

This is an excerpt from *Imaginary Year*, a work of serial fiction by Jeremy P. Bushnell. Visit the *Imaginary Year* website (<http://www.ImaginaryYear.com>) on Mondays and Fridays for new updates.

58 / WHAT HE IS GOING TO DO

Jakob sits in a cafe, reading an article on *Minority Report* in the newest issue of *Wired*. His hand loose around a glass of iced coffee which has grown studded with condensation. His plate dotted with bagel particles.

He received his Master's Degree in American Studies exactly one month ago. There was a graduation ceremony; which he skipped, spending that morning instead in this very cafe. Thinking about what he is going to do.

He has decided not to jump into anything right away. He has some leftover student loan money which will hold him for a while, so he's decided to take the summer off, to not take a job until September. He's spent eighteen of his thirty years as a student: September, for him, is the month when work is supposed to start.

There are things that he should be doing. Freya's begun to regard his time with a suspicious eye, as though his days were little more than extravagant pastures of leisure. Jakob can't fault her for that—not when she's stuck giving up forty hours of her life to the record store each week—but he wishes that he could make clear to her all that he hopes to do this summer. He's not on vacation. He needs to organize material of a considerable depth. He needs to look at the Employment section in the paper, study the websites of local organizations, review the interlocking systems and forces that make up Chicago and figure out if there is a place there that he can sanely inhabit.

If there isn't he needs to make his own way. He has toyed with these ideas: starting a nonprofit, a collective, a think tank. Maybe now is the time that he should be investigating

the processes by which these things happen. He could be exploring grant opportunities. He has notes for a novel. He could get far on a novel during a summer.

A month has already gone by.

He turns a page in the magazine.

Tiny globes of condensation grow full, tremble, then slide down to join the puddle forming beneath his glass.