

"Sensorium"

written by

James "Séamus" Bearhart

www.jamesbearhart.com
jamesbearhart@gmail.com
3475250189

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - DAY

TITLE: LOS ANGELES, 2050

A FAMILY sits at the table eating breakfast in their home. This is the MONROE family - ALBERT (42), his wife MARIA (39) and their children JESSE (17) and QUINN (19).

The home isn't what you think the future would be like. It's not sleek, or smooth, but seems quite present day, and, well...drab.

There are a lot of empty walls - no paintings, no wall decor.

The family are eating as a family, but there's something a little different. No one is looking at their phone. Or anything really.

MARIA

Oh, how awful.

ALBERT

The Evans case?

Maria barely registers what her husband has just said.

MARIA

Yes. Awful.

Quinn laughs out loud. The family look at her, unamused at her laughter.

ALBERT

No vids at the breakfast table
Quinn.

QUINN

Sorry Dad.

Jesse looks at Quinn conspiratorially. Quinn makes a motion at the side of her head, she touches her finger to her temple, then flicks the finger out as if she's throwing something towards Jesse.

Jesse looks out towards an empty wall, and suppresses a giggle.

Albert looks at them both. A little annoyed. He tuts to himself.

Maria taps the side of her head. We notice now that everyone has a small silver dot on the side of their head. It's a small silver half sphere that is stuck on each person's right temple.

Maria is 'hearing' the news article in her head.

MARIA'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Martin Evans, thirty eight, was a man of God. His death is described as part of ongoing fatwah against the church...

Maria holds on to a cross around her neck.

MARIA'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Play footage of shooting?

Maria nods her head. Maria's eyes move as if she is watching a video of something in front of her. No one else sees what she is seeing. Her face is one of horror, but she doesn't stop the video.

Albert is also hearing the same story, but it's different.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Dr. Evans, thirty eight, was described as a family man. He is the victim of what is being considered a lone shooter..

Albert, depressed at the news, double taps his device. He hears the next headline.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

The DOW was up twenty points today in a sign that the US economy has never been better...

Albert finishes his coffee as his audio continues. He grabs his suitcase and keys. He leans over and kisses his wife goodbye. She looks out into nothingness, barely acknowledging his kiss. He waves to his children.

Jesse waves somewhat distracted.

JESSE

Bye, dad.

Jesse flips a finger from his device over towards Quinn, sharing something with her. Quinn laughs.

Albert leaves the house.

The family sits at the breakfast table. Watching out into space.

INT. OFFICE - DAY

Albert walks into a gray washed out office. Similarly dressed men and women sit in their cubicles as Albert walks down the hall to his cubicle.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

And that's the economic report.
Join Shane Lopez in his daily
video report.

Albert shakes his head 'no'.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Geo location shows you've arrived
at your office! Would you like to
order a coffee direct to your
desk? We have your regular order of
a Large Americano...

Albert nods his head 'yes'. He sits down at his desk and opens his briefcase. He takes the papers out from his briefcase.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Order confirmed, delivery time
will be...

His cubicle is modest, plain. There is no personal decoration, or any semblance of life. Just a terminal and a keyboard.

The voice continues but Albert 'dials down' the device on his head to reduce the volume.

ROGER (39), a similar office drone to Albert, is sitting at his own cubicle, which is against Alberts. Roger peeks over the cubicle divider.

ROGER

Morning, Albert.

Albert doesn't turn to look at him.

ALBERT

Morning, Roger.

ROGER

You heard the news this morning?

Albert's device hums in Albert's ear, the volume is 'off' but he's still aware of it's presence.

ALBERT

The shooting?

ROGER

The terrorist organization? No.
This.

ALBERT

No, wait...

Before he can object, Robert taps on his own device and swipes outwards towards Albert.

A video opens in front of Albert's eyes. No one can see what he sees. The video shows footage of Romanians and their children in detention centers, cages. Sleeping on the floor, barely any food.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Thousands of Romanian refugees
have been detained in Switzerland.
Escaping rising sea levels, many
people from Eastern Europe have
fled to the interior for
protection, but have been placed
in what is considered 'inhuman'
conditions...

ALBERT

Disgusting.

Albert nods at Roger over at another coworker, SOPHIE, 35.

ALBERT

Sophie's Swiss, right?

ROGER

I think so, yeah.

Albert shouts over at Sophie.

ALBERT

Hey Sophie, you know about this?

He makes the sharing motion with his hand, from his device to Sophie's.

