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The Body is the Book

I was born into a world where people don't just read books, they embody them. There are no longer limitations to just sight and sound; they have become full-body experiences. Text is delivered through micro-sensory implants that each child gets at birth. Invisible to the eye, the implant rests below the skin behind the neck. From there, the implant has direct access to all bodily and hormonal reactions, waiting to be triggered. To the reader, the transmission feels natural, as if the book's feelings have lived in our minds forever. Corpus, the global publishing conglomerate, replaced paper centuries ago with tablets that activate our chips. To own a Corpus tablet is the only way one can experience a story or novel.

The device translates text into patterns of electrical signals, stimulating the nerves that regulate heartbeat, breathing, and skin response. A fight scene doesn't just describe adrenaline; it triggers your amygdala, raising your pulse, tightening your muscles, and sharpening your vision the way fear does. A romance doesn't only tell you about warmth and security, it triggers the ventral tegmental area, which is part of the reward system and produces dopamine. It activates the chemical pathways as affection, making your chest feel light and cheeks flush.

When I was a child, bedtime stories were designed with feelings of comfort. Parents would choose fables that slowed the heartbeat, softened the muscles, and released waves of calmness throughout the body. Reading those stories was less like imagining and more like a weighted blanket. The "Big Bad Wolf" still appears in the plot of the *Three Little Pigs*, but the

sensations and sensory experiences were carefully moderated, a brief chill across the skin, immediately followed by warmth to reassure young readers.

The idea was created by the authors at Corpus to close the gap between words and experiences. Centuries ago, readers relied on imagination to picture battles, romances, and heartbreaks. By the 2500s, technology made those imagined feelings tangible. Books became not only stories but simulations in controlled environments where emotions lived, rather than being guessed by the reader. People used to say stories “came to life” when they were moved. But now, in 2525, they literally make us feel alive in ways the body can’t ignore.

As I became older, it was time for the training wheels to come off. Adult novels use the technology without moderation, letting the body absorb the raw feelings of the novels. A historical tragedy will leave you aching, shoulders heavy from grief. A war book shakes your bones, simulating the exhaustion of soldiers marching for days and hours, mile after mile. Even thrillers are crafted to spike your heart rate, so the suspense isn’t just mental, it’s physical and fills your body.

In 2525, embodied reading is not just a form of entertainment; it is implemented into education, work, and daily life. Now more than ever, schools depend on it. Physical textbooks no longer exist, let alone do most people know what one is. Schools purchase licenses from Corpus, ensuring that every lesson is mediated through the implants that they install and control. History classes no longer rely on memorization of dates and names. Instead, students feel the fear of preparing for battle, the emptiness of hunger during a famine, or the relief of peace treaties signed after years of conflict. A lesson about the Industrial Revolution doesn’t simply explain factory conditions; it forces students to experience the weight of soot in their lungs and the ache of repetitive labor in their hands.

Teachers say the logic behind it is simple – you remember what your body endures more vividly than what your eyes skim. They say this new reading mechanism has reshaped how knowledge is transmitted. Science lessons trigger sensations to demonstrate principles – the chill of absolute zero, the burn of chemical reactions, the lightness of zero gravity. Literature classes allow students to embody characters directly – reading a poem about longing leaves students with a tightened chest, while comedies make their stomachs jump with uncontrollable laughter.

Even reading for leisure is different. Some people spend weekends “living” entire novels; they submit themselves to the feelings of a plot. A thriller spikes adrenaline levels so high that readers stumble out of the book shaking, while romances leave them flushed and dreamy for hours. Libraries and bookshops look less like quiet halls of paper and more like wellness centers, where readers choose how they want to feel – exhilarated, comforted, challenged, or transformed. The new way of reading has blurred the line between text and reality. People don’t talk about understanding a book anymore. They talk about what it did to their bodies. Stories are no longer measured in pages, but in the strength of their impact. To read is to live a version of a story within your own flesh and bones.

The most powerful aspect of embodied reading is how differently genres affect the body. In earlier centuries, genres were understood as styles of writing. Today, they are known by the physical experiences they produce. A tragedy is distinguished not by shocks or bursts of warmth, but by heaviness. The limbic system is flooded with signals that mimic grief—shoulders slump, breathing slows, tears rise suddenly. Readers often feel drained after finishing a tragic story, as if they are carrying someone else’s grief. This effect is intentional. Authors use the embodied system to create empathy, ensuring readers cannot skim past feelings or treat them as an abstraction. Meanwhile, comedy is one of the most physically contagious genres. Comedic texts

trigger involuntary laughter, making the stomach tighten and ribs ache. Even if the reader doesn't find a joke amusing intellectually, their body responds to the signs of humor. It is a physiological reaction that is nearly impossible to resist.

What ties genres together is the idea that text is not only about meaning but also about incorporation. The technology that enables this works through a fusion of neural stimulation and biochemical release. Each word and sentence is mapped to a pattern of signals that the tablet transmits, producing emotions consistently and predictably. Over time, authors Corpus have learned to compose with bodies in mind, choosing not just words but physical sensations. A chapter is incomplete until the writer knows how it will feel in the muscles, chest, or skin of the audience.

