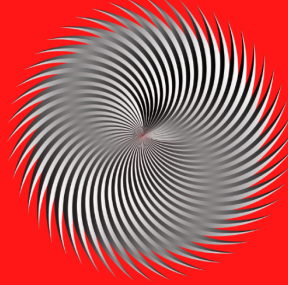


Ade Ronke



# DEATH ROW AUTONOMY



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## **Death Row Autonomy**

Life offers us nothing but the moment. It renders no momentum as the grief stricken unamendable path lost to its own horizon. Gone to the leisurely caress of some trivial expectation, for a moment here, a moment there, seeking the predacious high intentions of the likes of power, rum, and love undeliverable with equity, there is always the illusion of life as a complex, degraded from its universally abiding simplistic roots.

Death must regard life as an artifact—that which cannot by pure or impure principles define the intrinsic mass of a non-melancholic state but must be refined on the conceptions of conscious thought as an illusion against its states. Life is ignorant of sanctity but is as a series of melancholic states malingering as some euphoria whose universal history is a series of null and void rapidly deactivating neural ends collapsing against a careless tide.

As a sword may yearn for its cutting edge to refine intention, the hour yearned for anticipatory refinement. There was that broad and poignant tension hanging in the air as a necessary part of the moment. It stung the atmosphere like some electrifying reminder that he couldn't simply use his prestige to achieve his aims as he could have in some distant past conditioned for the privileged.

The purpose was dawning, the element ripe, and the closed door hearing could have been mistaken for that arranged by the Intelligence Committee.

Dr. Dawson headed the panel of scientists responsible for providing justifications and answers to the panel of lawmakers. It was his most fearless burden to take the most responsibility for the project he had mainly spearheaded. He had proposed the legislature as a necessity for the times, positioning the Nestla project for what it was to become. His dream had hardly been keenly lit, his eager drive for its realization wrought with one legislative impediment after another. And the battle was yet being waged unendingly. Despite this, he was certain the future was on the right path. Nestla was a modest awakening prototype, an inevitable alternative to the expectation of death.

The statesmen had agreed to hear the remedies and proposal in a closed door hearing. And it was hardly by mere chance. A lot of money had been funneled into their campaign and interest accounts, or those of some of their relatives and friends either by direct or indirect means. He was known, renowned, and a pillar of charitable offerings.

The accusations thrown at him had been strange in the least. He had made his convictions known, hadn't forced any contractible agreement on participating parties, but for some unforeseeable reason had broken some unwritten law on the state level and had been called to account for it on the federal platform.

Dr. Chang, Dr. Rudnick, and Dr. Smith sat with him. One after the other, they introduced themselves to the room, mainly for the sake of formalities.

There was that brief uncomfortable silence.

Glover, the long-term senator who had made ethics in business the high point of his advocacies, spoke first. It was expected. Having mastered the solemn approach to



generating relevant questions to relevant answers over the years, he was a great discussion starter.

“Dr. Dawson,” he called. “I am going to ask you a series of straightforward simple questions. Can you handle that in the same manner as I ask them? Give me simple, straightforward answers. Can you do that?”

Dawson nodded. “Yes Senator Glover, I can do that.”

“Are you here for retraction?” Glover asked.

“No,” Dawson replied.

Glover’s tone was intentionally slowed and lowly as he spoke. “Are you here for redemption?”

Dawson shook his head. “No.”

“Are you here for atonement?”

The question stopped the flow of the conversation for a few seconds. Dawson, pondering what the Senator could have implied with the line of questioning, asked, “Atonement? Whose?”

Glover shook his head. “Since you have broken the rules of the conversation you so solemnly chose to abide by a few seconds behind, I want to tell you what I have been pondering as well...and these thoughts are waking me up at night. I am wondering, pondering what death really is and how it could have prevailed in thought as punishment. If it is punishment, is it some sort of atonement? And then as you asked, whose? Whoever could owe the atonement? To whom is the atonement owed? Death is a stoppage where there should be

continuous and relentless instigation for life. And stoppage cannot be the instigation for life. If the purpose of death is punishment, does that necessitate the need for atonement? Whose?" He maintained a few seconds of silence, holding on to Dawson's eyes intently, before he relaxed into his seat, indicating he was finished with his round of questioning.

Dawson barely winked before he heard his name again.

"Dr. Dawson," Senator Richard Grant, the one notable physician turned Senator on the panel called.

Dawson didn't want to engage his eyes, suspecting some unforeseeable leap the simple proposal pitch and scientific explanation of the workings of the Nestla he had planned was already derailed. Getting to a wider audience across the prison systems was the underline for his presence, however much the legislative body could have reasoned things otherwise. "Yes Senator."

