

# **Quorum**

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I really don't know where to start.

\*Cough\*

I mean, it must have seemed like a good idea at the time. Even knowing what I know now it still seems like a good idea. The only real downside you could really predict would be the limited duration. Ironic, isn't it.

We don't really know how it got started, that part is classified I'm sure. From what I've been able to gather it started as a theory from a number of university researchers that was tested by a government research group. You have to wonder how many tries they made before they were successful. I doubt we'll ever know. All we do know is that the result of the first successful test was the boy we would eventually know as Brian.

The science as I understand it was fairly straightforward. Genetic technology had already improved crops and livestock, giving us the ability to feed our ever growing population. No one could agree on whether that same technology should be used on humans because of the philosophical questions. What would you change about a human and still have it be considered human? Give a person three arms? The religious nuts would never let that fly.

It's ironic that the university researchers were actually primate experts when the idea was conceived. They identified the differences in genomes between humans and orangutans that gave us such phenomenally higher intelligence. Once we knew that, it was only logical to ask what would happen if you amped up those same genes another notch? What if you could make people that were so intelligent they made us look like orangutans? Heh, I didn't even realize I said "make". I guess "making" people didn't seem that bad. Heck we do it all the time.

I wonder sometimes how much of Brian was by design and how much was on purpose. I mean, sure, he was engineered for amazing intellect but did he end up with blonde hair and blue eyes by accident? It certainly made the photos with the president more picturesque. I'm going to guess that the people behind the scenes knew that the presentation was as important as the performance. And perform Brian did.

When he was revealed to the world at age four the religious conservative movement was up in arms. That was until they found out that he had already solved some mathematical principles considered far beyond modern mathematics. He literally invented new forms of mathematics and he wasn't yet five years old. The potential of that kind of mind to benefit humanity outweighed all of the negatives. Not only did Brian deserve our support but we needed more like him. Of course, they already knew that would be the case which is why we met Emily, Aaron and Timothy the following year when they too turned four.

\*Cough\* \*Cough\*

Sorry about that.

I bet they had focus groups to come up with the names since they found the least offensive and most common names imaginable. There weren't any parents, of course. A by product of the "process" was that the children couldn't be gestated in a womb. Apparently the zero-gravity environment that they spent their first 9 months of life eliminated fundamental bias that the rest of us suffer with. An intelligence ten times our own would be ruined if exposed to such bias. Or at least that's what I remember from some of the early videos about the achievement. They could have grown up in a cave for all I know.

The four of them were quite the team, if you remember. Being able to see the world in ways we will never comprehend made problems facing us literally child's play for them. All the world leaders and nobel prize winners got on long waiting lists to have these young children help them solve their problems. Recessions were fixed through revolutionary monetary policy. The effects of pollution reversed through amazing new ecological techniques. Medicine made dramatic strides with illnesses disappearing from the face of the earth.

And we finally understood how the orangutan must view us. They looked like young children but they weren't really children at all. I'm not sure what they were but they were as much like human children as we are like chimps.

Just how different they were was apparent when they spoke in public. It was a rare occasion but guaranteed to capture the world's attention. These were the people who understood the secrets of the universe, wouldn't you want to hear what they had to say? When they did speak it was often pleasant and informative but slow, as if they were having to translate their own thoughts into something we would understand. As if they were talking to children. I guess that is to be expected, rumor had it that the four of them had developed their own ways to communicate between them which were far more efficient than the languages we used.

We trusted the children with more and more responsibility as they grew older. In retrospect we should have questioned it when they were given de facto responsibility for some government decisions. But they were the smartest people in the world, after all. They knew better than us. The reality was that everything they touched was just better. Better thought out, more efficient. Giving them decision making power was just easier since we would have asked them what to do anyway. Man, those were the golden years.

And then Brian died.

Shit, I wonder sometimes what would have happened if that bastard had survived.

The way people tell it now is that on his 13th birthday he just dropped dead, like an expiration date had come. The media frenzy at first was amazing. Brian was a worldwide celebrity and answers were demanded. The government, of course, insisted it was just an undiagnosed medical condition. It could happen to anyone they said.

