

## ZampanioSim Story

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The Tale of the Blorbos

Two Gay Jokes

<http://www.farragofiction.com/TwoGayJokes/>

Working in anomaly containment was a lot easier than what people thought.

Really, though. It was. He thought so, at least. How many jobs gave you such clearly laid out instructions? Most jobs worth a damn, they paid you to sit down and pretend to work, or to work at an undefined 'something'. You chip at nothing, or you have to come to some definition of what that is along with your co-workers, and then you all use that energy making sure that at least one thing gets done. Not like it matters. The people up top are rarely, if ever, losing money when you cock up.

Not him, though. His days were simple. He woke up, rolled out of bed, ate, peed, found somewhere to shower, changed into his uniform, and then checked the todo pile. Camille, while kind of shy, did a bang-up job of keeping everyone focused on something, no matter what; for him, it was crunching numbers.

And crunch them he did! Every day he'd sit at his makeshift cubicle, papers in hand, and chop out stats for every single detail that might be important. Amount of limbs. Movement speed. Contact with other anomalies. Times turned east. The occasional cause of death. And there was nothing else he would rather be doing, really. There was something cathartic about trudging through all that raw data and coming out with only the essentials, like compressing coal into diamonds. Making things simple. Tidy. Put them in places where he could forget them, and then find them without even trying.

And, at night, while everyone slept, he got to wander.

He'd wandered the Westerville Mall many times before-- everyone in the team had done so at least once. He preferred to meander through its windowless walls and ceramic pathways; he'd count the shops with his fingers as he passed by, and note which ones moved out or in. The mall changed just enough to keep him entertained, but not so much as to throw him off guard. It was just right.

But then, the mall changed.

What was once a quaint building morphed overnight into a sprawling mass of corridors and ramps and elevators and endless endless everything all leading to nowhere. Whatever may have been considered tasteful by human logic and reason was blocked off from the public: the glass halls they prided themselves on were locked off but not destroyed; the previous parking lot was deserted, leaving miles of pure darkness only accessible if you knew where to look; a lot of shops became minotaur-themed, for some reason, selling labyrinth-print shirts and mino-burgers.

The mall had so many things. So many things that were there all the time. There were people and there were staff and they all had schedules and events and sales and they had so many

variables to keep track of all the time. Walking at night, when no one else gave a damn, helped ease the monumental headache all that input gave him.

Case in point: this part of the building was not something he'd seen before.

Neville was sure he'd tracked this whole section on his last walk: the amount of blocked-off sections, how many of those still had merchandise in them, how many still had shops that just refused to close. Devona could tell you from the top of her mind, easy-- she was cool like that. But not him. For him, that certainty was more an ache underneath his ribs: a message from the part of him that remembered where he'd last been and where all the best hidey-holes were.

A grunt escaped him as he pushed over a maintenance door behind a large 'coming soon' advertisement plastered where a stall should be. The iconic TV-ready smile of some famous actor buckled in on itself, the gap between their teeth and jaw giving in to show... yet another pathway.

How had he missed this one? Perhaps it was made more obvious by the ad than as the dull wall it was before. He'd never know for sure; all there was left to do was to enter the man's maw.

First thing was the dust. There was so much dust. He pulled up the collar of his shirt to try and shield it from the barrage, the itch making him half-sneeze every third step or so. As the walk continued, the light pouring from the entrance became dimmer and dimmer, until he was basically standing in the dark. His eyes blinked, trying to make something out-- anything, really, that would make it worth it going further down this hole.

Just like that, fate sent a sign: a light from one of the stalls at the furthest end of the hallway, staying steady for a whole minute before rotating out of view. A flashlight? It had to be. Maybe there was someone still being sent to work in that hell-hole after all. Neville burst into a sprint, making sure to count the shops as he passed them-- abandoned food mart, home decor, home decor, bakery infested with rats-- until he made it to the source of that flash.

What he found was something he wasn't sure he expected. Racks and racks of clothes-- pretty fancy ones, too-- some high-end shop tucked in the middle of goddamn nowhere. Were they expecting to make big bucks in this city? Well, judging from the state of clear disrepair, they didn't exactly win the lottery.