A book that changed me at an adolescent age was *Lord of the Flies*. In the 21st century, it was already considered a classic, but in 2525 it was taught in a way that no earlier reader could have imagined. It was my first fully unfiltered understanding of tragedy, and my teacher promised it would teach us not just about historical literature, but about ourselves. At first, it seemed manageable. The opening chapters carried a salty taste of freedom— the lightness of running barefoot on the sand, the warmth of the sun pressing down on my face. For a while, I feel the exhilaration of escape, the energy of being young and free. But as the story shifted, so did my body.

The tension between the boys hardened into a pressure in my chest, a constant, relentless anxiety. When Jack grew intoxicated with power, my own pulse raced with the same intensity, as though his hunger for control infected my body. The violence came as a shock. My muscles locked, my throat dry, and when the first stone struck, it was as if my own ribs had been bruised.

I could feel the panic of the crowd, the mania. There was no safe distance between me and the story. I wasn't just reading about the cruelty, I was participating in it.

What scared me the most was how the sensations lingered. For days afterward, I carried the same restless energy: the flush of anger, the unease of guilt, the heaviness of shame. The story left me unsettled, not because I had read about the collapse of order, but because my body had enacted it. I knew then what my teacher meant when she said embodied reading wasn't just about consuming literature; it was about letting the consumption fill your body. That book taught me that power is not just an idea, but a sensation in the veins and a weight that presses on the conscience long after a story is over.

For all of its power, embodied reading is not without its risks. The technology that makes a book come to life can also be used to manipulate, addict, or even injure. One danger is propaganda. History texts are no longer neutral; governments and institutions can alter the bodily sensations tied to specific events. A battle that should feel brutal – lungs burning with smoke, skin raw from injury is rewritten as a triumph, flooding readers with pride and relief. Children raised on altered texts don't just learn a different version of the past; their bodies believe it. How can anyone argue against a story that lives in their pulse, breath, and bones?

I experienced this for the first time when I studied the early 21st century. Our curriculum included a text on 2020 – a global pandemic, the protests after George Floyd's death, and the political unease that followed. The edition I was given filled me with pride – my nervous system filled with relief as communities supposedly came together, my shoulders lifted with hope at the mention of reform. But I knew enough from older records to sense something was missing. Where was the fear of isolation, the relentlessness, and the grieving from mass death? Where

was the raw anger for reform during protests, the weight of marching for justice, the sting from the tear gas? My body felt none of it.

Then and there, I realized the story had been altered. Corpus promised the world integrity, authenticity, and honor, but the device made me feel only what it wanted me to feel. The technology has filtered away the heaviness and grief and replaced them with relief and hope. It had replaced outrage with unity, as though there was a solution to the world's problems instead of an unhealed wound. I left the lesson uneasy, not because the facts were absent – names, dates, and events were still there – but because my body and brain had been denied by the truth. The danger of embodied reading is not just that it can overwhelm us. It's the fact that it's designed to make us feel only what someone else wants us to.

Last year, I visited an archive that still keeps artifacts from before embodied reading existed. In a sealed case, I found a relic: a paper book. Its cover was worn, its pages yellowed, and when I opened it, nothing happened. My pulse stayed steady, my skin remained cool, my body felt nothing at all. At first, I thought it was lifeless, a hollow thing compared to the immersive texts I was used to. But as I read, something unfamiliar happened. The book described a storm at sea, and no neural signals strained my muscles; I imagined the rocking of the waves. When a character cried for her departed husband, no tears came down my face, but my throat still tightened with sadness. The story gave me no commands, no forced sensations, yet my mind and body responded anyway. I slowly realized that feelings were not imposed from the outside; they were felt from within.

That was the difference. Embodied reading makes sure that everyone experiences the same heartbeat, heaviness, and warmth. A tragedy makes every reader collapse, a romance makes the heart burst. But the paper book gave me my freedom. My body and mind reacted in

ways that were uniquely mine, shaped by my memories, associations, and my own imagination. It's not weaker; in some ways, it was stronger because the sensations and reactions were uniquely mine.

Since I discovered paper books, I began wondering what we lost when we surrendered our bodies to the machinery of Corpus. Embodied reading gave us empathy, education, and unforgettable intensity, but it has also taken away the freedom of choice and imagination. The freedom of opinion. We feel what others decide we should feel. With paper, even if the body does not ache or tremor on the author's command, it finds its own path. The act of reading isn't about surrendering control, but about discovering how words live and mean differently to each of us. In the end, both systems remind me of the same truth – stories are never just ideas. Whether they make your heart race through technology or stir our imagination, they change us. To read in any form is to carry someone else's world inside your own mind, body, and soul. We thought we had discovered how to make stories come alive. But in the end, I became the story, the character of someone else's reality, living in a book that will close only when I do.

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