaining seven hours of my day. I'd always wondered how far I could bend the program specs without getting fired. For someone who wouldn't recognize one of his employees if he met him in a bar, the Man has an uncanny omniscience when it comes to the projects, and his policy is no-tolerance. Luc and I joke sometimes that we're rats in mazes, but the path leading to the cheese has been sealed off.

Well, that's the life of office drones like us. They won't even spring for a carafe to keep our coffee hot.

Luc drifts into the conference room just as I finish my newest programming idea. My initial desire to brag about the adaptation dampens at his appearance, however. Two days of stubble, bruise-purple rings highlighting red eyes, neck still adorned by the celebrated pink silk tie, now stained. He dropped into his chair with a wide yawn, grabbing my coffee mug and downing the contents.

"Decaf."

"Shit."

"Na, didn't feel like coming in yesterday?"

"*Shit.*"

"Was it the tie?"

"It was various things as the night went on. Me. Her. Something about an old boyfriend – rebounding, I don't know." Luc's program springs to life before us on his screen; he sticks his tongue out at it. "It's over, either way. Sex was great, though."

"Ladies and Gentlemen, we give you Luc, lord of the one-night stand. A three-night stand's gotta be even more impressive."

Luc makes a non-committal grunt, glares at his screen, then looks over at my program. A moment; he squints, then lets out a surprised bark of laughter as he notices my most recent addition.

"Is that a *guy*? An *office worker*?"

"Na, I figured we're stuck here at someone else's beck-and-call, so I thought I'd put him down there and see what he does. A whole sphere – and he can do anything he wants in it!" A few flourishing keystrokes and a second program places a girl beside the guy.

"Of course, the corporation can always scrap the program. Or rewrite it."

"True."

"I wonder how long it'll take before they piss someone off and put an end to their own cushy existence... Hey, you should give them a pet!"

“Luc...”

“No – look!” I roll my eyes, but move aside and allow him access to my equipment. Luc types in a lower-classed high-level biological entity program.

“Na, you’re such an idiot, Luc. Anyway, the project specifications have been met in both our programs – let’s get out of here. I need to hear all about your exploits!”

We permanently release our project commands, indicating that our programs are completed and ready for review, then shut down our screens.

As we walk out, I mutter to myself, “Who’d want a snake as a pet?”

In accordance with company policy, we office drones all receive a day off on completion of our project. By lunch, the conference room is empty.

“... and He rested on the seventh day from all the work He had undertaken...”