And, in the middle of all that, was Witherby.

He appeared to be surveying the place, the flashlight held up only by the tilt of his head against his shoulder, leaning over a glass case not too far from the register. The light bounced off the case and back onto him, showing his silhouette against the darkness.

What a strange guy.

"So this is where you hide, huh, Wibs?" Neville heckled from his spot in the entryway, thumbs rocking back and forth inside his pockets as he stared off with a dumbfounded smile.

Witherby froze, hands clenching at the sudden noise. A moment passed, then two-- his eyes closed in recognition, shoulders slumping back to where they were, and he continued on, as if Neville had never called him out in the first place. "Impressive, is it not?" he wondered aloud, talking to no one in particular. His eyes betrayed his ruse as they flickered between Neville and the case. "Apparently they found it cheaper to leave all the merchandise here than to send a team to extract it."

Neville let out a 'hah', walking closer to where Witherby stood. He turned to stand behind him, resting his head over his unoccupied shoulder. "Didn't take you for a historian."

He shrugged him off. "Then you clearly do not know me."

Sheesh.

Neville sat in that silence for longer than he should have, counting the seconds as they passed, as if that would make either of them talk any faster. It was of no use. Wibs was one of those people who could pretend you didn't exist for as long as he wanted-- perhaps it was just a skill that he picked up from the job. Either way, he'd have to be the initiator. Just like at the water cooler, really! Like old times.

"So..." he said, resting his weight over the case like one would at a bar, "You come here often?"

"About as often as anyone else. Hadn't noticed this path even existed before they put up that poster. The printing made that door inside his mouth jut out-- it just... looked unnatural."

"Yeah, you'd know all about holes in men's mouths, wouldn't you?"

He let out an exhale, his hand pinching the bridge of his nose-- Neville cackled at his own joke all the while. Finally, Witherby opened his eyes again. "We just let you speak all the time, don't we?"

"Don't give me that, man! You're all out and about twenty-four seven!" Neville threw his hands in the air. "Who am I gonna tell all my material to, Ria?"

"Oh, I feel your 'material' may be too high-brow for her," he stated, flatly. "And you should give her more credit. She's trying."

"I'm just saying you can't give me that look just because you gave me a ball and I happened to swing it."

Witherby let out a wry smile. "So now we're talking about balls?"

Neville's cheeks caught the slightest tint of flustering red, eyes wide as plates. "Listen-- not fair!"

The other man returned to the glass case as Neville coughed away the embarrassment --and the dust--, amusement never leaving the glint in his eye. At long last, Neville cleared his throat, his signature cool-guy smile coming back as if nothing had ever happened. "All right! Okay. Listen. What's up with this? If you want help getting into that box, you know..."

“For you to smash it open?” Witherby spared him only a glance. “No need.”

He reached into his sleeve, pulling out two bobby pins; he tore the ‘head’ off the first one with his teeth, then got down on one knee. Then, he bent the second bobby pin into the shape of a lever and rested the first one on top of it-- a makeshift lockpicking tool.

“Woah.” Neville whistled, leaning forward. “New party trick?”

“Hardly.”

The bobby pins pressed on the locks inside the case, pushing them up through trial and error; one by one they gave a soft click, until the case gave in with a ‘pop’. Peeking in, Neville could get a better view of the case’s contents: six sets of jewelry-- two pairs of earrings, two necklaces, two watches-- all neatly laid out for the best combination of storage and appeal. It was pretty to look at, for sure-- he could probably spend the rest of his natural life tracing out the inlays in some of them, but...

“You, uh... got a girlfriend, or something?”

Witherby turned to him with a raised brow. “Hm?”

“Or! Or a boyfriend! I don’t actually know! I was just doing a bit!” Neville’s shoulders tensed up, his hands going up to his chest as if fending a tiger off. “I’ve just never seen you around these kinds of places, man, and it’s not like I knew a lot about you back when we worked, you know, there, and you spend all of your time working, and I don’t know where you go when you aren’t working? I’m just-- I’m doing what Devy does. I’m just asking. Are you just selling this off? Is that legal? I thought you were a tech guy, that’s all.”

