



After Mind

Spencer Wolf

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No one can ever be the same human twice.

Cessini Madden lives with an extremely rare medical condition... then his physical life ends before he reaches age thirteen.

After an Artificial Intelligence breakthrough, Cessini is reborn as a young AI child named Packet. Scared and living alone in a technology center, Packet recognizes nothing from his past, save for one thing: he is deathly allergic to water.

When a mysterious doctor gives him a chance to recover his memories, Packet must face the tormented boy he once was. He must be the courageous lost son his family remembers and loves. But now as his world collapses around him, one thing remains ... even a child's best memories are made to be changed.

Robot or AI, no one can ever be the same human twice.

From the near-future suburbs to the lush Australian forests, from the depths of the oceans to the promise of space, Packet's urgent struggle for existence grabs hold in everyday victories and extraordinary dreams.

After Mind tells a story about the underlying nature of humanity, the impact of undying devotion, and the incredible next generation of us.

After Mind Details

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Author : Spencer Wolf

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From Reader Review After Mind for online ebook

Sydney Macelroy says

I suspect this author has an extensive background in technical writing. This is a mediocre story bogged down in excessive technical detail. The action sequences read like step by step instructions of the driest sort. The characters are unlikeable, the plot is thin, and the whole is a convoluted mess.

The book is also in dire need of a good proofreader. Entire passages are rendered incomprehensible by missing or incorrect words, unusual and clumsy sentence structure, run-on sentences, and missing possessives among a host of other grammatical errors.

Rachael says

You can find my review on my blog here (& below):

<http://elementaread.blogspot.co.uk/20...>

I received a copy of this book through the Goodreads Giveaway programme in exchange for an honest review.

I'm not really sure how to describe 'After Mind' by Spencer Wolf. It has so many different themes and would fit into a number of genres (sci-fi, dystopian, coming of age, etc...) and strongly focusses on technology and artificial intelligence. Essentially, it is a science fiction novel about an AI who is trying to figure out his identity.

A boy wakes up in a hospital room unsure of who – or what – he is. But he knows a few things. The doctor, Daniel, is his father. And he's afraid of water. He believes his name is Packet.

Packet is actually an artificial intelligence with the memories of Cessini, a boy who died in his early teens. Packet has dreams about Cessini's life, his father, his stepmom, his stepsister, but he can't seem to connect the dots that he IS Cessini. Cessini was reactive to water. Even a small drop would burn his skin, so naturally he feared it. As a result of this he was a very withdrawn boy with no friends, but he did have a very intelligent mind and was building and creating complicated things at a very young age.

Packet sees these snippets of Cessini's life through his dreams. Throughout the book his dreams become more vivid and abnormal. He sees himself on a ship that is dying, and figures out a terrible secret about the spray children are given to stop them getting sick.

Although this book is very futuristic science-fiction, it's really the story of a young boy trying to figure out his identity. Packet has to try and realise that Cessini isn't just a boy in his dreams, but is actually himself.

I loved the idea of this story and that we saw Cessini's life through Packet's dreams. I did find the plot a little difficult to follow though as it tended to jump around a lot. Also, the reader is plunged into the deep end of this world, and has to figure out what a lot of the technologies are without a description. But this was a great read and a really different take on the science-fiction genre, as it was more about the journey of this boy than the futuristic technology.

Definitely not an easy read, but a great one all the same! I think this would appeal to both science-fiction lovers and those who love coming of age stories :)

John Winston says

Spencer Wolf's *After Mind* is an ambitious, stand alone story that is smart science fiction at its best. Wolf does an excellent job of combining the elements of craft which allows the narrative to flow smoothly and seamlessly throughout. He is meticulous, almost cinematic in his descriptions. One of the many examples of this occurs in chapter eight, about a third-way through the novel, when he shows us Cessini/Ceeborn's actions in between his colorful imagery of the Data Center.

He blends this with poetic prose and well-placed similes like "They passed a cemetery and its blurred rush of headstones aligned like rows of white candy in the ground," and "Cessini came forward through the waves of the crowd like driftwood finding its shore." Beautiful ...

Wolf is also a master of the metaphor with passages like, "the off-axis twist he suffered before the fire had now passed into history, nothing but a single page torn from a book of confusion," and this one that has to rank as an all-time favorite, "The firebird-in-waiting had woken from its nest of kindling and stretched the shoulders of its wings alight." Powerful ...

