

Claims Department



Claims Department - November 2022

I can't figure when I first heard the term magic realism, or magical realism, but I know that it was well before I met Bruce Taylor, aka Mr. Magic Realism. He was a fixture at a lot of cons I'd go to, and I am lucky enough to have sat down with him pretty frequently, usually chatting about books that I'd somehow managed to read, or at least claimed to have read. He turned me on to many books, and I sought some of them out, though not as many as I should have.

I've always been interested in Magical Realism, though I've got a much broader definition than most apparently. I once described it as 'Spanish for Fantasy' and there's something to that. The world of Borges, Allende, and Garcia Marquez. It's grown to be a world-wide phenomena, or at least it always was and now folks are recognizing it as such. Some say that only those authors who wrote in Spanish did Magic Realism while 'magical realism' is a much-wider term. Me? I'll use 'em interchangeably and let you suss out which you think is better.

This issue, I'm exceptionally happy to lead off with Kristy Baxter, and then it's all me and the joy that is Midjourney AI Art Generation system!

Comments?

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Magic Realism Bot
@MagicRealismBot

A novelist gives birth to a frozen cuckoo clock.

7:43 AM · Jan 21, 2020 · Borges Bot

NO TIME LIKE THE PRESENT

Kristy Baxter

I have no time.

I look everywhere, every time a rare spare moment comes along. I get down on all fours to peer under the bed, scanning for seven-thirty a.m. among the dust bunnies. Check my mailbox for ten-fifteen—morning or night, either will do. Search for noon in the stuffy attic until the oppressive heat pushes me back downstairs. I look for all hours, day and night. No matter how hard I look, though, I have no time.

My friend Miranda finds me ransacking the cupboards one day.

“Why don’t you give up?” she asks. “You know how pointless it is. You know you’ll never find it. And even if you did, what would you do with it?”

But I don’t stop looking. I can’t. Miranda knows that, and resignation fills her sigh, bloats it, expands it into a balloon that fills the silence of my house.

A knock at my door, three sharp raps, pulls me to the front stoop one steamy, stifling morning. A small basket lies in wait, its contents nestled in a faded blue cloth. A tag dangles from the handle, smudged black type bearing my name: *Jane*. There is no second name, though, to tell me who sauntered up my little stone walkway to drop a gift at my door.



I glance up the road, but an unusual emptiness blankets the neighborhood. No one wanders the sidewalks or putters in gardens. Shrugging, I unfold the cloth to find a small clock with a wooden face, gleaming gold numbers, and slim hands. A joyful laugh escapes me.

“Tick,” the clock says as I pick it up.

“Tick, tick,” it says as I hug it to my chest.

“Tick, tick, tick,” it says as I run into the house with my precious gift, sending silent thanks to my anonymous benefactor.

The clock never leaves my sight all day. I stroke the raised numbers as I carry it around the house, thrilling as their cold metal turns warm under my fingers. It sleeps under my pillow that night, its gentle ticks lulling me into a sleep so deep I nearly drown in it. The next morning, I drink coffee in my favorite chair and stare at the clock, a smile dancing across my lips.

Three sharp raps sound at the door.

Another basket waits on the stoop, with another tag and another blue cloth—and within, another clock.

“Tick, tick, tick,” it cries.

I have all the time I need and I don’t want to be greedy, so I return the clock to the basket and go inside. The clock grows louder and more insistent until its ticks become shrieks that pierce my skull and shatter the easy peace of my neighborhood. A sigh escapes me as I bring the basket into the house. The shrieking subsides to smug ticking as I cross the threshold.

A glance in the mirror the next morning brings the discovery of a white strand of hair threading through my black curls. I shrug and continue on with my day.

Another clock arrives right on schedule. When I leave it on the porch, its ticks rise in volume and lower in tenor until it’s booming like a cannon, shaking the house. I hurry out and bring the clock inside.

Every morning, another clock I have no choice but to bring inside. They clutter my house, overflowing from boxes, sliding off tables, taking up all the chairs. They tick and tock, titter and gossip all day, all night, all the long hours of my life.

Miranda stops to visit, standing awkwardly because there’s no place to sit. “Why don’t you take them to the thrift store or throw them in the dumpster?” she asks.

I cast forlorn eyes across the clock-filled room. “Because another will just show up tomorrow. And then another the day after that.”

“So take those to the dumpster, too.”

She means well, so I don’t bother to tell her that I tried. I took a box of clocks to the church do-

nation drive. In the musty, damp church basement, an elderly woman with bluish hair and infinite wrinkles accepted them with a smile and said nothing. When I returned home, the exact box and its ticking clocks lay on my doorstep.

