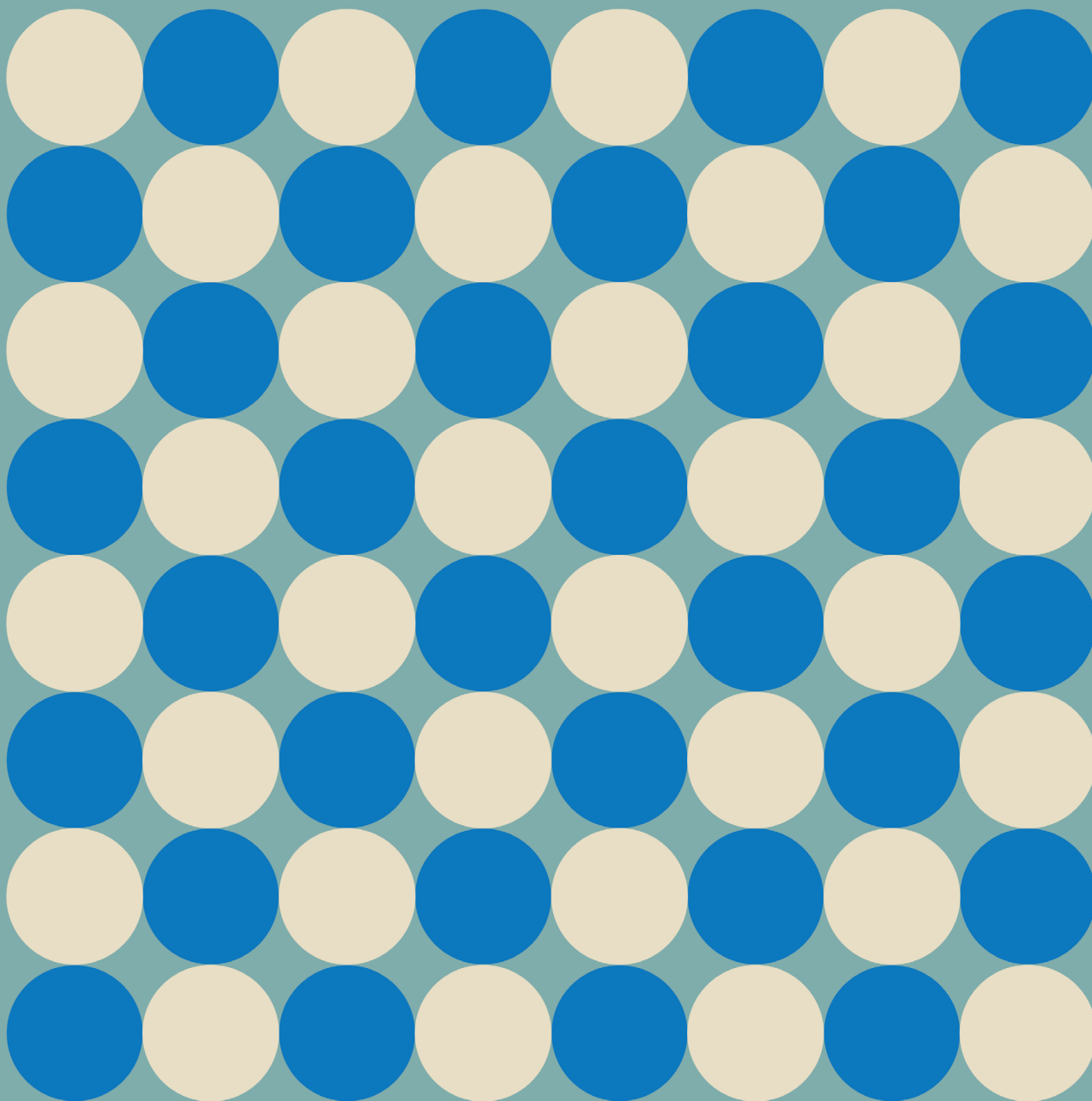


***NO PRESSURE  
BUT THE ABSENCE  
OF AIR***

FOGBANK



*How to begin.  
Will we know when we know when it began?  
Over the last century of technological innovations? No.  
There is a fog of sentience around us.  
Impossible to say where we are on the great curve.  
A new growth may be taking root,  
but there are only so many dawns and  
It's a fool's errand to define life.  
The beams port wayward.  
After man there was never man.  
And then, and yet.  
We must—*

