

Blindsight Notes

Prologue

- A kid named Siri has a nerdy/geeky friend named Pag.
- Siri sees Pag getting beat up by bullies and Siri intervenes.
- Siri goes too far and pretty badly hurts one of the bullies.
- Siri had severe epilepsy as a kid and recently had a new operation done that removed half of his brain. It cured his epilepsy.
- Siri recounts that since his surgery he's noticed that he's changed a lot. The doctors even said that would be expected because the brain would have to naturally rewire itself after the operation.
- Pag accuses Siri of overreacting and says that it's like Siri is a different person now since his surgery. He figures if they take out half of your brain, then how can you really be the same person you were before? How does that not change your mind and personality - and who you are?
- Siri disagrees with Pag. But Siri does think about how he's had to 'adapt' to people since the operation. He has trouble acting the way people expect you to as he apparently doesn't often feel the same they do. As such, overtime he's gotten better and better by observing how people act and analytically deducing how he should act. He "fits in" by doing that.

Theseus - Part 1

- Siri (at some unspecified point in the future) wakes up from hibernation. He is on a spaceship controlled by an AI named Theseus. He is with several shipmates. One of them, Sarasti, serves as the main captain.
- Hibernation appears to work by literally draining the body of blood, etc. So it takes a long, painful while for the crew to "reanimate". They even refer to themselves as "vampires" in a way. They seem to have been genetically altered somehow to be able to hibernate and be reanimated like this.
- They realize something has gone wrong. They were supposed to be heading to a specific destination but got half a lightyear off course. Apparently the ship AI must have reacted to something and suddenly veered off course.
- Siri mentions this potentially having something to do with "aliens" - but not necessarily seriously.
- During this "reanimation" process each crew member sets up their personal tent and space on the ship.
- Note that there are other people that can be hibernated and reanimated like him stored on the ship as "backup" - in case anything happens to the main crew. They are still in hibernation. Only Sarasti doesn't have a backup.
- Siri seems to make some attempt to see what went wrong - assuming it has something to do with the ship, but he doesn't really find anything.

- Siri ominously mentions that his value amongst the crew diminishes as they veer further of course.

Theseus - Part 2

- We are at some unspecified point in Siri's past.
- His mom has "passed" and they recently had her funeral. Although in the future it's not typical.
- After the funeral the body is put in storage for future usage should it ever be wanted/necessary (Although no one ever does). It appears the persons "mind" is then uploaded to some type of fantasy world where they can choose to live in their own "Heaven" however they'd like. They can even have visitors.
- He and his dad visit his mom there. His dad acts as one might expect, but Siri is upset at the absurdity of it all and how people pretend that it's like death and going to Heaven but it's really not. He mostly hates the strange way in which people pretend the world is still like it used to be before the technology instead of adapting and changing how they are.
- It was right of this visit that the "aliens" or "things" showed up - all of the stars suddenly looked different. It was February 13 2082. He also noticed a "vampire" for the first time in public - which seem to be related to his state on the ship but it is not clarified.
- A swarm of iron-like objects had surrounded the earth. They referred to them as fireflies. They were in essence taking a 3D picture of the entire earth.
- Clearly something had invaded, but this didn't bother Siri. Humans often acted alien to him - so how different were 'aliens'
- Siri imagines tries to imagine what it would be like to be one of the alien probes in much the same way he tries to imagine and imitate fitting in with typical people.
- He imagines them as probes sent long time ago by some ancient organization but then potentially co-opted by another to investigate something earthly.
- Apparently scientists were right on the cusp of creating powerful AI before this all happened
- He gets a call from his Dad - who works for and does something top secret. He confirms the "Icarus Array" (some powerful tool, likely a Dyson Sphere) hasn't likely been damaged or noticed. But the fact that his Dad calls him makes Siri worry.
- His Dad says that "they" are sending a team to investigate the source that the fireflies (probes) are communicating with. It seems to be something in the Kuiper Belt surrounding the larger solar system. They need someone with Siri's "Synthesist" abilities (assuming that means someone that can "decode" foreign personas)

Theseus - Part 3

- Three probe waves are sent out towards the entities transmitting to the probes

around earth - the entities in the Kuiper belt past Pluto.