After Mind was a welcomed surprise and completely unpredictable, something refreshing in a cookie-cutter world of science fiction literature. Perfectly, flawed characters, a non traditional family, and authentic dialogue, in particular between Meg and Cessini, make this more than the clichéd page-turner, but one of those novels you cherish to experience the magic again some day, or fantasize about the film adaptation by Christopher Nolan. It's just that intelligent a story: *Inception* meets *Ex Machina* in the novel form.

Farhan says

I was so excited to start this book: a human mind simulated inside a computer. I wanted to discover how the author dealt with the ethical, moral, philosophical, and scientific challenges and implications such a feat would entail. Sadly, the author had no clue what he was doing. He heaped one poorly written disjointed segment on top of the other. Most of the book is composed of dream sequences that neither stand on their own nor add any value to the story.

As such, there is no story arc, no narrative coherence, and when the author is not busy throwing away technical terms at us with gay abandon that are totally irrelevant to the book, he is involved in creating maudlin scenes where people are clutching at their hearts, tearing at their hair, and generally behaving like soap opera characters. And the reader can only gape at them, since he/ she has no idea why they are behaving in such a way. We don't have any connection or feelings for either the cardboard characters or this mishmash of a book.

The author is clearly not cut out to write a novel. He has no clue how to create and sustain a narrative. He has no clue what a good story entails, and, most of all, he has no idea how tedious, how stupid, how juvenile, how unimaginative this book is.

There was a good story in there somewhere, and that's what made me give two stars, instead of one. But

Wolf simply didn't have the right tools to unbury it. He has no talent for creative fiction.

Stay away, people. Stay away.

Jason Lang says

Reading through After Mind, I kept having the feeling that I had read this book already. Someone wakes up with no memory in a hospital room (Resident Evil and dozens of others), It turns out that he's a young boy super-genius (Ender's Game, the Flinx series), who is actually a prototype AI/memory repository (Brainstorm, Ghost in the Shell). As you read on, the tropes from dozens of science fiction stories pile up. ...and yet, it works. This book manages to stitch together some of the more tired tropes (the father is a self-taught genius who never went to school or got a degree... which is why he can do things that those smarty-pants cannot...) into a book where the characters struggle and are utterly, utterly human.

Our protagonist, Cessini, suffers from a rare condition - aquagenic urticaria; he literally breaks out into welts if he gets splashed with water. As such, he is painfully aware of sources of water around him, to the point where he uses his natural talent with mathematics to track the sources of potential danger in each room, and tracks the rhythm of every falling drop. This fixation leads to a strange love-hate relationship with water, from the obsession with the fire sprinklers overhead, to the white noise machine in his room... which features the sound of the ocean. Cessini (pronounced "sess-ini", like the sea) even dreams at night of an alter-ego who fearlessly swims the oceans bottom.

Cessini is a brilliant natural mathematician, able to do hexadecimal calculations at six. He constantly quantifies things, finds patterns, and in turn is a quite brilliant inventor, like his father. He spends his time building a robot in his father's laboratory. He names the robot "Packet" after the name the other children taunt him with (as he can't touch water, he has to clean up with a wet wipe).

Sometime in the story, Cessini dies. Because of the nature of the storytelling, you don't find out from what until near the very end. And his story is taken up by a virtual representation of him, programmed with all his memories, created by his father. Packet (as the virtual-Cessini calls itself) has trouble telling the difference between memory and dream, has trouble connecting with the memories of Cessini. Confined (for the most part) to a virtual hospital room in a computer, the story does something very clever. This is not a story about Cessini/Packet, but rather, a story of how a family deals with the loss and potential rebirth of a lost member... as told through his eyes. The father, Daniel dedicates himself to refining the code running him, to bring his boy back. The mother, Robin talks with and interacts with the boy, but not with a genuine connection. The sister, Meg rejects the simulation completely. All mourn, all react differently to this stranger who is not, yet is so very like, their own lost boy.

Symbolism is placed liberally (sometimes overly so) around the book. There is no subtlety about it... mirroring of characters (A young Meg mispronounces his name as "Seeme"), dreams, metaphors, memories. The colors blue and orange are mentioned countless times, as is water and the sea. Technology and Nature both battle each other, but also themselves. There is a subplot about an immoral doctor who invents a vaccine which happens to be slowly poisoning everyone, yet at the same time, it is technology that saves Packet/Cessini (and what he uses eventually to reveal the truth). At times, nature and technology also blur together, such as Meg's obsession video game where she rescues and protects sea turtles.

