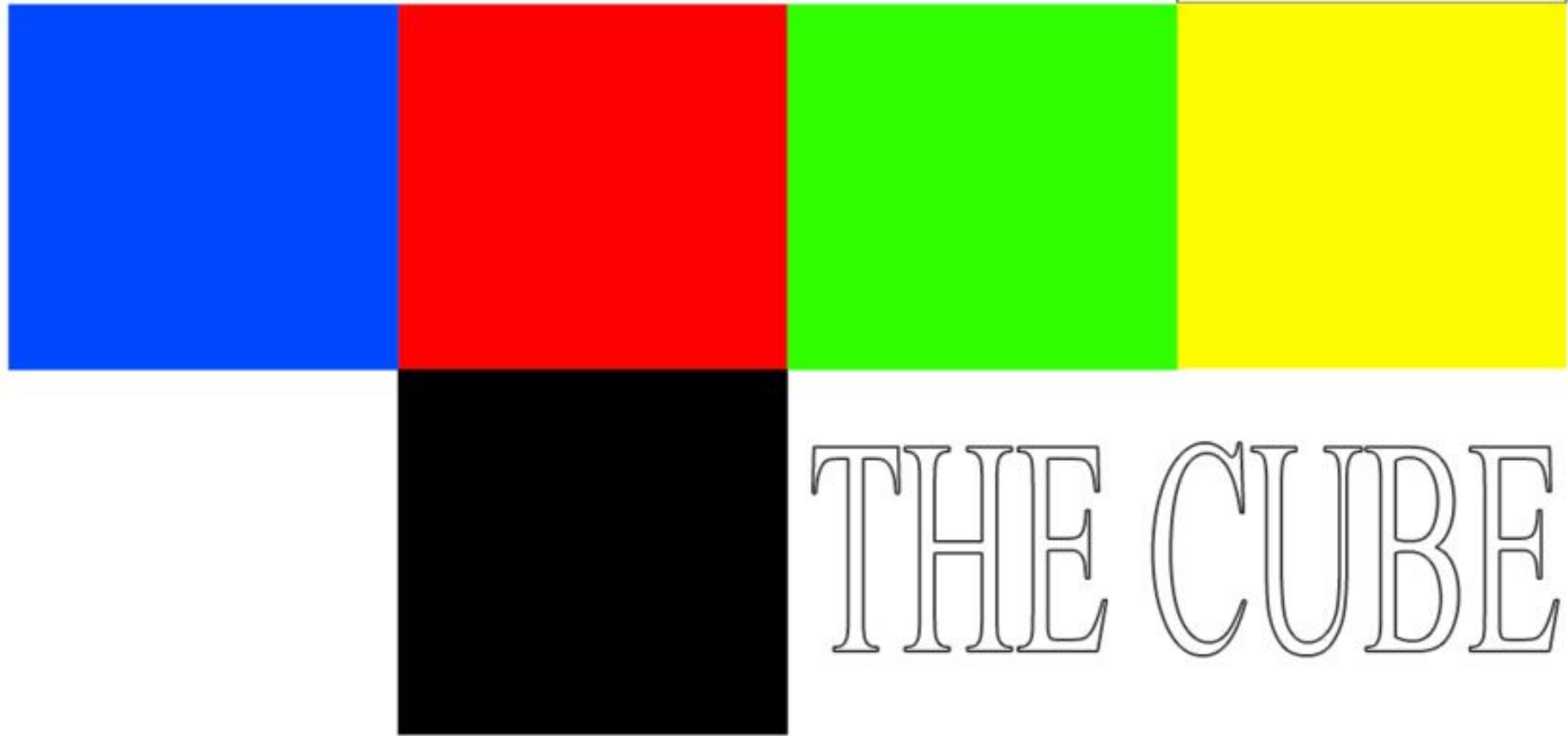


SIMONE M. NAVARRA



THE CUBE

To my father and my mother

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# **THE CUBE**

## **DIGITAL SHORT STORY DISTRIBUTED OVER THE INTERNET**

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Translation by Denis Bonner

Cover image of the author

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### **HELP ME OUT!**

# INTRODUCTION

A cube surrounded by empty space. A microcosm populated by five men without the added presence of anything else but the distant stars.

Still, the idea represented in these few pages are far more complex than what might appear at a first glance. Even while I'm writing this introduction, I find myself reflecting on what happens in my story and what *might* happen in the infinite similar stories that belong to our everyday life.

Is it really possible for all of us to reach the white side, or are we stuck on the black one, living on the false assumptions that the way we see the world is how it effectively is? Are our dreams and desires really pushing us towards the right

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direction, or is our search for what *belongs to us* a desperate rush towards our own end?

I wish I could give an answer to this. Still, I believed in the idea behind my short story at the time I wrote it, in 1993, and I still believe it now: if we weren't so afraid to share what we *are* (much more than what we *own*) maybe we could see that the end would result in a gain for us all, and that the answers we are looking for are just a few steps away.