The silence in the room was nearly deafening in itself. Neville could feel Witherby’s gaze as he looked at him; his black eyes, focused and unreadable, remained locked onto his... but what were they looking for? Ah, fuck, he cocked this one up. It’s fine. This is probably fine, right? He’d just wait for Witherby to dismiss him, and then he’d leave, and it would be as if none of that conversation ever happened. He counted the seconds. He kept track of each moment he was still staring. Just so he’d know.

Eleven seconds.

Witherby’s eyes looked up, then left, as if recalling something-- and then he laughed. Not a chuckle, or a brief exhale. No, he laughed, putting his hand up to his mouth to stifle the noise. With his other hand he caught the flashlight before it could fall off from its nook around his neck, leaving it pointed to the ground as he shook whatever he thought was so funny off of him.

“Oh, no, nothing like that! I’ve never been good with computers. I’m not seeing anyone, either.” He reached for a pair of earrings in the display case-- two silver studs in the shapes of crosses-- and nonchalantly pushed the edges of hair back as he put them on. “These are for me. Although perhaps I could trade these off. It’s not like we get paid in fiat currency.”

Neville couldn't help but stare at his coworker's ears. "Oh. I didn't know your ears were-- nevermind, that's, uh... stupid. What I was about to say! Not... not you." He cleared his throat. This was dumb. This was so, so dumb. How the hell did he manage to miss all that information? Did Devona ever catch it? He had so many questions. "So... you like this stuff?"

"It's one of the luxuries of this world. Food is very... temporary." Witherby's hands had moved onto the necklaces; he rolled them out over his palm, bringing them closer to the light as he examined each one. "I take it you don't change clothes very often."

"Yeah, no. Kinda busy trying not to get murdered, and all that." He said, banging at his chestplate for emphasis. "Especially with those weird ones that can walk through walls. Gotta stay safe, right?"

"I do not blame you, Neville. I was just making an observation."

Neville merely watched as Witherby's eye remained trained onto the jewelry-- he put them back in the box as he went through them, as if discarding players for a draft. He saw him pause at the last one-- a golden chain-- as he brought it up to the light, extending it in Neville's direction. Devona did that whenever she was trying to get a good shot-- what was he trying to do?

"Take off your tie."

"Wha-- huh? This?" He replied, grabbing its edge from where it was tucked into his shirt.

He nodded. "Just hand it over."

"Oh. Yeah, sure. Here you go, man."

Neville grabbed and pulled it out of place, the knot untying itself with the force, and leaving his hand holding it up like one would a fresh catch. As if on cue, Witherby stepped closer to him, necklace in hand; he put his hands around Neville's neck, wrapping the piece with a gentle touch, and letting it hang over his pristine white suit, while Witherby pocketed the tie.

"There," he said, patting his shoulders with the tips of his fingers.

Neville blinked, brow furrowed, tilting his head down to try and see the chain. "I don't get it."

Witherby let out a sigh. "I figured you wouldn't. Here."

With that same grip on his shoulders, Neville felt a push as he appeared to want to lead him somewhere. Well, why not? He let the shove walk him through the shop, the lone flashlight serving as the guide, until they turned towards an area labeled the 'changing room'. The light flashed back at them as it got reflected; he'd been led to a mirror. Neville stood still as he took in the change, pacing in place as if to help him see everything better.

Witherby leaned back against the wall, crossing his arms. "The red is striking, but... gold suits you much better. It brings out your eyes."

“Woah. Hey. I guess it does.” Neville reflexively gave his reflection a double thumbs-up, wide grin spreading across his face. “It’s like, shiny. Man, wish I’d brought my glasses--” he patted himself down-- “That would’ve been a good look.”

“Maybe.” Witherby stared off into the mirror, face as unreadable as ever. “...perhaps we could find you a whole outfit in this section. I’m sure if they kept jewelry, they must’ve kept some new sunglasses.”

Neville’s face practically beamed at the thought. “Really? Dude-- that’s cool! You’re the best!” He turned to face Witherby and tossed his arm over the man’s shoulder, pulling him into a hug.

