

The Value Of One

by

?

To you and my family.

The world's economic collapse was the trigger.
You must've seen the financial and social state;
hatred & jealousy,
blackhole-sun-smiles,
fading billboards,
fragile tics and mindless talks.
But Hugh Oppenheim saw something else you might've missed,
something he couldn't un-see.

He wasn't famous as some tech moguls out there –
but he was rich, perhaps... richer.
People gossiped of army contracts and dark government deals,
place holders for those fragile *mindless* conversations.

His wife and children saw a family man,
an obelisk of confidence.

But to him?

the money,

the world,

his family,

he himself,

everything was a repeating pattern.

Hugh Oppenheim created a system he called **Tymeflow** and by 2035 it was
responsible for...

- 1.7% unemployment.
- A world where every action left a signature.
- Where value wasn't hidden behind bank accounts or titles.
- Where people could see themselves and their efforts in everything they did.

Executing TymeFlow wasn't just a colossal endeavor,
it was an impossible one.

It demanded mastery over the physical and the metaphysical,
an understanding of human needs and desires.

Knowledge that stretched beyond the flat simplicity of three-dimensional reality,
a collapse of physics and something else,
symbols and their mechanics.

Hugh Oppenheim,
gave it all away because he had to.
This is how it happened.

// FRAGMENT 01: Exile

I remember being in my mother's womb.

It's somewhere between *prenatal memory* and *hyperthymesia*.

That's not a metaphor.

Not a dream.

I was there,

that's how I started and *I remember*.

The warmth... such comfort is beyond words anyone can share.

Laughter when I kicked.

The damped voice of my father.

Floating words. Familiar rhythms.

Time passing, liquid, goo and strange lights.

And then, the exit.

Nothing can prepare you for this kind of cold.

Being born isn't an entrance. It's *exile*.

You're torn from the only place you've ever known -

a quiet, weightless world you didn't even realize you belonged to.

And then: the *great* freeze.

Hands. Masks. Machines.

Language you can't parse.

So I did the only thing I could, I shut my eyes and went to sleep.

When I woke up, I wasn't alone.

There was a mirror image of me.

Not a twin.

Not a shadow, it was me,

but maybe... the part that never fully let go?

As if I left the womb in halves one for the world,

one to carry the memory of where I came from.

Once as *him*.

Once as *me*.

And we grew next to each other.

He was unique, indescribable.

I was sharp. Eager.

Somehow I thought,

even then that if I broke -

he'd be left alone in the world.

So I held back.

Watched from a few seconds ahead.

Polite.

Calm.

Like someone letting the child version of themselves have a turn at living.

Chapter One:

Re-Compiling The Dollar

Shanghai, 9:00 AM,
government building,
ironically made of glass.

Forty-seven floors above a city that lives and breathes innovation,
inside a meeting room; six suits sit across; five Asian, one German,
conversing quietly between themselves.

A large screen glows behind them,
displaying a single logo: Tymeflow.
Hugh Oppenheim steps into the room.
Tall man, around his 50's,
lightly shaven beard, smooth face and kind eyes -
Black shirt, jeans, no tie,
carrying an old bag (the kind your father gave you).

The room aimed for black-box opacity -
old-fashioned, sealed, unlike the transparent tower around it.
The table was a culmination of wood, brown and ivory marble,
squared and rooted, resembling a chess board.
Hugh moved his eyes in diagonal lines,
looking at its curvatures and symmetries.
Calculating his play, or perhaps he wanted them to wait...
to build tension, to see who kingside castles.

Was Tymeflow a time machine?
A water aggregation system or some sort of a hyper energy source?
One thing was certain,

Hugh didn't need or want more money.
For him it was a deeper structure,
the building blocks of reality.
And if they buy into it?
It'll be a Trojan horse RANCH -
An opening chord of a stampede no one could hear coming.

Hugh opens his wallet,
takes out and places a \$100 bill on the table.
And so it began; "Tymeflow didn't begin as technology.
It started with a question.
One no other system wants asked...
"What is the value of this?"
Hugh points at the bill.
They were listening.