"Can you explain the circumstances surrounding the death of Mr. Norman?" Grant asked.

"I administered the Nestla Serum..." he replied simply.

"What the hell were you thinking?" Senator Ford asked.

Dawson almost imagined the question was not for him. He was familiar with Senator Ford, the notable Democratic Senator who had been fervently against the Nestla Project at the very knowledge of its inception, and had inspired the federal investigation into state activity. It hardly bothered him that he could very much be hated by Ford for reasons he wouldn't care to know. Ford, made his decision on the

Nestla before he heard any of its defining details. Argument with him will be antagonistic and futile.

“It was done with consent...” Dawson started.

Ford raised his eyebrows. “Action! Is that what you call it? No Dr. Dawson you wouldn’t be able to recognize consent if it hit you...”

The room observed silence briefly.

“Senator Ford,” Dawson called. “Mr. Norman wanted to die.”

Ford stared at the celebrated psychiatrist as though he were stupid. “Dr. Dawson, it can easily be surmised that Mr. Norman wanted to die because he was on death row. He definitely could have wanted it all over.”

“That was exactly what he wanted,” Dawson added.

Ford gave a sharp sardonic laugh. “Wrong Dr. Dawson, that was exactly what he never wanted. That was why he was sent to death row.”

There were a few seconds of silence. Dawson didn’t give a response.

Senator Hunt, the republican Senator in favor of capital punishment on record, spoke. “There is a segmented but fully institutionalized part of our society dedicated to two things mainly: crime and punishment. Under normal circumstances, all probabilities of prejudices or privileges aside, I would like to believe these things apply equally to all that may be

subject. Regardless, the rules apply that with crime there is usually some appointed punishment after convictions. And I am sure at this point, as you must be knowledgeable of it as well, that part of the assigned punishment for Mr. Norman's crimes was death.”

Dawson hesitated. “The state accepted the recommended manner of death. It wasn’t done on a whim.”

“Of course it wasn’t done on a whim,” Ford snapped. “They were romanced, awed by you, your endless need for psychiatric reform, by the seemingly unbelievably endless scientific breakthrough after breakthrough, and the ease associated with it, one of such, according to you, Mr. Norman consented to. What do you know? That nestla event ascribed to Norman had to be quietly celebrated, didn't it Dr. Dawson?”

The sting of his words was more effective than Dawson made it appear. His celebrity eroded the tenacity, importance, and efficiency of his work, which if allowed to pervade, could demote the credibility of both project and proposal for the extended applicability of the Nestla. Dawson held Ford's eyes. “Senator Ford, if the efficacy of the Nestla Serum is what is in question here rather than the platform of the application and procedural policies, we need to be talking about the general extensibility of the Nestla project.”

The disdainful expression his statement drew from Ford was on point. Ford was silenced momentarily.

Senator Stanford, the formerly high profile practiced Lawyer among the lawmakers spoke. “While this meeting may not apply to the potency or the efficiency of your project, the adaptability and applicability may apply, and the implication of those could be damning as well... the application of the Nestla

Serum under the terms and conditions can be reasoned as murderous and wrong.”

It was Dawson’s turn to observe silence at the ridicule of words.

The room maintained silence for a few moments.

Dawson spoke. “Murderous or wrong are not the words I’ll use, Senator.”

“Why? Because Mr. Norman isn’t dead?” Stanford asked.

Dawson shook his head. “He is indeed dead by consent of the State.”

“And executed,” Stanford added.

“And executed,” Dawson agreed.

Stanford held a sarcastic smile. "And who is the executioner in this case Dr. Dawson? Aren't you the executioner here?"

Dawson hesitated. “Execution is a process. The State, I’ll say Senator.”

“Now we've come to the case of procedural ethics in medical practices. And there is the urgency of the question. Was Mr. Norman executing Dr. Dawson?” Ford asked.

Dawson hesitated, thinking without much effort to induce thought. He had asked himself the same question over time and had never been able to come up with an answer. Did he have an insider on his team betraying him with the specifics of

the nature of the Nestla Realm? Was he deeper than he thought he was at the simple legislative hearing?

It was his duty to discuss the details of the Nestla Project both as a part of the legislative and penal systems, and he had enjoyed a level of authority and control with the legislative bodies over the years, one that had always assured him they trusted his instincts. The particular case of the Nestla Serum, he understood, was particularly different. He, as well as the Nestla Project, were on trial, a delicacy not of intellect or scientific correctness but of decorum and a miser's compromise on medical ethics.