“Wait. This is a friend thing, right? You’re not trying to buy me out?”

“I don’t work in my off-hours,” he replied, matter-of-factly.

“Okay, cool. Second question. Won’t people notice if we walk out with anything?”

“They don’t have security here like we used to. I assure you they won’t notice.”

“Isn’t that like... like a crime?”

“Oh, Neville.” He smiled back to him, that aura of deliberately manufactured mystery hanging in the air ever so slightly. “You’re about to learn a lot of things about me.”

This was weird. You work with a guy for so long, and you don’t really get to know him. Not like where they worked on was known for fostering good on-site relationships, you know, with people dropping dead every day. But their little group was something different, They’d all died, or close to died, back there, and yet here they were: alive and kicking, like it never happened. Maybe it’d be a good idea to start getting the gang together. Get to know each other. And, if this universe wasn’t against it, maybe even live a little.

“Yeah, okay. I’m ditching if we get caught, though.”

“Whatever you say,” he answered, both of them walking back into the store.

Light and Void

<http://www.farragofiction.com/LightAndVoid/>

Nevy! Hi!

I feel REAAAALLY bad about the whole 'assuming you were dating Witherby' thing. And I could tell you were getting overwhelmed trying to figure out if you even liked him like that on your own...

So!

I thought maybe I could help you out like I do with Training research?

I've attached ALL the stuff I could find on bisexuality and how to tell if you are and all that, and I figure you can do your thing to it and figure out what parts actually matter?

Love (but not that way!)

Devy

\*The remainder of the text is pulled out paragraphs from legitimate articles about bisexuality. This research was used in a blackout poem. The retrieved parts were assembled here in whole. For original experience, see <http://www.farragofiction.com/LightAndVoid/?dearWitherby=true/> \*



How To Tell If You (Neville) are Bisexual (for Witherby).

search:

<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bisexual>

characterized by sexual or romantic attraction  
to people of one's own gender identity and of other gender identities  
of both male and female reproductive structures

<https://kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/kinsey-scale.php>

sexual behavior, thoughts, and feelings towards the same or opposite sex were not always  
consistent across time.

[https://kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/historical-report-diversity-of-sexual-orientation.p  
hp](https://kinseyinstitute.org/research/publications/historical-report-diversity-of-sexual-orientation.php)

the Human Male (1948)

some overt homosexual experience to orgasm  
for years  
a range exclusive experience/response  
up to the time of the interview

a classification scheme to measure sexual orientation.

(not random)

reported having had homosexual experiences "frequently" or "ongoing."

men

attempted to differentiate between sexual attraction, sexual behavior, and sexual identity

<https://academic.oup.com/sf/article/97/3/1067/5045222>

"Why do i  
identify as LGBTQ  
?"

emotional attractions and sexual attractions, practices, desires, and fantasies

always cluster

i seek to understand why  
."

<https://www.insider.com/guides/health/sex-relationships/biomantic>

<https://www.menshealth.com/sex-women/a39431976/biomantic-meaning/>

"People often say when they're referring to romantic and sexual attraction, it's a way to hop in the sheets

,

happily dating a partner whom they love deeply.

"The first step is knowing —which can be tricky. "

"Such activities include snuggling, holding hands, going on romantic dates, exchanging romantic words, sharing a bed, being in a committed relationship. someone you want intimacy with."

"Ultimately, you get to decide. Try to not rush the process."

<https://www.healthline.com/health/am-i-bisexual>

give me a sense of comfort  
give me a sense of adventure  
Is it fun to think about?  
Does the thought make me happy?  
Does it make me feel good about myself?  
Does it give me a sense of challenge?  
Does it give me support?  
Does it give me anything else I'm after?

If you answered yes to any of the above, You're absolutely valid."

<https://www.cosmopolitan.com/sex-love/a27574705/am-i-bisexual/>

"The thing that makes it kinda tragic: subversive and hard to pin down, hard to actually see. It doesn't fit neatly. there aren't exactly rules —you just sort of know it when you feel it."

"That's not to say you won't spend hours, if not years, of your life wondering if you really are But maybe all that questioning is part of the fun. Or at least a necessary step."

