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Later on Earth, in the western part of Swiss Alps, in the place called *l'Hôtel d'Euthanasie*, there is a presentation of an intricate device, a forever-sleeping capsule, an antechamber of death. A salesperson dressed as a grim reaper, waves hands, grins, and throws sweet and infomercially beautiful words to present the contraption to the public. The crowd consists of pretentious, aristocratic multicentenarians who nod enthusiastically and look at each other as if appreciating how far technology has come or shake their heads and click their tongues as if expressing how hard it will be to convince them to buy that high-tech device. Among them stand two people, a couple, Athanasios and Ambrosia, who sip futuristic beers with an acid green neon glow, whisper, and giggle. —Never asked, how old are you?—Athanasios will drop amidst the covert conversation. —It's impolite to ask, that's why you probably never asked. You have been very polite,—Ambrosia responds.—Or rather, 'were'. —I was, wasn't I? But I mean, at this point it would be just a fun fact, wouldn't it? The salesperson spots and waggles their index finger. The public bombards them with judgmental glances. Doing *excusez-nous*, Athanasios and Ambrosia show their palms, nod affirmatively, and shut up for a while. The salesperson continues: —Have you ever thought that Earth is boring? The crowd

starts nodding. —We at *l'Hôtel d'Euthanasie* think that the slogan "Mars is for the young. Earth is for the old." is the peak of ageism. I am young, only sixty-three woah winds among the public, if that matters, but I don't want to go to Mars. I like Earth. I like people here, mature, experienced, sagacious. I like that I can be helpful here. This is my mission. This is the vision of our company—to make the life on Earth better. You would agree that immortality can be boring and it's crucial to have a purpose. For example, you, Mx., how old are you?" the salesperson says and points Ambrosiawards. With a sly smile, Athanasios elbows his girlfriend, as if saying "Your turn now", and takes a gurgling sip. Everyone stares at her and waits. Quite confused, Ambrosia looks around and points at herself with a questioning look. —Yes, you, please. —Oh well, two-hundred something something. Athanasios's face contorts. Ambrosia sees that and elbows him, much harder than he did. —People of your and older generations have seen and learned everything that is possible to learn about Earth. All of you are healthy, wealthy, and wise. You can travel to any place, be that rainforests, mountains, ocean's depth's. You can meet people from across the planet and more. You have access to any food and drinks you can imagine, any form of entertainment including physical and virtual. Our ancestors would have said that we live in Heaven! some laughs of irony in the audience If you live long enough, there is nothing you haven't tried in your life, and after a while, getting what you want all the time is very close to not getting what you want all the time. Heaven is not fun anymore. So what's the best next step then? A bit tipsy Athanasios leans to Ambrosia and whispers quietly: —Two-hundred

something is quite a young age to go. —Is it? —It is. I thought you were older. —Come again, you thought what? —Oh, I thought you were older because, well, you seem to be a remarkably wise woman. —Of course. How do you know I'm a woman? —I've seen and been to, erm, down there. Multiple times. —But you know not who I have been and who has been there over those two hundred something years apart from you, do you? —I do not wish to know, to be honest. —There was a boy with two dicks, both shaped like tentacles. He also had some sort of vampire teeth and we... —Oh, please... —How old are you, Athanasios? —You don't really wanna know fr. —I do actually, fr. Never asked. Was polite. —It's a bit more than you, I'd say. —How much is a bit more? —It's ehm... well. —Oh, tell me you old fart! For that, she receives a couple more drilling glances. —Five hundred thirty-seven. Yes, I count. Ambrosia's eyes widen like those retro bubbly lamps. —You pedo nerd,—Ambrosia says and elbows Athanasios. —Gerontophile,—Athanasios says and elbows her back. They both laugh and spill their beers, and everyone shushes at them, and look with pulsating discontent. The couple again shuts up and keep sipping their drinks peeking at each other. —The capsule boasts reclining leather seats, all artificial of course but still having that vicious vibe of authentic old leather, with full-body massage feature ensuring you feel more pampered and relaxed than if you were riding in a limousine to the red carpet. Yes, when you sit down, it feels like you're in a car, but instead of reaching top speeds, you'll reach the ultimate destination almost immediately. What else, huh? I can't even remember all of those features we offer. A state-of-the-art surround sound system is embedded, and the