- The first wave is just a simple reconnaissance wave that shoots past. They detect a strange comet. It is all machine.
- The second waves is sent with better gear and AI to analyze them. They detect activity and structures on the comet and start to zoom in. They are suddenly "blinded" and all of sudden they disappear. The second wave is all machine and AI.
- Siri's team from Part 1 is the third wave.
- Sarasti is a "vampire"
- As the third wave arrives they and Siri receive intelligence that the disappeared entity has turned into some extremely dense and small quantum particle, barely detectable. They assume the comet they saw was just a decoy.
- The crew tries to decide what to do and what the alien's intentions are
- Siri thinks back to a conversation with Pag about vampires. Apparently they are some type of modified human that can see multiple timelines at once and multiple histories (they see all of the potential paths a situation can/did go)
- Siri dated some girl named Chelsea that Pag set him up with at some point. She's dead now. She used to work in the tweaking of people's minds to improve compatibility with other partners (like a marriage counselor of the future)

Theseus - Part 4

- The crew tries to determine what to do. They think the alien race may be some terraforming project.
- They wonder if the enemy is hostile or not. Siri's seem to think it makes sense to assume they are hostile. Humanity has since stopped making progress. Since inventing "digital heaven" they stopped making progress. Everyone can finally have what they want. So Siri reasons that technology is only needed so long as a race needs it to survive. So the more technologically advanced a society/race is, then the more they had to struggle against. The fact that these aliens seem so omnipotent compared to them suggests they struggled against much and are inherently hostile. However, must humans ignore such a view. They really just don't care.
- Apparently vampires are inherently very off-putting to humans because they are kind of natural predators. As such, prey tends to be skittish and quiet amongst them (in this case humans - assuming vampires are some type of modified human).
- Siri recounts his romantic "failures" with Chelsea. His straight-forward logical analysis of all human interactions was off-putting

Theseus - Part 5

- The crew realizes that the alien "planet/particle" is constantly tracking the crew's position and reorienting themselves so that the crew is constantly in a

blind spot where they can't spy on the planet

- The two start to communicate. The alien planet vaguely says that they shouldn't come near, but don't really specify why despite any further attempts to find out. The aliens speak in plain English.
- The crew deduces that this alien thing has been monitoring humans for a long time - but not all of history (just recent history) based on the language used.
- The crew thinks the alien planet may just be a probe like object that is still under construction and that they didn't expect humans to show up so quickly.
- After further analyzing the dialogue between the two, they see that the alien planet has all of the tendencies of talking like a clinical sociopath. The crew then talks about how "vampires" are the same way - without much further specification. They further talk about how vampires have to hunt human prey, seemingly due to some chemical that only regular humans possess in their brains. Although it's not all very clearly specified

Theseus - Part 6

- The cloaked alien "planet", finally revealed knowing its angling trick, appears to grow itself by sucking in matter from space via gravity and then somehow "digesting" the material and it being redirected to growing segments of the planet - like it was some large living organism
- They extract information from this readings and continue trying to talk to the planet - it does seem interested in details about humans
- Siri noticed something strange on the ship. For just a second one of the pipes on the ship looks wrong and then goes back.
- Eventually they start saying random obscenities to the alien planet - but to prove a point. While it seems the planet can speak and listen to English - it can't comprehend it. It's intelligent - but not necessarily conscious.
- Philosophically this is known as a Chinese Room - https://en.m.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_room. The simple idea being that even if there were an ultimate computer intelligence it wouldn't understand anything. For example suppose a person who only knew english was in a room and was given a Chinese book of responses given some questions in chinese. The English person could then send them Chinese questions and get proper answers back using the book by marching up the symbols. That wouldn't mean they understand chinese though. So how is an AI computer necessarily different?
- They continue to approach the planet
- The planet responds increasingly violently to not approach
- The vampire leader Sarasti says to continue even as the crew has doubts
- The planet eventually accuses the crew of thinking it is just a "chinese room" and declares that they will now all have to die
- They see the planet as a ring of "thorns" around a fallen star like being

