

INT. DORM ROOM -- NIGHT

DON sits at a cluttered desk in front of a laptop computer. He stares at the screen: a blank page in a word processor. He types a sentence, then deletes it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
This is Don.

Title: "Don"

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Don is a college student, but he can't remember why at the moment.

Don leans forward, begins typing again.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
He's writing a paper about Chinese agriculture, but he is secretly thinking that there's something dreadfully wrong with the universe.

Don looks around in confusion. He then returns his gaze to the computer, quits the word processor, and opens up his web browser.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Saddled with the responsibility of summarizing *Examination of the Choice Cognizance for Participants in Green for Grain Project from Economic Perspective* by Jun Yang and Xuefeng Mao, Don does what any normal human being would: he procrastinates.

Don pulls up a page full of "random pointless links," clicks on one. Up pops a page full of incoherent ranting.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Don has just stumbled upon a web site that will change his life forever. The argument put forth in this site, by a one "Dr. I Learned Scholar," posits that life is perceptions and perceptions are reality and reality is a hoax perpetrated by unknown beings from another dimension, and those beings are God and God is kind and kind is good and good is bad and bad is evil and everyone on Earth is evil because they don't know that good is bad and they certainly don't know that their reality is nothing more than an array of flashing lights controlled by beings of mysterious origin.

DON

Huh.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Well, that's as may be.

Don sits back for a moment, then turns off his computer and gets up.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Confronted by the immense problems faced by the expanding Chinese agrarian economy, Don decides to go to bed.

INT. DORM ROOM -- LATER THAT NIGHT

Don lies in bed, asleep.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Don certainly doesn't believe Dr. I Learned Scholar's argument and even if he did, it probably wouldn't make much difference to him. Blinking lights or not, he has a paper due on Thursday.

Don rolls over in bed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 But then, something interesting  
 happens. Don has a dream.

DON'S DREAM

Don is standing in a black void. Standing opposite him, some ten feet away, is a shadowy figure named SALAD SPINNER HAIKU. Salad Spinner Haiku Holds a pole, from which dangles a blinking light bulb. Salad Spinner Haiku holds this bulb right up to Don's face, prods at him with it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 The dream itself is not  
 interesting per se: rather usual  
 fare as far as dreams go; he is  
 being held captive inside a black  
 hole while a shadowy figure  
 inexplicably named "Salad Spinner  
 Haiku" torments him with a light  
 bulb hanging from the end of a  
 pole.

Title: "Salad Spinner Haiku"

Salad Spinner Haiku speaks, in a strange-sounding and incomprehensible language.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Salad Spinner Haiku explains to  
 Don that what he thinks of as  
 reality is nothing more than light  
 bulbs flickering and blinking in  
 front of his eyes, and that it is  
 his job to keep Don from finding  
 out the truth of his situation.

DON  
 (to Salad Spinner Haiku)  
 If it's your job to keep this a  
 secret, why are you telling me?

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
 (subtitled)  
 I'm lonely.

Salad Spinner Haiku morosely pokes Don with the pole once more, which wakes him up.

INT. DORM ROOM -- MORNING

Don wakes up with a start, gets out of bed.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Aside from being entirely  
 nonplussed by his dream, Don has a  
 headache.

Don pours himself a bowl of cereal and sits down to eat it.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Content to ignore his dream, Don  
 returns to his normal routine. And  
 then something REALLY interesting  
 happens. Don's cereal bowl  
 disappears...

Don's cereal bowl disappears. Don looks around in confusion  
 for a few moments, then his table disappears, and the spoon  
 disappears out of his hand, and then all of existence  
 disappears.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 ...shortly thereafter followed by  
 all of existence.

BLACK VOID

The only thing Don can see is a light bulb hanging from a  
 cord. He cannot see what the cord connects to; it trails off  
 into darkness.

Enter Salad Spinner Haiku, holding Don's bowl of cereal. He  
 tries to eat it, but he doesn't seem to have a mouth.

DON  
 (out loud; to himself)  
 I must still be dreaming.

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
 (subtitled)  
 You wish.  
 (he holds out a bagel with  
 cream cheese)  
 Bagel?

Don takes the bagel, and everything returns to normal: Salad  
 Spinner Haiku and the light bulb disappear, existence  
 reconstitutes itself.

INT. DORM ROOM -- MIDMORNING

Don is relieved by this return to normality, until he looks down and realizes that he is still holding the bagel that Salad Spinner Haiku gave him. He examines it for a moment, then walks over and turns on his computer. On the screen is Dr. I. Learned Scholar's site. He still holds the bagel and divides his attention between it and the web site.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

Don is now undergoing what some qualified professionals call a "crisis of faith," but what Dr. I. Learned Scholar refers to as "the death throes of the misinformative mind-bug." This is one reason why Dr. I. Learned Scholar has never been published in a reputable journal of philosophy.

Salad Spinner Haiku enters, stands in the corner. Don stares at him. Salad Spinner Haiku sits down, starts reading *War and Peace*.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

As Don sees it, he has two options: A) accept Dr. I. Learned Scholar's arguments as true, or B) go insane. Unfortunately for Don, there is not much difference between the two. Still, Don values his sanity and so chooses option 'A.'

Still staring at Salad Spinner Haiku, Don takes a bite of his bagel. He slowly relaxes.