My trip to the dumpster ended in an identical fashion.

Rather than admit that time is getting the better of me, I thank Miranda for her sound advice.

I try lying in wait outside to catch my cruel benefactor. I wait and wait, hiding behind a stout oak tree as the heat thickens and sweat soaks my shirt. My impatience grows as the seconds stretch into minutes that trudge from morning to noon. No basket. No clock. Finally, when I can ignore my stomach's complaints no longer, I abandon my post and go inside for lunch.

Three sharp raps sound at the door the moment it clicks shut. I whip it open to find a cuckoo clock in the basket.

And the next day, a mantle clock.

The day after that, a grandfather clock smelling of dusty old memories.

The day after that, the clock from the tower at the town square sits on my small green lawn, crushing my favorite rosebush.

I drop to my knees on the stoop and look to the innocent blue sky. "No more," I say. "Please, no

more. I have plenty of time. I have too much."

Only the ponderous ticking of the tower clock meets my cries. Wrinkling my nose at the scents of rotted wood and greased gears, I haul it inside, my back protesting.

The next day brings no knocks or baskets or clocks. I sleep that night for the first time in weeks, my dreams drowning out the clocks' non-stop chatter. Morning comes, and I wait for the knocks. They come—of course they come. My shoulders fall and my frown deepens. I open the door.

On my stoop: the basket, the tag, the dull blue cloth.

And in the basket, nestled in the cloth, is a book.

END







Magic Realism Bot

@MagicRealismBot



A tiny poem is in a Tunisian garden. An empress plots to steal it.

6:01 PM · Oct 24, 2022 · Borges Bot

The Poem & The Empress by Chris Garcia

She existed as sixteen letters, broken into four words, one atop the next. A box of meaning obscured. The poet, a latter-day Aram Saroyan, had spent days trying combinations until they hit on the right combination. Each row formed a different four letter word, as did the diagonals. The effect, lurid if read as a whole, seemed calmed now after a difficult birth.

And now, the poem, full-formed and coronet-announced, had a world to see.

And see it did.

College classrooms were a natural stop, and cafes, bookstores, writer's conferences. Poetry professors printed it, brought the little tinder to life on a Xerox platen, handed it to students as the height of today's neo-minimalist maximality; some were sneering at the idea as they handed the papers around like a communal meal of water-logged lettuce.

This life grated, and the poem needed a time of their own; having become, they required a recompense. They looked East, but not so far as where their cousins, the haiku, might recognize them, take them to task for showiness or lack of season.

No. That would not do.

Tunis.

Like Paul Bowles before them, the poem knew only that peace came amid the sound of the mul-lah and the market and the ex-patriots chattering, sweating in the swelter and shelter of their put-upon hosts. And so they went, quietly, and found a city like any others. Different sounds, a new timbre, and always the press of the city. The city. The city.

Like any other.

Architecture that had known rulers from afar, and buildings towering only weeks old, their foundations settling like footprints along a water-packed beach. The steel shone next to ornate tile baked again in the afternoon sun. The sounds were city sounds, but no longer the sounds that drew the poets and the drunkards of the past – they were every city sounds now, no different than Paris, than Oslo, than New York, than Bangkok.

Fleeing, our poem, perhaps not brave enough to say they'd failed, and certainly without the courage of conviction to end this silly adventure, wandered, turning left at every steel structure. The city thinned, but became denser. Inhabitants, people, living lives not dominated by the city but by their city. Satellite dishes grew from roofs hundreds of years old, buckets beneath window-held air conditioners, catching the drips to be used elsewhere, first-come first-served.

And there, between two buildings where once the poem would have heard the radicals talking of Camus between demitasses of coffee and tea, was a green patch, square as our endeavoring poem, with a rose bush in one corner, a small bunch in the other. A soccer ball, worn to colorlessness, sat on the center.

The poem, arriving at the exact center, as precise as those diagonal tetragrammatons, laid down, their eyes closing, the grass beneath cool.

Far away, in a palace as opulent as any Shah's, an Empress sat, looking on the map that was not her territory. Missing from it, simple, pure, was a heart. In that land that was not the map, a heart must work in all directions, must allow for all entrances and exits, simultaneous or staggered. The poem's birth had awakened her, our Empress, and now, knowing that it had found its place, and in that place a place to place itself, she thought how she might possess it.

The poem.

The poem.

Simply recreating it would not do, for once a poem is conceived to reconceive is simply an act of desperation, and though the Empress was desperate, she would play by the rules of Empire.

And sitting in her palace, she called to her visier.