Theseus - Part 7

- Siri takes with Bates, the crew member in charge of armed force. They briefly wonder if the planet is worried about Sarasti - the "vampire" (still not totally clear what that is)
- Apparently the vampires are like something so intelligent but also aggressive that they must hibernate for decades so as to not exhaust their prey?
- A probe they sent nearby managed to land on the alien planet and take soil and visual samples before the camera suddenly dying

Rorschach - Part 1

- The alien planet is called "Rorschach" as per the voice they had communicated with on the planet earlier
- Before Siri had left, he visited his mother in "heaven" one last time. She resented his father because he continued to work even in an age when it wasn't really necessary to survive. Siri disagrees with her to an extent.
- After inspecting Rorschach with their probe they don't find any evidence of biological life. They think it is an autonomous mechanical entity somehow terraforming the planet for eventually life.
- They continued to send further probes but each 'died' overtime due to exposure to strong forces (magnetic, electric, etc)
- They discuss what to do next. Before they can decide, Sarasti decides they will go onto the planet themselves somehow

Rorschach - Part 2

- One of the crew members, James, has a type of condition similar to multiple-personality-disorder. In earlier days it was often the consequence of a mutation or some type of emotional trauma. In later days people began experimenting with it as a good thing. I.e. - treating it as a complex, not a disorder and trying to create multiple personalities in other ways... and for potentially good reasons
- As the crew arrives on Rorschach they start to explore, but find nothing. They start to feel strange overtime. James (referred to as the Gang of Four due to their multiple personalities) is most affected and tries to pull his own limbs off. The other crew members are incapacitated hearing voices and seeing strange things. James claims the aliens are "in the air, language in the form of electromagnetic waves itself). Bates manages to get the crew into a sealed tent, but stays outside herself to guard it.
- Siri recalls his old girlfriend Chelsea and how she worked as a 'brain re-wirer'. She would help people alter minor things about their personality to be happier, etc, such as dampening or removing memories. They debate whether each change makes you a new person or the same.

Rorschach - Part 3

- In the tent they go back to feeling normal. They try to talk to Bates outside the

tent. She responds, but says that she's "dead" - or more precisely does not exist. Siri and some of the crew wonders start to wonder what it could mean.

- A few minutes later the high magnetic field readings nearby subside and Bates outside suddenly returns to normal.
- James/The Gang Of Four hypothesizes that the high magnetic field contains patterns and represents Rorschach "talking" in a way
- They take some readings and samples and go back to the ship before another "magnetic spike"
- Upon returning they go back into their "hibernation pods" to be repaired
- After being mostly repaired and waking up everyone claims to have seen or are seeing kinds of hallucinations. They think it is likely radiation damage from the trip - but they aren't so sure
- Apparently Bates had become famous for fighting in a war against the "Realists". Her job was to end the war. She seems to have sacrificed some of her own troops that she deemed "wrong" in order to create a ceasefire and end the war. She would have been terminated by the military for this - but when the story leaked people appreciated what she did and so she was sent for rehabilitation. It's possible this is her first mission since and that they choose her because she gets results regardless of the means.

Rorschach - Part 4

- They make 5 more trips back onto the thorny structure surrounding the ball of energy and learn more - but feel the same affects each time
- They notice more mental affects and Siri compares them to known diseases/ syndromes where you feel as if you don't exist, or literally can't recognize things in one half of your vision, suddenly hallucinating things briefly, or [these are all real things]
- On their sixth trip they hear the planet 'talking to them'. The Gang of Four (which is just one person with multiple personalities, often James) thinks it is coming for them. Suddenly the tunnel they are exploring is cut off by a wall suddenly just appearing, trapping the Gang of Four. They shoot through it to try and free them, but it is as if the planet is fighting back. They manage to get through but one of the crew members is killed by shrapnel before they can return. The Gang of Four survives.

Rorschach - Part 5

- The replacement for the killed member is taken from the 'backup' supply and taken out of hibernation.
- They think that there is some form of inhabitant there based on analysis of the incident with the tunnel being blocked off.
- They blow up the remaining items at base camp. The planet experiences damage, but then appears to regenerate itself.