"Value is a formula,
unlike any other.
It's the most complicated of all calculations,
one our logic won't compute,
because it can't see it.
We don't know what the value of \$100 bill is,
Indeed our own mechanism of economy,
is built on what we *can* see and is easier to calculate,
debt."

He steps away from the table.
His voice sharpens.

“China is stacking gold to resist the dollar.
building better cheaper refrigerators,
language models,
GPU’s and flying trains...
but misunderstands the battlefield.
Gold and flying trains are *not* what makes empires last,
look at ancient Greece, Egypt, Rome...
America is collapsing and it had it all.”
His eyes hinted at it first and then the mouth spilled it out;
“I’m not here for a lecture on morals or pseudo-economics..
I’m here because China wants to replace the dollar,
and until now, failed. To succeed,
you need to do something completely different,
you need the key to the mechanism beneath the dollar.
Not the currency - the calculus.”

Then, finally:
“The dollar could tumble. But China?
It’ll be standing on the right side of the collapse.”
He presses the clicker.
The Tymeflow logo fades.
A map of Shanghai appears.
Numbers, standard economics; purchases, clicks, currency.
Thousands of dollars hovering over locations-café,
offices, homes - real-time transactions.
Then, a second set of the unknown data emerges,
running calculations from odd looking formulas,

as if it was extracting value from... nothing,
each traditional dollar manufacturing 100x more.

Then a map of New-York,

Paris,

Mumbai,

the whole world,

conventional money vs Tymeflow economics,

debt vs value.

Companies suddenly appeared on the screen,

familiar giants from the Fortune 500,

but their Tymeflow projections broke every known model.

Brands fighting for single-digit growth now showed phantom revenue—curves
rising where no product launched,

no campaign aired,

no dollar spent.

It looked like imaginary sales,

fabricated demand,

but the system wasn't inventing anything.

It was measuring the invisible effect of something else -

the behavioral wake every human leaves behind.

Value that had always existed and never captured.

The group was mesmerized at the figures on the screen,

as the images transitioned into the last frame (the kind that these folks need to see):

“Dismissed value using existing data re-focused through a different lens -

Tymeflow”.

Then the screen gently faded black,
leaving the room in reflective silence, which lasted only a few moments.

The German was the first to speak:
“Magical numbers, Mr. Oppenheim,
yet I’m not quite understanding the product,
the model nor the technology.
Can you perhaps elaborate on this different *lens*?”

“Danke Herr?” Hugh asked for the German’s name,
with only a slight German accent.

“Stein” replied the German.

“Freut mich, sie kennenzulernen” Hugh greeted.

“Herr Stein,
just now I showed you an image of what the world already is,
and how it could be.

But you are correct to push this further,
after all value is not something one can count,
it is - an event horizon.”

Hugh reached to his bag.

Pulls out a small box -

smooth, nothing fancy.

Opens it.

Inside: a device that looked like a prism.

Handheld. Sleek.

A metal frame with the initials “powered by OCT” carved into it.

A strange, bent piece of glass at its center.

He slid it across the table to the curious German:

“Please take a look inside.”

At first Stein hesitated,

but curiosity won him over and he leaned in.

A pulse.

Barely visible. But *felt*.

And in that shard of glass -

he saw something.

A memory that he wasn't sure was his.

A feeling he couldn't place.

A consequence still unfolding.

Everything - and something else.

He jerked back. Stunned. Pale.

The legal suit across the table squinted.

"Ah, what, what did you see?"

Not a sound.

His mouth opened, then closed,

he had no words for it.

His eyes flickered toward Hugh,

seeking something, anything,

to anchor his stuttering thoughts.

"Ein sechsdimensionaler spiegel."

Hugh said, almost as a sidenote.

The German still gasping,

involuntarily said:

"A six-dimensional mirror..."

The words felt foreign in his mouth,
but once spoken,
they rooted themselves a fragile,
unprovable certainty taking hold of the room.

A measured voice, the eldest among them speaks:

"Congratulations, Mr. Oppenheim.

