



THE BIG BANG THEORY EXPLAINED (IN LIGHT VERSE)

Premise the First: Immortality—or even greatly prolonged life—would be no blessing. You were born with all the brain cells you'll ever have, and you lose a certain number of them every year, because of background radiation. Live long enough and you'll have the intelligence of a bright cabbage.

Premise the Second: If you have enough money it will take care of itself.

"Wake me when the Dow-Jones hits a million," he said,
And took a few grams of Sweet Dreams Hydrochloride,
Closed his eyes, lay back, rested his head,
And while diverted by raunchy fantasy, died.

The friendly machines, they opened his veins:
Sucked out the blood from flesh and from bone;
Replaced it with stable polymer chains,
Then froze his wealthy ass into stone.

He owned a salt mine, miles deep but cool.
His gold coffin rested there, blissly serene,
Facing millenniums, immersed in a pool
Of nitrogen, tended by friendly machines.

To backtrack:
This wasn't a thing that our hero did lightly,
Nor fearing death: he'd died twice before
These past two centuries, and found it just slightly
Boring, lying in wait for his cash to restore
Some old failed organ—beef up his muscles—brighten his blood ...
Come out of his coffin a centuries-old stud.

But there was a limit. Because the brain
Cannot be replaced—yet it slowly decays
Assaulted in silence by treacherous rays
Of the alpha, beta, and gamma persuasion,
Destroying your brain by ablation.

You can lock yourself up in a box made of lead,
And be safe from the fallout and all cosmic ray—
But no such protection will save your poor head,
For the elements comprising your body betray
You with unstable isotopes that leak radiation,
Subjecting your neurons to steady predation.

Our hero knew this, and it made him quite mad



To know that by quantum-mechanical fiat
His ultimate fate was both sordid and sad:
The world's first immortal blithering idiot.

But over the centuries our hero'd evolved
A method for dealing with logical goblins:
"Deluge it with money until it gets solved!"
It had cracked the world's most intractable problems.

It worked: they invented a magical box
Where he sat all day long, for dozens of years,
Cleansing his body of isotope pox
By exchanging atoms with poor volunteers.

He finally was clean! No Geiger could count
The tiniest click from his corpus pristine.
His eye on the future, he gleefully mount-
Ed his coffin-cum-time-space-and-money machine.

To backtrack again:
By creating a fortune so diverse and broad,
He'd created something resembling life:
It would feed and excrete; be active and nod,
And when confronted with problems or strife
Could act on its own, without consultation
Of the genius financial who'd sparked its creation.

Which suited him fine. He wanted to, know
Whether this creature of dollars and francs,
Without him, would simply continue to grow
Sucking up offices, factories, and banks,
Expanding its own ecological niche—
Quietly making him rich.

And it did—beyond his most fabulous dreams!
Not being omniscient, though, he couldn't know
He'd own the whole planet with his little scheme
And still have a hundred centuries to go.

It followed humanity out into space;
Annexing whole planets, and systems, and more,
Till it finally ran into a greedier race
And plunged the whole Galaxy into a war.

It won, though it took it some eight thousand years,
In which time humanity changed for the worse.
They stopped using money, stopped having careers—



They thought owning things was perverse!

The friendly machines that our hero'd entrusted
With all of his wealth had long ago rusted.
But their n-times-great-grandchildren covered the planet,
Waiting to wake up the man who once ran it.

But they spent a few centuries converting those dollars
To things of real worth, according to scholars:
A Galaxy's worth of compassion and pain;
Quintillions of lives to maintain.

And so in a salt mine in Texas, in autumn,
They opened his casket, injected, and thawed 'im.
He looked in the eyes of metallic envoys
And asked, "What the hell is that noise?"
Sparrows falling.

What?

They drop like flies. You have to keep track of every one.

Hey. I'm just a banker.

So was I. Now you've got one nanosecond to count each hair on everybody's head.

Everybody?

I didn't make up the rules.

(sighs) I can count pretty fast, it seems. But they grow faster. It's your baby now.

What's going on here? What went wrong?

Nothing. It all went according to plan. I've been in charge of this circus for four and a half billion years. It's all yours now.

What? All mine?

Somebody has to do it.

But I'm just a banker!

Tell it to the Judge. Look. I evolved you from a fish. Gave you opposable thumbs and supply-side economics. Set you up, I admit it. You'll excuse me? I'm going to get some sleep now.

Hold it! What about these goddamned sparrows?

They do make a racket. Do whatever you want.

What do you mean?

Hey! Come back!

Aw hell. Might as well start over.