

Through the Reading Glasses

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Music written and performed by

Claus Springborg

CoCreation

Cast of Characters

Prof
Alice
Div
Con
Art

Through the Reading Glasses

(Prof sits at his desk working on a lecture)

- PROF: Nietzsche talked about Apollonian and Dionysian creativity. Apollonian creativity was the hard work of the practicing artist, while Dionysian creativity was the sudden flash of insight. No, that's not it. *(pause.)* In Buffalo, New York in the 1930's, advertising whiz, Alex Osborn invents brainstorming. Like a lot of management practices, it's a very successful man's explanation of what works for him and it catches on. And even though it will later be shown to not really work, the modern day business obsession with creativity is born! Crap. *(pause.)* Ever since Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote about being interrupted by a man from Porlock, we have seen creativity as being about some sort of divine inspiration. Shit. *(pause.)* Ideation. The word itself makes me cringe. Can you think of an example of a word that does a better job of taking something that is so innately human, so completely a part of what it is to be a person, and makes it into some mystical, yet very scientific sounding, über-important, magic bullet that is the answer to all of your business problems? Ideation –
- ALICE: *(entering breathlessly, holding a pair of glasses.)* It works!
- PROF: Well I should hope so.
- ALICE: No, I mean it really works. It really, really works.
- PROF: That is more than I can say about my lecture.
- ALICE: Oh, I'm sorry. Am I interrupting? I can come back later.
- PROF: No, my own little man from Porlock. You're here, I'm here. Now is fine.
- ALICE: I can come back.
- PROF: I think that I need a break. So, tell me what is so important?
- ALICE: I got it to work
- PROF: I had gotten that much. What is it that you got to work?
- ALICE: My dissertation. My PhD. It works.
- PROF: Don't you think I should be the judge of that? I know that it may sound old fashioned, but as your supervisor I do think that I am entitled to at least an opinion.
- ALICE: The software works. The virtual reality environment. It is working.
- PROF: Oh, that. The technical part.
- ALICE: Yes, the technical part. It works. You have to see it. Just put these on *(offers the glasses)*.
- PROF: Yes, in due course. *(takes the glasses and sets them down without trying them on.)* And the text?
- ALICE: I thought you might be interested that the virtual environment is working and want to try it out.
- PROF: Have you made any progress on the text? Remember, your dissertation is the text, this virtual hoop-de-doop is only there to support the text.
- ALICE: Yes, I know.
- PROF: So, bring me some text.
- ALICE: Yes, I will. *(Alice leaves the Prof and sings to herself and the audience.)*

What does text, mean to me?

What does text, mean to the academy?

I read Deleuze and Foucault,
Lacan, Derrida, and Rousseau.
I even read Guillet de Monthoux.

What does text, mean to them?

Why all these words from all of these men?

I want to sing and dance and show you my heart
I express myself, share myself with my art.

Words are lines and ink on the page,
But art comes to life on the stage.

So, I ask, what does text, mean to me?
And what does text mean to the academy?

(Alice exits. Prof returns to preparing the lecture.)

PROF: A specter is haunting business – the specter of ideation. No, they won't get the damn illusion. *(pause.)* Ah, a prop. *(Picks up the glasses.)* It is really nothing more than seeing things differently. They are the same things, and then one day *(puts on the glasses and is in the virtual reality environment)* ... wow ... this is ... oh, my ... look at ...

(the twins, Div and Con enter.)

DIV: So many choices.
CON: But only one is right.
DIV: Which way, which way will you go?
CON: Choose the right way.
DIV: So many choices.
PROF: I'm sorry. I'm not quite sure what's happening here.
DIV: There's so many choices, you have to find all the choices.
CON: But you can only choose one. You have to choose one.
PROF: Choose one what?
CON: One option, one path, one course of action. You can't go ahead without making a choice.
PROF: Well yes, of course.
DIV: Have you found all the choices? You have to find the choices. There's always more choices. It's really the crux of the whole thing.
CON: I believe the crux of the matter is choosing the right choice.
DIV: You always say that. But how can you choose until you know all of the choices?
CON: Even to look for more choices is a choice.
PROF: Please, I'm still not sure what exactly is going on here. It would help me out...

(Div and Con freeze. Alice enters.)