Your name precedes you.

We've seen systems with persuasive technologies before,
many of them promise optimization.

Growth. Scale."

A pause.

Then, a light skepticism.

"Yours, it seems promises..." he considered his words,

"something harder to control?"

The room absorbs the sentence.

The older suit looked onto the younger, analytical, suit
maybe legal - passing the right to speak:

"Why would you offer us this advantage?"

A slight cough was sounded,

someone thought that question was ill-placed, perhaps.

The analyst tried to reframe; "What",

Hugh cut him off "*If* you're about to pass.."

looking at the analyst

"This will be your Kodak moment.

The moment someone hands you the future -

and you turn it down. Why?

because it threatened what *you* thought was working perfectly.”

He let it hang.

Then, softer - almost like a reassurance:

"Tymeflow is infrastructure.

A focused layer beneath what already functions."

He paused, weighing words.

"China currently has somewhat of a control,
it isn't real" he added.

"But once Tymeflow is online,
people will stop following the old economic systems that punish receipt,
and move towards economies that reward motion.”

Then he turns to the German,
picks up the mirror and places it in the bag.

Heads to the door, no handshake.

No eye contact.

Just a nod - the kind you give when you check-
mate an opponent that never saw it coming.

The implications were already rearranging in their minds;
what happens next?

What if Tymeflow could actually give them what hundreds of years could not?

They needed to find out more.

Translate, dissect the tech to gravel.

But the bottom line was simple, it couldn't be ignored.

Hugh exited via rooftop and stepped into the waiting helicopter.
Inside, Bill Banks was strapped in,
eyes locked on the laptop screen.
Banks was Hugh's shadow,
the name hinted his area of expertise;
the money man.
People said jokingly he could track ROI between squares of toilet paper.

"Next meeting?" Hugh said over the headset.
Bill nodded,
the names were in place,
the order mattered and the sequence was running.
Below, Shanghai blinked alive in data.
Patterns. Movement.
Frictionless intent,
as the two began their next stop to the International Airport.
Hugh, sending his gaze out of the Helicopter's window,
the coms fitting tightly on his head...
reducing some of the engine loudness,
but a headache was lurking.
Hugh knew those all too well,
"headquakes" he called them.
Fearing the pain would intensify, he reached to his bag,
took a couple of pills and a slight sip of water.
Bill's eyes were still to the screen.
"That was quick" he grinned as the inbox incoming mail notification chimed,
reading through it quickly he said to Hugh; "they're afraid".

“Hmmm” Hugh replied, eyes to the city.

The laptop closed with a soft click.

“They want Tyme-flow, but they need more language,” Banks added.

“Certainty. Something to show the next floor up.”

Hugh nodded and without hesitation:

“Give them the standard VC-BS:

‘Tyme-flow operates within existing structures.

It doesn’t overwrite protocol -

it’s maintained and controlled,

listens before it moves.

It’s not emotional,

it’s rational and send the relevant material,

‘Mirrors don’t act. Mirrors show.’ but take your time.”

Banks hesitated. “so we promise it stays in the box...”

“while it teaches the box to open itself” Hugh finished.

This is how you dance with empires.

A few days later an email arrived..

[Classified Internal Memorandum – PRC Ministry of Digital Infrastructure]

Re: TYMEFLOW INITIATIVE / PHASE 1 REVIEW

Status: Conditional Advancement

Circulation Level: Tier 4 and Above

Following the exploratory engagement conducted at Executive Level with Mr. Hugh Oppenheim, and pursuant to the demonstration of the proposed TymeFlow framework, the Ministry has determined the following:

- The framework, in its current iteration, appears structurally non-invasive.
- It presents no immediate challenge to national digital policy, sovereignty, or economic telemetry systems.
- Behavioral modeling indicates the system’s core output aligns with passive reflectivity rather than active influence.