Sophie sees a different video. It's a video of the PREMIER OF SWITZERLAND, speaking directly to camera.

SOPHIE'S DEVICE (V.O.)

The premier of Switzerland announced today a sweeping reform for climate refugees, ensuring protections and a quality of life equal to local citizens.

Sophie smiles, enjoying the video.

SOPHIE

(to Albert)

I am very happy with my country. You should do the same here in the United States.

Albert and Roger look at each other, vaguely unsure what happened and slightly insulted. Albert now notices Roger has a gold colored device, as opposed to silver, on his temple.

ALBERT

You got the Sensorium 10G?

ROGER

Yep. Credit rating approved me over the weekend.

ALBERT

How's the surgery?

ROGER

Easier than getting your ear pierced. You should get one.

Albert looks at him, a little resentfully.

ALBERT

Maybe. What's the data purity on it?

ROGER

Closer to the source. Less editorializing. Fewer advertising. Privacy settings exist.

ALBERT

Like what?

ROGER

You can turn off your location for up to one hour per week.

ALBERT

Wow.

INT. OFFICE - DAY - LATER

Alfred is typing on his computer monitor. The device is making a low, slightly disturbing sound in his temple. Like the hum of an electric fence.

He is looking at a large sheet of numbers. It's clear he's data processing. The work fits the setting - bland, repetitive, lifeless. The halogens lights on the ceiling creates a disconnected effect with the daylight.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Your sensorium has detected low blood sugar, please have a delicious Mars Bar Max, now with extra caffeine. Would you like to charge it to your salary?

Albert nods his head. His sensorium makes a 'ding' sound.

INT. OFFICE KITCHEN - DAY - LATER

Albert pulls out a mars bar from the vending machine and sits down to eat it with a paper cup of coffee.

Like the office, and his home, there is little in the way of personal effects or personality to the place. All the walls have no decorations on them.

Albert stares at a blank wall. He taps his device.

ALBERT

Sensorium, play Mary Tyler Moore Show. Random episode.

He stares at the wall as he hears the intro music to a 'Mary Tyler Moore' episode.

From his viewpoint, against the blank wall, he sees the beginning of the episode 'Chuckles Bites the Dust'.

He places his finger on the his device and motions in a circular forward motion, causing the episode to fast forward, to the funeral scene.

GEORGETTE

Why do people always send flowers when someone passes on.

SUE ANN

What would you suggest dear, fruit?

The audience laughs in the episode. Albert chuckles while he watches the episode.

From outside, he looks deranged, laughing to himself while staring at a blank wall. The episode continues.

GEORGETTE

It's so sad, funerals always come too late.

MARY

I'm not sure I understand that Georgette.

GEORGETTE

Well I mean we take people for granted when they're with us, then when they're gone we wish we'd been nicer to them. So we dress in black and cry our eyes out. Why don't we ever think to do that while they're still with us?

The audience laughs. Albert smiles quietly.

MARY

Good question.

TED

I wish I was...

BANG! Albert is startled by the sound of a loud shot. It shatters him out of the numbness he has from his device.

He doesn't know what to think. He hears screaming. He double taps his device to pause the episode. He slowly moves to the wall connecting the kitchen to the office. Sophie runs past and then BANG.

We don't see her being shot, but the force of the shot sends her flying to the ground, so that Albert only sees her feet. She falls almost as if someone cut the strings off a marionette. It's almost comical in that it's not what's expected.

Albert nervously suppresses a laugh. A laugh of horror. He hides behind the wall of the kitchen.

He sees Roger standing at his cubicle wall.

ROGER

No, please. Stop! I have children...

BANG. Roger falls back, clumsily. It's not what you see in the movies. He doesn't fly back. He just falls down.

Albert sees a shadow through the transparent dividers between the kitchen and the office cubicles.

ALBERT
(quietly)
Sensorium, call 911.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)
Calling now and sending your
location. Automatically recording
audio and video.

From Albert's viewpoint, he sees a red dot in the top right corner of his view.

Albert looks around the corner and sees the shadow of the SHOOTER moving around the office looking for anyone else.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
All gone. You're free now.

Albert moves gently trying to keep out of sight of the Shooter, but also trying to get a view of him for the police.

He sees as he's close to the ground that all his office mates are now dead. He sees Roger's face on the ground, facing him.

Roger is staring at him. He's still alive, barely, trembling. He mouths to Albert.

ROGER
Albert, help me.

BANG. The shooter points his rifle directly down at Roger, and finishes the job. The life is gone.