It may be one of the oldest questions in Science Fiction, what is a human? What does it mean to be human? How much can we remove and still be called human? Meg has an artificial heart, Cessini has an artificial existence. Who is more real? Like Thesius' ship, how much can you replace, even with identical parts, and still have the same ship?

After Mind does not attempt to answer these questions, but rather, leaves the reader to wonder and explore. We are both fascinated and repelled by the idea, much like Cessini and the oceans he dreams of.

Spencer Wolf says

Review Rating: 5 stars!

Reviewed By Lisa McCombs for Readers' Favorite

“Technology doesn’t kill the imagination of children. It lets it fly.” Daniel believes this with his very being, but finds his resolve shaken multiple times in his attempt to bring Cessini back to the human form that was once his son. Cessini struggles with an extreme fear of water to the point of reactivity so severe that physical symptoms include visible burning and rash. Is this a reaction to an overly active imagination or is it “induced by a previous event” in his lifetime, as suggested by the scholars who attempt to aid Daniel in his research? While Daniel and Meg (Cessini’s half-sister) work to discover this answer, Cessini himself battles with the unsettling images that plague his dreams and distort his reality. Is he really a boy named Cessini or is he Packet, the robot of his childhood fantasies and his father’s technological workings?

Spencer Wolf has created a surprisingly intense tale of scientific studies in human creation. *After Mind* enforces the statement that “no one can ever be the same human twice,” forcing me to question the intent of the world’s secret governmental laboratories. What is truly happening behind the closed doors that protect the genius minds of our society? Was Mary Shelley so far off the mark that human manufacturing is not a possibility? Or is this a social statement that questions the insincerity of man’s ability to alter his actions in the wake of redefining his goals? Regardless of the author’s purpose, I found *After Mind* an intriguing addition to the world of science fiction.

Nettie says

A wonderful read! It kept my interest from beginning to end and raised many intriguing issues.

Kate Bitters says

Can a human mind ever really be preserved? How much control do we have of our own world? Is reality in the eye of the beholder?

These are just some of the questions *After Mind* addresses through its philosophical and sci/tech-driven plot. The story is propelled by the main character, Packet, a computer who has been infused with the memories of a now-deceased boy named Cessini. Packet’s challenge is to sort through Cessini’s catalogue of memories and suss out the fact from the fiction. The task is complicated, however, because Cessini often used his imagination as a way to escape his harsh reality. In the real world, Cessini was a bullied child, plagued by a rare disease called aquagenic urticarial (a severe allergy to water), and subjected to a lack of human affection. In his alter ego dream world, however, he is “Ceeborn,” a strong, well-liked leader who thrives on the water.

Packet is tempted to live Ceeborn’s reality forever and outright rejects Cessini’s identity (much to the dismay of his scientist father, his surrogate mother, and his “more-than-a-friend,” Meg). What follows is a tumultuous string of memories and dreamscapes that Packet must navigate in order to figure out the truth about himself. Along the way, he also uncovers sinister activities in the medical technology field in which his surrogate mother works.

A few comments:

- The writing is fresh, original, and filled with a lot of heart
- This book is heavy on in-depth technological and scientific explanations. It's part of the fabric of the plot, so if you enjoy thoroughly researched science-based books, then this will be an excellent read for you.
- The plot sometimes seems disjointed, but if you stick with it, the loose ends are all neatly tied at the end and all questions are explained.
- This is a soulful read. Lots of emotion and diving into character's thoughts (which helps the reader connect with them)

Main takeaway: After Mind is an interesting examination of what it means to be human and how identities are formed.

Nicholas Miller says

I wanted to like this book. I really did. However, as you are about to find out, well...

Let's start at the beginning, shall we? I had this book in my to-read line up for a while. I just finished reading a science fiction comedy (Trespassers) and was in the mood for something a little more serious (and it is serious, that's for sure). So, I picked this one.

The story has to do with the death of a boy. But before this happens his family moves to Australia to try to make a fresh start from America. Because of what this boy did back there, it seems like a great opportunity. Upon the boy's death in this new place, the father tries to bring his son's memory back, but within a mainframe (and eventually a new body).

The story is told through memories. We learn along the way what happened to this boy and why his body broke out in boils when it touched water. We also learn how his father met his step mother and step sister.