At this time, the Ministry is positively considering to **authorize a limited deployment** in controlled pilot zones within existing civil infrastructure frameworks, under the following conditions:

1. **Visibility:** All TymeFlow operations must remain indistinguishable from native data flows.
2. **Control Assurance:** All administrative access and systemic permissions are to be routed through pre-approved supervisory nodes.
3. **Narrative Management:** Public-facing materials will refer to TymeFlow as an “*experimental insight layer*” - not as a platform or system.
4. **Containment Protocols:** In the event of anomalous or emergent behavioral shifts, Phase 1 may be suspended without notice.

The Ministry accepts Mr. Oppenheim’s verbal assurances that “**mirrors do not act, they show.**”

All further interpretations of that statement are the responsibility of the host entity.

Please share a TymeFlow Gantt.

Prepared by:

X.L. / Division A7

Verified:

D. Chao / Minister Liaison

It was moving...

Hugh believed emotions were invented for man,
just as the software was invented for hardware,
Neither said *enough* of the architecture.
He felt we all pursue what looks like passion,
relevance,
control,
love,
but beneath the surface -
something else grows.

If the weakness of man is that he believes in the code...

how can you rescue a world that was programmed to program?

//FRAGMENTS: **1985**

If you could go back in time –

*what would **you** do?*

I'd go back to be with my parents,
my sister, brother, visit my *old* childhood.

How I want that.

Did you watch Back To The Future?

Well, to me Marty McFly was a god.

He *could* go back in time.

Be with his family...

to *come back* home... and see them again;

New.

That scene in the living room at the very end?

It *moved* me.

When he wakes up and sees his brother and sister, all businesslike, sharp -
sitting around the fancy living room table, being these confident,
composed 'adults' - it was - ugh.. significant.

Because at the beginning of the movie,
they were struggling. Common. Lost.

I don't know why,

but that *small* scene, with no special effects, no spectacle...

That was the magic moment of the entire film,
and that maybe, just *maybe*, if we could..

somehow tap into one tiny choice in our life and flick it -
switch it from George getting hit,
to George *hitting*, from 0 confidence to infinite ∞.

That ***one*** move could trigger a whole universe to shift -
and to me, that was incredible.

I don't know if people saw it as the significant part,
but all those *little* choices we make?

Are roads that lead to roads that lead to... islands.

To underwater.

To burning buildings.

To meeting the person of our lives.

To money.

To being broke.

Those tiny moments are a map.

An invisible web.

Chapter 2:

Home

Hugh was a few inches closer to home.

To Gaille.

He leaned back,
watching the world blur in fractured reflections.

He could've chosen differently.

There were others-brighter,
wilder,
less likely to ask about taxes or sunscreen.

But he chose Gaille.

She didn't chase sparks;
she held the light,
she asked to understand,
not to impress.

She never needed proof he was going somewhere,
and made the going comfortable.

For a long time that was enough.

Enough to build on.

To land in.

To return to.

Even if she never stepped fully into his dimensions,
or follow thoughts that bent at impossible angles -
she made him less lonely.

Sometimes the right orbit isn't the one matching your space...
it's the one giving you gravity.

That's why he married and grew a family with her.

Up front,
a song played low.
Ambient.
It moved something old in him.
He looked out the window,
eyes half-heavy - the motion delaying the time around him.

He'd written words,
melodies,
years ago.
Before the family.
Before the trust.
Before Tyme-flow and quiet exits.

It had started with a minimal demo -
his lyrics over an acoustic guitar.
He uploaded it one night,
spontaneously.
Called it: *The Indication of Time*.

*There was a time for classicals,
A time for turn, turn, turn.
There was a time for Jethro Tull,
And heavy metal yearn...*

***Remember, world peace?
All through the sixties.***

Who will save Africa?

'We are the world' or queen?

Love-wasn't it everything?

Hey, time...

We are the indication of.

He didn't need anyone to hear it,

he posted it for him.

But then –

a comment.

Like the last field of fog before the sun broke it:

"That's a far-out concept...

people listening to music are the indication of time?

Did I get it right?"

He stared at it longer than he should've.

Then typed:

"Yes. People. And the act of remembering.

**Music is what time sounds like when it's being
remembered by someone."**

A pause and then:

"Damn."