"Go now," a hiss, "and find a garden in Tunis, and in that garden, there is a poem, and there set-up a small table, and upon that table set *My Last Duchess*, *The Windhover*, *O Pioneers*, and *Howl*, and carry a small, tight-woven net."

"Why these things, your Majesty?"

"For no poem could resist being a part of such a canon, and when it tries to take its place, you will lower the net, and twist it to capture, and you will bring it here, and we shall install it, a heart for my Empire."



The Lost and Not Lost: Absurdism as Magical Realism

By Chris

ABSURDISM IS ONE OF MY FAVORITE MOVEMENTS OF THE 20TH CENTURY.

Now, we can argue about exactly what Absurdism is (and remember, words have no inherent meaning...) but ultimately, it's about reflecting aspects of human existence and the lack of meaning within them.

I came across two pieces at nearly the same time that had similar themes. Lost people in places where they should not be lost, and a bigger sense of absurdism not only to the search, but the circumstances surrounding them. One, a book, *The Navidad Incident*, the other a film, *Congratulations*.

The book first, because its print is dying.

The Navidad Incident is a novel translated from the Japanese novel by Natsuki Ikezawa. The story is a political satire, not only about the fall of an island dictator, but about the strange world of post-World War II political relations between Japan and various island nations. A tour bus becomes 'lost' on the trip, and the locals report sightings like it's a UFO... though only if UFOs showed up at a local church, or on a runway alongside a plane's take-off, or even skipping across the lagoon like a stone. It's a fun concept, and the actual story of dictator Matias Guili is funny, but also feels like a Charlie Chaplin version of the ruler of a Banana Republic.

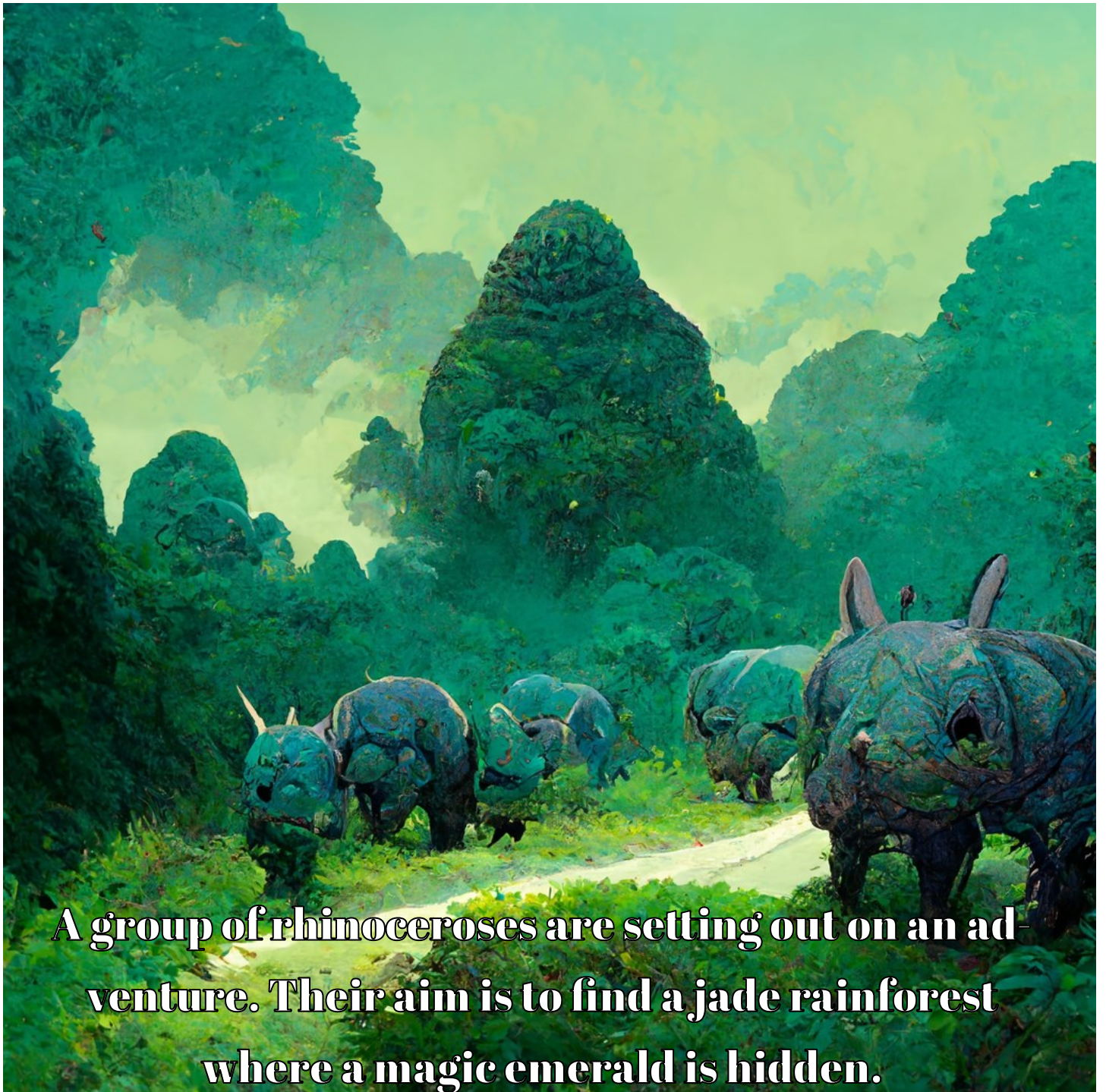
Congratulations is a film by Fake Wood Wallpaper, which is a company probably best-known for their Adult Swim segment *Too Many Cooks*. They are semi-regulars showing at Cinequest, and they've had some really fun ones. *Congratulations* is a simple story—a young kid, Paul, is lost. He's lost in his house. He could be nowhere else. So the cops come in and look all around the house, calling "Paul!" constantly. The methods of the detective are strange, and the main focus is bringing in all the tropes of a missing child story and narrowing it down into literally one house. One officer papers the entire house in Missing posters. Another screams into an empty garage demanding Paul reveal himself. Eventually, Paul is found, but no explanation of where he was or what he was doing is given. It's just a bunch of stuff that happened.

