

Life v2.0  
By Jon Skovron

"It's finally here," he breathed, as he strode through the door clutching a cd-rom. "After three billion years." He sat down at his desk and turned on his computer. When it finished booting up, he popped in the disk with a trembling hand. A message flashed on the monitor:

LIFE 2.0  
From the Existence Corp.  
Press any key to continue.

*Click*

His eyes, though infinitely patient, glittered with eagerness. His fingers tapped a light bossanova on the edge of the desk. After several hours, the monitor flashed a new message:

Upgrade complete  
Please restart to continue

The old man rubbed his dry old hands together with delight and rebooted his computer. Then he started up the program. The monitor said:

Welcome to LIFE 2.0

This updated version contains such improvements as:

- "RELIGION/SCIENCE" conflict resolved.
- Human "SELF-DESTRUCTIVE TENDANCY" glitch fixed.
- Fix of the pesky "CANCER" and "RACISM" bugs.
- More cohesive overall "MEANING".

Thank you for purchasing LIFE 2.0. If you experience any technical difficulties while installing this software, please call the Existence Corp. support hotline at (800) 555-2322  
To begin using LIFE 2.0 press any key...

*Click*

An oil tanker slides across the proud waters of the Pacific. The captain sighs with contentment as he gazes out over the red streaked horizon. Suddenly the sun is no longer the sun, but instead an enormous free-floating John Deere tractor. This is upsetting to the captain. So is the fact that the oil tanker underneath him has inexplicably become a cockroach. But neither

of these developments are quite as alarming as when the captain realizes the he looks less like a person and more like a bag of M&M's.

The heavens open up and what sounds like a thousand voices singing in perfect tutonic harmony says:

"Ah, shit."

A gazelle leaps across the wide plains of South Africa. It's muscles contract, then surge, as it moves effortlessly through the swaying yellow grasslands. Then the grasslands begin to sway in an unusual way. Much like water swirling down a drain. The gazelle tries to leap away from the vortex, but since it is no longer a gazelle but instead a toaster, it is sucked into the funnel.

And a voice like a choir of angels reverberating endlessly through the cosmos says:

"Control-alt-delete, damn it, control-alt-delete!"

Voices clamor, bells ring, and paper flies. It's an average day on Wall Street. Until the hammerhead shark begins thumping down the isles, snapping up stockbrokers. Then the hammerhead is crushed by two tons of strawberry preserve that had previously been the upper floors of the building. That, in turn, is gobbled up by the Statue of Liberty, which now bares a striking likeness to a four hundred foot tall sheep. *Baa baa.*

A voice like endless hosannas shivering with harmonious bliss says:

"Where's the fucking plug...ah ha!"

Everything is frozen in time and space for a moment, then goes dark.

"Thank you for calling the Existence Corporation. My name is Charlie. How can I help you?"

"Uh, yeah. I was just trying to upgrade to Life 2.0, and my system crashed."

"Okay. Is this a matter or anti-matter system?"

"Matter."

"Hydrogen atmosphere or oxygen?"

"Oxygen."

"How many planets currently?"

"Just one."

"Hmm. Are you the sole deity, or are you part of a pantheon?"

"I am the one true God."

"Right. Well, sir, unfortunately, Life 2.0 does not support single planet monotheistic realities."

"What? Why not?"

"Well sir, there hasn't been much demand for that model in the past few millennia so the designers at Existence Corporation decided to phase it out."

"Well, what am I supposed to do?"

"We recommend a hardware upgrade so you can expand to a multiple planet reality, or MPR."

"Uh huh. And that's probably going to cost me, isn't it?"

"They're not cheap, sir. However, I really think that once you've expanded to MPR, you'll find it a far superior reality."

"You people have really got me by the balls, don't you?"

"May I suggest joining a pantheon or polytheistic reality share group? Those customers who consider MPR financially unfeasible often find that a reality share or co-op is the solution that works best for them."

"Share?"

"Yes, sir."

"Share my world with other people?"

"Well sir, in a share you could afford to have several worlds. Feasibly, everyone in the share could have their own planet within the shared reality."

"But they would all have to adhere to the same rules, wouldn't they?"

"Well, of course sir. After all, if one of the planets achieved interplanetary travel and contacted a different set of laws within the same reality, there would be a system wide meltdown."

"So it's a pretty confining structure."

"Some allowances must be made, sir, if you want to—"

"You know, I've been a loyal customer of Existence Corporation for over three billion years, even when it seemed other companies, like the Conscious Company and Inception Industries, had superior technology, because you convinced me that your main priority was caring for the individual customer. But now it seems that with your recent success, you don't mind stepping on the little people who got you here."

"I'm sorry you feel that way, sir. I'll tell you what. Let's look at your specific reality in our database and see what we can do."

"Thank you."

"Now, what is the name of your planet?"

"Earth."

"Earth...hmm...oh. Wow. You weren't kidding. This is one of the oldest realities we have on record."

"You see?"

"Yes, I see, sir. This reality is so outdated, you're better off scrapping the whole thing and starting over again."

"What?"

"Now, since you've been such a steady customer, I'm going to talk to my manager and see if I can get some kind of deal for you."

"But you really think I should junk it?"

"Sir, in all honesty, I'm impressed you held it together as long as you did."