

The twenty minutes of the IRITS test is the most intense twenty minutes you could imagine. Your brain feels like it's one of those old fashioned combustion motors that has been ripped to the max, pumping out every erg of energy it can possibly pump, shaking and shuddering all the while. As the images and sensory stimuli came in thick and fast, I followed the instructions that appeared in my eye line in the glasses.

'Thunder, true peace, lightning, friendship, acclaim, alarm, be still, be calm ...'

Everything seemed to be going well as I rapid-fired the words out and focused on aligning my emotional output to the words and images on the test screens and also on my glasses' images.

'Unsettled, rethink, instinct, salutation, crowd-like, conciliate, create, surprise, antagonise, heated, harmed, harassed, harangue ...' My heart thumped as my cheeks puffed out with involuntary resistant energy. Flashing red lights on my glasses. Danger! "WALL IT OUT". This was my signal that a crucial test phase was being entered. It was my signal to think about a neutral thing—and I went to my old standby. A brick wall—in fact, *the* brick wall. The Great Wall of China. I walked alongside it. Calmly. Eventually I found a part of the wall with outlying bricks which allowed me to step my way to the top. Hoisting myself over, I gazed at the wonderful garden beyond. Multicoloured patchwork fields of impossible beauty and grace. I smiled. The test programme responded, as it always had before—the flashing red light in my glasses went away as the test images softened.

'Tranquillity, harmony, sincerity, joy, fidelity, serenity ...'

The programme ended. The white-coated warriors came in to take down their wires and other gear, and to release me.

Commented [HS1]: I think a little description about this room and the test process is needed. In the paragraph before this you say that the glasses give him answers to the questions. Here, it seems like images are scrolling on a screen and he is supposed to say what comes to mind. Why is the tester there? Does he write down the responses? It seems like in this world a computer would do that. Does he ask any questions? Or does he just monitor? Does the screen ask questions along with presenting images or is it only the images?

Commented [HS2]: Okay, so the screen does ask questions, or at least has words on it. I would still like to know what the tester does.

I walked out of the testing room. In the entrance hall, a small rent-a-crowd type of group was assembled and waiting for me. In front was the big smiling mouth of Stacey. Alongside her were a few of the board members, and they were looking dubiously skeptical. Most skeptical of them all, hovering over the water cooler, was Frangerton himself. The images on the big screens on the walls and in holimages as far as I could see—were of me. The applause was loud, and ostensibly genuine. The big letter messages read: CONGRATULATIONS DOCTOR JASPER JARMAN. MAXIMUM SCORE. MOST MENTALLY ADJUSTED PERSON AT CHARAKA SAMHITA. WE HONOUR YOU; WE ADMIRE YOU; WE LOVE YOU.

Fuck me, I needed a smoke. Or a toke.

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My next thought was for Jezebel. I needed to get to her.

I did the fake meet and greet thing as quickly as I could. I had Flossingson arrange me a transit pod. When it arrived, I put my head down, and with steady and firm intent, I beelined it for the exit. Right at the door, I swerved to avoid one of the humourless armed guards, and ran right into Keith Kesselwinger, one of the board members. He was a specialist in obstetrics and gynaecology, but I had always thought