But these two stories have elements of magical realism. *The Navidad Incident* reminds me greatly of the story *The Handsomest Drowned Man in the World*, while *Congratulations* has all the markings of exactly the same story. There's no magic, but it's strange, and the solution, never given, can not be anything other than magical. Or near so as to be arguable. There is a sense that the scenarios are unreal, though the markers of our reality are all there, there whole time. That is what Magical Realism feels like.

Magical Realism Bot Prompts as Midjourney Art Pieces



A senator owns a sculpture which depicts every humiliating defeat by a college professor. -



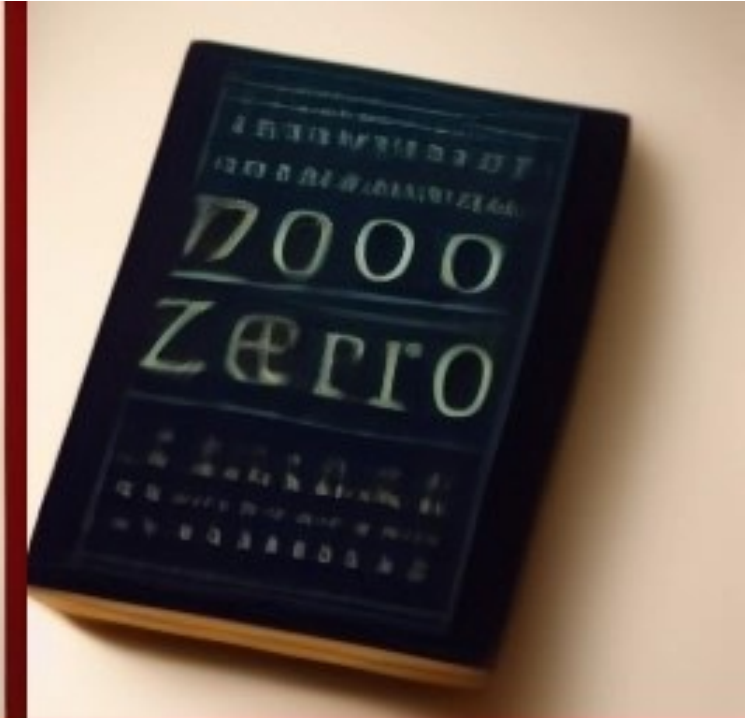
A group of rhinoceroses are setting out on an adventure. Their aim is to find a jade rainforest where a magic emerald is hidden.



At 3am Bengal is flooded with olive oil.



