This is a short story that I edited not too long ago; the author has been kind enough to allow me to post it on my site as an example of my work. The writing was already in good shape with very few technical errors, so I was able to focus more on nuance of meaning and style.

Note that this is written in UK English, edited according to *New Hart’s Rules* and the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

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For each universe, there are always six

It's a strange feeling. Being a being without form. Not having a body any more. It's what dying must be like. Except that dying is like nothing. It's no thoughts, it's no feelings. It's like what life was like a billion years before you were born. It isn't anything. But this isn't like that. This is very much something. It's more than that. It's everything. It's the feeling of waking up late on a Sunday morning. It's the leaves rustling around your feet at the park. It's the silent witnessing of a newborn child dying in the arms of its mother. It isn't that some days are better than others. It's that all days are everything. Every feeling. Every emotion. Every cut, scar and bruise. Every winning goal. Every first kiss. It is too much.

So there's no such thing as infinite power, only infinite potential. I thought it would be okay, that I could handle it. And it was fun for a few seconds. I destroyed a lifeless planet straight away, just to see what would happen. But I already knew the answer. I know most things. The answer was nothing. I mean, no feeling. There is no feeling, only action.

Life wasn't always this way. Turns out I was one of the six. I was a normal guy, except I can't remember much of it. I can't remember the humdrum. I can't remember getting up every day and feeling my back hurt as I switched on the radio. I can't remember brushing my teeth. Oh, to feel teeth now. To feel anything, truly.

But I remember some things. I remember feeling different. Like I wasn't the same as everyone else. I've heard a billion conversations today where people say the same thing. So maybe I really was the same. But no, in fact I was six people. I was three men and three women. And we were the key to what I am now.

Now I'm one, and now I'm the genie with the hammer that cracks open the bottle from the inside. I'm the one who gets to decide. I can put a ghostly grip anywhere I want, make crops fail, make zebras kill lions and make galaxies vanish. I can do anything.

Almost anything.

What can't I do? I can't switch off the noise. I can't ignore the chatter. It's everywhere. It slides over my hollow form like rotten prisoners let loose on a passing maiden. What I want is what I can't have. I want it to stop.

What am I to inhabit this space? And forever? An unbounded period of utter dominance over something I cannot feel for? When you see countless civilisations rise and fall, you stop caring. I never cared, though. I cared for less than a moment. Then all I saw was ants. Less than ants. Minuscule imitations of ants leading out their directionless existences. But these ants had megaphones. And they wouldn't shut up.

The previous Incumbent was clever and sly. Or maybe it was one of the Predecessors. Whoever it was, they laid down Directives. My main focus of loathing. I cannot start afresh. I cannot kill for no good reason. I cannot rest. The Directives are my punishment for a crime I cannot conceive of having committed.

In your time, I have been constituted for mere months. For me, the stretch has been eternal. But I have always drawn hope from this Directive:

'For each universe, there are always six.'

The wisps of recollection circled the words and emboldened them. They showed a route, a way out of this loud forest of wretchedness. When the next six came together, I would be released. And they would take up this unwanted throne. And I would find repose in silence, no trace left of my feelingless existence.

But how and why and where and when? No god knows his descendants. And neither do the descendants know their fate. And indeed, most descendants never achieve their destiny. Human bodies are frail. They expire too quickly. Those failed descendants lie in their graves, lost from being saviours of their desperate ruler.

How long had the last Cycle taken? Who can tell? It is beyond even my cognition. It doesn't matter. In this universe, there would always be six. Even if one were to die, another would be born. I just couldn't determine who it was. I would know everything about them. I would know how many atoms were in their eyeball. I would know who their first love would be. I would know which cancer would kill them and when. I just wouldn't know that it was them. I could not see the six. They would be strangers in the same phone booth. Just a simple cognitive step away from release. A simple, frustrating step.

I got angry. My invisible, imperceptible self, burning. One conversation was all it would take.

'The unforced words of the Descendants together bring peace.'

So I knew. I knew what was necessary. I just had to unite you all. But how? How to look for six needles in a haystack of seven billion needles? And all needles the same. Some black, some white, some long, some short. But all the same. Bones wrapped in skin, with your thoughts. Always sharing with me your pain and joy and everything that doesn't matter. How could I find the six keys for the door? How could I not be your Incumbent any more? How could I join the Predecessors in blessed release?

And then a moment. A fault. A gap in the real. I found it eventually. I had been everywhere and seen everywhere, but then it revealed itself. A tiny, shining crack in the iris of a boy who worked down a mine. I let him work long hours. I let him get weak. Not so much to kill him—he was my treasure—but enough to make him tumble further down the mine one day. He got stuck, and before I spared him and let him wriggle free, I looked at that beautiful green iris. And I looked at the glimmering, different crack. And I saw it.

I saw a place inside him. A room. A secret room. In this universe I had inherited from the sick Predecessors, I saw a secret room. And yes, I inhabited the room. And therein lay the knowledge I was looking for. The key to my release. The reason I can write you this letter.

Inside the room, my eyes gained new sight. A bright white and beautiful ending, because, at last, the room gave me the secret I had wanted to know for months.

The room revealed who the six were. You are one of the six, Alex. Your colleagues are aghast, as well they might be. But you were instructed to read this to them, and read it you shall. Your conversations have given me what I want. By talking to each other, as you already have, you have fulfilled what I needed you to do.

Now I am no longer the Incumbent. I am your Predecessor and you—all of YOU—will take this burden with you. You will merge. You will forget. You will hate, and you will move on. You will create and destroy. You will feel tortured. You will feel nothing. You will want my sweet release.

But I will tell you that it won't be easy. I hate my Predecessors as you will hate me. That is because, with my final act, I can now write my own Directive to add to the thousands that have gone before me.

'There are no more secret rooms.'

God's speed, our new Incumbent.