ALICE: How may I help you?
PROF: Alice, how good to see you. I've tried on your glasses and the most remarkable thing has happened.
ALICE: How may I help you?
PROF: You've really done a wonderful job with this. It all feels so real. *(pause.)* Are you real?
ALICE: I am the help avatar. How may I help you?
PROF: Oh, I see. So, if I ask you questions you can answer them?
ALICE: I am the help avatar. I am here to help you. How may I help?
PROF: Okay. Who are they?
ALICE: They are Div and Con.
PROF: Why are they here?
ALICE: They are here to help you on your quest.
PROF: And what is my quest?
ALICE: You must rescue the princess.
PROF: Of course. Where is the princess?

ALICE: You must find her.
 PROF: You're not going to tell me, are you?
 ALICE: I am here to help you. I will provide information about how to play the game.
 But you must rescue the princess.
 PROF: Or what? What happens if I don't rescue the princess?
 ALICE: You lose. Game over.
 PROF: Then I guess I'd better rescue the princess (*chuckles*).

(*Alice exits. Con and Div unfreeze.*)

CON & DIV: (*sing and dance*)

Converge, Diverge,
 Converge, diverge, converge.
 More choices, much more choices.
 Wacky and wonderful, nothing's too outrageous.
 No censoring, no thinking, nothing can contain us.
 Converge, diverge,
 Converge, diverge, converge.

PROF: That's all well and good, but I need something a little more specific,
 something that will help me rescue the princess.
 DIV: We could send in the army. You could kill the dragon. You could have a house
 land on top of the witch.
 CON: You could send in the army in a house and have it land on top of the dragon.
 DIV: You could go back in time to before the princess needed rescuing. You could
 answer the riddle. You could learn to fly.
 CON: You could go back in time and learn to fly by answering the riddle.
 PROF: Do you know where the princess is?
 DIV: She could be anywhere.
 PROF: So you don't know.
 CON & DIV: (*sing and dance*)

Converge, Diverge,
 Converge, diverge, converge.

PROF: Yes, I've got that.
 DIV: So look for her. Look everywhere she might be. Then look in the places where
 she can't be.
 CON: And you'll find her in the only place she can be, the place where she is.

(*Div and Con exit.*)

PROF: They are no help at all.

(*Alice enters.*)

ALICE: How may I help you?
 PROF: Where is the princess?
 ALICE: She is in terrible danger. You must rescue her.
 PROF: Yes, I get that. We all get that. I just don't know how.
 ALICE: You know. You just don't know that you know.
 PROF: I question your epistemology.
 ALICE: I question yours.
 PROF: That's rather uppity for a help avatar.
 ALICE: Don't you mean, for a graduate student?

PROF: Yes, I believe I do. (*Pause. Alice exits.*) Well, now what? (*pause. Looks around the stage.*) Oh, princess? Where are you princess?

(*Art enters.*)

ART: Did you lose your puppy?

PROF: I don't have a puppy.

ART: I can see that.

PROF: I'm looking for a princess. I need to rescue her.

ART: Oh, come on. Surely these days any princess worth her salt can rescue herself. I mean, isn't it rather condescending and just a tad bit patriarchal to think that every princess needs rescuing? What does that say about princesses?

PROF: We all need to be rescued from time to time.

ART: Perhaps. What do you need to be rescued from?

PROF: I don't know.

ART: So maybe you're wrong. Maybe none of us need to be rescued. I'm just saying. I could be wrong, but I'm probably not. I seldom am.

(*Con and Div enter.*)

CON & DIV: (*sing and dance*)

Converge, diverge,
Converge, diverge, converge.

(*Art attacks Con and Div with a paintbrush and drives them away.*)

ART: I hate those guys. Talk about your one trick pony. Talk about your annoying song. I'm gonna have that in my head all day now.

PROF: Well, thank you, I guess.

ART: You guess. I just rescued you from a fate worse than death. So, perhaps I was wrong. You did need to be rescued.

PROF: I'm not so sure. I was getting to like those two.

ART: Really?

PROF: No.

ART: (*laughs.*) I'm getting to like you.

PROF: Do you know where the princess is?

ART: I don't need to know where the princess is because you know where the princess is.

PROF: No, I don't.

ART: Oh yes, you do. You just don't know that you know.

PROF: Don't give me that crap.

ART: (*does a lengthy solo dance, then sings*)

Play, play-play-play.

(*continues the solo dance*)

Make, make-make-make.

(*continues the solo dance*)

Fun, fun-fun-fun.

PROF: Oh, good heavens.