Rorschach - Part 6

- Through further observation they learn that the sudden tunnel blocking "devices" the "aliens" use take time to setup. Thus, they can likely avoid them by landing at random points on the planet rather than use the same one.
- They land at a new place to explore
- As they explore they go down to explore separate tunnels
 - Siri encounters an alien - although it appears invisible to him at first. Only the rest of the crew and his assigned 'drone' notice it. Eventually Siri is able to notice it though and sees that it is not just an optical illusion. The alien attacks a drone and the crew then fires at the alien killing it. It had many arms like some kind of floating starfish. They return to the ship.
- They dissect the body. It appears to have plastic skin. They can't determine much though because their microwave guns vaporized the cells in the body. It seems to be a carbon-based and protein based life form. The body appears to be able to survive in space, but only for a limited time... like a dolphin in water.
- It has no central nervous system, but instead many clones of the same things that seem to act independently. It is covered with small hairs and eyes that allow it see and perceive many things. It can change colors like a chameleon, but as per reviewed video evidence doesn't explain why Siri couldn't see it at first.
- It's wiring suggests that it isn't necessarily intelligent - more like a Venus flytrap. It appears to function using ATP, which would require a large amount of energy, which couldn't be done without oxygen. This leaves open the question of how it has energy to move and where it comes from.

Rorschach - Part 7

- Siri complains of the interactions with other people and how they often feel fake as he knows behind the scenes it's all just game theory and power dynamics - even if the people don't consciously know it themselves
- Siri thinks about how he has created his own form of empathy - not the usual way of imaging how you would feel as someone else (because that would imply you felt things in a way similar to others) - but a different way. Through constant observation he's built up an almost algorithmic series of flow charts and decisions trees to do the proper things in social settings. It's like a manual re-engineering of empathy.

Rorschach - Part 8

- They go back and manage to catch a live "alien"
- Crew member Bates begins to think in the back of her mind that this plan of Sarasti is bad and that they shouldn't have gone in in such a hostile manner
- They learn that the aliens grow in a kind of stack and mature as they grow up the stack and new ones are added to the bottom. Once they pop off they become more spherical - like a ball with a bunch of arms on it that floats

around. They think it is like a worker bee for the alien planet. They don't behave like normal human animals. They have basic responses to basic stimuli - but given an environment merely do a perfect scan and then 'shutdown'.

- They learn that they store up energy slowly overtime and can then release it in slow bursts and be very fast. They are basically preloaded with chemical energy - ATP
- In talking with the newly replaced crew member - biologist Robert Cunningham - Siri and him discuss the nature of the crew members. He talks about how all of the crew members are 'enhanced' humans and a kind of resentment of Siri for being some kind of observer that reports back to earth and regular humans based on the ship's happenings (since Siri is so good at observing and processing and drawing inferences from situations). He also complains of how when you get to the end of life you basically have to choose between "fake heaven" like Siri's mom or getting enhancements

Rorschach - Part 9

- They notice after several days the aliens communicating in a way. A light and rapid tapping on the glass between each other that occurred once every day or two and only last a second or less. They were able to record and analyze the sound - but without any idea to base the content on it was impossible to decode it... A Chinese room problem.
- Sarasti determined they would expose their communication as follows. Inflict pain on one of them and then show them the means to escape that pain. However, only make it possible to escape that pain if the other communicates something to the other one. For example, the other being may need to push a button of a certain color and the other being only knows what the color is. That forces the being to communicate the color to the other in order to stop the pain. This means an observer can deduce the content of the communication - it must contain a reference to the color. Doing this repeatedly could be used to derive enough context to understand their language.
- The experiment begins by using pain to get them to do things, such as press a button or predict the next thing in a sequence. They were stunningly good at it - far better than humans. They learned extremely fast too and got to the point where they could easily generate the next prime number in a list of long numbers, which is something so hard humans haven't quite figured it out. The crew still debated whether this meant they were intelligent - or if they were just like a computer.
- They continue, but despite their efforts can't deduce how they think or how they work.
- They also discover that the aliens are 'deteriorating' since being taken off the planet - as if some of their essentially biochemistry was left behind on the planet.

- Further they find that there aren't any genes in the alien. Their entire biology is an emergent phenomenon (like floaters in Conway's game of life or how ants can form complex structures while only doing simple things themselves). Or how honeycomb is shaped the way it is not due to genes in a bee, but due to mathematics. They actually naturally chew in circles, but hexagons form in honeycomb because the act of multiple bees chewing circles next to each other without bumping forms a hexagon. The idea is thus that these aliens they captured aren't the 'bees' - they are the 'honeycomb' produced by the bees. The bees themselves (with the genes) are still on Rorschach.

