

3-29-2023

## Blind Entanglements

Timothy Connors

*Georgia College & State University, [timothy.connors@gcsu.edu](mailto:timothy.connors@gcsu.edu)*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://kb.gcsu.edu/grposters>

---

### Recommended Citation

Connors, Timothy, "Blind Entanglements" (2023). *Graduate Research Showcase*. 102.  
<https://kb.gcsu.edu/grposters/102>

This Poster is brought to you for free and open access by the Graduate Research at Knowledge Box. It has been accepted for inclusion in Graduate Research Showcase by an authorized administrator of Knowledge Box.

Tim Connors

## Research Day Presentation: Blind Entanglements

Hello everyone. My name is Tim Connors and I am writing a collection of near future science fiction stories about the way we become entangled with technology. The easiest example of this is our phones. We can't be a member of society without our phones anymore. We can't contact anyone. We can't stay in-the-know. We can't remember our schedule, our friends' numbers, or, sometimes, our loved ones' birthdays. We conceived of smart phones as revolutionary communication devices. But they have become much more. We hardly ever think of them, though they are fully entangled in our lives. We have become blind to their influence.

So, in my stories, I examine this phenomenon of entanglement for future technologies. I think it is dangerous not to think about our entanglements. Especially as the future utopia we once imagined erodes. We wanted robot servants, universal basic income, cures for aging, and flying cars. The reality is that our tools, rather than helping us individually, are used to relentlessly improve our efficiency and productivity at the expense of our own physical and mental health. For example, the boundaries between home and the workspace have disappeared because our technology can keep us perpetually at work.

I'm going to read an excerpt from a story I wrote about Greg, an employee of an enormous tech company, Eternity Enterprises. While working, Greg hallucinates a work coach or motivational speaker—in this story called a hustle helper. Jason, the hustle helper, acts as Greg's cheerleader and confidante. His job is to make Greg work harder. This story engages with the erasure of the divide between work and home life and presents a possible future if our uncritical entanglement

with technology continues. I'm going to start after Greg has met his hallucinated hustle helper, Jason, and is now processing where Jason came from. The story is from Greg's perspective.

#### An Excerpt from "Hustle Helpers"

I got the job through an online recruiter. She explained the duties, the software, the benefits, the salary. I accepted, reported to a workplace assignment center, filled out paperwork, did a round of medical examinations and bloodwork, received up to date vaccinations, took an eye test, stress test, ear test, a round of neurological tests, took a grammar test, edited a test document, signed more paperwork, signed a company loyalty oath, participated in behavioral studies, received performance injections, and finally, they gave me a certificate, username, password, and proof of employment.

That's where I think Jason came from. Legally, big companies as integral to the economy as Eternity Enterprises can experiment on employees without their knowledge. And since most employees work remotely, it's harder to compare experiences. You can't even talk about tech sector jobs on message boards or social media if you don't want to get sued. So, when Jason showed up, I figured Eternity Enterprises did something at the workplace assignment center. Injected me with nanotech or neurochemicals that made me hallucinate Jason—something to help with my productivity. I called my supervisor, my HR representative, the local Eternity Enterprises offices, and the main office in Australia. The only reply I got was a recording from my supervisor saying he'd be at a conference for the next week. I sent emails, too, that demanded an explanation. Instead, I got automatic replies from every office that apologized, but relayed that, unfortunately, my request could not be fulfilled because the information was classified. How convenient.

Jason returned two days later when another deadline loomed. This time he wore a three-piece suit and drank martinis. His mohawk glistened like an oiled buzz saw. “Your writing’s going to be smooth as my suit today.”

His reappearance didn’t surprise me—but the anticipation that he’d show up had kept me awake all night. My body burned, my eyes twitched, my jaw slid back and forth. I despised him for being there.

“Sit down,” I said, pointing at the couch. He sipped his martini and did as I asked.

I got close to him. He had no smell, made no fidgets or unconscious movements, and held a perpetual grin on his face. Despite these clues, my mind was fully convinced he was real.

“Look,” I said. “I need to know something.”

He cocked his head. “I know what you know, Greg.”

“Why are you here?”

“I’m your hustle helper. I help you work.”

“Right, but how did you get here?”

He rubbed his chin. “I don’t have that answer. And I don’t see why it matters.”

I sighed and sat on the floor. All the stress from my sleepless night fell out into my empty apartment: an apartment that contained only a twin sized mattress on the floor and a blue couch I’d found on the street. I’d never put up any pictures and the landscape paintings, abstract pieces, and green digital clock hanging on the walls had been here when I first signed the lease, just like all the kitchen appliances. A few boxes filled with knick knacks lay open and unpacked on the far wall—mostly wires, adaptors, cables, and VR equipment along with a few keychains and paper weights I’d picked up at previous jobs. I’d sold my TV, my books, my mom’s St.

Christopher pendant, and my dad's gold watch to make ends meet before I started working for Eternity Enterprises.

"I think I know," I said. "It's my addiction to VR simulators, isn't it?"

Jason put his drink down on the floor, clasped his hands together, and let concern pour from his face.

"I bet that's it," I said. "Eternity Enterprises wants some extra insurance. It's fucking embarrassing, man. First my family. Now this. When you're a virtual reality addict, people treat you like you've got the plague. Like if they touch you, they'll get addicted and fuck up like you did. My family doesn't have anything to do with me anymore."

Jason nodded.

"I miss them," I said. "I miss talking to my mom and Moriah without that warning in their voice that says NO before I can say anything. Like everything I say is me conning them, asking them for handouts."

Jason looked over at the green digital clock. Then he looked into my eyes. "There's still time, Greg. That's why I'm here. To help you work. To make sure you won't need to ask them for anything ever again. To make sure you can give *back* to them." As he spoke, Jason grew even more muscular and stout. He stood up and pointed at the clock.

I was on the brink of tears. I hadn't talked that candidly in a long time. There was no one I could talk to; the company benefits didn't cover therapy. I wiped the tears away. "Right." I said with conviction. "Thank you. I needed that."

He nodded and held his palm out towards the computer. I finished the assignment with seconds to spare. Then I got out the VR simulator equipment. Why couldn't I quit despite all the problems VR had caused me? If you're asking, you've never used those simulators.

#

It was nice talking to someone. Even if that someone was an induced hallucination. Even if it was a hallucination with an ulterior motive. I did, however, consider that I could be losing my mind from all the hours logged in VR simulators.

But Jason did his job so well, I didn't consider anything too much. We made a good team. Me: red eyed, slack faced, tapping my fingers wildly on the keyboard. Jason: debonair, strong, encouraging, calm, wearing a different outfit every time, holding a cocktail while he coached. Plus, it would take some time, but soon I'd be able to pay off my debts. Maybe get back into my family's good graces.

One day, during break, I walked around the block. The streets were filled with delivery couriers and a few automatons performing maintenance on the streets and buildings. I decided to call my mom. The call didn't go through, so I sent her a text letting her know I was working and wanted to say hello. I got a text back saying that she was also working and couldn't answer, but she was happy for me and wished me well. Next, I tried my sister. The call went to voicemail. Her messaging instructions went like this: "Hi, this is Moriah Khoury, please leave a message after the beep. Unless you're my brother looking for a handout. You can fuck off, Greg." BEEP. I left her a text message too, saying hello and asking her how everything was going. I was about to sit down on a bench when Jason appeared and pointed at his wrist where a watch would be if he wore one. Break time was over. Back to work.