

Why Falling in Love in 2050 Means Attacking the Planet

By Jose Bernardo Reyes Facio

As an international student, up to now I have had the privilege to live in five different countries, and just over a thousand different rooms. It's been fantastic. There are nights when I don't sleep at all... for various reasons. But there are particular ones though. Those in which a sound loud enough wakes me up in the middle of the night and just before sitting on my bed, I have to think for a minute if the sound I'm hearing makes sense to the place where I'm sleeping. Sometimes is China, sometimes is Chicago, sometimes is Mexico... It never does. I don't really know why I bother asking myself anymore. Some people call it involuntary situational awareness but I don't care what they think. I know I'm not crazy. I just suffer a condition called anachronism syndrome. Let me break it up for you, I was born in the wrong era. Fortunately for me, I don't dream about the melancholic past and what could I been should I had lived in it. Rather, I think about the future because I've been there and I constantly see myself in it.

I know what you're thinking: surely, 'what the hell?' But this is not as strange as you might think it is. How do I know? Just ask yourself if what you're hearing makes sense to the place where you're sitting right now. Freedom is a very human word; it is the opposite of enslavement. In this sense, if we all are enslaved, our oppressors are familiar things that we so much naturally live with, until the point that we no longer realize what these things are: the senses, the physical world, the passage of time from past to future... Does it make sense to tweet your thoughts and swipe left for love? Fifty years ago, it didn't. So, I'm about to tell you things that won't necessarily make sense now. But if you listen carefully to my story, and never lose sight of where you are, you might begin to make sense and become *the change* your time so desperately needs.

When I was in the future, mid-21st Century in America to be precise, every major social action was taken considering the future of the Generation Z. Not for nothing they were named after the last letter on the alphabet. We had never been so concerned about their future. This was a generation of youngsters that didn't consumed products; rather, they 'rented' everything: houses, cars, boyfriends, library spots, you name it. Quite literally,

everything was put on rent online and delivered with a drone to their houses. They didn't hate their leaders or their political systems like we do. They hated us for handing them a world so linked, yet so fragmented. When I was in the future they looked at me the way I looked at the old cornfield turned into a shopping district miserably showing my house between the stores which now hold someone else's dreams.

Perhaps what surprised me the most about this time was that they still had the same worries that most of us do. They were vaguely aware that the thin line that limits themselves and the world was not their skin. They learned to live with their smartphones attached to their hands. Some of them even had tattooed QR codes to easily download music or upload videos from their recently purchased eye-cameras. Maybe they wanted to prove to themselves that they too can last forever. The progress on mobile technology did not change the fact that they were still self-aware about their own image and just like we do, many wanted to look better, richer, or healthier. They were able to video-call each other through virtual reality glass adapters, enabling them to literally be present in a conference room via holograms. But add-ons services were also offered and people bought 'filters' to make everyone believe they were better, richer, or healthier.

Quite a plastic society, right?

Students were more aware of themselves and their role in society than we were. They had forced their education institutions to adapt to the rapidly changing fields that a mid-century market demands. In Lake Forest College, some majors were modified and some others were added as students demanded them. Jessica Miller, who then became my girlfriend, for example, studied Biologic Nanotechnology with a minor in Environmental Science. After she learned during freshmen that there was more plastic garbage in the entire ocean than actual fish, she developed an interest in contributing to the already existing nanotechnology that replaced some species in the marine ecosystem. To be honest, I was afraid that she was going to cry when she found out about this, and my stupid brain couldn't think of anything to comfort her except taking for a walk in Lake Shore Park. It was a very dumb idea because right in front of us Lake Michigan reminded her of the ocean. But somehow seeing trees and wide open fields where Lake Shore Drive

used to lead hundreds of cars made her believe that there was a chance for Mother Nature. She was the only one that looked at me with sparkling eyes of hope, those that don't seem to be looking someone from another time. She didn't know it yet but I was falling deeply in love with her. Fortunately for me, Jess believed that nature awakens the need for love, and although global warming refugees had proven otherwise when they moved here from drier lands, sometimes nature doesn't really satisfy this need. But walking right next to me while surrounded by fresh lake breeze was enough for her to fall in love with me and I was happy about it.