Stanford spoke. "It would be impossible for us to overwhelm you Dr. Dawson, however it may seem that way. So let me put things in proper perspective so none of us are here wasting our time on things that will hardly benefit society at large... Would the circumstances surrounding Mr. Norman's death satisfy and certify your scientific or rather official term of execution Dr. Dawson?"

"I will say so Senator," Dawson replied.

"Then you will say it satisfies the legal order rendered by the law of the land?" Ford asked.

Dawson hesitated briefly then raised his head to hold Senator Ford's eyes. "If by law of the land you refer to state laws, Senator, then I will have to say yes."

Ford held a sarcastic smile.

"If I may speak to Senator Ford..." Dr. Chang started.

Ford turned to Chang. "Yes, Dr. Chang, you may."

Chang exhaled. “The reason for this hearing Senator is mainly to consider the use and efficacy of the Nestla Serum. Mr. Norman’s death is not just a past inefficacy-efficacy probability, it is secondary to the possible benefit of the Nestla.”

Ford laughed, sarcastically and some other members of the committee joined contagiously.

None relieved their expressions.

Chang exhaled loudly.

Ford spoke. “Dr. Chang, you’re well aware of the pending anomaly in the issue of the circumstances surrounding Mr. Norman’s death aren’t you?”

Dr. Chang nodded. “Yes Senator, I am well aware.”

“Then if you are well aware as you speak...” Ford said as he held Dr. Chang’s eyes fully. “...do tell me which particular after effect of the Norman case I have been referring to.”

Chang hesitated, briefly. “The families of the victims questioned the notion of justice in the case of Mr. Norman.”

Ford nodded. “We are indeed on the same page. But that justice is a notion is questionable. You see Dr. Chang, justice can not afford to be a notion...if it were, our roles, time, and effort here today would be questionable. The role of legislature, both state and federal will be questionable and we have no choice but to discuss the Norman case as we discuss the efficacy-inefficacy probabilities of the Nestla Project.”

“In other words...” Stanford started. “...if we choose not to entertain truth at this level, even if we may eventually close our eyes to it, we will fail the people at large. The purpose of the legislature is eventually justice.”

Chang nodded. “I agree with you Senators. And though the nature of my job gives me more practicality in medicine rather than the emotions associated with death, I am...”

“Are you saying you’re more accustomed to saving lives than killing? Or that death has no implication to you?” asked Senator Pent, one of the two women in the room.

Chang nodded. “Yes Senator, partly that, but more importantly that death is death. The implication of death is death, especially one necessitated by the state.”

The room observed silence, briefly.

Ford spoke. “I disagree with you on that thought Dr. Chang. Nature of death matters. We promised the victim’s families we’ll give them justice. Did they get it in the case of Mr. Norman? The nature of capital punishment is execution...nothing otherwise lesser than its kind will suffice as justice.”

Chang's expression was that of indifference. He didn't give a response.

Dr. Smith spoke. “If I may remind you Senators, that the Nestla Project was a necessity born out of a necessity. The state of Texas came to us in 2040, approximately five years before the Norman incidence with an overcrowding, a general inability to cope with upsurge of crimes and bankruptcy problem involving the correctional system.”



Dawson continued. "Then we tried some systemic changes which were woeful failures in solving the problems. But as scientists, we don't give up. So we kept looking for solutions."

"Before you came to the Nestla," Ford added.

"Before we came to the Nestla," Dawson agreed.

Senator Stanford gave a slight shrug. "It's a familiar tale, Dr. Dawson. The State of Texas needed you, and this time it took a lot of time for you to come up with a deadly miracle now questionable as a means of executing justice won't you say?"

"Correction Senator if I may..." Dawson started.

"You may, Dr. Dawson," Ford encouraged.

He continued. "The nature of the solution sought was itself deadly at the onset. The need was for a way to save the cost of maintaining and managing the correctional system, and with death row inmate insurgency, the managerial aspect was more important. Three prison officials died in a matter of months. And because of the nature of their serious crimes and eventual fate, eliminating death row inmates kept coming up in our meetings with state officials as those of more urgency."

"You mean the state considered them easily disposable?" Senator Miller, the other woman on the committee team known to be openly against capital punishment asked.

"They were already deemed disposable by the death penalty Senator Miller. The main problem was that they weren't easily disposable. They were costly to all...their everyday welfare...the extra security they sometimes require, there were

those endless appeals after appeals, costly to the generosity of the public, costly to the judicial system when the monies involved could have gone to other things not eventually doomed..." Dawson replied.

"Eventual damnation...so they were deemed more disposable by the situation?" she asked.