After a week or so, one of the research scientists on the original project came forward and leaked it all to the press. The 13 year lifespan was known before the project was started, all the models proved it. They decided to go forward with the project anyway. Having access to a super intelligence for 13 years was better than nothing, right?

These kids had IQs of around 500 but they could only live 13 years.

Remember, the physiology of these kids was still all new to us there was no way to know it was unstable. Apparently the human mind was not designed to handle what we did to it. After a certain point it just overloaded. Shut down.

\*Cough\*

Everyone's reaction was the same as far as I could tell. It was the natural human reaction to almost any situation, actually. How does it affect me? The panic that ensued about what we would do without our little decision makers was almost comic in retrospect. We only have one year left of them solving our problems for us! Everyone started planning how to be ready for when they were dead.

You can't really hold it against us, thinking about your own interests is about as human as it gets. When the stakes are that high you can develop tunnel vision. Lose sight of the bigger picture. And the bigger picture was simpler than we thought.

Brian was dead. Emily, Aaron and Timothy were still alive. If you were super intelligent and knew you were going to die in less than twelve months what would you do?

You sure as hell wouldn't sit down and let it happen. You have all the tools in the world and nothing to lose.

\*Cough\*

Hold on a sec...

\*Cough\* \*Cough\*

Sorry.

I suspect they had known this was coming, although we'll never know for sure. Whatever kind of secret sanctum the government kept them locked up in must have given them everything they needed. I'm guessing they had been spending years researching their own physiology and probably saw the end coming. Sometimes I guess it doesn't matter how smart you are. You can't change the rules of a rigged game after it's started.

You have to wonder why they waited until Brian died to let us know.

That press conference was supposed to reassure the world that the remaining three children would still take care of us. They had a whole year to make sure we'd be okay when they were gone. Somehow we expected that was all that mattered.

It was clear that everyone was surprised when they announced the virus. The government types that were standing with them probably more than most. Heck, they were probably some of the first to be infected.

These kids were raised to solve problems and they were faced with the one problem they couldn't solve. They couldn't prevent their own deaths. But they had decided that the world needed people like them. I think they might have used the word "species" but I can't recall.

The virus was going to kill everyone on the planet with sub-genius intelligence. It was progressive so the intelligence required to survive the virus as it mutated in future generations would be higher and higher. They estimated that it would only take about 15 generations to breed an entire race of humans that were just like them.

Their legacy. A solution to the problem.

I can't really remember what Emily said during that broadcast but I do remember what it meant. Almost every human on the planet earth was going to die in less than twelve months, You can say something in eloquent prose all you want but it can't change the message.

The real kicker was the timing. The virus was going to take effect on the same day the kids were going to die themselves. What possible sense does that make? Even if you buy their theory about the need for the next stage of evolution, how does pulling the trigger so quickly make sense? It makes sense if you realize it isn't logic. They were angry. They were children after all. They had emotions. It was our fault they were this way after all. I'm sure to them this was a way to teach us a lesson. Suffer like they suffer.

Is that a rational reaction or psychotic behavior? Who cares, it doesn't change a thing. Maybe facing a problem they couldn't solve pushed them over the edge. Maybe they had a break with reality. Maybe it makes sense in ways I can't understand. Who cares.

\*Cough\*

Eleven months of desperate scrambling later and no cure was found. In fact that only thing we proved was that the virus was real and the countdown was accurate. If that surprised anyone then they clearly didn't understand the situation. Hand a combination lock to a chimpanzee and even given ten years they won't figure out how to open it. Even if their lives depended on it.

I ... don't like to think about how things have been. People faced with the end of things don't behave well. I'd rather remember the way things were.

I don't know what else to say. That's all the history I have. Tomorrow is the day. Tomorrow is the deadline.

\*Cough\*

I guess I am hoping that someone finds this recording. I don't know why, but I hope someone hears this story. I hope someone knows what happened. I hope they know what was lost.

END RECORDING