

*Postdestined*

A Short Story

by

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On my forty-second birthday, two awful things happened.

Around seven, after a dinner of leftover pizza, I became the first person killed by an email. Some have died as the *result* of email. Unfortunate meetings arranged with deadly strangers. It wasn't like that for me. My email was the *direct* cause of my demise.

The subject line read: *Roger, I need this by tomorrow*. The sender, according to my mail client, was my boss, Sally Kincaid.

I clicked on it. For just a second, I saw its one-line message: *Nyuk, nyuk, nyuk*. I knew something was wrong, because Sally had no sense of humor.

The screen went white and made a high-pitched whine.

Then it exploded.

In that instant, I knew what happened. I didn't piece it together, linearly, deducing that *A* must have occurred, then *B*, then *C*. No, the explanation popped into my head, complete. The email only *appeared* to come from Sally. A virus attacked her machine, sucked my address from her contacts, and sent itself to me. It contained a script that instructed my monitor to crank up its vertical refresh rate beyond its specified maximum. All over the world, monitors crashed that night, but my dinosaur happened to be the one that wouldn't die gracefully.

The screen cracked, and flames shot out. I pulled back, spilling my glass of cheap scotch down my shirt. Then I ignited.

That, as they say, was all she wrote.

I don't know if the house burned down. I lived alone, so I don't care.

After my death, my night went from bad to worse.

I woke up, if that's the right way to put it, in hell.