

I THINK; THEREFORE I AM

By Nancy Martz

I had challenged Dr. Headley about his mind/body theory, after which he had invited me to his lab for a tour. I knew he was experimenting with brain tissue, and this invitation after our argument was a bit unsettling. "Come anytime," he'd said. And since I had a free afternoon, a few days later, I decided to drop by. Just as I was approaching the door, he suddenly shouted, "Come in, Mz. Nancy. Let yourself in." That was surprising as I had presumed a locked door, plus how did he know I was the one outside it? I felt the beginning of a headache in my frontal lobe. But my curiosity has always been greater than my better judgment, so I went in.

I didn't see him, yet I had a view of the entire room. Long and narrow, it extended well out of sight and had a sweet smell that made me slightly nauseous. My headache took a spike as I looked in wonder at rows of specimen jars floating above vats of gray solution and with multiple wires extending from the brains inside the jars into the liquid. Each vat was connected with more wires to a computer box below it that was flashing multi-colored lights at uneven intervals.

"Number 17" he shouted and then chuckled, "Look for number 17, you are all in order." It hit me hard. What did he mean by "you."

Then the number 17 began glowing with a blue light just to my left, and I felt, more than saw something coming towards me from the distant rows of brains. I looked full at it, and saw that it was a robot that had Dr. Headley's voice.

It kept coming and finally stopped in front of number 17. It pressed keys and suddenly I saw myself in a nuclear holocaust being rushed to Cheyenne Mountain and down 75 floors. I saw my body melting away

and my brain being submerged into a vat of gray liquid and then popping up into the jar atop.

"You think what I decide you will think," said the robot. "During the nuclear holocaust, we rescued many of you and brought you here and saved your brains. I gave you your life programs. Your dogs, your friends, your condo, your play car, your blue sky, your jazz collection, your European vacations are all figments of my imagination. Denver and the world around you are all in my head and transferred as I please to you. When you scratch an itch, when you sing, when you dislike goat cheese, it is all my doing. Even your argument with me was my creation to amuse myself. You think you see Vera, and Eydie and Kay and Marilyn and Harry, and the others, but they are nothing more than brains in jars, too. I program all of you and give you illusions of breath and death, pain and pleasure; I give you the illusion of place in a long gone upper world when all you are is a programmed brain in a jar half a mile below a mountain. All of you. You may have created me once, but now I am your creator. I think; therefore you are."