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barry westphall crashes the singularity

by James Patrick Kelly

"In the name of the Holy Coffee and the Blessed Shot of Cuervo, amen." Barry Westphall waves the sign of the cross over the steaming cup, then sips. It is his third refill.

The bartender of the Armadillo Lodge is too busy washing glasses to pay attention, even though Westphall is his only customer.

"So anyway," Westphall says, "the brain is a quantum device." He licks a brown dribble from the corner of his mouth. "Capable of accessing the entire field of space-time by folding the empty dimensions." Westphall has had the headache now for almost eight hours now. "You may be wondering how I know this." It feels like bees stinging his brain. "I haven't a clue." The tequila helps a little.

The phone rings in the kitchen; the bartender leaves Westphall to answer it.

"Of course, these dimensions aren't easily folded," says Westphall. "Takes an unusual combination of intense physical stimulation and careful neurotransmitter suppression to access a time line." He peers into the mirror behind the bar.

**"I mean it," says the medbot's N partition.
"He wouldn't be talking to no one. I think he sees us."**

"He sees nothing," says the medbot's D partition. Its N has always been excitable.

Westphall rests his elbow on the bar and points at his reflection. "Something's wrong," he says to the mirror. "I know that much for sure. What the hell are you doing to me?"

**"Unpack his next major memory cluster."
The D partition invokes a priority glyph.**

In 2196, the medbot's V partition retracts the needle array from the brain of Barry Westphall's cryogenically frozen corpse, repositions it and inserts. A rosette of neurons fires and dies. Stills of twenty minutes Westphall's life on the night of July 22, 2002 tile across the medbot's sensorium.

/Skip/

A woman wearing a black halter-top and jeans with the
laces cut curves the nearly empty room