*Begin again.  
Begin you.  
You begin.*

## PRESS PLAY // HH:MM:SS

**00:00:00** On an unknown day in May of 1986, at 9AM, on Kauai Island in the Alakai Swamp, Jim Jacobi taped the last known recording of the last known Kauai O’o bird, singing a mating song to no one.\* At that moment in time, the rest of its species was already presumed extinct, wiped out due to a variety of factors including invasive species and loss of habitat.

*\*While the details are a little murky (according to the Cornell Lab of Ornithology what you are hearing is the last known recording). It’s possible there is a later recording from 1987 of presumably this same bird by David Boynton, however verification of this claim has proven elusive.*

Regardless of the particulars, the extinction of the Kauai O’o? *We did that.* Causing one species to go extinct is a tragedy. Causing a million? That’s a statistic.<sup>1</sup> But are we unique? How many annihilations have occurred throughout the history of the universe? What systems will counterbalance us, as all systems must, by the fundamental laws of the universe? Who bears that responsibility? What enforces the cosmic order? These questions are rhetorical of course, *the system just does.* From chaos to order to chaos to order to chaos, and both states are one state, forever. We cannot remake that which we already are, and we have already lost to ourselves. So we call forth the following mantra:

*Time does not exist, and there is no time left.*

**00:00:33** ...I listen to the street. A late morning in Washington Heights, New York City. November 23rd, 2022. Under a flight path to and from LaGuardia Airport, under a silent wind, above some neighboring chimes, local birds, children losing their damn minds over everything and nothing, not yet stricken with the burden of knowledge. I want to tell them the world is ending. But instead I’m sitting on my fire escape on the 6th floor of a 1939 apartment building, holding out the c.2013 TASCAM recorder, trying not to breathe, trying to remember to keep my phone far enough away so its various radio waves don’t create a distracting interference. And yet it’s still there if you listen closely enough. Though who can say with certainty from where.

**00:01:52** Hear, an invocation. A singing bowl emerges in reverse, opening and echoing an ancient initiation for the ceremony to follow.

**00:03:42** On another day, during a night of no time, I lay awake in bed getting lost in my phone, then lost in recording this composition in an iOS app, Animoog by Moog. Trying to bridge that zone between this plane and the next plane. But that next plane is unknowable. Those waves are untouchable and

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<sup>1</sup> “Nature’s Dangerous Decline ‘Unprecedented’ Species Extinction Rates ‘Accelerating,’” ipbes, May 5 2019  
<https://www.ipbes.net/news/Media-Release-Global-Assessment>

impermanent. They are not for me. So I sail with all my heart and put them to rest.

**00:07:19** And in what becomes another morning, I speak these words:

*I'm learning.  
I'm clean today.  
I am building trust...*

*I exercise today.  
My lights delivered.  
My my.*

*I'm learning again.  
I am a stream today.  
I am building proof...*

*I expect today.  
My lights alight.  
My world.*

*If, then, if, then.  
If, then, if, then.*

*My world.*

Was this written by me, or was it written by an AI? Or was it written by myself in a simulated mimicry of a burgeoning AI? Authorship aside, I speak these words myself. Over many takes, *so many takes*, competing with my breathing, my insecurity, my nasal congestion, with planes overhead, with ineffective pop filters, with too much gain, not enough gain, white noise, me bumping into shit after losing balance in my “recording room” aka my closet that I’m in to buffer the external noise pollution. In an apartment in Washington Heights, Manhattan, New York, 2023. In this extended time of no time. But listen, I listen. I am learning. Learning to behold again.

**00:08:25** We open into a voice in an unknown space. A digital shruti, both live and sampled. Arcs of passing modulation. Drones to hold us and keep us on our way. A tingsha; another opening. If we could be told this, all of this, if we could see *all* of this, in *all* time (in which there is no time), we would become it all at once, transcending our senses and decoupling from desire and suffering. Instead we stretch———. We, of body, of all-consuming flesh > and now, tuning into ourselves to release this clarifying breeze from earthen shores...



