

Nervously fidgeting, Emily and her parents waited for Dr. Harper, a renowned psychologist specializing in counseling people fearful or otherwise anxious about uploading their consciousness to virtual reality. Emily was about to turn eighteen, making her eligible for this groundbreaking opportunity. However, the procedure wasn't foolproof, and there were risks.

Emily reflected on her decision to upload her consciousness. Her sudden diagnosis of Iatrogenic Creutzfeldt-Jakob Disease forced her and her parents to consider the options for her very short future. The doctors gave her only a few months to live. But she had faced death before.

As a child, Emily and her mother were passengers in a horrific train derailment. Emily had needed a blood transfusion to save her life. Years later, she tragically learned that the life-saving transfusion had infected her brain with prions, resulting in the fatal neurodegenerative disease she suffered from now. Her only choice was between natural and final death or becoming part of the virtual reality world called Nirvana, where she could live—albeit in a new form.

Sitting in the doctor's waiting room, Emily repeatedly rubbed her fingers on the chair seat, memorizing the uniform feel of the fabric's weave. She noticed her mother checking and re-checking that the tissue in her purse was still handy. Her father's foot waggled nonstop, as it usually did when he was nervous.

Emily appreciated her parents' unwavering support in her decision to transition to Nirvana. Nonetheless, all three were still concerned about whether Emily would suffer during the technical procedure. She would undergo a high-resolution scan to digitally emulate her brain's activity and structure. Once the data transfer had concluded, with quality and safety checks completed, technicians would activate her consciousness in Nirvana. With her digitized consciousness, she could communicate with her family, friends, and the rest of the world through the artificial neural network.

However, many transitioners reported having frightening experiences during the lengthy procedure, including violent hallucinations, confusion, and intense pain. Emily hoped she would be one of the lucky people who didn't have to experience any of that. She made a mental note to ask Dr. Harper if medications could be administered to help ward off those horrendous side effects.

Then, there was the significant amount of time to complete the procedure. For a high-IQ 80-year-old, the scan, digital conversion, and consciousness activation in Nirvana could take three to four years. Given Emily's young age, her transition could be completed in about one year. Unfortunately, none of her loved ones could communicate with her during that time. She would miss out on a year of interacting with her family and friends—indeed, on an entire year of life experiences. She wouldn't even be able to interact with others in Nirvana until her consciousness was brought fully online. Would she feel lonely during the transition? How would a lost year of life experiences affect her long-term?

Her name called, Emily walked toward her future, realizing that uploading her consciousness was her best—well, her *only*—hope. It was time for a new version of herself.