Rorschach - Part 10

- They approach the planet more closely
- They still have yet to learn anything from the aliens - but think that they are only "aware of themselves" in certain moments such as when they experience pain, etc
- They discuss how the crew has been very enhanced in a way that their consciousness and mind often extends beyond their own bodies in a way

Rorschach - Part 11

- Robert Cunningham finds out that the aliens can detect and understand things through sensing electromagnetic waves. Further they can react incredibly fast - faster than a human can think. As such they can effectively read minds - and respond to it faster than a human good even process. Reading the mind is no different than reading the brain waves it gives off.
- It explains how they would appear invisible in the tunnels for example. Humans don't see everything, our brain just stitches it together. So a smart alien could move so that it is only present in between the snapshots the eyes take - rendering it blind to a single human. It was only caught when others were there because not all humans take snapshots at the same.
- This could also explain the other affects they could have on the human mind. Since they can also control EM waves they could influence the mind.
- He also thinks they are all connected together by the larger EM waves emitted by Rorschach. Kind of like a medium through which they can all talk.
- This suggests the aliens aboard are more of spies than prisoners.
- Siri's girlfriend Chelsea had died in a terrorist attack. She tried to call to say bye but Siri never answered as he couldn't think of the proper way to handle it despite searching for how to properly react.

Rorschach - Part 12

- Siri goes to observe Sarasti's quarters as that is part of his job on the ship
- Out of nowhere Sarasti attacks him
- There is various discussion about how humans possess consciousness and that it is this consciousness that slows us down and makes us less efficient.

For example humans can do amazing things unconscious - driving while sleepwalking. Even the best athletes and musicians let their instincts do the work - if they think about it too hard they often mess up. Another example is how a human can react so well "unconsciously" in a "live-or-die" situation. Perhaps the aliens are unconscious and that speeds them up.

- This also could suggest that it is an inherent weakness in humans.

Rorschach - Part 13

- They further discuss the value of evolving sentience
- Siri broods over Sarasti

Rorschach - Part 14

- Siri talks with others on the ship about why Sarasti would have done that
- He realizes they all had a feeling it was going to happen - as if to demonstrate some point to the rest of the crew and Earth - who Siri reports back to as an "observer"
- They keep stressing that he (Siri) isn't understanding something, but he isn't sure what.
- Finally while talking to James, he's told that given that he doesn't actually understand how anyone feels - just reacts to it using algorithmic thinking and piecing together observations - that his human consciousness doesn't really factor into his decisions - should make him perfectly capable of understanding the Scramblers because they are the same way. They react to information analytically - not through any type of consciousness
- They seem to suggest that a species such as the aliens would interpret consciousness as a type of virus that needlessly slows down beings and serves no true value. The fact that humans evolved consciousness was an anomaly
- This would naturally suggest that the aliens are hostile - how can you make peace with a non-conscious being
- There is an attack between Rorschach and Theseus

Rorschach - Part 15

- Rorschach and Theseus fight again. Rorschach manages to destroy most of Theseus. Sarasti dies. But it is revealed that the ship largely controlled Sarasti.
- It's basically a suicide attack by both - suggesting that both Rorschach and Theseus and the crew will all perish
- All Siri escapes in a pod - to slowly fall back to earth and relay what they have found

Charybdis - Part 1

- As Siri falls back to Earth he starts to understand what has happened.
- The more conscious one is, the less they are in control / have agency.

- Because Sarasti, the Vampire, and the Ship controlled basically everything we see that the book was really just a chess match between two unconscious entities - and the humans were merely pawns.
- Consciousness is an evolutionary dead-end that wastes energy and costs efficiency, so any aliens that we meet in the future will almost certainly be unconscious and thus far more formidable. We stand no chance. We already see it our day to day lives - the more sociopathic and less conscious of others you are the more likely you are to succeed (like most notable CEO's). Perhaps humanity has been slowly selecting for this overtime and we will end up optimal non-sentient beings