INKWELL

MORE FUNDAMENTAL THAN INK

Joshua Charles Craig

speculative fiction forward to "I Wrote 14,332 Words & No One Paid Me:
Fanfiction as a Critical Practice You Do for Fun" by Lindsay Walker

You're sitting, jaw to palm and elbow to desk, staring into the black emptiness flecked with stars that blankets every window you look through while your language teacher drones on in that tone from the adults in those old *Peanuts* cartoons your grandparents sometimes watch on holidays. Your thoughts drift out through the window, past the docking ports and STC towers, past the satellites in orbit, and finally into the vast expanse of space. —Language has never interested you: reading can't encapsulate you and writing is too laborious. IR though, it immerses you. You can touch the characters, feel their breath; under the helmet everything is as real as you are: action brings fatigue, and the sun warms your skin, and while these experiences don't have a lasting effect on your body, they burn memories in your mind. —Your gaze drifts back into the room, and the teacher's muffled words become clear. "Does everyone understand that?" No, you think but won't say: you'd seem dim to your peers. The teacher smiles, now distributing Immersion Coding Tablets. "You'll be writing your very own IRs using your favorite characters from the IRs we've studied in class."

The teacher's voice snaps back to its muffled tone. You feel a swell of ideas. Everything is at your disposal: the heroes and gods from Human history, elements from your darkest virtual memories, even the Peanuts will do as you dictate. The scenes burned in your mind are now malleable; this is the first step towards crafting Immersive Realities. You've reached inside yourself and drawn up the basis of writing: something more fundamental than ink: story. Now, pen poised, you breathe deeply, and begin . . .