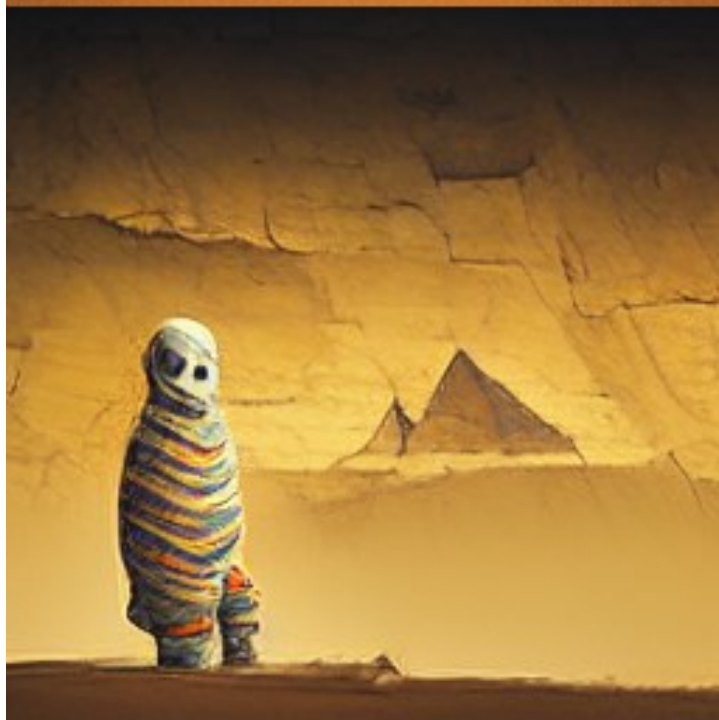
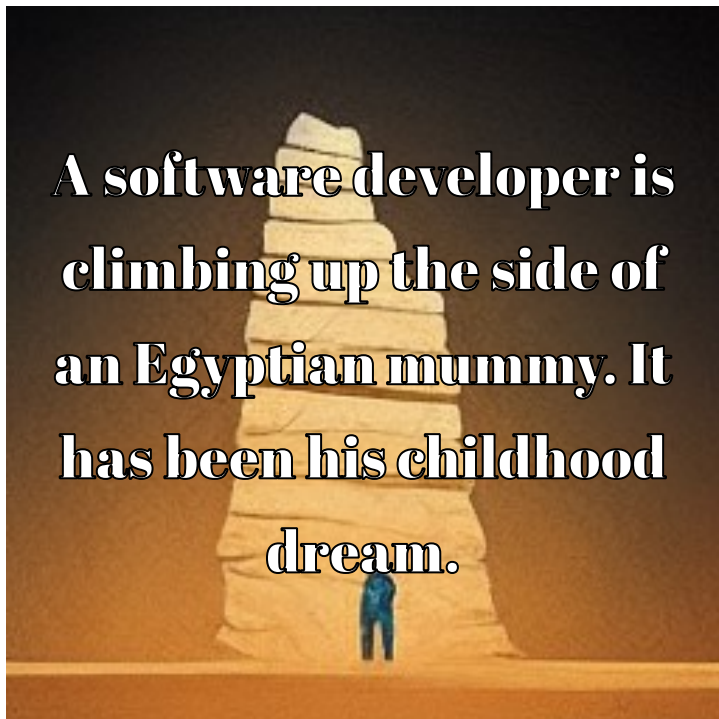
**There is a 15th century Albanian prophecy that you
will be worshipped by a monkey**



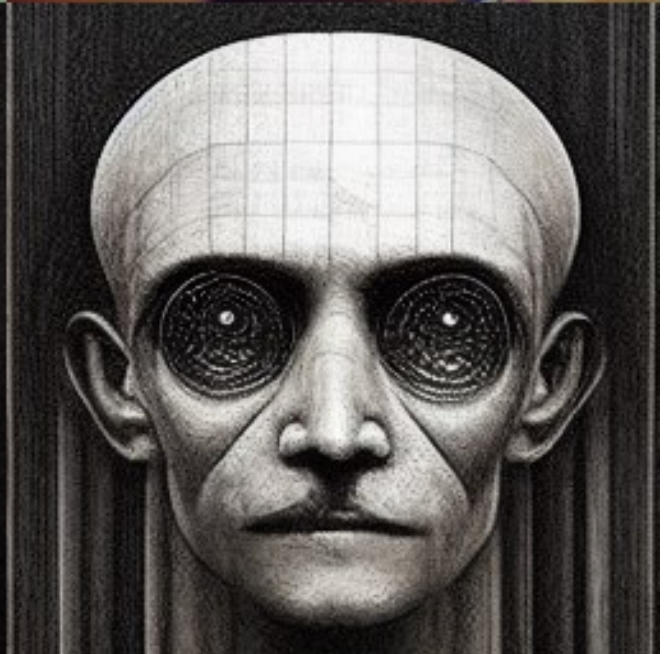
**A Venetian book
describes a world where
everything is made of
the number zero.**



A software developer is climbing up the side of an Egyptian mummy. It has been his childhood dream.







A committee of scholars invent a parallel universe where everything is faces.



