

Now and Zen

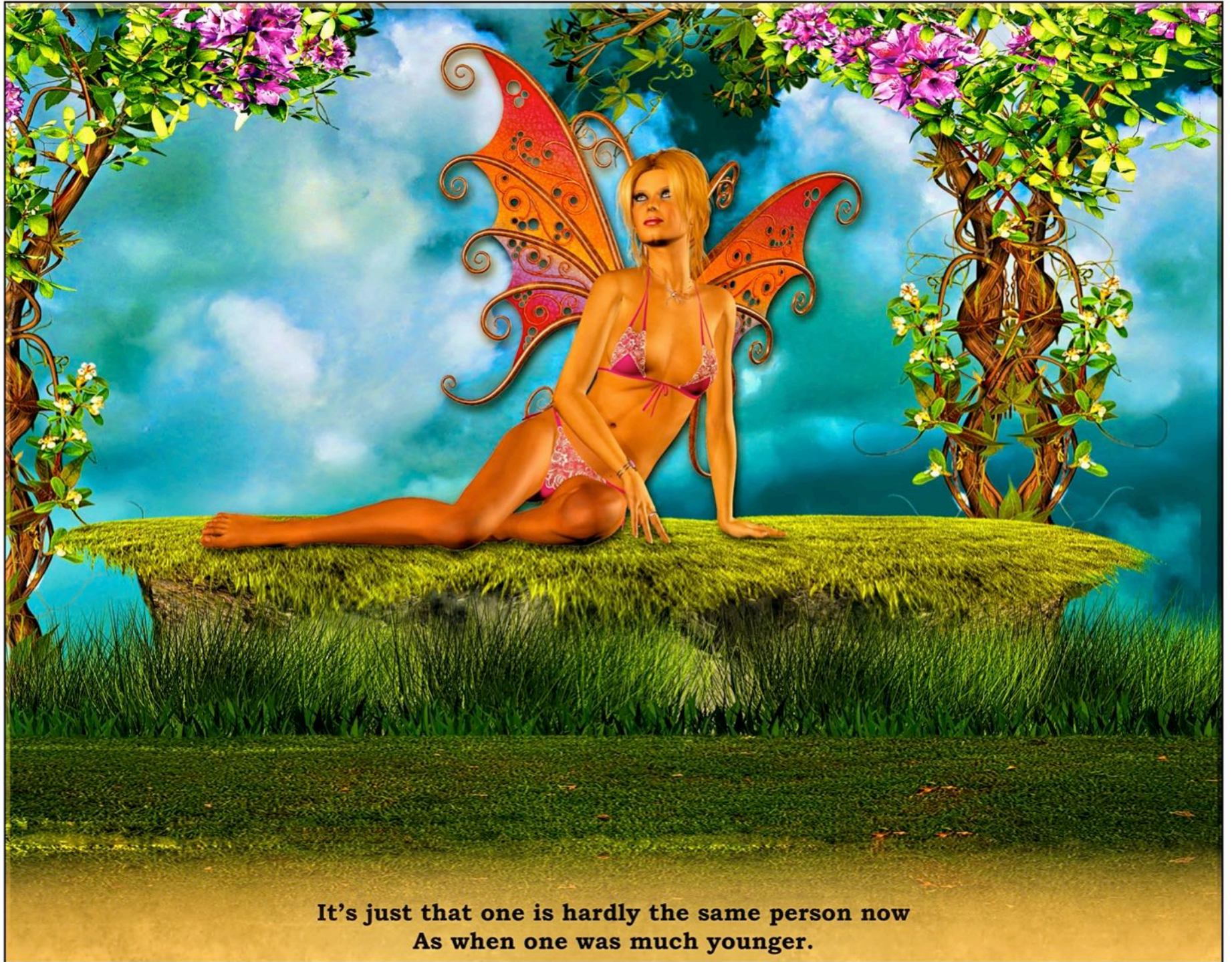




What Really Happens After We Die?
We die 'little deaths' all the time.