Before leaving you to this short reading, I'd like to remind you to look at the last page for some more informations about my activity as a writer and to thank you for the time you are dedicating to my work.

***Simone M. Navarra***

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# I

The Cube was constructed with six sides of different colours: the blue side was opposite the green and the yellow was opposite the red, while the white side was opposite to the black. On each face of the Cube, except for the white one, there was a man dressed in overalls of the same colour as the side of the Cube on which he lived.

The men's clothing was drawn to the side of the matching colour, apart from the white surface which drew all colours to itself. For this reason each man could only walk on the side of his own colour in addition to the white side. The man on

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the black face was the exception since he would have to cross a surface which would not hold him if he wanted to reach the white side.

The other men considered the man in black overalls inferior because he could never reach the white side of the Cube, and thus could not participate in their meetings (which were always on the white face) and so they never kept him up with their decisions. But the man in black overalls was happy just the same, because his side was enough for him and also because, essentially, from the noises and the voices he managed to pick up from his solitary position he had guessed that those long and tedious meetings in which the other inhabitants of the Cube participated were nothing but an excuse for them to quarrel and wrangle.

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**TAKE A LOOK AT MY PICTURE GALLERIES!**



## II

The man in the black overalls (or “Black” as the others called him) was lounging on his side of the Cube, his arms clasped behind his head as he studied the sky. All space above him glittered with little specks of a strange opalescent colour, in a way similar to yellow but far, far brighter. The man spent a good part of his day admiring that marvellous spectacle (not that he would have had anything better to do, in any case), trying to imagine what might be the use of such a great number of such microscopic lights that, although he had tried over and over again jumping

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and stretching up with all his strength (always when the other men couldn't see him, of course), were too high up for him to reach.

“Perhaps today I will make it,” he thought, “perhaps while I was asleep I grew enough to manage at least to touch one of them.”

Black got to his feet, looking upwards, aware that most probably his attempt would end in another failure but at the same time with hope in his heart. After choosing which of the lights he would try to seize, he bent his knees and jumped with all the strength he had, at the same time stretching out his right arm so much that his shoulder joint cracked: his finger appeared to brush the luminous little globe which seemed to mock his futile attempts, but a moment later the man in black fell back to the ground, defeated yet again.

“Ha, ha, ha!” he heard laughter behind him.

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**LET'S TALK ABOUT IT!**

He turned and saw it was the man in the yellow overalls who was laughing. (“Yellow”, to be precise: the inhabitants of the Cube didn’t have much imagination when it came to names).

“Do you really believe you can touch the stars with your hand?” Yellow asked scornfully, obviously very amused by the display that Black had put on.

Black bit his lip: the man in the yellow overalls had seen him, and now he would make fun of him in front of the others.

“I only wanted to try to see them from closer up!” he explained, moving nearer to the yellow face of the Cube. “You... you can tell me what they are made of?”

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Now the two men were close to each other, and their bodies formed a right angle.

“You can see much better from the white side,” replied Yellow smiling maliciously, “why don’t you come and look too?”

Before Black had time to respond the man in yellow turned away and went off chuckling to himself in the direction of the white side.

“Excuse me,” he addressed the man in the black overall, “but the others are waiting for me.”

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### III

Black was in one of the corners of his side of the Cube, to be precise the one formed by the red and the blue sides, sprawled on his stomach with his head resting on the outside and his left arm dangling in the emptiness. Right now the others were on the white side, and this was the best place to listen in to their conversation.

“Enough of your stupid arguments!”

He recognised the voice of Red: the other men were once more fighting over

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who should be declared the owner of the white side of the Cube. Black knew already that the discussion would go on for hours without reaching any conclusion, so he moved slowly back towards the centre of his surface, and after a few minutes, fell asleep.

He was awoken by a scream of pain. Intrigued and at the same time frightened, the man in black overalls moved across to the edge of his side which was joined to the green side. There wasn't anything to be seen from there so he hurried over to the yellow side: from here he could see Blue who, standing right on the edge of the white side was gesticulating furiously, confronting one of the other men. Black couldn't see who it was.

“That will teach you to talk to me like that!” Blue shouted in the direction of whoever it was he was talking to.

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Suddenly something happened that Black could never have imagined: Yellow attacked the man in blue overalls and, seizing him firmly by both arms, he threw himself and the other man onto the yellow side. The man in black saw that the man in yellow overalls had a bloody nose.

“Don’t let me go!” the man in blue begged his assailant.

“Sorry,” Yellow sneered cruelly, “but I am really curious to see what will happen.”