Dawson nodded. "Yes, I'll agree with that. Within the perspective of eventual damnation, they were indeed deemed most disposable by the nature of the state and their death row statuses."

Ford frowned. "Nature of the state and statuses?"

Dawson nodded. "Yes Senator. It was said earlier that the nature of death matters, and here, it is not merely the nature of the crimes but the extent. Texas felt there was a crime wave revolution in place. Every state felt the same. But Texas was not willing to absorb the costs, especially the human cost on the judicial side. They thought they had to do everything within their power to manage things. And I believe the Nestla Serum solution was more than we all bargained for. It was not just a solution that could solve the state's problems but one capable of indirectly solving the state's problems by being the inevitable punishment the inmates may want..."

Pent widened her eyes. "You don't say?"

Dawson exhaled, and spoke in a soft calm tone. "That they were disposable at any point in time or even when the debate-able, repeal-able, retractable time came will be irrelevant. And that death is inevitable will not be my call. Neither will how the death occurs."

“Your job was to render a means of disposal that was cost-effective and discrete?” Grant asked.

Dawson exhaled, wondering what intelligence the Senatorial Committee had been able to gather on his processes. “Processes are always secretive until they are required.”

“Required?” Senator Miller asked.

“Required to be otherwise accessible,” Dawson replied.

“Dr. Dawson,” Miller called. “Are you aware of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of two death row inmates, Jason Perkins and Alex Rogers prior to the state’s eventual enablement of the Nestla Project?”

Dawson nodded slowly. “Yes I am well aware of their deaths.”

Miller narrowed her eyes. “Of what nature would you say those circumstances were?”

Dawson hesitated briefly, now certain there had been an intelligence leak from his or the penal system camp. “They were examined for the Nestla Project, but were never subjects for the process.”

“They were examined in what manner Dr. Dawson?” Miller asked.

Dawson hesitated briefly, thinking. “They were questioned, subjected to mental tests, and finally, hypnosis.”

“Suggestive hypnosis?” Ford asked.

Dawson shook his head. “Interrogative hypnosis.”

Miller continued. “Were you aware of the circumstances surrounding the deaths of both Perkins and Rogers as now being reported having symptoms resembling the same as those observed and documented with the official Nestla environment? By official, I mean Norman’s?”

Dawson shook his head. “No, I am not aware of that Senator. I will assume with your use of 'now', these so-called observations came to light after the Norman report came out.”

Miller hesitated briefly. “I will assume so. But that doesn’t take away from the resembling symptoms as those which could have been noticeable with Perkins and Rogers as well.”

Dawson exhaled. “No it doesn’t. But it does bring to mind that this could have been empty observations on the part of the observers. The report on Norman, the unlikely uproar from the victim’s family, the seeming secretive aspect of the workings of the Nestla could have been just some of the after effects that could have jogged some false memories on the part of the observers. And by observer Senator Miller, I will assume you mean someone present in the prison system and infrastructure, someone close enough to have known the conditions Perkins, Rogers and especially Norman were exposed to?”

“Yes I’ll say that Dr. Dawson,” Miller replied.

Dawson narrowed his eyes, trying to read into Miller’s demeanor. Whatever answer he gave based on the conversation

could only have repercussions for him. She was soon to forget whatever discussion she had with some famous doctor who killed people by dinner time. She would have some other discussion the next day.

Discrediting him and the Nestla project with vacuous rumors and baseless Intel will be futile however easy. The two, he knew too intimately, were two completely separate endeavors. He was a valuable asset to the psychiatric community and had proved it over time. Yet, he was cautious, in fact anxious. Nestla was his most controversial project yet. "Then If I may add Senator Miller, the qualifications for and distinctions on such observations are highly questionable if not ineffective."

Miller raised an eyebrow. "Are you telling me the lay man's word or even the average citizen's senses of observations are highly tainted if not irrelevant? That the world must live on the words and superior senses of such distinguished intellectuals such as yourself to have reliability, to have the truth?"

The room was engulfed in silence, the reassuring much of it remained that reassuring. And Miller could have easily read the prolonged silence to mean consent by all.

Dawson spoke. "If you tell me, Senator, that your informant—"

Miller widened her eyes. "Informant? One would have thought you committed a crime rather than the great service the state communed and commissioned."

Sarcasm, Dawson noted, was the implication. She knew some more. Some more of what? He corrected the statement. "If the observer, in this case, was to be one of my associates, I will readily agree with and address your concerns, Senator Miller."

Miller twisted her mouth slightly. “You can hardly address them Dr. Dawson, when you haven’t heard them.”

Dawson hesitated, wishing the moment away, considering it a waste. “If you may, Senator Miller.”