ART: Join me.

PROF: I don't dance.
ART: Then sing.
PROF: I don't sing.
ART: Everyone dances. Come dance with me.

(Prof resists Art's attempts to dance together. Art tries harder, finally physically forcing Prof into movement.)

PROF: Help! Help me!

(Alice enters. Art freezes.)

ALICE: How may I help you?
PROF: I'm being assaulted by this, whatever, whomever this is.
ALICE: So, how may I help you?
PROF: Make it stop.
ALICE: Only you can make it stop.
PROF: You are exasperating. And fairly useless as a help avatar.
ALICE: I have answered all of your questions. Perhaps you just ask bad questions.
PROF: Okay, how do I make it stop?
ALICE: You have to choose.
PROF: I choose to not dance.
ALICE: You have to dance with the horse you rode in on.
PROF: That's a mixed metaphor.
ALICE: Normally those cost extra. But the first one is free.

(Alice exits and Art resumes trying to force the Prof to dance.)

PROF: No. I choose to not dance.
ART: Really? But you seem to be enjoying it so much.
PROF: This is pure agony. I do not want to dance.
ART: You could sing instead.
PROF: No! No singing. No dancing.

(Div enters.)

DIV: There are many choices.
PROF: Do any of them lead to the princess?
DIV: Probably.
PROF: Do you know which ones?
DIV: No. You never know where a choice leads.
ART: You like this one?
PROF: Doesn't make me dance. Doesn't physically assault me.
ART: That's your choice.

(Art leaves.)

PROF: So, I guess I'm left with you
DIV: You'll be happier with me. I can tell that you're my kind of guy. I don't go in for all that dancing and singing stuff.
PROF: Except when you were singing and dancing.
DIV: That's just to express myself. But that's not the heart of it. No you have to think you're way through. You want to find the princess, you have to figure it out. You can't dance your way to her.
PROF: My thoughts exactly.
DIV: Where do you think she is?

PROF: We might back up a little and ask first, who is she is? Who is this princess and why does she need to be rescued?
DIV: By you.
PROF: Indeed, why does she need to be rescued by me?
DIV: What do you think?
PROF: Well, it's the classic quest structure isn't it? It's the hero's journey. You have to have a princess or something, although it's usually better if it's someone and historically a princess or some other potential love interest makes the whole thing that much more important.
DIV: So you love the princess?
PROF: Well, it's better if I do.
DIV: Does that tell you who it is?
PROF: Sadly no. I love my work, my work is love, but otherwise I am quite single these days.
DIV: Really? With all those fish in the sea, you haven't even a nibble? Not a fantasy, not a thought, not an unrequited love that you could rescue and in so rescuing make her realize that she also loves you even though she didn't know it up until now?
PROF: That does make for a good story.
DIV: So there is one.

(pause.)

PROF: No. No one I'm sorry to say.
DIV: That really is sad.

(Prof unconsciously takes the glasses off. Div exits.)

PROF: What? Where did ... oh. I see, game over. *(pause.)* Well, that was really something. Alice has outdone herself. Alice? Oh, right, she ... well, where was I? My lecture. Ideation. What a load of crap. *(pause.)* It's all about connection. Creativity is largely understood as making connections that previously hadn't been made. Creative solutions to problems are often structurally identical to a solution that exists in another domain, but which has never been applied in that domain. You might think of it as the power of metaphor and the connections you can make, but really it's more than that. It's about the power of connection. Not just connection of an idea or structure in one domain to a problem in another domain, but connection between people. That's where the real creativity happens.

(Alice enters.)

ALICE: Were you looking for me? I thought I heard you call my name.
PROF: What? I'm sorry, I was just lost in thought. I think I may have finally found the start to my lecture.
ALICE: Did you try the glasses?
PROF: These? Oh, yes I did. Remarkable. Really very remarkable work.
ALICE: Thank you. *(pause.)* Did you find the princess?
PROF: No. I didn't do very well at all. I think it may be a generational thing. I was never into video games or these dragon quest things or any of that.
ALICE: No, what were you into?
PROF: The usual kid things. Sports. Girls. Cars. Mostly girls.
ALICE: I can see that. I bet you were quite the ladies man.
PROF: No, not really. I never had much success.
ALICE: I find that hard to believe. You're smart and good looking.
PROF: Thank you, Alice. That's nice of you to say.
ALICE: It's true. There's nothing as sexy as smart.