He smiled.

They started messaging.

Short, careful bursts at first.

Music.

Meaning.

Everything in between.

And a few days later,
he invited her to an open mic night.
She said “maybe... btw, it’s Gaille.”

When that night came,
he almost didn’t care about the gig itself...
Just wondered if she’d be there,
somewhere in the crowd...
He didn’t know what she looked like.
But then the host,
calling the next show -
reading names off a napkin,
said: “Gaille, from the, eh, comments section..?”

She walked onstage like the room belonged to her.
Beat-up acoustic.
Tuned perfectly.
She played *his song*.
Her version.
Not a cover.
A conversation.

He just looked at her,
surprised, he couldn’t move...
She later went to him backstage,
by the gear bags.
Looked at him with a smile and before she could say anything he said:

“You’re a time generator.”

Now, his body leaned into the corner of the back seat,
seatbelt pressing a crease across his shirt.

Outside - light.

Not Beijing. Not Shanghai.

Home.

The door clicked open.

He stepped out before the driver could offer a hand.

Gaille stood on the porch.

She hadn’t heard a word from him in the last forty eight hours not even a text.

One hand on the railing,
the other cradling a coffee she hadn’t sipped.

The kids were already shouting.

They wanted to know if he brought back anything sweet.

He walked up the path, loosening his collar,
letting the heat rise from his spine.

“You’re back,” she smiled.

He reached the top stair.

“Not really.”

He looked at her face and leaned in for a soft kiss.

Inside, the house still smelled like breakfast.

Coffee.

Toast.

Orange peel left out for aroma.
He didn't drop his bag.
Didn't ask about her day.
She lingered behind him, watching.
There was nothing dramatic in his movements -
but something was wrong.

When he finally sat at the edge of the couch,
she asked softly, "Was it bad?"
He didn't answer right away.
Then: "still sorting it."
She nodded, but the smile faded.
"Hugh... ?"
He looked at her. "Just tired."
Displeased but thought it was just the trip.
They've been a bit off for a while,
but she didn't want to add any weight.
She let it go.
He wanted to tell her everything.
But if he did - she'd never forgive him.
Not for what he had done - but for what he was about to.

At dinner time they gathered around the table -
plates full, napkins half-folded, laughter leaking between bites.
One child demanded ketchup for something that didn't need ketchup.
The other recited facts about dinosaurs that may or may not have been real.
Gaille passed the salad without looking at her phone once.

Hugh watched the way her hand brushed their daughter's hair out of her eyes,
almost absently -
like a ritual she didn't even know she was performing.

The dog barked.

Someone dropped a fork.

Someone shouted about screen time.

Nothing important.

Everything important.

Hugh said little.

But he memorized it all -

the weight of the fork,

the tilt of the light,

the way his son's face scrunched in concentration,

over an impossible math problem involving broccoli.

He knew these moments would be the only proof he ever lived here at all.

The sun has set. The house's rhythm slowly reducing.

The kids were still running wild through the hallway -

one of them half nude,

the other singing a song about robots and bedtime injustice.

"Five more minutes!" they shouted in sync,

already negotiating with a bedtime that had no vote.

"Three," Hugh called back from the kitchen,

"and that's final."

One of them paused. "Final-final?

Or the kind where we talk about?"

He smiled - not wide, just enough.

They groaned and vanished toward the bathroom,
feet smacking tile.

He watched them go.

Let the sound settle.

Let the silence return.

Hugh -

still wearing the same shirt he pitched an empire in,

“You’re not sleeping like that,” she said.

He didn’t argue. She got up, came to him quietly,

fingers finding the first button on his shirt.

She undid it like she’d done it a hundred times,

she wanted him close.

“You’re warm,” she murmured.

Then leaned in, breathing him in like memory.

She paused. “What’s that smell.. it isn’t your cologne.”

A second beat.

Thinking, “It isn’t mine either.”

Her hands stilled. He didn’t look at her.

“Hugh...” Her fingers dropped from his chest.

“Where were you?”

He said nothing.