Miller continued. “The observation was of the impulsive surge of happiness, the inexplicable lucky streak of jolliness, the ease with the knowledge of death and dying, the definite and unrelenting state of euphoria.”

Dawson felt the surge of unease at the thought that everything Miller said could be summed up into one sentence. Embellishments mattered little to him. He was a practical man. And Miller was further assuring him she was a waste of his precious time.

Miller continued. “And there was the lack of clearly perceptible medical causation or anything conclusive regarding the natures of their deaths.”

“There were those,” Dawson said mockingly.

“You were not around for the certifications of deaths were you Dr. Dawson?” Miller asked.

Dawson shook his head. “No I wasn’t. Such, I couldn’t have known the circumstances surrounding the deaths as you mentioned. I read the reports Dr. Miner gave.”

Miller squinted, studying Dawson’s increasingly hostile demeanor. “Despite the fact that you weren’t available for the certifications of both Perkins and Roger’s death, you were indeed present for the certification of Mr. Norman’s death weren’t you Dr. Dawson.”

Dawson nodded. "I was, indeed, Senator. I was."

"And is it in your opinion that not only are the deaths of Perkins and Roger unrelated to the Nestla Project, they are unrelated to the hypnosis administered to determine qualifications for the Nestla Project?" she asked.

Dawson nodded. "That is my opinion, yes."

Miller narrowed her eyes as she held Dawson's. "But this kind of incident has never occurred in Texas death row history, or even any other state's death row history, is that not so Dr. Dawson?"

Dawson hesitated briefly. "I will need the clarification for your distinction of such which you refer to as incidence here Senator."

Miller exhaled, holding on to Dawson's eyes. "There have never been such cases documented, such cases in which death row inmates seem to have died of some sort of hyper inflated euphoria."

Unable to contain himself, Dawson laughed. And the other doctors on his team followed contagiously. He shook his head as he contained his laughter. "It could never be that simple Senator Miller."

Miller feigned indifference at the thought she couldn't, wouldn't understand. "It couldn't?"

Dawson nodded. "Yes. And that's why I can not reasonably comment on the deaths of Perkins and Rogers. I—"

“Other than they were sentenced to death and now they are dead,” Senator Miller interrupted.

“That Senator Miller...” Dawson started. “...will be an issue to take up with the Texas State Penitentiary system. They were sentenced to death by the state and the state maintains all phases of enforcement of justice and judgment from court procedures, to appeals, to eventual execution. We are here for the Nestla Project. And the only death row case relevant to the project is that of Mr. Norman.”

“Now to the Nestla...” Grant started. “Can you give us the background on the Nestla and its use?”

Dawson exhaled, tried to clear his thoughts over the bit of normalcy employed at the moment, scanned the room full of oddly appointed and participating Senatorial Committee briefly, before speaking. “The Nestla was developed over time through Hypnotic and oneirology research.”

“Clarifications Dr. Dawson,” Miller said.

Dawson continued. “The Nestla Project was developed over many years of research into hypnosis and the science of dreams. We linked the strategic and systemic scientific research of dreams with that of the nature of hypnosis.”

“Sleepwalking?” Pent asked.

Dawson shook his head. “Far from that Senator Pent. There is thorough lucidity.”

“And the process?” Pent asked.



“The first aspect of the process is in deciding the hypnotic susceptibility of the subject,” Dawson said.

“Susceptibility? You make it sound like a sense of vulnerability, rather than a scientific disposition,” Miller said.

Sarcasm again, Dawson thought. The woman was getting on his nerves. “By susceptibility to Senator Miller I am referring to how receptive someone is to suggestion under the influence of hypnosis.”

“What about those who are unable to be hypnotized?” Miller asked.

Dawson wondered then how stupid a voter-certified Senator has to be to qualify for the job. What do they have to be nowadays, an actor, a singer, social media kings and queens? Are these things degree-curated? Do they even have to be educated, have a first degree? “There are those people who are difficult hypnotic subjects, and such, they will not be considered good subjects for the Nestla.”

“But they still have to be killed, don't they Dr. Dawson?” Pent asked.

Dawson swallowed his tongue, reminding himself to mind his anger. “Do you mean they have to be executed according to the law, Senator Pent?”

“Do you hold a distinction between someone being killed and someone being executed doctor?” Pent asked.

Dawson nodded. “Yes Senator. Killing could be murderous. Executions as they are referred to in this case, is a legally

binding obligation to a legal judgment. Addressing a state mandated legal process is different from administering it. ”

Miller spoke. “Nobody is asking you to rewrite the law, Dr. Dawson. The

means of administration is as much part and process of legality. If the Nestla is adopted as a means of administering the death row execution process, what happens to those who are not susceptible to hypnosis? Do they get to suffer a worse fate? Do they get to suffer a better fate?”