"There were some inklings and vibes for a while, but it didn't feel like it became a fact until I found myself truly flustered for the first time in a long time."

I hoped he would kiss me.”

Clown Diary Sim

<http://www.farragofiction.com/ClownDiarySim/>

Yongiki

Day 1

6/1/2007

Viktor said that I should have a diary. They said it would help me better remember things and concepts. I thought about it and I think they're right. I think a lot better when I'm writing because I can look back at what I wrote and I don't have to do it all at once.

So I got this journal from one of the abandoned shops down here. It has a clown with a gun as the cover. I don't really get it but I like their red nose and eyes. I think it really suits them.

Words Of The Day:none

Day 2

6/2/2007

I showed Viktor my journal. They said it looks really nice but that I should keep it to myself because it's for my thoughts. So I'm not sharing it anymore. They also said that I should emphasize any new concepts I learn because then I can see how good I'm getting at learning new words and that way I can count how many I'm learning per day.

Today I learned the word centennial. It means 'a hundredth anniversary'. The people who made this notebook made it on the centennial. I don't know what was so important about this clown book that they had to do it on that day but they did it anyway.

I'm glad they did it. I like the clown notebook.

Words Of The Day:centennial

Day 3

6/3/2007

Khana came to talk to me today. He said he wanted to hang out and I was bored so I said yes. He let me use my notebook the whole time too. I asked him if it bothered him because Viktor said that some people would see it as impolite but after I told him it was a journal he didn't care at all. He said that some people might find it rude but that I should do it anyway because it's my notebook. He then told me some stories and taught me the word 'defenestrate'.

Apparently it's when you toss something out of a window. He said he'd gotten into a bar fight at some point and he had defenestrated a guy. I don't think it makes a lot of sense because he's always carrying a wrench so I pointed that out. He said he didn't have the wrench back then but yeah maybe if he did have it he would have just hit him.

I liked hanging out with Khana. We don't do that a lot but I like it when we do even if he's kind of weird. That's fine. I'm kind of weird. I don't know who's right though. Viktor is very smart but Khana talks to a lot more people. Maybe I'll sleep on it and decide later.

Words Of The Day: defenestrate

Day 4

6/4/2007

I think there's a rat inside the walls. It has to be big because I could hear it when I went to sleep. It makes noises along the wall whenever it comes by. That means it skitters. I don't know if it lives nearby or if it was just passing through but I don't think Viktor would like it if I told them there was a big rat. Maybe it won't come back. We'll see if it comes back.

Words Of The Day: skitters

Day 5

6/5/2007

Heard the rat again. This time I told Khana and he woke up to check. He said he could hear it as well and that we probably had to stop it from nesting. So he used his wrench and he slammed it into the wall several times. He has to be really strong because he didn't sweat at all. Then the skittering stopped. He said that we probably had to do that a couple more times so that it'd stop prowling. That means that it's hunting and looking around. So he's staying with me for the rest of the night.

It's morning now. Or at least the clock says so. It's hard to tell down here. Khana was swinging at the wall but he said it was because he was bored. I'm going to prowl around for something good for all of us to eat and then maybe tomorrow I'll go ask the Training team to see if they know about any rats.

Words Of The Day: nesting, prowling

Day 6

6/6/2007

Today I went to the higher floors. It was very nice. I like seeing all the people and the shops. I told Viktor I was going and they told me to be careful. They weren't very happy that I told them I was going to see the Training team but they said that I should only trust Devona and Neville. I thought all of them were really nice when I went there but I can't see a reason to disobey orders.

I asked Devona if she knew about any rats. She said she had seen some rats close to some of the old bakeries and I asked her if she could help me look and she said okay. So we went down to the left wing (I know what a wing is obviously but in this case it means like a department. She also told me you can say 'wing it' like you're improvising something (doing it without preparing). There's a lot of ways to say the word wing).

She was really scared the whole time. I asked her and she said it's because she's afraid of the dark. I asked her if she was scared of the dark because we were winging it and she said yes. So that made sense.