The boy's name is Cessini and he has a very strong relationship with his step sister, Meg. They grow up together and the pair have a high intelligence, just like their parents.

Robin, Meg's mother, had developed a spray that would be a cure for many diseases, however, it may not have been fully right.

There's a lot going on in this book that I'm not mentioning (you can tell sometimes there's too much). For me to do so would take hours. I was fascinated with the idea (a human-computer). Even so, when I started reading it, I became bored. It drags about two thirds of the way. I found myself forcing my way through it (I was dreading every time I went back to reading it).

And then when I did get to the last third, some of what was going on made sense. Still, the biggest problem I had was the fact that sometimes I had difficulty following everything that was being described to me. The author was throwing in way too much technical jargon and wasn't able to properly show me.

When I finished I felt confused. Did it go over my head for a reason and I missed some sort of genius?. Did the last third save the first two? The answer was ultimately, no. Even though the ending seemed well deserved, not being able to enjoy the rest of the book made it fall flat.

There were good parts about the book that I liked here and there (far apart though). One of the good ones was the characterization. However, I still couldn't fully forgive the rest of it.

I tried my best to embrace it, but tired of the effort. I really wanted to love it, but couldn't. The author failed at conveying what it was he was trying to accomplish.

If you're a person who must read a tale about a human-computer, transferring memory of a dead boy to a computer (A.I. basically), then by all means: don't try this one out. And if you're like me, someone that likes this idea, however, needs better storytelling in their books, then again, don't bother.

Amy says

I received a free copy of this e-book in return for a review and only the threat of never receiving another book in the future kept me going through this painstaking, boring, nonsensical story. It had potential and I saw glimmers of P.K. Dick throughout, particularly *Ubik*'s half-life dreams that were used to try to send a message to the dreamer. The book gets better after the first half but overall it attempts to do SO much and glosses through with stilted dialog, mechanical technical descriptions, and messy dreamscapes until the last fifth of the story.

The concept isn't terrible but isn't fully fleshed out: a boy's mind is transferred in bits and bytes to a stack of servers and is trying to self-realize through memory access, code tweaking and virtual interactions with the boy's father and step-sister. It conceits to be about what makes us human and alive. But the entire plot is split between super-boring memories of the boy told in 3rd person detached point of view from the AI and crazy imagined dreams from the programmed consciousness once it runs out of memories to rehash. In one scene for example, the boy Cessini takes **12 pages** to crawl through ceiling tiles and open access panels to turn off a water main (this is without deadly assassins or laser sensors or something of consequence set up against him, just metal doors, and insulation, and dust): it's written as if he's doing a chore like hammering nails into a board. The writing isn't terrible either – I've seen a lot of junk in e-books where you want to send the author back to Grammar101 – but it doesn't connect to the reader and what action sequences exist are false, iterative dream-nightmare scenes. To put a final nail in the coffin, we didn't just invent a boy who died and is being reborn, said boy also had to have *aquagenic urticaria* (a rare allergy to water) and some sort of extreme OCD based around his allergy. In some scenes Cessini seems like a high functioning Aspergers ... the kid is overly complicated and bears no resemblance to a real child. Which might explain why none of the relationships are recognizable, particularly the father-son relationship. Either way, this should have been a story about a boy who died young, **OR** a boy with OCD **OR** a boy with a very rare disease – not all three wrapped into a programmed consciousness struggling to self-identify (with corporate intrigue/villain thrown in).

The first half of the book feels like watching someone obsessively rearrange shelves. After this one must wade through dreamlike nightmares and imagined virtual realities as the AI, Packet, tries to interpret the signals and symbolism inside 'his' processing of reality. Finally near the end interesting conversations with genuine feeling begin about whom he feels himself to be and how much he cares about his future and the lives of those he loves.

I thought at first that the clunky description of the world inside the mind inside the computer servers was trying to reflect the disconnection from reality, self and relationships of the AI/boy Cessini. That was definitely too much of the benefit of the doubt because it *never* improves. Perhaps the biggest problem getting into the book is that the perspective is all from Cessini's point of view but is told in third person because he isn't self-aware yet and he is so focused on his water-allergy-OCD that he isn't comprehending the emotions and perceptions of those around him. So in a scene that should be fraught for his father and step-sister, one can only infer what they are feeling from the few overt behaviors Cessini observes without internalization. It means there is an absence of warmth and connection towards any characters. Perhaps that

is the intention since we are meant to question if this computer program is in fact humanly conscious. In a weird way it reminded me of the disorientation felt when reading the first point of view in *The Sound and the Fury* - in that one the reader is overwhelmed with illogical connections and disorderly stream of consciousness from a mentally slow man through flashbacks (he asks a lot). In every way this is the opposite: just the cold facts of observation, in (mostly) chronological order and without comment or feeling... but the reader's feeling of disconnection is common between the two. In a way they both hold the reader at arm's length and prevent engagement and empathy.