PROF: The virtual reality world is very compelling. I completely forgot I was in a virtual reality world.
ALICE: Thank you.
PROF: And it's very, uh, moving. I had something of an epiphany.
ALICE: Oh, do tell.
PROF: Well, its not important what exactly happened, but the key to my lecture came to me.
ALICE: It's important to me how it happened. I mean, for my research, it would be helpful to hear more about the details of the user experience.
PROF: Yes, I can see that. But some other time. I need to get back to my lecture while the ideas are still hot. I will not let you play the man from Porlock for me.
ALICE: Okay, but you do have to tell me.

(Alice exits. Prof returns to his lecture, idly playing with the glasses. He puts the glasses back on and Art enters.)

ART: Have you found her?
PROF: You're back.
ART: Well, my front actually. This is my back.
PROF: Have I found who?
ART: The princess. You were looking for a princess.
PROF: Yes, and I guess I still am.
ART: What do you see when you look?
PROF: I don't follow you.
ART: Of course not, walk beside me. Or in front of me. If you follow you won't see anything but my back. *(pause.)* In your search, what do you see?
PROF: I don't see much of anything.
ART: Then look. Look there and tell me what you see through those fine glasses.
PROF: Oh, right, the virtual reality glasses. Well, what is it I'm looking for again?
ART: The Princess.
PROF: Right. I don't see her.
ART: What do you see?
PROF: I see an office. A rather non-descript, shabby little office.
ART: Look closer. What do you see?
PROF: I see a wall of book shelves. There's many familiar titles. And there's a coffee mug on the desk. It's from my old university. And a very old computer. There's a newspaper.
ART: Look closer.
PROF: Look, it's an office. I don't see any sign of the princess. I don't think she's here.
ART: Look closer. What do you see?
PROF: The newspaper is from ... I know that date. The newspaper is from the day I defended my doctoral dissertation. This office, it's my graduate student office.
ART: Very good. Keep looking.
PROF: I know that office like the back of my hand. I spent countless hours writing, coding, drinking coffee from that mug. I know everything about that office.
ART: Look. Don't rely on your memory of what it looks like. Really look at the office.
PROF: Oh, I see, this is one of those games. Find what's wrong with the picture.
ART: Well, no. That's not it.
PROF: I see a copy of my dissertation, printed out. Hundreds of pages of text. Tens of thousands of words. Really my crowning achievement. There's a coffee stain on the papers. I must have spilled when I was reading it. It looks like I have been through the stack of pages many times. I used a red marker for notes. It looks like the text is bleeding.

(Alice reprises her song from earlier from the side.)

ALICE:

What does text, mean to me?
What does text, mean to the academy?

I read Deleuze and Foucault,
Lacan, Derrida, and Rousseau.
I even read Guillet de Monthoux.

What does text, mean to them?
Why all these words from all of these men?

PROF: I wonder if anyone ever read it? I mean really read it and got something from all those words. So many words.
ART: Maybe you should have danced it.
PROF: I'm not a dancer.
ART: So you say.
PROF: There's a mark where I found a missing comma. Commas can save lives you know.
ART: Really?
PROF: It's the difference between "let's eat grandma" and "let's eat comma grandma". That comma could save grandma's life.
ART: No one was going to eat grandma.
PROF: No, I suppose not.

(Con enters.)

CON: I would have eaten Grandma. Really, I would have.
ART: Oh, no you wouldn't.
CON: If there was no comma there I certainly would have.
ART: Following the rules mean so much to you that you would eat your own grandmother because someone missed a comma?
CON: Yes. Yes, I would.
PROF: That does seem a bit extreme.
ART: So that one little line, or lack thereof, makes all the difference. That's the essence of the phrase?
CON: Well, it does make all the difference, but that doesn't mean it is the essence.
ART: And what is the essence? Professor?
PROF: Good question.
ART: Show me essence. Hold on a minute.

(Art exits and gets drawing materials and returns.)

PROF: I'm not sure I like where this heading.
ART: Here, draw the essence of that statement.
PROF: I can't draw.
ART: Everyone can draw.
PROF: I think that I am the exception that proves the rule.
ART: Con, will you model? Just assume a pose when I tell you. Professor, you draw the essence of Con. I'll give you ten seconds.
PROF: Ten seconds that's impossible.
ART: Con, pose! *(Con poses.)* Professor, Draw! *(Professor draws.)* Ten. Nine. Eight. Seven. Six. Five. Four. Three. Two. One. Finished. Let's see.
PROF: It's just a couple of lines.
ART: But there's something of Con in that. That line. I would recognize it anywhere.

