

It is 'end-of-the-world weather', a poet declares. Famine, disease and riots break out across Europe as extreme and never before seen temperatures devastate crops. As each day turns to night, last gasps of sun fade away in an eerie distortion of phosphorous yellow haze.

The 'sun will die', an astronomer says. Spots spread like 'black bile' across the surface of our star. Perched high over cobbled Bologna streets, the astronomer sets a date. July 18. A prophecy of darkness echoes from the knowing halls of an ancient university.

It is 1816. Friends gather by a lake. A summer holiday in a year without a summer. Sheltering from frost and fog, they tell each other ghost stories to pass the time. One tells of a dream, which was not all dream, where in the moonless air, we forget our passions in the dread, of this our desolation.

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It is 2006. 190 years later. Black ash on Pacific blue laps against my body. I gather with my friends on a beach. There is a hazy red sky. It is the first day of the year. We are isolated by fire, the roads are closed, so we wait for it all to burn. Cooling ourselves in the ocean.

The date is set, scientists say in the newspaper that day. We only have 20 years left. Action is needed to avoid absolute obliteration in 2025. The roads are still closed. We pass the time telling each other stories of post-human futures. I tell of a scientist named Roger Traub, who works for IBM in New York. He uses computers to simulate circuits in our brain.

Mathematical models explore only a fraction of the billions of oscillations that just a fraction of the billions of neurons make. Oscillations that, when visualised, appear to be nothing but squiggles. There is some meaning in each of these squiggles. Some patterns the scientist's eye can see. I see only abstraction.

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Under a setting sun forecast to die, Mary Shelley sits with her friends overlooking the lake. It is her turn to tell a story. She feels a dull nothing, a blank inability of invention. Thunder rumbles. The lake lights up. Then a pitchy blackness. She starts to tell her story. It is about a man and a monster. It is about art and science.

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I imagine the squiggles the scientist Roger Traub sees. Squiggles of thoughts, of senses, of sight. Squiggles of memories, of fears, of desires. Squiggles of love, of despair, of dreams. Stranded on this beach, while the white foam of waves paint squiggles in the black ash of a burnt land, I think of these oscillating waves in our brain. Waves of all that we are and all that we can imagine we can be.

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It is 2023. Scientists say we soon face a ghastly future of mass extinction. I imagine a saviour - a masterful mind. A hope sparked by slicing up the brains of all our great artists and scientists and shuffling them together like a deck of cards. Could we find our future in this mash-up of electric squiggles and oscillating waves. Could we create an electric consciousness together, an artificial super intelligence?

Collisions. Intersections. Dissections. There is a violence in the language we use to describe art and science. Mary Shelley's story of Victor Frankenstein, shows we can only find an enduring death and isolation in forced creation. Instead in our climate of impossibles, we must plant the seeds of the possible. We must nurture them together. Let them grow. Together we can create an ecology - not a monstrosity - of art and science.