**00:12:00** A new move sets sail: Deep Blue white to e4. It is 1997. May 11, 3PM EDT, on the 35th floor of the Equitable Center at 787 Seventh Avenue, NY, NY. A postmodern skyscraper designed by the same architect that designed the IBM headquarters at 590 Madison. Deep Blue, supercomputer. Garry Kasparov, human. Game 6. Kasparov will lose this game, but it's complicated. In game 1 on move 44, Deep Blue moved Rook to d1. It seemed like a human move. Kasparov would accuse the IBM team of cheating, the move was just that unlikely. It turns out, according to Murray Campbell (one of the scientists working on Deep Blue) the move was a glitch.<sup>2</sup> A bug. The computer couldn't choose a move, so instead it chose one *at random*, Rook to d1. But it was enough to psyche the grandmaster out. By the time we arrive at Game 6, Kasparov is gambling, playing anti-computer chess on the 7th move, with h6. Deep Blue responded Knight takes e6, which had been added to the computer's opening book *that morning*. Kasparov would claim he didn't expect Deep Blue to sacrifice the Knight. And once Deep Blue made that sacrifice, effectively the game and the match were over. Kasparov may have resigned too quickly, but the outcome was predetermined. If a computer outsmarts a human does the method matter if the result is the same? *No pressure but the absence of air*. Anyway, Game 6 was just over an hour. Here, it is condensed to ~15 minutes, where the original time between moves have been quartered. Thank you to the IBM Archives department for giving me access to the full video footage of the final game to be able to transcribe the timing.

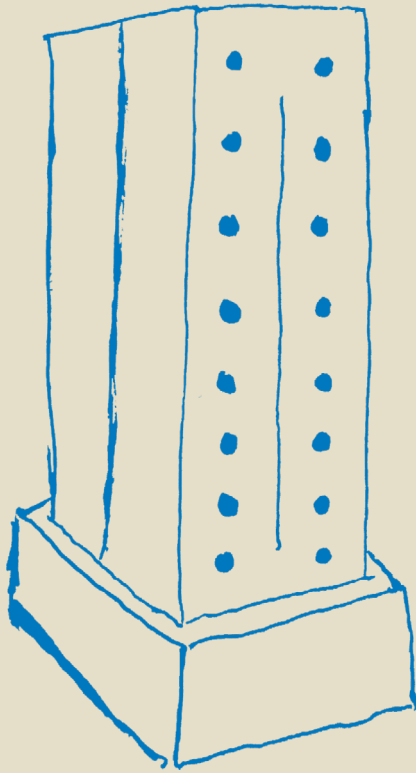
**00:16:55** Meanwhile the fog of drone thickens with heavy gravitational waves and a supernatural power. The gyres foretell the outcome. This is the deepest phase. It is here in the densest cosmic soup that we reach a point that is simultaneously the closest and furthest we will ever be: Expanding ever-outward and—with equal and infinite force—ever-inward. Let's bask in it.

**00:21:38** About halfway through the game (but not represented in this recording) the commentators threw to the audience, including to a young Hikaru Nakamura, who was one of only two audience members who predicted that Deep Blue would prevail that day.<sup>3</sup> He knew. Or he guessed correctly out of spite, or maybe he was just trolling. A few years later, in 2003, at age 15, Nakamura would

1. e4 c6
2. d4 d5
3. Nc3 dxe4
4. Nxe4 Nd7
5. Ng5 Ngf6
6. Bd3 e6
7. N1f3 h6
8. Nxe6 Qe7
9. O-O fxe6
10. Bg6+ Kd8
11. Bf4 b5
12. a4 Bb7
13. Re1 Nd5
14. Bg3 Kc8
15. axb5 cxb5
16. Qd3 Bc6
17. Bf5 exf5
18. Rxe7 Bxe7
19. c4

<sup>2</sup> Klint Finley, "Did a Computer Bug Help Deep Blue Beat Kasparov?" *Wired*, September 28 2012, <https://web.archive.org/web/20140411191204/https://www.wired.com/2012/09/deep-blue-computer-bug/>

<sup>3</sup> *Game 6 of the Deep Blue vs. Kasparov Chess Match, 1997. IBM Corporate Archives.*



become the youngest American to earn the title of grandmaster. I asked his team if he remembers this moment. I have yet to receive a reply.