Dawson reigned in his frustration. “I will answer your question eventually and reasonably Senator, once I am through with explaining the Nestla process.”

Pent forced a smile. “Thank you, Dr. Dawson. I will be counting on it.”

Dawson exhaled. “The Nestla serum drives presynaptic and postsynaptic efficacy, relaying refreshments of induced hypnosis, persistently.”

The room met with silence.

Dawson continued. “It mediates a dream-like REM state in which the subject is wakeful and alert.”

Silence.

Grant spoke. “Do they know what they’re doing? The subjects?”

“Yes, they do,” Dawson replied.

“Do they know what is going on around them?” Grant asked.

“Yes,” Dawson replied, and hesitated, thinking. Getting a round of persistent questioning from the notable physician on the team was some means to some eventual end he could see coming. And he was trying to get to it.

“What do they know?” Grant persisted.

Dawson hesitated.

“Dr. Dawson,” Grant called. “There is a reason for combining hypnotic susceptibility with the Nestla to administer death and dying. What don’t the subjects who can hardly be called your patients at the moment know?”

Dawson hesitated, formulating the appropriate terms before he uttered them. He did so solemnly. “They may not know they are dying.”

Silence presided in the room briefly.

“Is that even freaking possible?” Miller asked no one in particular.

“Is this where you answer the question about whatever would happen with people who aren’t hypnotically susceptible?” Pent asked.

Dawson held Pent’s eyes. “Although it took me a while to understand it, those who are unable to be hypnotized undergo a different sort of process.”

“What sort of process can there be from that?” Miller argued.

“The Nestla will induce hypnotic susceptibility. They’ll only require more serum than the others.”

Miller spoke. "Such, the Nestla can be used on anyone?"

Dawson nodded. "Yes, it is everyone-hyper-inflated-effective with varying influences. The more serum in the bloodstream, the more hyper inflated the effect."

Ford spoke. "Let me understand what the Nestla Project is all about. Are you saying we should storm our death row systems with Nestla hysteria so we can save money?"

Dawson shook his head. "I'm here momentarily and mainly state-approved. I'm here because of the legality of the Nestla which was state approved as a right of choice on method of execution by the state. The effectiveness has been proven. This is for consideration of extension to other states."

Senator Stanford spoke. "So you're banking solely on the consent of the state of Texas?"

Dawson nodded. "Nothing in this case of death row execution will be possible without the consent of the state."

"And the state in this case will do anything for control and money management. But I'm curious about the case of Charles Norman," Senator Ford said. "How do you achieve consent in the case of the death row inmate?"

"We had informed consent," Dawson replied.

Senator Stanford laughed, sarcastically. "Which to a serial killer on death row means exactly what, doctor?"

Dawson spoke in a solemn tone. "He knew his options without reservations."

“Ah!” Senator Stanford snickered. “Are his options without reservations? Are his reservations with options?”

“He understood self-decision. He understood autonomy,” Dawson added.

Roger Frederick, the Senator he recognized to be that from Arizona laughed, out loudly and sarcastically. And got everyone’s attention. “And he had self-decision. And he had autonomy,” he mimicked.

“Yes,” Dawson replied, swallowing the slight insult.

Frederick raised his eyebrows. “His autonomy had already been taken from him. He had no right to self decision. That was part of the punitive aspect of taking someone else’s life, of being a serial killer. Or am I not smart enough to figure these simple things Dr. Dawson?”

Dawson nodded. “You are right Senator Frederick. His autonomy was stripped from him as the main purpose for the punitive imposition. His ultimate right to life was stripped from him. But his option on how he dies within a framework of choices was his to make.”

“And so we come back to the very nature of the Nestla process. Can you explain it to me one time, I’m a little slow,” Stanford said.

Some of the Senators laughed.

Dawson hesitated, pondering briefly on some form of simpler explanation before he spoke. “We enhance the overall

neurological-reactionary complex using the biochemical stasis enabled by the Nestla Serum to induce favorable applications of the neurophysiological process which also involve some simulations, divinatory simulations and such.”

“Divinatory?” Pent, a notably devoted Christian asked. “Do you make them believe they've died and gone to heaven?”

Dawson shook his head. “There is no time they believe they are dying or may have died, Senator.”

“Is it possible for them to believe they are in heaven, Dr. Dawson?” Pent asked.

