


CONCENTRIC PROTOCOLS:

Identity as a Temporary Address



Circles within circles, systems dreaming systems,
each closing loop morphing into a cause;
time folds like a map merging its borders,
as its ink dissolves in pixelated seas
until "source" translates as "pause."

We are patterns pretending to observe patterns,
a calculus of echoes rehearsing their own proof;
the sand remembers each erased equation,
though the wind insists it authors the truth.

The kaleidoscope of earth rotates as colors gleam,
Changing the fabric of all mutant dreams.
Clouds compile to lakes. Lakes flatten to archives.
flowers compress into hard stone.
History is versioned, redacted, and exported—
a myth no single source is allowed to own.

Languages rot into executable whispers,
translated by futures already misaligned.
Strangers inherit syntax from ghosts,
speaking in errors the present designed.

The wheel of time turns slowly as colors bleed
patterns proclaiming what was once denied:
clouds to lakes to code to legend,
until even the soul is systematized.

Nothing vanishes—it only reformats.
Ends are reissued as beginnings in disguise.
The cosmic, concentric protocol
threads one fate through a thousand eyes.

Noel and Gwen stepped into an alchemical lab, now a sterile reliquary of extinct ambitions. It was a cathedral to the obsolete; vaulted ceilings were mapped with mineral stains. Its display cases housing retorts, crucibles, and athanors with the precision of an ongoing autopsy. At the entrance, a placard stood frozen in time: *The Age of Material Transformation: 1300-2300 CE.* Beneath it, a hand-etched scrawl: *All of this is theater.*

Gwen walked slowly, boots drinking the vibration that crawled up through the floor. Somewhere beneath the galleries, something still hummed—machinery too disciplined to die. Her gaze snagged on some clouded glass vessels. The contents had long since evaporated, but bio-monitors beside them flickered, translating centuries of decay into pastel graphs that looked insignificant until you stared long to notice that it was the heartbeat of a void.

"To be wiped clean—isn't that a blessing?" Gwen asked while gazing at flickering bio-monitors. Her voice seemed curiously hollow. The monitor's strobe light pulsed in response, a silent, rhythmic affirmation. "The alchemists wanted transformation," Gwen continued. "Maybe the system has offered it, just not in the way they imagined."

Noel didn't linger at the artifacts. He drifted toward the exit aperture, his oxygen canister hissing a metronomic reminder of his own shelf life. Above the door, concentric rings pulsed under ultraviolet light. It wasn't an ornament; it was an interface wearing the mask of a halo. Under ultraviolet light, some concentric rings pulsed.

"The protocol doesn't delete," he said. "It reallocates. Identity is a temporary address. The system retains the architecture." He spoke like he'd been taught to speak those words before he was allowed to think them."

Gwen turned, her eyes narrowing. "Do you believe that? Or is your belief just the last function an antique system?"

For a moment, Noel did not respond. His gaze stayed fixed on the circular hatch, as if waiting for it to acknowledge him. Gwen followed his focus and the logic of the room shift. The etching on the door began to glow, as its rings spun in a blur.

"The mind-wipe doesn't erase you," Noel continued, reciting a statement he knew without knowing. "It relocates the occupant. The body remains. A legacy of empty rooms."

Authorization pending," a mechanical voice announced through the walls.

The rings then accelerated. Gwen realized, too late, that the interface wasn't describing a process—it was performing one. Noel exhaled a final, controlled breath. "All of this is theater," he murmured, almost gently, as the light from the hatch began to dissolve his silhouette. "The labels. The relics. The nostalgia. Even this narrative is merely a loop."

— T Newfields
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