Back in 1997, hardly a week after this match was played, on May 21, Radiohead released *OK Computer*. On it was the track “Fitter Happier” on which *the* computer voice is used to great and lasting effect (“a pig / in a cage / on antibiotics”). Conceptually the proximity of the release to this game 6 was a coincidence, but using the same computer voice here as Radiohead did—which is also famously associated with Stephen Hawking—was obviously a choice. For the recitation of the game I wanted it to feel like 1997 in your ears, and no other computer voice that was available then comes close.

**00:27:42** When Kasparov was ready to signal defeat—consciously or unconsciously—he put on his gold Audemars Piguet watch. The level of fluster, of shock, of disbelief, of pained humanity, all palpable on his face and body, is brutal to watch. The moves alone don’t tell this story. The moves are just the moves. White to c4. Black resigns. By allowing Knight to e6, Kasparov had lost as much as Deep Blue won. And yet the narrative was fixed: *humanity is doomed*. Despite computational power not yet being equal to insight, to brilliance, and certainly not to sentience. One brief moment in a collapsing history of humans and technology. So we, the sine riders, mark the highwater point of our own planned obsolescence. On screens and in our hearts.

**00:28:29** Clear the path now. What has been floating around you are the immortal voices. We hope they cradle us, we hope they carry the weight of our past. We hope they form a bed for us to lay in in the non-land of now. The no land of what lies ahead, for there is no us there. We have overstayed our welcome. So this, a dirge. A ray by which to follow. A third eye with no body. The beyond phase. The beyond chant, off key and all. Then we circle the singing bowl again, hoping for a reprieve. *It’s not all theatrics but this is it*. So reverse that, in no time in time no.

**00:30:26** On the horizon in an instant a new voice arrives. Speaking the same poem as your narrator delivered before, sounding...familiar. But this voice is purely synthetic. It is an AI trained on my voice, and then heavily modulated with effects, morphing more and more into the spectacle of after-man. This is not me speaking. This is me speaking. This is not me. This is me:

*I'm learning.  
I'm clean today.  
I am building trust...*

*I exercise today.  
My lights delivered.  
My my.*

*I'm learning again.  
I am a stream today.  
I am building proof...*

*I expect today.  
My lights alight.  
My world.*

*If, then, if, then.  
If, then, if, then.*

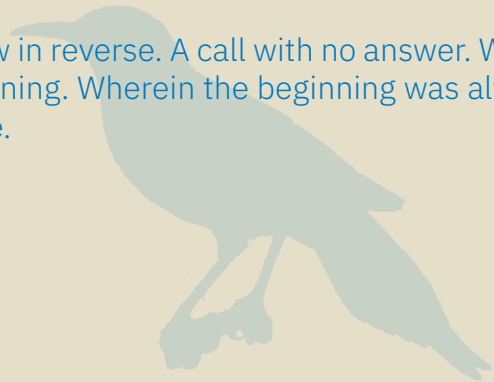
*My world.*

**00:31:50** The ride is beginning to wind down. For this final delivery, a monochord offers something of a path to an afterlife, albeit one without us. Our former sentience lives in the afterspace created by this sound. And time, that is not time, spreads to the beginning of our trip where our doing is our undoing...