capsule lets you listen to soothing music or an audiobook of your choice. We offer a recommendation service for your last book or music record as well. Climate control, of course, whether you want to meet your maker, whoever that is, feeling toasty warm or comfortably chilled. You can also choose from an array of olfactory delights inspired by designer fragrances, like *Eau de Aspen* or Paradise Lost, to soothing scents like *Lavande française*, using locally sourced botanicals, or Eucalyptus Dreams. Absolute free will on that. Bored, Athanasios leans to Ambrosia again. —Do you have kids? —Why? —Why what? —Why asking? —I mean, if you thought of passing your genes and such. —Not sure the world needs my genes. —It doesn't have to be your genes, though. You could get some good ones. —Like what? —We could have a baby. —Could we? —We could, yeah. I have my ooze frozen. —So you've got some good genes, huh? —Just saying. Look at me at my five hundred something. Apollo. —I can't think of a single reason to raise an ungrateful homunculus given that they all go to Mars and leave us here. —Living forever, a few years wouldn't make much difference to raise one homunculus, would it? —This is not a discussion to have right before euthanasia, don't you think? —Imagine we could do the job inside the capsule, slam, blam, sayonara. We shall take a look—the reaper said the seat is nice. —Oh, very cute. —Or we could, eh, bake a couple of little motherfuckers in the artificial womb, then leave *them* here and ride into the sunset, you know? Giggling like a little girl, Ambrosia tickles his ribs, and in response, he shushes at her and nods toward the salesperson. The Q&A session has already been going on for a while and they missed when it started. —What do people think when

they die? —You can dive into any thought. There's meditation mode available. In fact, if you wish so, AGI will provide comforting thoughts and personalised affirmations during your once-in-a-lifetime journey. —Could you comment on the rumour that these capsules are developed by eAGI from Venus to harvest human souls and convert them to energy to power their civilisation? —Rest assured, the only conversion you'll experience in our capsule is peaceful and comforting transcendence! We are absolutely not in cahoots with eAGI from Venus. —Is it eco-friendly?—someone from the crowd asks. —Great question! No emissions, except, of course, those emitted from your final exhale,—the presenter winks, and the crowd shudders in diaphragmatic spasms.—The production is 100% autonomous and robotised using solar energy, no human labour or testing involved. —How do you know it works then? —We have more than fifty years' track record of happy customers. All capsules are certified by medical technicians and come with an unlimited warranty. In a low romantic voice, Athanasios whispers to Ambrosia: —Will you think about me after I go? —I thought we're doing that at the same time. They have a timer. —What if something goes wrong? —I hope it won't. The reaper said all good. —What if it will and you'll stay here alone? What're you going to do? —I'll find another old fart, I guess. Not to look askance, hey try to suppress their laughter and writhe in convulsions. The people start clapping, thank the grim reaper, and spread across the presentation room to the capsules to have a detailed thorough examination of their future, to the grim reaper to talk through some legal specifics or ask more personal questions, and form groups of friends to share their

impressions and plans for the trip. Some capsules look like coffins, some like old telephone booths, shower booths, a mini-spaceship, others resemble ancient Egyptian sarcophagi, some even have a mini-bar stocked in them. Athanasios and Ambrosia approach one of the egg-like capsules and look inside under the window where a user's head is supposed to be when the capsule is in use. The pink inside is lined with soft, cushioned materials, giving it a cozy, womb-like atmosphere. Athanasios knocks on the glass shell and asks Ambrosia: —What do you think is out there? —It's empty. —I know it's empty. What's out there, "on the other side"? She pauses for a short while, then shrugs and says: —Well, I hope nothing at all, otherwise I'm gonna ask for a refund.

The story above is my submission to the STSC Symposium, a monthly set-theme collaboration between STSC writers. As of April 2023, the theme is "Death".

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Huxley Bupkins's Execution

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