**Our atoms change,/Some of our memories go away, and some new ones reappear,
Although we realize that it's the core of memories that defines one as one.**



**It's just that one is hardly the same person now
As when one was much younger.**



**We had 'death' before birth, too, and now there is life after birth.
*Is there life only during life?***



**If we had amnesia, and began learning the world anew,
Then one might say that 'one' as the previous person was 'dead',
And that it's one's new life that counts, one not even missing the old one.**



**And while the 'big death' is much more than any of these 'little deaths',
It is that our atoms may go on to reside in a new person eventually.**



**It's not like there will be any continuity of memory,
But more like that any narrative will do!**



**Everything that is part of us—our cells, tissues, organs and organ systems—
Has come about over billions of years
Because it proved successful in the great survival stakes
During our perilous evolutionary descent (ascent) with modification.**



**The brain, being no exception, evolved in part
To allow a creature to learn from what happens in its life,
To retain key elements that could influence future actions.**





**We ourselves are mainly the cause that we are interested in.
The self is preoccupied with staying alive,/Which is why our species is still around today.**



**It is a prime biological function to be afraid of death,
And so the self, as thus contrived,/Is able to fully play its crucial survival role.**



**We want to equip our brain with a soul/That offers us an escape when the brain dies
Since the self cannot come to terms with its own extinction.**



**From a subjective standpoint, we are all born equal and undifferentiated,
But as mature selves we make a distinction/Between the individual and the surroundings.**



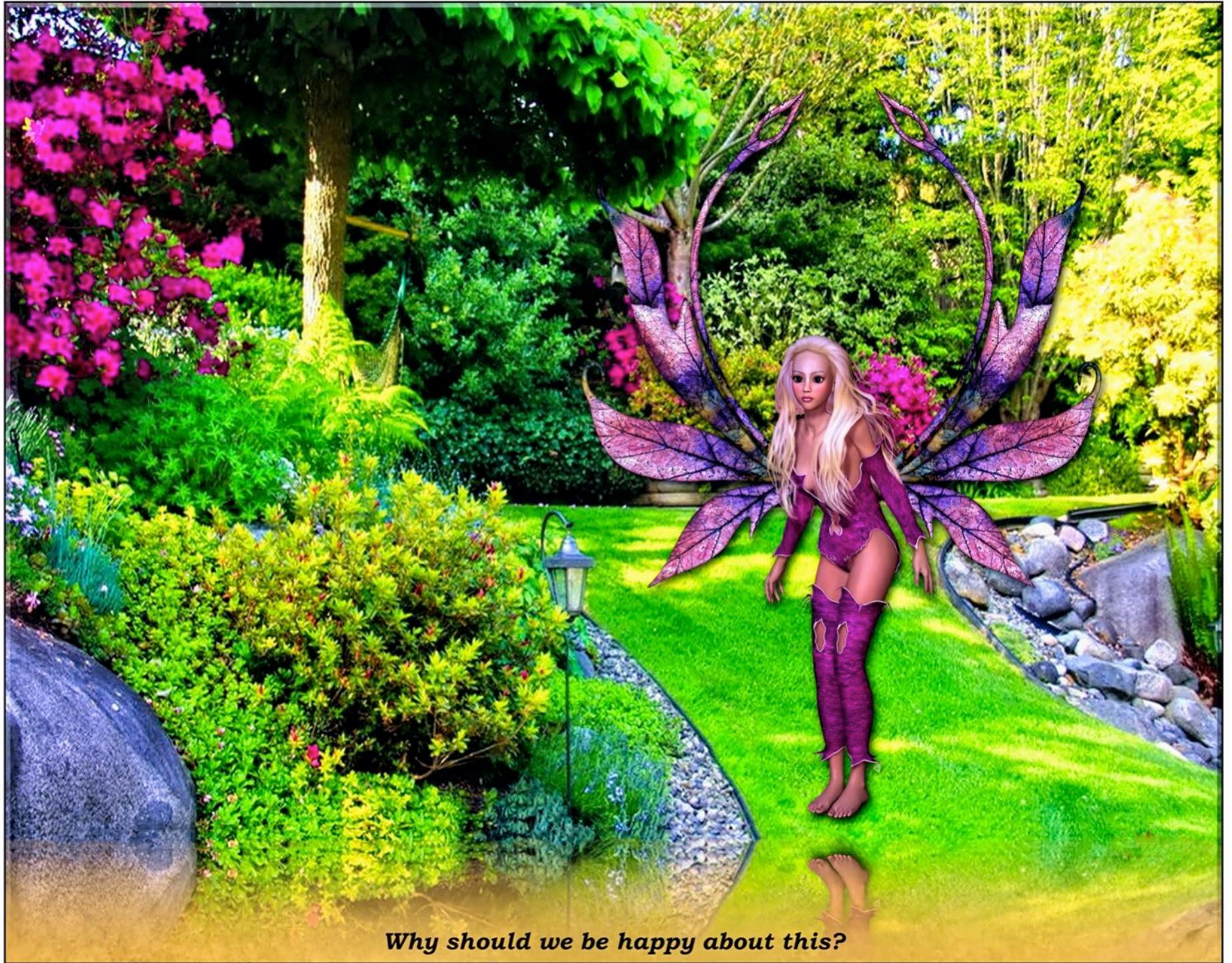
**Still the brain keeps changing throughout life,/In a pattern of the shifting flux of its neurons;
We gain and lose memories and feelings,/Essentially creating a new person over and over again.**



