



## Afterlife Crisis

**Randal Graham**

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In Randal Graham's raucous, wry, and philosophical sequel to *Beforelife*, the divine Author's intrepid hero, Rhinnick Feynman, returns, determined as ever to prove his centrality to the story of all.

Those who meet their ends on Earth are pulled from the river Styx and welcomed into immortality, set in a sprawling metropolis called Detroit. They exist among personalities like church/cult leader Norm Stradamus, a number of Napoleons, hotel bellboy William Shakespeare, a crispy but reconstituted medium, and first resident Abe L.

Also in Detroit: rumors of life before the Styx are considered a delusion. But Feynman, who otherwise could be mistaken for a rather average fellow, recalls his beforelife, an error for which he's been relegated to hospice care several times before—not that anyone seems to remember that. Charged by Abe with a mission to keep Detroit safe, Feynman carries a loyal hamster in his pocket, refers to lauded genius Isaac Newton as an "arithmetic poop," and becomes entangled in multiple engagements by accident. Detroit's history shifts around him, but only he seems to notice. He is slow to see what harm there could be in Isaac toying with reality at a quantum level.

Feynman's narration—which is indelicate, touched by good-humored egomania, and prone to malapropisms—smothers its entranced, sometimes captive, readership in its loquacious embrace. Beyond his musings lies a rich metaphysical and scientific milieu, in which theories of multiple worlds, the nature of existence, and the impermanence of truth combine. As his quest continues, Feynman encounters decamillennials on ice, complications with television, and a plot to reprogram the past; he comes to the realization that only one empowered by the Author can save Detroit.

Filled with wordplay to die for, Randal Graham's latest dizzying, irresistible life-after-death satire tackles perennial existential questions with humor and hunger.

MICHELLE ANNE SCHINGLER (July / August 2020)

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