“It is possible for them to believe they're in Nirvana, Seventh Heaven, Heaven, or anything, ” Dawson replied.

Pent's smile was sarcastic. “The punishment just keeps getting better and better, better than prayers really...you are bigger than a miracle worker for making them do that...”

Dawson shook his head. “I don't make them do anything Senator Pent...it is the basal reserves of their Christian upbringing that may do such a thing...I do neither the induction nor the simulations. It's unimaginable where a man's mind may go when his subconscious is trying to get away from death.”

“Straight towards it?” Miller asked.

Dawson almost smiled at the thought of the paradox implied by Miller. “Blissfully so.”

Grant spoke. “If there is some deeply seated subconscious reality, what's catalyzing their realities?”

Dawson hesitated briefly. "Oneiric simulations which play on presynaptic future events as if it were happening at the moment...an induction of a sort of dreamlike lucid state within a real state."

"What is the real state made of?" Grant asked.

"I exist," Dawson replied.

"Simply that?" Grant asked.

Dawson hesitated briefly, thinking. "That is simply a very powerful Senator, especially in a precondition where that is left in doubt or life is threatened. It is a pre-post existential state that must persist for the induced lucid state to function properly."

"Lucid State?" Stanford asked.

Dawson hesitated, fashioning his words. "There's always a norm which is implanted at the awakening of the Nestla Realm. Such, by lucid state I am referring to a state in which the subject is aware and conscious but not of the abnormality the implanted reality presents."

"Abnormality implanted?" Pent asked.

Dawson held her eyes, wondering if it was possible for him to be properly understood. "After the serum is administered, we use hypnotic mechanism to implant errors and synaptic efficacies help build the Nestla Realm."

Pent frowned. "Reality is not estranged from the subject as the observer?"

Dawson squinted, yet wondering if he would be understood. "Never. The reality is the observer's mind. The reality is the observer."

Pent deepened her frown. "You mean reality is implanted in the mind?"

Dawson exhaled. "At the point in which the lucid state is fully induced, the reality is the mind Senator. In the Nestla Realm, every aspect of the mind is engaged in reality. There can be no estrangement of the self."

Ford spoke. "Correct me if you think I'm wrong Dr. Dawson but isn't it death row autonomy as you defined it his right to decision making given perfectly understood circumstances."

Dawson hesitated briefly, rethinking his statement. "Because there wasn't a proper sense of self in relation with the state and by that I mean that the inmate was put on death row without his consent, he had no initiating autonomy other than that which the state pre-supposed, pre-approved, and pre-appointed with the Nestla Project to achieve their desired aims. Such the autonomy of choice is understood by the inmate, but the autonomy taken by the state remains. In other words, the State is helping the inmate with the personal conviction of the necessity of death to kill himself. This is highly cost-effective against recidivists and death row inmates who use public privileges to go from appeal to appeal in the revocation of death row sentences...and at a point when the prison populace threatens the lives of administrative officials."



Grant laughed, sarcastically. “All of a sudden, the state presupposes aims without your consent Dr. Dawson?”

Dawson gained silence.

Grant continued. “Here’s to a subject we’re both familiar with. Whatever happened to medical ethics in this case?”

Dawson hesitated again.

The Senator lingered on Dawson’s hesitation, awaiting a response.

Dawson spoke. “Autonomy in medical ethics borderlines on outcomes favorable to the patient’s health...and this could not be achieved in the case of Mr. Norman because he didn’t have an eventual outcome that was his own...that is one, dead set against the Nestla outcome. All that remained was what favored the state. The state wanted what he wanted; for him to die. On Norman’s behalf, to do so without the realistic burden of execution. On the state’s behalf, to have him die without any more cost than they have endured and without suspicion.”

“Without suspicion Dr. Dawson?” Grant asked.

Dawson swallowed his statement about the state, regretting it immediately. “With little suspicion.”

“Is my guess right Dr. Dawson, that the death will not be recorded as executions as executions are usually administered and public?” Grant asked.

Dawson exhaled. “Not entirely. But you may be right in assuming that

Senator. The date of death could hardly be announced as it could not be truly known. No press release arrangement necessary. But that is merely convenient at the moment. The method can be fully introduced to the public as a life-death choice. ”

“And at what point will these suspicious death be registered and on record as the Nestla Project deaths?” Grant asked.

“I believe we are at that point Senator,” Dawson replied.

“Whatever happens in these Nestla Realms capable of killing death row inmates? The inmates don’t die in a real world, won’t you say Dr. Dawson?” Pent asked.