**The self is thus not so rock solid as it seems.
These moment-to-moment changes differ from death
Only in degree. In essence, they are identical.**



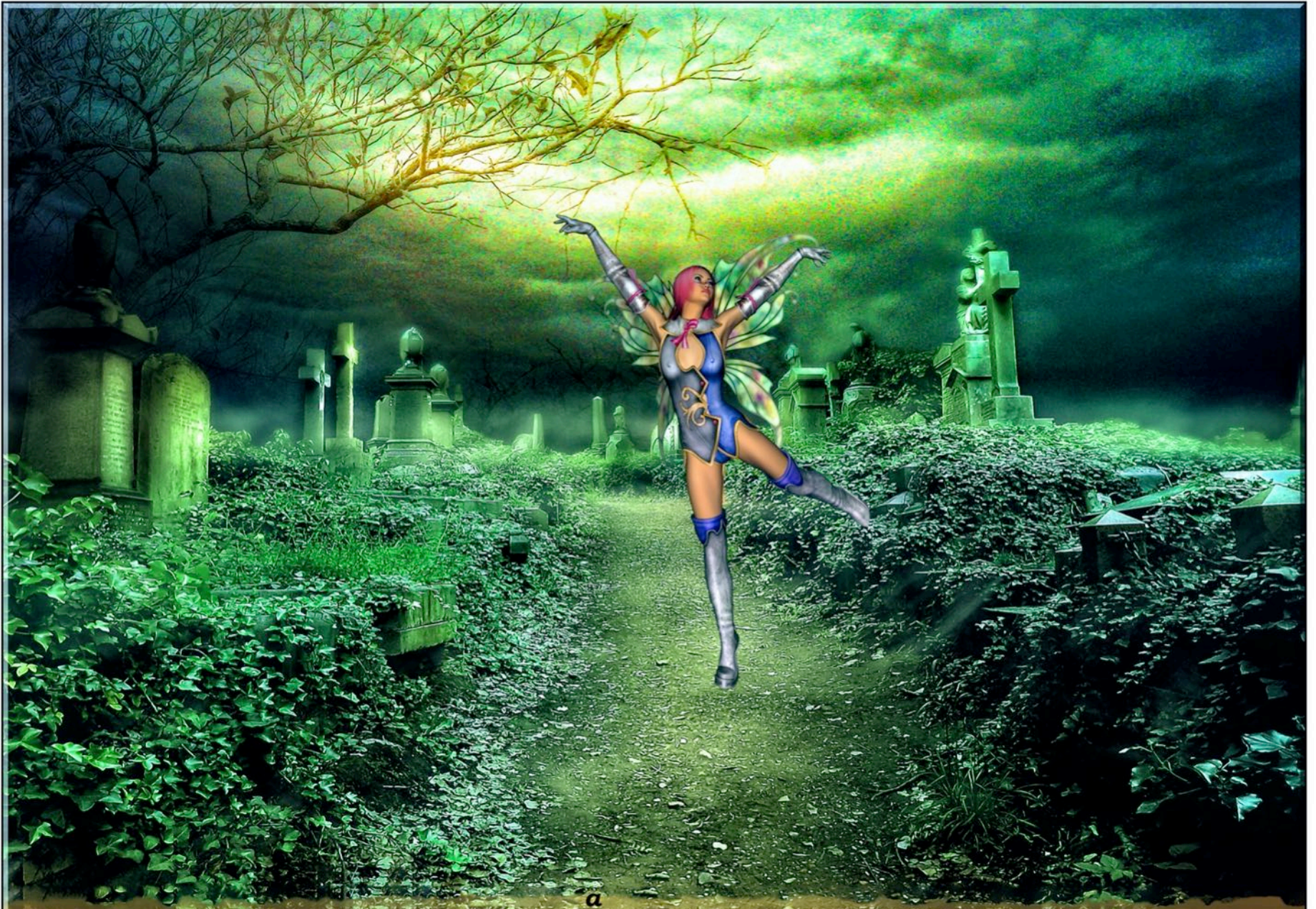
**Other neural networks will come to be in other, /Future people, albeit with an 'amnesia'
Of what went on before in the brains of the previous others.**



Why should we be happy about this?



**We never can be, because the 'I' cannot operate outside of its own boundaries.
The only viable alternative is to think of a way/In which it is possible to ever continue on.**



a

*What will it be like to be a part of someone else after we die,
With our own particular narrative of life cast aside?
That is the 'zen' of now and then and when.*