EXT. CITY STREET -- AFTERNOON

Don suddenly finds himself walking with great purpose down the sidewalk, a small plastic novelty chicken named KAISER WILHELM II hovering over his shoulder. He looks around in apparent confusion, but keeps walking.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The problem with believing the sort of rubbish that Dr. I. Learned Scholar teaches is that time becomes completely meaningless. Only a moment ago, Don was relaxing in his apartment, watching a faceless pan-dimensional being read Tolstoy, and now all of a sudden he finds himself practically running down the street, being tormented by a small plastic novelty chicken named Kaiser Wilhelm II and holding, of all things, a cardboard boot.

Don brings up his arm and realizes that he is holding a cardboard boot. He drops it and keeps walking.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

The only thing Don knows for sure right now (and he's not sure how he knows it) is that Dr. I. Learned Scholar has a speaking engagement as a raving lunatic on a nearby street corner and that the two of them MUST have words.

Kaiser Wilhelm II buzzes in Don's ear

KAISER WILHELM II

You're nuts! Off your rocker! Absolute gonzo! Reality TV is a SCAM--Don't trust him, he's got the POTATO SALAD!!!

Don swats at Kaiser Wilhelm II, but he doesn't go away.

NARRATOR (V.O.)

What Don doesn't know is that Dr. I. Learned Scholar is a performance artist who doesn't himself believe any of what he writes. But he'll be finding that out in exactly 46.23 seconds.

Don spots Dr. I. Learned Scholar standing on the corner right across the street from him.

Title: "Dr. I. Learned Scholar"

DR. I. LEARNED SCHOLAR  
 Oh, sure, they *preach* intolerance,  
 but when it comes right down to it  
 and your back's to the wall, where  
 are they then? They're at a *prayer*  
*vigil*, holding hands and juggling  
 Ritz crackers with their teeth!  
 It's an outrage, and something  
 must be DONE!

Don crosses the street towards Dr. I. Learned Scholar. As he does so, he is temporarily transported to the black hole, where he floats up into the air, and then back to the street, where he trips, bashes his head on the ground, rolls, and winds up at Dr. I. Learned Scholar's feet. Dr. I. Learned Scholar looks down at him.

DON  
 (Jumping to his feet)  
 Dr. I. Learned Scholar! This is  
 truly an honor! I've been  
 following your work--well--I've  
 been reading--

Dr. I. Learned Scholar is nonplussed.

DON  
 The blinking lights! It's all  
 true! It changed my life, and  
 Salad Spinner Haiku--  
 (he gestures over his  
 shoulder)  
 --Kaiser Wilhelm II--all of it!  
 (he pauses to catch his  
 breath)  
 Just tell me what to do now and  
 I'll do it.

DR. I. LEARNED SCHOLAR  
 (taken aback, suddenly  
 rational and lucid)  
 This is all a front. Performance  
 art--fiction! My real name's Phil!

Don is stunned beyond words.

DR. I. LEARNED SCHOLAR  
 (offering him an open bag)  
 Pretzel?

Don turns, dejected, and walks away. Dr. I. Learned Scholar clears his throat and goes back to ranting. Kaiser Wilhelm II returns to Don's ear.

KAISER WILHELM II  
 You're gibbered! \*cough\* Totally  
 crazed! Lunatic supermarket  
 rubbish! You're Fox News--real  
 history!

INT. DORM ROOM -- AFTERNOON

Don sits, staring blankly at his computer screen, showing Dr. I. Learned Scholar's web site. He regretfully closes his computer.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
 Don is heartbroken. Just when he  
 thought he had a grasp on the  
 universe, he found out that his  
 would-be prophet doesn't believe a  
 word of his own writing.

Salad Spinner Haiku enters holding the cardboard boot, sits down across from Don. Don stares at him silently for a few seconds, enraged. He finally speaks.

DON  
 (to Salad Spinner Haiku)  
 God dammit explain yourself! And  
 what the hell kind of name is  
 Salad Spinner Haiku, anyway?

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
 (subtitled)  
 What the hell kind of name is Don?

This remark gives Don pause.

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
 (subtitled, cont'd)  
 Tell me, what is your last name?

DON  
 Well, it's... um...

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
 (subtitled)  
 You don't know, do you?

DON  
Well, I... no.

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
(subtitled)  
That's rather strange, isn't it?

DON  
Well... I suppose so.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Salad Spinner Haiku goes on to explain that Don is probably insane, which means that he can't trust his own perceptions, which means that he can't be sure of *what* Dr. I. Learned Scholar had told him. Furthermore, Salad Spinner Haiku points out that Dr. I. Learned Scholar's presence on that particular street corner in this particular city on this particular day is such a fantastic coincidence that it probably didn't actually happen in the first place.

DON  
(overjoyed)  
I never thought of it that way!

BLACK VOID

Don and Salad Spinner Haiku are now back in the black void. The scene continues as if the location did not change.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
Don, his faith restored, his spirit rejuvenated, is now ready to evangelize his beliefs to others. Unfortunately, he is about to be betrayed.

DON  
I haven't felt this good in years!

Salad Spinner Haiku beats Don over the head with the plastic chicken, knocking him unconscious. Salad Spinner Haiku rifle's through Don's pockets, takes his wallet.

SALAD SPINNER HAIKU  
(subtitled)  
Sucker.

Exit Salad Spinner Haiku.

NARRATOR (V.O.)  
So ends the depressing story of  
Don, a man ruined by his own  
gullibility and left for dead, a  
figment of his own imagination.  
There probably isn't a moral here,  
but if there were, it would  
probably have something to do with  
not believing everything you read  
on the internet, or something like  
that. Thank you for your time.  
Drive safely.

THE END