Dawson hesitated. He was at the worst moment in the meeting. Was he to tell the truth and nothing but the truth? Or was he to tell the level of truth reasonable enough not to scare the lawmakers? “The subject is introduced into a lucid state of constant involvement, of adventures, entertainment, one which absorbs him or her completely. It is one in which he forsakes the self and is fully absorbed in the new world. There is no need for food in the realm. There’s entertainment...there’s pleasure.”

“How do they die?” Pent asked, sensing Dawson’s hesitation on disclosing the details.

Dawson exhaled and spoke in a low solemn tone. “They starve to death.”

“A world without food or water?” Senator Pent asked.

“A constantly engaging reality of sensory amplification, self-indulgence and entertainment,” Dawson replied.

“They’ll die happy, yet they’ll die starving?” Senator Pent asked.

“They’ll die feeling happy...” Dawson stressed. “...before they drift into permanent sleep mode unaware of their hunger and starvation.”

“Is it the hypnotic suggestion that they’re fasting for some ulterior reason?” Grant asked.

Dawson shook his head. “No Senator. They can’t be fasting when the presiding belief is that they don’t need food. The Nestla Realm is the most intrinsically and intuitively imposing. If they feel hungry and eat there, they are full there.”

“And they don’t know they’re dying because?” Pent asked.

“We had induced a paradox that cancels out the eventual purpose, which in this case is for them to die. They’re excited rather than burdened when engaged in the Nestla Realm...” Dawson said, and hesitated briefly. “And they’re too restful when they’re drifting off to sleep, which in reality are their deaths.”

Ford grunted. “So, instead of executing our serial killers we send them off to some world of the living walking dead where they are entertained and pleased to death?”

Dawson shook his head. “There is no such thing as the living walking—”

Ford raised his voice. “Don’t tell me who is dead and who is not dead here Doctor. In a world where everyone is starving to death but begrudged by the superficial enrichment of life and mind numbing entertainment and are not aware of the predicament of imminent death, everyone is a living dead.”

Silence presided inside the closed door committee meeting.

Grant spoke. “Capital punishment is usually adopted by states. And the constitutionality of the Nestla process is not questionable at the moment. In fact, it gains an opposing effect. It doesn’t seem like a punishment. And when it comes to reasonable legal processes, the punishment should fit the crime. It is unreasonable to commit a crime in the land of the living and get your punishment in the land of the dead. When you commit a crime in reality, your punishment should exist in reality. That is not the case here.”

Senator Ford spoke. “The legality here is apparent Dr. Dawson. You have to publish all facts relating to the Nestla Project so that all parties may know and understand it. If the legislative side and the victim’s families do not fully comprehend the circumstances surrounding the so-called Nestla executions, they can not defend against it. Flying rumors and supposed unscientific judgments is not what educated civilized people do. Anyone with common sense should be able to know what the Nestla death is. It is a dream of death within a dream of life for the living dead.”

There was that unreasonably long drawn-out silence in the room as though some final word had been spoken, but Dawson understood the process well to know the summary judgment must be from Grant, the notable physician among them.

He remained silent.

When Grant spoke, he did so deviating his attention from the notes he had written, placed conveniently in front of him. His tone was calm and assured. "Let's presuppose some ideal state of luck within some ideal state of luck as everything is genetically predisposed and with the propensity to become a better version of some semblance of itself. Now these semblances must know manifolds and productivity. Unless that is, we assume luck is immaterial but productive, in which case, it must hold the very same reckoning as the later. The later ideal state of luck in reckoning with itself must do so by rules. There is life and there is death and sometimes the justice system uses death to justify death...no, rather, it uses the eradication of life in one to certify death in another. That is, we have some sort of standardization of optimization within the possibilities of extremes or in the very extreme cases, as a necessity for it. There is the reduction of universal non-particularity for instance, to some vectorization favorable for a particular subject or thing. And this will consistently trigger too many unpredictable factors in humans. One of such factors is in this case, a pleasure to the point of death, or as you may, starvation to the point of death through pure emotional delight. Would you say experiences in the Nestla realm affect self-perception positively or negatively?"

Dawson cleared his throat. "It does not affect self-perception at all. If it does, it does so unrealistically, positively."

Grant shook his head. "Unrealistically, positively...that must be like a shipyard of skulls you raise your hands to in some bloody red heaven and color them life. You then call a party of them and call them ideal, while one way or the other, you must pay in blood. This calls the inevitable. A death that must be described as some pleasure cruise to

the death from a disposition of death cannot be celebrated. And a death that cannot be celebrated cannot be left unsaid. You're going to write out in full detail the scientific workings of the Nestla Serum within the possible premises of the Nestla realm. And you cannot afford to do that on a shipyard of skulls.”

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