PROF: You think so?

(Div enters and looks at the drawing.)

DIV: It could be anything. It's a line with a million possible meanings. I love it. Is it for sale?

PROF: No, of course it's not for sale.

ART: Why not?

PROF: Because ... I mean it's just a line. You can't sell that.

DIV: I'd buy it.

PROF: No. For how much? No, it doesn't matter it's not for sale.

ART: So, it does matter. That line matters quite a bit to you.

PROF: Yes. No. It's not that at all.

DIV: Ten bucks. Ten quid. Ten of the currency of your choice.

CON: That's a fair price.

PROF: No. Look, I'm not an artist. I don't sell lines on a page.

ART: What do you sell?

PROF: Not much. My book, the one from my dissertation sold a few copies. It's in a few libraries. I bet no one has ever even checked it out.

ART: Not even your students? Not even Alice?

PROF: You think Alice has read my book?

Div & CON: *(look at each other)* No.

ART: Do you want people to read it?

PROF: I did.

ART: Would you want to read it?

PROF: No.

DIV: Write another book.

PROF: No one reads books anymore.

DIV: There's hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of books published every year.

CON: And everyone reads five of them. And a few people read another handful of them. And most never get read by anyone. Or almost anyone.

PROF: Like my book.

ART: Like your book.

PROF: *(sings)*

Words, gathering dust.

A book that no one reads ...

A chapter in a ...

An article in a ...

A blog with no hits ...

I want to make videos of cats,
Dress them up in some cute little hats,
Narrate their silly funny old chats!

(dance break.)

ART: Nice, Especially that last bit.

PROF: I'm not done. *(sings)*

I want to be first person shooter.
another convenience store looter,
Hang out with a guy called Pooter!

ART: You're done now?

PROF: I think so.

ART: More dancing, perhaps?
PROF: Maybe later. For now, I'm done.

(Prof takes off glasses. Art, Div and Con disappear.)

PROF: Well, here we are. Back to ... back to whatever this is. My lecture. My class. My teaching. My influence? My lecture on creativity – could there be a less creative way to talk about creativity. A less influential way to have influence? Shit. Balls. Crap. Insert the swear word of your choice. *(pause.)* DAMN! *(pause.)* Sigh.

(Alice enters.)

ALICE: Is something wrong? I heard yelling. Is it the program?
PROF: Well, I suppose yes.
ALICE: I'm sorry, I know there's still a few bugs.
PROF: It worked fine. Maybe too well. Alice, did you read my book?
ALICE: Your book?
PROF: That's what I thought. I wrote a book. It was off my dissertation. Years ago.
ALICE: I didn't know. I'll read it right away.
PROF: No, don't bother. No one reads books anymore.
ALICE: I've read hundreds of books. Just like every PhD student. We all read books. All the time.
PROF: You may be the only ones. It's a conversation with our children. But only the ones that we don't really need to have a conversation with.
ALICE: I don't follow.
PROF: And that's good. You shouldn't follow. I'm a dinosaur. You're the new breed – all video games and virtual reality. You're cat videos, I'm dust in the library.

(Art enters.)

ART: That little dance number wasn't dust.
PROF: You're too kind.
ALICE: I'm too kind about what?
PROF: Not you, well I guess it is you really, it is your program.
ALICE: Are you feeling okay?
PROF: Yeah, no.
ART: What's the problem?
PROF: I'm seeing one of the characters from your virtual reality world. But I took the glasses off, so it should be over.
ART: Are you sure you took the glasses off? Maybe you just took off the virtual glasses and you still have the real glasses on?
PROF: It certainly feels like they are off.
ALICE: Maybe you should lie down. You don't look well.
PROF: If that theory is true then you are the help avatar, not the real Alice. Am I wearing the glasses, Alice?
ALICE: No, you're not. You're starting to worry me.
PROF: This would be an interesting twist in the game. The help avatar stops helping.
ALICE: I want to help. Let me get you some water or maybe call someone.
ART: How about the nut house? You could call the insane asylum.
PROF: I don't think that's necessary.
ART: Don't you think that anyone who still writes text in today's world is crazy by definition?

(Div and Con enter.)

CON: The definition of insanity, repeating the same action over and over and hoping for different results.