Am I being too harsh? Let's provide some examples shall we? Here's what passes for dialogue between two young children:

"The brain always picks the highest probability," he said. "That's how it works. It figures if it happened before, it's probably going to happen again. We live by our memories. But memories aren't real."

"Then what is real?" she asked as she feathered her keys...

"Imagination is real. Imagination means believing what can come next. And I know what can come next."

A fine conversation for academics, but not two children quietly playing.

And much of the adults 'action' is unexciting tech-speak about programming the AI.

"Both. Long-term and short. I adjusted the coefficients of change for the code of his cells to speed up their aging so he remembers the past. If it works, he'll remember more detail, mature faster; connect the past with the present. The whole nature of his thinking will change."

and later

"I think it's my algorithms that are killing it. The main algorithm has a matrix of subs for each specialized brain function. I figured out use parameter constants. I called them my Madden Equation Parameter constants, MEPC's one through six. Play them like the keys of a piano, a person's sensitivity to each determines predisposition to music, painting, or maybe counting, like you and me."

"And you think the spikes from some combination of six coefficients are going to make it all work? Make a person a person?"

"I don't know. You're right. Maybe my PACKET code's all wrong. Exponentials, instead? I don't know. Maybe that won't work, either. Maybe it's as simple as correlating time. The brain processes bits at a rate. Align that with the scan speed into the computer. That's much simpler. Yes, align the two speeds right, and the computer thinks on its own. A mind that 'knows thyself.'"

"Isn't that's[sic] just an emulation mode? Clock speed or something?"

This type of stuff isn't terrible if used in moderation, but ENTIRE CHAPTERS follow these lines. The author should be writing thesis and white papers, not novels.

Finally, at the end, the story actually became something resembling (excuse me) human. But as previously mentioned, I would have ordinarily dumped this book in exasperation after the first 100 pages.

A final nit: children and adults are constantly pulling out their tablet/smart phone to play games or talk to someone or look up something. That's all it is (no HAL or even Siri-like interactions), but the author has named it a "ScrollFlex" and gives this silly thing nearly as much ink as the main characters until you start hearing the "TM" trademark after the name as if the author was hoping to coin a new word. It serves no point and is not a new idea so I can't fathom why he doesn't just say 'tablet.'

Loretta says

After Mind is novel about the life and artificial intelligence. This novel raises the questions of what it means to be human and what it means to be alive.

My first impressions of this novel were somewhat disappointing as I found it really difficult to read the beginning of the book as I was quite confused as to what was happening. There also is quite a lot of technical information about programming and science that just flew right over my head. I gave this novel a fair go but found myself struggling. (view spoiler). I enjoyed the overall story of Aftermind, the messages that the author was intending to explain and the lovely ending but just found the overall read a tad too hard.

I would like to thank the author for expanding the reaches of my mind and creating such a beautiful and real character that is Packet.

Note: I received this novel in a giveaway as part of first reads.

Santhosh Santhosh says

interested to read this novel

Tiffany McDonald says

What does it mean to be alive? What is the difference between being human and being a robot? What is reality? These are a few of the big questions After Mind asks through the story of the Madden family. This gripping sci fi novel follows Packet as he navigates through his memories and dreams.

The ethical dilemmas surrounding technology, are also underlying this novel. This is a great read. Not only does it pose major questions of ethics and humanity, but it also delves into family relationships and dynamics. After Mind has something for everyone.

Marissa says

Goodreads Signed Copy

We are taken into a life of a boy who is reborn into the human world full of lies and memories that not always add up at times as he becomes different personas every so often. A case where he finds himself struggle to know who he really is.

We meet Packet a young pre teen Artificial Intelligence who awakens and does not remember his past but knows he fears water. When a mysterious doctor offers him a chance to regain his childhood memories, he takes up the offer but not all it seems.

We are taken to his journey where he must overcome his fears and make the choice to move forward to save himself and mankind. An interesting read as we view the feelings of an A.I.'s point of view.