She stepped back, one pace,

arms folding around herself like instinct.

Like armor. “What did you do?? Are you’re going to make me say it?”

she said, quieter now.

“You’re not serious.”

His jaw clenched. Eyes forward.

“Did you sleep with someone?”

The words just-hung.

It didn’t make sense.

They had been together the night he left.

She had kissed him at the door,

tasted him. But the perfume...

His neck looked like it had been kissed.

Not bruised. Not marked.

But touched -

in a way she knew didn’t come from her.

She was in shock. Didn’t know how or what to say.

Couldn’t cry - not yet.

Her body hadn’t caught up.

“Hugh, please -”

she said, but even her voice had to sit down.

She didn’t cry.

Didn’t scream.

Didn’t even look at him.

She was sitting on the floor,

legs clutched toward her chest -

barefoot, arms folded, hugging her knees -

and something in her face went dark.

Not anger. Not pain. Just... absence.

Like a switch flipped.

Like he knew she would.

But that silence - not the perfume,

not the lie - was what gutted him.

He took a step forward.

“Gaille...”

Her voice came back cold. Flat.

Mechanical. “Get. Out.”

Two words.

No punctuation.

No explanation.

He didn’t move.

“Get. Out.”

She repeated it, but now it was even colder,

darker. Like a wound revisited,

re-stabbed.

Still no tears.

Just metal.

It worked - she believed him.

And not just believed -

she let it sign on her.

He hadn’t betrayed her with a body.

He’d betrayed her with the one thing

she couldn't come back from:
being the kind of man who would.

Because for Gaille, betrayal wasn't failure.
It was familiar.
To her it was the most painful sin...
And now he'd rewritten himself into her trauma.

He didn't leave.
Not right away.
Instead he walked out the back,
crossed the yard just walking like someone who knew every step might come back
and take revenge.
He walked into the garage.
With the his workbench,
fancy toys hanging on the wall,
and the radio that hummed with frequencies no one tuned into anymore.

There was a small window, high up -
too narrow for anything useful.
Except for this.
From the right angle, you could see the kitchen.
He pulled up a folding chair and sat.
From there,
he could watch her move.

Quiet,
practiced motions.

The kind that come not from peace,
but from keeping everything from falling apart.

She was making coffee.

No robe.

Just a shirt – his maybe.

Hair tangled, like it had barely survived what had happened.

She paused at the sink.

Just her hand on the counter.

Just for a moment.

As if remembering a version of the morning that didn't exist anymore.

He didn't know how long he sat.

Long enough to see the kids come down.

The door creaked open.

Soft footsteps on the concrete.

“Dad?”

Hugh turned.

His older son stood there,
squinting against the dark.

“I saw you,” the boy said.

Hugh blinked. “Just now? Noah, how are you awake?”

Noah rubbed his eyes,
like the answer wasn't important.

“I heard noise...Last week I saw you.

On TV. You were young.
Your hair looked confused.
And they wrote your name wrong.”
Hugh frowned. “Oh, wrong how?”
The boy looked at him like it was obvious.
“It said your name was TED.”
Hugh stared for a second -
then broke into a grin, helpless against it.
“That wasn’t my name,” he said.
“That was the talk. It’s... never mind.”
The boy nodded,
then held something out.
It was a folded piece of paper.
Thick lines, rough shading.
A house.
A figure.
And beside it -
something that looked like a door with too many hinges.
“I tried drawing the door from your video,” he said.
Hugh looked at the sketch.
The door with too many hinges didn’t open into anything.
It just bent.

Dear friend,

You received this first episode from someone who received it from someone.

Know that this book is the sum of my life's experiences.

It is ***not*** fiction (let's say a biography in the making).

Write me *your* significant memory and send to:

hugh@tymeflow.com

I trust you with my work,

you trust me with your valued memories.

I'll keep it sacred,

as I'm sure you will mine.

You can use an anonymous email,

alias/fake name,

makes no difference to me.

I don't respond to emails,

there are no newsletters.

You'll get the next episodes as soon as I get *your* memory.

Thank you.