

Chapter 6 – Brain Change

Wilber:

My Dear Friends,

This is Wilbur McBush. I know you may find it difficult to believe that this is in fact the backward goober you've come to know and love over the years, but I assure you that I am, in fact, myself. I must now reveal the true reason why I left town. No, it was not to escape the clutches of that insolent young hooligan who refers to himself as "The Kid". I left our fair city for a different reason – to undergo a complex and risky medical procedure. I underwent what the surgeon refers to as a trans-lateral neurological matrix implantation.

This procedure increased my cognitive abilities twenty-fold, transforming me from the brainless idiot you have come to know, into what I am revealing to you today. Most of my brain and higher intellect are now governed by a complicated artificial neural network. This is the latest in a groundbreaking area of research lead by the most revered neural implantation specialist in the field: Dr. Kenneth Basey.

Dr. Basey is a local boy who went on to greatness. Some of you might remember him; that small skinny kid in coke bottle glasses whom many of you made fun of mercilessly in elementary school. Well, Ken went on to win the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1998 for his pioneering research. He later assumed the chair of the University of Florida School of Medicine, where he now serves in an advisory capacity.

Dr. Basey scoured the country for subjects for his most controversial discovery: enhancement of mental function using implanted artificial devices. His primary requirements for subjects were an IQ between 35 and 50, the lower the better, and a willingness to participate in the program. I fitted those requirements perfectly. After undergoing a battery of tests, both physiological and psychological, I was accepted into the program. I was considered the second-most ideal candidate. The primary subject was disqualified when he refused to leave his barn, and I was selected last year to undergo the procedure.

Finally, Dr. Basey gave the go-ahead a few weeks ago. That is the true reason I left Troy. I underwent the procedure two days ago, and am now feeling healthy and strong.

I find that my prior occupation no longer holds any interest for me. I have accepted an offer for a professorial position at the University of Virginia School of Medicine. I will be starting next fall. I hope to follow in Dr. Basey's footsteps. I have already written one paper that has been accepted by the New England Journal of Medicine.

Now, I find myself in a somewhat embarrassing position. I took a loan from Mayor Podman to help pay for my surgery, rather than the purported reason I gave him. I

forthwith include a check for the original loan amount, plus a healthy finance charge, in repayment for that loan. I apologize to the mayor for soliciting money from him under false pretenses. I am hoping he will understand.

As soon as my recuperation is complete, I will be returning to Troy. You will see the same Wilbur you have known all of these years, albeit in a new and improved form. I am looking forward to it. I have high hopes that the great town of Troy will accept me back as one of her own.

Sincerely,

Wilbur S. McBush

P.S. Dr. Basey would like to say hello to all, and to reassure everyone that he holds no grudges. He would particularly like to say hello to Ms. Molly Martini (nee Trenchman), who was one of the few classmates who treated him well and indeed, supplied him with tremendous nurture and support during those trying years. He extends his heartfelt condolences for her loss. If there is anything he can do to help assuage her grief, she should not hesitate to call him.

Podman:

I sure hope this means Wilbur will FINALLY stop singing "If I only had a brain".

Wilber:

Singing old show tunes is not one of the several side-effects Dr. Basey told me I might experience.

That boy said ah mite experience 'cassional ree-lapses.

But that they would decrease in number as time went on as my old brain's neurons die out and the artificial neural substrate assumed more and more higher level cognitive function.

--Wilbur

Bird:

Dat you Wilber? Damn! Sounddid like a pollhytician der fo a minitt.

Wilber:

Well, after getting my feet wet in the medical field, I thought I might consider a turn at public service. I think I could do a lot for the town of Troy.

Lahk hell you will.

Harrumph, I apologize for that remark. It was entirely unintended. I don't know what came over me.

--Wilbur

Bird:

Poor, Poor Wilber. Him still dumb as a corn pipe. I liked him beeter when he'd was not smart.

Wilber:

You must disregard my poor, dim-witted friend.

His pore mama dropped the boy on his haid an' he ain't been raht since.

In his defence, they say even the most dull-witted can sometimes be depended upon to exhibit certain proclivities that cannot be explained by modern science.

Eye-ee, he one of them damn idjit save-ants.

Bernie Carlstein:

Medical Bulletin, Troy Sentinel

FDA says trans-lateral neurological matrix implantation (TNMI) is hazardous procedure

The FDA recommends a moratorium on the TNMI procedure. Studies have shown that rats which undergo the procedure experience a "bilateral bifurcation" of mental function. The FDA says more study needed. In the meantime, they recommend avoiding it entirely, as it can be extremely dangerous. Side effects include toenail loss, slurred speech, and testicular dislocation.

Bird:

Pooooooh poooooh Wilber. Thay gonna cut off his weenie!