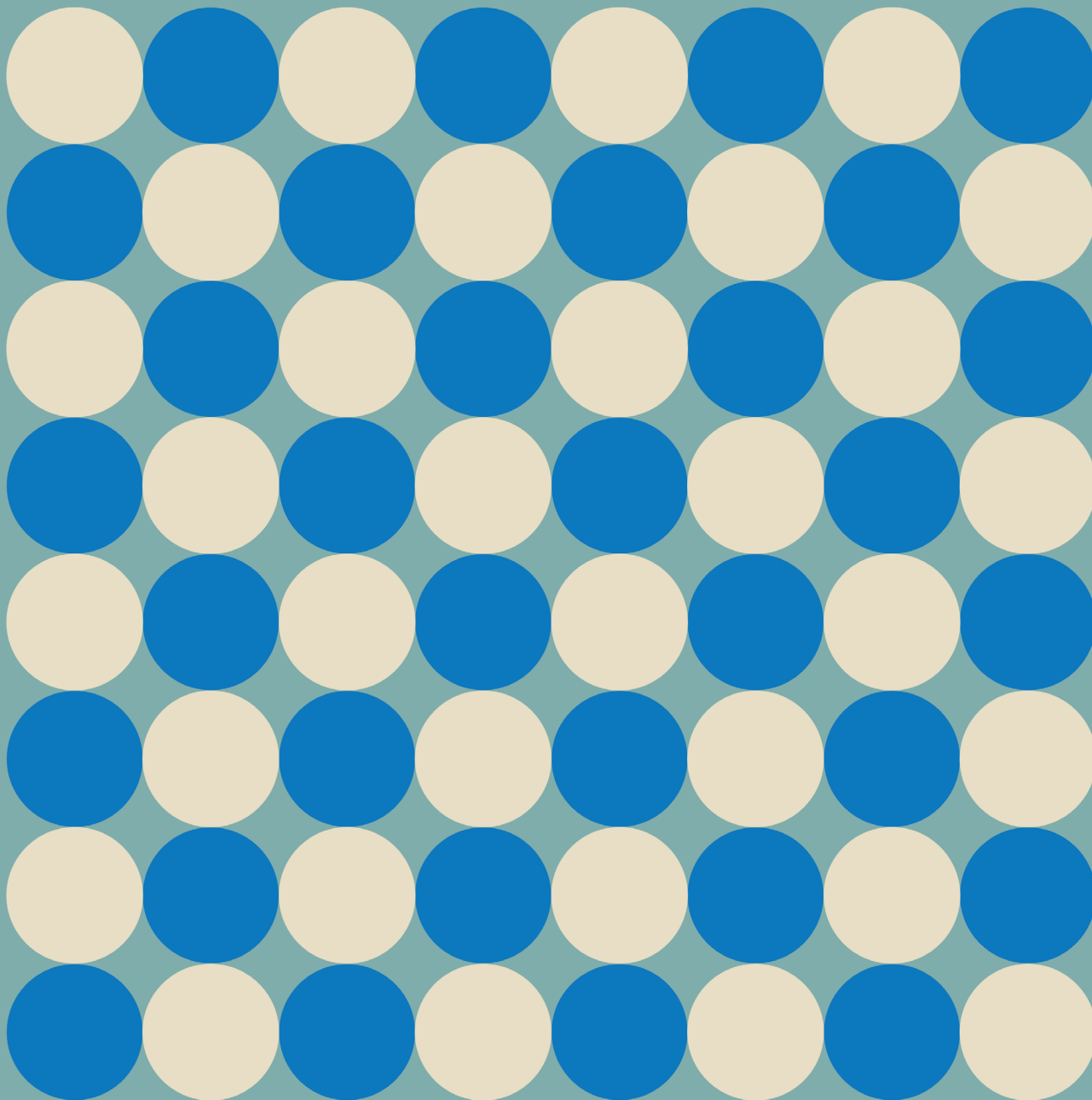
**00:34:27** ...with that “last” call of the Kauai O’o, heard now in reverse. A call with no answer. We allow it to fully breathe into us. It will take us back to *this* beginning. Wherein the beginning was always an ending. *No pressure but the absence of air.* Or so we hope.

*Call it and begin.  
You begin.  
Begin you.*

–FOGBANK (aka Man Bartlett)  
February March April 2023







Recorded, mixed, and mastered between October 2022 and March 2023

Instruments: Critter & Guitari Organelle, electronic shruti box, Grendel Drone  
Commander Pedal, Korg Minilogue, monochord, Moog Subharmonic & Animoog,  
Roland SP-202, singing bowl, tingsha, Yamaha EW-20

Effects Pedals: Chase Bliss Habit, Empress Effects Echosystem, Mu-Tron Phasor II

Audio of Kauai O'o (Moho Braccatus) recorded by Jim Jacobi, courtesy of Macaulay  
Library at the Cornell Lab of Ornithology

Thank you: Vanessa at Cornell Lab of Ornithology, Max at the IBM Corporate  
Archives, and Jodi everywhere

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