DIV: Writing academic articles and hoping that this time they will have real influence. Writing books and thinking someone will read them. Lecturing students and thinking they will understand what you have to say just because you said it.

ART: Of course, that was hard gained knowledge for you. You had to learn it from experience and thinking about things and reading and making sense of all of it for yourself. But you expect them to just get it when you wrap it all up in a neat little bow and tell them what's what.

PROF: Stop! Stop, stop, stop.

ALICE: I'll go get help.

PROF: No – you are help. You have to help me.

ALICE: I don't know what to do.

PROF: You're the princess! You are the answer to the quest. You don't write books.

ALICE: I'm writing a dissertation. I was hoping that maybe it could become a book. It's really not fair to say that it can't be a book before I've even written it.

PROF: But you've created this. All of this.

ALICE: I'm not God.

PROF: You are God. At least for this world. And it's fantastic. It has rocked my world.

ALICE: I'm just going to call the campus police.

PROF: Oh, you can stop that whole, "we're not in the game" riff. It's good. It really whacked me right between the eyes, right in the cerebral cortex so to speak.

ALICE: You're really worrying me.

PROF: But enough is enough. Stop the virtual reality simulation.

DIV: Maybe she's right. Maybe you stopped it when you took off the glasses.

CON: She's clever, but I'm not sure she's that clever.

ART: Does it really matter? You're seeing things clearly now.

PROF: I'm not hallucinating.

(Div and Con exit.)

ALICE: I didn't say you were.

PROF: It matters. I don't hallucinate. I don't see people who aren't there. It's your fault, Alice.

ALICE: I'm really sorry *(starts crying)*

ART: That's not good.

PROF: Oh, don't do that. I'm sorry.

ART: Maybe that is good. Some honest expression of emotion.

PROF: Shut up!

ALICE: I'm sorry.

PROF: Not you.

ALICE: Let me call someone.

PROF: No. I don't need any help.

ART: So you have figured it out? You knew the answer all along. You've found the princess?

PROF: Yes. I have found the princess. It's you, Alice. You're the princess, you're the one I'm looking for.

ALICE: I'm not a princess.

PROF: You're my princess.

ALICE: I don't need to be rescued. I don't want to be rescued.

PROF: No, you don't. I think that I need to be rescued.

ART: Now, that's a nice twist. You find the princess and she rescues you.

PROF: I think that maybe you have rescued me.

ALICE: I've texted the campus police. They'll be here soon. They can rescue you. Really, they can help.

PROF: But you've already rescued me. And maybe I can rescue you as well. I can rescue you from the world of text, from the rational analytic prison of academia.

ALICE: I don't think it's a prison.

ART: Do you hear sirens? I think I hear sirens in the distance.

PROF: We can rescue each other. Isn't that how it's meant to be? We have students so we can learn from them.

ALICE: That's very nice of you to say. But I have learned so much more from you than you could have possibly learned from me.

PROF: You may think that, but you're wrong. You have rescued me. You have shown me that art can be more than just childish games. You touched my soul with your virtual reality.

ALICE: I think I may have done more than that.

ART: She thinks she broke your mind with her glasses.

PROF: I'm not crazy.

ALICE: You're taking to people who aren't here.

PROF: Don't we all do that? I imagine my students when I prepare a lecture. I obey the cultural mores of the multitudes who aren't here. If the administration and their damn rules weren't here in some way, I'd take you in my arms and kiss you.

ALICE: Don't do that.

PROF: You feel it though, don't you? You feel the same.

ALICE: This is making me very uncomfortable. I think you aren't well and this isn't really you talking.

ART: You've painted yourself into a corner there, Prof.

PROF: No, of course you don't. You are young with a future and I'm just an old man. I mistook your concern for ... well, I've just embarrassed myself, let myself down. Please forgive me.

ALICE: It's okay. You've had a rough time with the glasses. Maybe something happened in that world and you got mixed up as to what was real and what was virtual. It can happen.

ART: She's letting you off the hook. She knows that's not it, but she's giving you an out.

PROF: Thank you for that, Alice. You're very kind.

ALICE: Thank you.

PROF: For what?

ALICE: For trying on the glasses, for trying my virtual world.

PROF: Well I am your supervisor. It's my job.

(Div and Con enter as campus police.)

DIV: Alright, where's the problem?

CON: Nothing to see here. Everything's under control.