Wilber:

My dear ill-informed friend, they are going to do no such thing. A dislocation is a simple detachment from a point of connection, and amputation is not considered a viable strategy for treatment.

But wen it happend, ah thought ah was gone die when they popped them suckers back in place.

Bernie Carlstein:

Troy Inquirer Headline:

The Man with Two Brains!

Troy man has two brains.

Medical professionals baffled

"Da ole' one just growed back!"

Alistair McBush

To Whom It May Concern,

My damn nephew has gone and gotten himself one of those brain change operations. I am so ashamed. He has besmirched the McBush family name. If I hadn't already done so, I would disown him!

He says he just wants to be who he really is. He thinks it's just a lifestyle change. Well, I say, what was wrong with his old lifestyle? What was wrong with his old brain? He was going along fine, doing the things the McBush's have done for centuries. So what if he was a little stupid? A little stupidity is good for a man, makes him think more before he goes blathering along about every fool thing. It runs in the family. He should be proud.

My damn nephew should look to his friend, Mr. Bird, for a prime example of where stupidity gets you. That fellow is about as stupid as they come, and yet he's gotten along fine, hasn't he? No fool talk about brain changes. With Mr. Bird, what you see is what you get. And what you get is Stupid with a capital S. He's satisfied with what he's got. That's the way a man should be, not going off and cutting your damn organs out and tossing them just because they're not what his "inner self" tells him he should be.

Sincerely, Alistair X McBush, former mayor

Bird:

Thank yas much for de complamint. I'm damn proud to bees a amareican.
Dat mayor he's a mean man! Who Dat? Dat you Billy?

Little Milton:

I for one applaud Mr. McBush for coming out in the open and exposing his true self. Bravo, Wilbur!

-- Little Milton Bostock

Wilber:

I regret to inform you that the University of Virginia has withdrawn their offer of employment to me

On account o' mah condishun.

Therefore, I will be regrouping in Troy and resuming my traditional duties

as prime supplier o' the finest moonshine on the dam east coast.

I sincerely hope that the Mayor wishes to continue pursuing our lucrative joint business endeavors

That dam skin-flint aint interested in nothin but Miss Hattie.

Furthermore, I will be pursuing a lawsuit against Dr. Kenneth Basey

that dam four-eyed pipqueak.

Excuse me, you idiot, but I was talking. Please do not interrupt...

You aint nothin but a dam arty fishal brain box, boy, and you aint gone tell me whut to do...

And you are nothing but a stillborn hayseed, and I insist that you desist from interrupting my train of thought...

*A hayseed, am ah? Them's fightin' words. You git outta mah haid, you sorry son of a b****h...*

Missus Podman:

Wilbur McBush, As your GOOD friend i hope this will get to you, STOP ACTING SO DAM WERID! What has gotten into you, boy? Also, i am sick of your spreading rumors about that lowlife Hatherine Karris and the major! You think he`d be interested in HER, over The Queen of Troy!!!!!! Now stop taking what drugs they have given you, and maybe you will revert. I think the operation was flawed because your IQ actually fell below the lowest number on the IQ chart. I`m only saying this for your own good. Maybe we can get Dr Frankenstien to adjust your brain or get you a new one altogether.

Love, Queen Linda from the lovely hamlet of Troy.

Maybe if we can get you back to full time stupid, i can get you a nice job feeding the dogs.

Bird:

That damn boy ain't right fer surein! He needs be ejected with some of dat testosthardon stuff to make his brain grow back! Den he be ok! It da major hebe a bad mean man!

Wilber:

I apologize profusely, on behalf of both the "old" Wilbur and myself. It will not happen again, Madame Mayoress. And may I say that you are looking particularly splendid today?

Ah's sorry, also, Missus Podman. Say, did ya git the weasel meat ah sent?

I cannot be held responsible for anything that cretin has to say.

Mah uncle Alistair done filed one of them classy-ass lawsuits on mah bee's ass. Ah aint got no idea whut that means, but he says ah git fifty dollah' out the deal. That means ah can start up mah biznis agin so ah'm happy.

Wilber:

Please allow me to point out that you cannot believe anything that Old Wilbur has to say. He speaks out before what passes for his brain has a chance to censor his thoughts. He and I have been working on this, as we negotiate how to comfortably share his body. I'm afraid that you will be hearing less from me as time goes by, as I prefer to take control during the late evening hours when it is quiet and I can read my poetry in relative peace. I reiterate that you completely ignore anything he says.

-- New Wilbur

and good riddance to yew. Havin' two brains aint eggzackly any fun, an' it sure ain't doin me no good.

-- Old Wilbur

Bird:

Eye likes da old Wilber better.

Podman:

I got a pitcher from the doc of Wilbur's brains.

Neither one looks too good to me.



Wilber:

Ah thank one a them is mah cousin, Abbie Normal.