Weeks after we graduated college I asked her if she would like to go traveling with me to the West Coast. I had stuffed my van with outdoor equipment and we both arranged our passports. The plan was simple: go camping for a while to California Republic and propose to her while looking at the stars on top of Redwood's hills. Sure crossing the border was a pain but the planning behind this moment and her eyes causing me a mini-heart attack when they looked at me made everything worth it. She also arranged everything at her job in the laboratory because it was hard to take a vacation in mid-September, when nationalist protests usually take place in the South.

One night during summer, she came home and plugged herself to her smartphone. I was constantly worried about her because I progressively saw how Jess was testing her own stupid theory that technology can sustain the human species in an ecosystem with fluctuating changes. I didn't like how she had tattooed a QR code so that she could download apps that would help her with daily routines, like arranging sleeping schedules or reading the news in the morning. I thought that it would eventually change her entirely. I reckoned that it was her body and she could do whatever she wanted with it but, that special night, the Jess that was sitting in front of me was not the one I fell in love with.

I couldn't really blame her for believing that an app would help her do something so natural to humankind, after all, doctors were able to 3D-print completely functional organs into the body. But I blamed her for being so dependent on them. As a social media analyst, I knew our dependency on technology was greater than it has ever been before. Just like it happened to news organizations, access to technology was first a luxury only

rich people could afford. Then it became a commodity everyone had access to. And it ended up being a necessity as there was no other way of conveying information. Call it communicational evolution, I call it digital dependency. It was a technology advancement I was very much exposed to and didn't want it to change her, yet it was an advancement she was testing for the sake of humankind and I didn't really know what to do.

That night she got mad at me for telling her to stop being so dependent on her phone and as she was walking away from me while yelling, her voice sounded quieter and her image increasingly transparent. I saw how she vanished right in front of my eyes. I couldn't believe what was happening. I screamed her name repeatedly, I closed and opened my eyes trying to understand what just happened. I ran to the bathroom where I was able to look at myself in the mirror and I repeatedly asked myself if what I heard made sense to where I was.

Was this a dream?

Terrified, I realized that for the first time what happened entirely made sense, so I begged the mirror to stop making fun of me or I will truly lose my mind. Few minutes had passed in trying to understand why I feel in love with her so easily and later lying on my bed I kept on thinking that there was no other woman who sparked such a cataclysm in my head. No other woman had taken me for surprise in such a wacky lightness. And no other women, of the plenty that inhabited my head, made such a mess in in my heart. When the *virtual reality* experience I was playing had ended, I kept on wondering if it was possible for a girl like that to ever exist in my life for real. I had returned to the that remote semi-barbaric place called reality because, since it seemed that one could expect nothing here but new love apps, it was better to be in love where it truly seemed possible.

I guess I lost the notion of hope ever since social media began developing their surveilling system. Not only were they able to know what I like and where I was, but they also developed virtual images of people I could deeply relate to. I still didn't know what the purpose of this was but it seemed though as technology had paradoxically come to be the best antidote for the loneliness it created. What a dilemma.

Things in the future couldn't seem more complex and students thankfully realized it soon enough. My roommate in college Eric, for example, who remained my best friend after graduating, knew what the world was going through and he stepped up when he was needed the most but perhaps he went too far. Asia had taken the leading position in world hegemony, quite literally. China was leading the world in almost everything including economy, education, and technology but they never focused their policy in military power as much as India did. These states were the powers that the world looked up to when it came to diplomacy and social development. Their growth was commonly known as the 'Asian Miracle,' which was immediately followed by other nations like Indonesia or Mexico. In this latter, David had spent some time to study the impact of the increasing nationalism groups on the American southern pro-independence movement.

"Who would have thought in Budweiser when ordering a good beer?" I asked David when he met me at the Lantern bar during Lake Forest College's homecoming. Like few things in this world, drinking beer with my friend was one of those that won't change no matter how hard it tries to. Though I remembered him skinnier. After some jokes and what seemed to be endless small talk he told me with a serious tone that he wanted to change his career to get into the new International Relations program at Harvard. I first thought that he was paranoid but after he truly looked concerned that up to this moment there wasn't any sort of international regulation on contacting extraterrestrial life, I took him more seriously.