He doesn't mean to, but Albert lets out a tiny gasp of shock. And covers his mouth quickly.

The shooter knows. He knows someone else is in the office.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
Who's left? Hmm?

Albert looks around for a hiding place. He looks down the hallway and sees the exit sign. He takes his shoes off, and slowly walks along the carpeted hallway towards it.

The wall of dividers to the cubicle hides him as he crouches down.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
I know you're here. It's only time
when I find you.

Albert continues along down the hallway.

SHOOTER (O.S.)
They're lying to you, you know.
It's all lies.

Albert is closer to the exit when suddenly a foot steps in front of his crouched figure. He looks up at the shooter. Who is pointing a rifle straight at him. The shooter is a sixty eight year old man, not what you would expect a shooter to be. The man's right temple is bloodied, with no device there, just an open wound. Around the neck is a small silver cross which catches the light.

The shooter and Albert locks eyes. The shooters eyes are almost...kind. Gentle.

SHOOTER
They're lying to all of us. I bet
you they're lying to you, right
now.

Albert looks at him as his device talks in his ear.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)
Shots have been fired in an office
in downtown. The shooter has been
cited as part of a local guerrilla
anti-capitalist group.

SHOOTER
What are they saying about me?

ALBERT
I...

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)
He is described as in his
thirties, of middle eastern
descent, and was believed to have
been radicalized by a far left
activist group.

ALBERT
It's not real. It can't be real.

SHOOTER

It wasn't like this. It wasn't
this bad...

He taps the wound on his temple.

SHOOTER

They're rewiring us. Don't let the
sensorium rewrite you.

He points the rifle at Albert.

ALBERT

No. Please. No.

SHOOTER

It's digital poison.

Albert puts his hands in front of his face trying to
shield himself from what he knows is inevitable.

ALBERT

Please..

SHOOTER

I found the cure.

The shooter suddenly points the rifle at himself, under
his chin.

ALBERT

(screaming)

NO!

BANG.

We don't see the shooting, just the impact as Albert's
hands are covered in spattered blood. Albert is in shock.

He hears the distant sirens of police approaching. He
stands up, and exits through the emergency door.

INT. MONROE FAMILY HOME - DAY

Albert enters the house, still in his socks. He goes to
the living room where Maria, Quinn and Jesse are sitting
on a couch together staring at the blank wall. Without
looking...

MARIA

Albert, you're home early? Come
join us, we're watching an episode
of Family Ties together.

Albert's hands are still covered in blood.

ALBERT

I'll be there in a moment.

He goes to the sink in the kitchen, and washes his hands with blood. Maria and the kids are laughing. At what we don't know. Without Albert plugged into the episode, it's deeply unnerving.

MARIA (O.S.)

That shooting today, I hope that wasn't near your office.

Albert doesn't look up as he continues washing the blood out.

ALBERT

No dear.

MARIA (O.S.)

Those terrible anti-Christians, what will they do next. I never feel safe in this town.

Albert looks up. He flashes back to the silver cross hanging around the shooters neck.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Albert, your heartbeat is rising at an alarming rate. Would you like me to call the nearest available doctor?

Albert slowly raises his still bloodied hand to his temple. He grasps the edges of the half-dome implant. He closes his eyes, he knows this is going to hurt.

ALBERT'S DEVICE (V.O.)

Albert?

He starts pulling. The voice in his head of the sensorium starts screaming, an alien type squeal that is horrifying. Albert groans in terrible pain, but he keeps pulling. As he pulls, the device isn't attached to his head by mechanical or electronic means, but biological tentacles, like wriggling worms that are buried into his scalp.

He keeps pulling, as the squeals in his head get louder, and the tentacles move in protest, wanting to latch themselves onto his temple.

He finally yanks the device fully out, tentacles and all, and throws it into the sink.

He looks in horror at the life-form that was in his head. It's still moving, as it dies slowly. The parasite no longer able to survive without him.

It's squeals and movements shudder until it no longer makes any sound. It's dead.

Albert gets some kitchen towel, runs it under some water, and applies it to the open wound on his temple, cleaning it and applying it as a compress.

He's in a daze. When he hears more laughter from his family. Out of sync with his reality.

MARIA (O.S.)

Come join us.

Albert walks into the living room where his family, with their devices intact, having no idea what is in their heads, are enjoying their tv show.

ALBERT

It's learning. It's rewiring.

The family don't turn to look at him. He stands over them, facing the blank wall as they do, seated on the couch.

A family seemingly gathered around the glow of entertainment.

THE END