DIV: Is this him? Is this the guy?

CON: You're going to come along with us.

PROF: What? What are you talking about?

ALICE: I was just thanking you for being a good supervisor. I've really enjoyed working with you.

PROF: Not you, them. I know you.

CON: Please just come along quietly.

DIV: We're here to help you.

PROF: Who do you think you are?

ART: Who do you think they are?

PROF: They're from Alice's glasses.

CON: It's for your own good.

DIV: You're a danger to yourself.

CON: And others.

PROF: I will not come along quietly. I don't need to go anywhere. I'm just fine here.
 DIV: We can do this any way you like it. The easy way or the hard way.
 CON: Have it your way, then.

(Con and Div arrest the Prof and they all exit.)

ALICE: Damn. That's not how it was supposed to go.
 ART: Oh, come on. I think that's a delightful outcome.
 ALICE: No, there's a bug in the code.
 ART: Looks like a feature to me.
 ALICE: I can't drive the player crazy. I can't break the rules and have the virtual world and the real world interact like that.
 ART: You're doing it now. I'm from the virtual world and you're from the real world.
 ALICE: That's okay because you're my character.
 ART: So as the artist, you're allowed to be crazy? But the player can't go crazy.
 ALICE: Yes. There's a line that can't be crossed. But I can fix it. If I just make a couple of changes. Here and here. And then I restart with the new version, from let's say here.

(Div, Con, and the Prof enter.)

CON: The definition of insanity, repeating the same action over and over and hoping for different results.
 DIV: Writing academic articles and hoping that this time they will have real influence. Writing books and thinking someone will read them. Lecturing students and thinking they will understand what you have to say just because you said it.
 ART: Of course, that was hard gained knowledge for you. You had to learn it from experience and thinking about things and reading and making sense of all of it for yourself. But you expect them to just get it when you wrap it all up in a neat little bow and tell them what's what.
 PROF: Stop! Stop, stop, stop.
 ALICE: I'll go get help.
 PROF: No – you are help. You have to help me.
 ALICE: Oh, that wasn't the right place at all. Hold on and let me try again.
 PROF: What? Hold on to what? What is happening?
 ALICE: I'm just going to change one thing here. And then restart here.

(Div, Con, and Art reset for the next scene. Prof puts the glasses back on.)

DIV: There's hundreds, thousands, tens of thousands of books published every year.
 CON: And everyone reads five of them. And a few people read another handful of them. And most never get read by anyone. Or almost anyone.
 PROF: (sings)

Words, gathering dust.
 A book that no one reads ...
 A chapter in a ...
 An article in a ...
 A blog with no hits ...

I want to make videos of cats,
 Dress them up in some cute little hats,
 Narrate their silly funny old chats!

I want to be first person shooter.

another convenience store looter,
Hang out with a guy called Pooter!

ART: Very nice.

PROF: I am having the strangest feeling of déjà vu. Which is odd because I never sing and I just sang, so I don't know how I could possibly feel like I have sung that song before.

ART: We all have songs within us, maybe this was just the first time it really came out.

PROF: I don't know anyone called Pooter.

ART: I think there's a little Pooter in all of us.

PROF: I'm still wearing the glasses, aren't I?

ALICE: Yes, you are.

PROF: I think I need to step out of this world. (*Prof takes off the glasses. Art, Con, and Div exit.*)

ALICE: Are you okay?

PROF: You're still here. But they are gone.

ALICE: How was it?

PROF: I sang.

ALICE: I heard you.

PROF: This virtual world. This unreal world you have created was perhaps the most real place I have been in years.

ALICE: Thank you.

PROF: No, I mean it. I'm not sure what was real and what wasn't. I was actually singing, wasn't I? I mean out loud, here in my office?

ALICE: Yes.

PROF: Extraordinary. But I didn't find the princess.

ALICE: There's still a few bugs in the software. This isn't the final version.

PROF: Of course. Nonetheless, it's really extraordinary. I am at a loss for words to explain what happened.

ALICE: It will come to you.

PROF: It was almost like I was traveling in time – there was an odd sort of loop that is starting to feel like a bad dream. (*Pause*) It's not about finding the princess is it?

ALICE: I suppose not.

PROF: No, I suppose not. What is it about? No, no, don't answer that. It would just be words. Have you found the princess?

ALICE: I think so.

PROF: I think so, too.

(*Curtain. End of play.*)

About the Author(s)

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