When working at Border Studies Center, he discovered that India already made contact with other civilization in outer space. I didn't want to believe that he changed his entire career over a gossip. But the essence of the idea sparked my interest. There was no regulation of any kind on contacting extraterrestrial life. This meant that if any country who could technically contact aliens, could also work together with for world domination. Sparks of hope in the political sphere were certainly present, such as the independence of Catalonia or the unification of the Koreas, but it was true that the world was more divided than ever and we had to look after it. The genocides following independence of northern

Syria or the tragic events of East Turkestan separation from China were just a couple of examples I could think of. It made sense to hear that realpolitik was the way to go.

Soon after enrolling at the program, he developed a proposal to the United Nations encouraging them to anticipate non-recognition to the declaration of Mars Independence. David thought that the simulated conditions humans implemented on Mars to begin biological activity were beneficial but, without regulations they could be counterproductive. He theorized that the atomic bombs we thrown in the planet not only created the thick layer of gas that allowed condensation to take place, but would also encouraged further scientific research to be sent from Earth via spaceflights, including ships with exported molecular life. We will have astronauts living in Terrestrial colonies to permanently monitor life signals but when they will able to detect communication with other forms of live in the solar system, they would stop communicating with us and declare independence since nothing really tied them to Earth, as opposed to India.

As a Social Media Analysts, it was my job to know what was happening on the world and what were people talking about. I was often hired by both private corporations and governmental institutions to identify trends and to spy on people when they discovered my technological habits on hacking accounts. This is how I got to know that Jessica Miller was not real although I wanted her to be. I knew the approval rates of David's theory in the scientific community were at the lowest. He was thought to be a wacky scientist without notions of the Outer Space Treaty signed in 1967. But no one knew about the conversations he thought were encrypted with some terrorist groups in Mexico. David contacted a network of professional mind-like scientists who were developing a nanotech-assembled 'virus.' It was aimed to be released at the UN headquarters next Friday to bring attention on regulating extraterrestrial contact, because such treaty only applied to Earth entities, not Mars colonies.

A sense of urgency surrounded me. I couldn't simply look at myself in the mirror and ask if what I knew was real, because I know for certain that it was. The nanotechnologists will be the conducting the major terrorist attack of the 21st Century after the incident of South Ossetia in Russia. I knew I had to get help, so I desperately looked through David's

contacts to stop any sort of communication with the scientists and to expose them to the respective authorities. Looking through the list of names a single one petrified me.

Biologic Nanotechnologist Jessica Miller.

Could it be? The coincidences were too many. Was technology playing with me? Was it using me as a sort of experiment to know more about me?

One thing I have for certain, from that moment on, is that I see the future as a technological device attached to my head. I have become a little too used to ask myself if what I am hearing makes sense up to the point that I have developed the theory that the nanotechnology-developed microorganisms were Jessica's idea to save the planet from its current path to destruction as we never really cared about environment. Perhaps we were already too used to receive everything from mother nature without giving anything back ever from the beginning of the century. The constant increase in world temperatures were changing and we never paid attention. Snow never fell again in Chicago during January and Florida was almost gone from raising waters. In reality, David's idea was to prioritize Earth and its species above everything else, so I can't really blame him for trying to make the effort no one else did in the past. I liked him for putting an effort, maybe even a massive one, on the way that he looked inside which unsurprisingly was reflected on the outside. It is common knowledge that girls were naturally attracted to him both internally and externally and I don't blame him for that. I don't blame him for trying to save the planet but I do blame him for saying 'yes' to what would have been the love of my life. Why did he say yes to Jessica? Was I to let him get away with this? As the controller of his digital life, I have now more control over his life than he did himself, perhaps the same way someone else was controlling mine as I commonly saw appearances of Jessica in my daily routines.

I did what I have to do.

Like a personal brand of heroine, every time that I go back into the future is like taking a small dose strong enough to get me addicted but weak enough not to kill me. I have seen

the future because I have been in it. I see how the world is divided into phones and humans, post-EDM music and naturalist mainstream, politics of outer space and the 3rd World War. We are the only ones that can change the historic course of the world division. We have the power to give Generation Z a world that can be both interconnected and proactive, pacific and stable, or sustainable and conscious. This, my friends, makes sense to where you are right now and will keep doing it for a long time. So, if you're still asking yourself if what you're hearing makes sense, think about my story and be the change your time so desperately needs.

The End.