With the echo of those words still in his ears, the man in black saw Yellow shove Blue away, sending him tumbling towards the green side: initially it seemed that nothing was going to happen, but some instants later the man in blue came off the yellow side of the Cube and, as if grabbed by an invisible hand, began to fall with ever increasing speed in the direction of the stars. Black thought to see him

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go past those little specks of light any moment, but for all that he waited, the distance that separated the man from the stars became no smaller, and after some seconds the silhouette of the man in blue overalls was lost in that mass of small but intense lights; suddenly he understood that the stars were much further from the Cube than he had thought, and decidedly larger. He had the sensation that his heart was breaking apart: the only dream that he had cultivated in his entire life stood revealed as a simple childish fantasy; certainly, not having any other object with which he could compare the distance he could not have known that the stars were in reality so far away, but nonetheless he felt very foolish.

His thoughts were cut short by the scream of terror of Red who, pushed by the man in green who had been the first to recover from his astonishment, flew off into the void in the opposite direction from Blue to share, however, the same fate.

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His cries of terror grew ever weaker until he was lost in that blackness that encloses the lights of the stars.

“That was exactly what I was waiting for,” exulted Green turning to the man in yellow, “soon there will be no one to oppose me!”

“We’ll see about that!” shouted Yellow in reply, turning rapidly to the white side.

Much as he strained, moving from one edge to the other of his side, Black could not see anything: evidently the two men were fighting right in the middle of the white side. He asked himself which of the two would win, conscious that he was unable to do anything to stop them.

After some seconds, leaning towards the blue side, Black saw the two men

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balanced on the edge of the surface, with Green kneeling on the man in yellow, trying to strangle him. Yellow attempted to tumble Green onto the blue side of the Cube, turning with all his strength to his right, but overestimating his strength and they both rolled onto the blue square. Black had hardly the time to move to the extremity of his side as the two entangled bodies sped in his direction before disappearing into the obscurity.

The man in black addressed an anguished sigh to the stars: he alone remained.

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## IV

Black found himself flat on his back on the ground with his eyes turned to the stars, meditating on his unfortunate condition. Only a few hours had gone by since the other men had fallen from the Cube, but it seemed that years might have passed. The man in the black overalls asked himself what might have been the fate of Yellow and the others once they had been flung to the stars: perhaps they had overshot them, continuing to fall towards infinity, or perhaps they had slowed their fall until they landed gently on those shining surfaces.

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The answer to his questions was dangerously close: a few metres from him the narrow space of the black surface of the Cube ended in emptiness, which seemed ready to snatch him up with its invisible hands and drag him inexorably away. The same stars seemed to tempt him, taunting him with their brightness, with their mystery.

“If I am able to see them from this distance,” he thought, “who knows how big they might be in reality.”

While he was engrossed in these reflections, Black realised that he could distinguish some tiny points of colour among the stars.

“They are getting closer!” He exclaimed, his curiosity aroused, and stood up.

The little points of colour gradually became bigger and more distinct until the man with the black overalls could see them clearly: they were the overalls of the

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other men.

The four coloured figures came ever closer to the Cube, and then landed gently on the sides of their respective colours.

The man in black contemplated the four sets of clothing for some moments, now deprived of the life that had animated them, and suddenly he was struck by an idea: lying on the ground and stretching out as far as possible on the face of the Cube towards the green side, he managed to grab the overall that was on that side and to drag it towards him. In reality it was a notion he had had in mind for a quite some time, but he had not proposed it to the other men for fear that they would make fun of him without taking any notice of it.

After he had decided what to do, Black sat with legs crossed and, holding the green overalls between his knees to prevent it from flying away, ripped off the left

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sleeve and substituted it for the arm of his overalls. As he has expected, the rubbery fabric of his clothing joined perfectly with that of the green suit, forming a new seam: now his clothing had a sleeve of another colour.

He repeated the same operation with the three other coloured overalls, replacing the right sleeve of his clothing with that of the yellow overalls, the right leg with that of the blue overalls and lastly the left leg with that of the red clothing. In brief Black found himself wearing clothing formed of five different colours, and no one could have said which had been the original colour.

“And now let’s see if it works,” he said determinedly, moving towards one of the four extremities of his side, that which was joined to the red surface.

It was with his heart in his mouth that he stretched his right leg towards the outside of the Cube. He was afraid, but he did it without hesitation: so if things

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went badly and he fell off the Cube as had happened to the others, at least he would have an answer to his questions.

“Cold comfort,” he reflected, moving his body forward.

He didn’t feel that he had moved, it seemed to him that it was the Cube itself that had rotated to go with his movement; in any case, now his overalls allowed him to move freely to any side of the Cube.

Black moved rapidly towards the upper extremity of the red side and, with a head that spun with emotion, he finally saw it: the white side of the Cube shining with its own light, emitting a bright radiance across space.

Black immersed himself in that light, laughing with joy: to look out at the stars no longer hurt him, because now he had one all to himself.

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# V

That day in the sky there was another star that shone more brightly than the others.

The man with the multicoloured overalls wished it good luck.

THE END

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Before leaving you, I wish to thank you once again for the time you spent reading these pages.

*Simone M. Navarra*

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