We looked around and saw a lot of ants and rats but we didn't see any big rats. She said she hadn't seen any big rats and asked me how big I thought the rat was. I told her I thought it was about as big as a chair or maybe a bit less. She said that rats don't grow that big and asked if I saw it. I didn't see it. So she scratched her head and told me I should see if it comes back and then tell her. And that was fine by me so I said yes.

Either way I enjoyed our adventure. I learned a bunch of new words and I like how her hair is all bouncy when she walks. She said that if I ever want to hang out I should ask her. I think I will.

Words Of The Day:wing, wing it, improvising

Day 8

6/8/2007

Sorry I didn't write yesterday. It was really uneventful (I learnt this one myself, it means an event didn't happen). I asked, Viktor if I had to write every day, and they said I don't have to, and that it's my diary so I can do what I want with it. And that made sense, so I didn't write. I also showed them a page, because I wanted, and they said that they shouldn't be looking at it, but that if I really wanted advice, then I should use commas more, because it helps space out the sentence. So, I'm trying them out to see if they, help.

I invited Devona and Khana to hang out though. I don't think they like each other, because when we were walking around he'd get closer to her and then she would get away, and then he would do it again, and at that point the compromise was that I was in the middle of them. I had fun but I don't think they did. Devona doesn't like talking about when she feels bad. I told Khana that she looked upset, and he said he didn't get why, when he wasn't harassing her (annoying her? Being hostile or mean).

I don't know. Hanging out feels like a lot of work. I don't mind the work, but it feels really hard to know what everyone likes, and then they're upset. I think I just will not hang out for some time. That way I can decide if I like being alone more.

Words Of The Day:uneventful, harassing

Day 12

6/12/2007

I think I like being alone a bit more than I like being near people. Not that I don't like people. But the point is, when I'm by myself, no one gets upset. If people ask me to hang out, then that's fine, but if I have to ask then I feel bad, like I'm carrying something really heavy by myself. Also people expect me to talk and I don't always feel like talking a lot. Sometimes I don't want to talk at all. So if I don't want to talk to anyone, I don't hang out.

It does mean I haven't learned any new words though, so I looked around and found a dictionary. It's a book full of words and what they mean. One I learned is 'flummox'. It means that something is confusing. It also means something is perplexing, which means the same thing. It's funny how there are so many words which are the same thing.

Remember that rat? I found a hole in a secret wall two days ago, and that flummoxed me, because it didn't look like the holes Khana makes with his wrench. It was a perfectly round hole the size of my fist. I think the rat walks through there, so I think if I leave food in there, the rat will pick it up and eat it. If it doesn't, then maybe it's not a rat.

I think I have a good idea about what would make it come out. I'm going to set it up today, and then I will write down the results tomorrow.

Words Of The Day:dictionary, flummox, perplexing

Day 13

6/13/2007

Last night I offered it slices of cheese and ham. My thought process-- the way I think or why I think the way I do, you can also say train of thought-- is that if it's a rat, it would eat the cheese, and if it was something bigger like a cat, it would eat the meat.

But it ate them both. They were gone by the time I woke up. I went to put down more cheese and more ham, and immediately-- really really quickly-- after I left it ate those as well. I think it likes the cheese, but it also ate the ham. Maybe it likes both.

At least I know that it likes to skitter around that hole, but I'm not sure what it is anymore. I want to ask, but I don't want to have to care about what they think, the dictionary is so much easier. I don't know. I'll think about how I feel later.

Words Of The Day:thought process, train of thought

Day 14

6/14/2007

I've been feeding the rat. Whenever I go prowling for food, I make sure to sneak in some cheese and ham for the rat. It always eats it, no matter what time of day it is. I tried sticking my hand to see if I could touch it, and I found out that the hole is broader (deeper) than I thought it was. When I finally touched something, It felt viscous (wet, slimy) and full of teeth. I think it was its mouth. I'm more surprised that it didn't bite me, it just waited until I pulled my fingers out. I think I got close to its snout when I did because it started sniffing at my hand really loudly, but after I stopped it stopped.

I'm going to call him Harold. It's a nice name for a rat.

Words Of The Day:broader, viscous

Day 18

6/18/2007

I don't think Harold's a rat.

When I was coming back today to get it food, I saw its hands. It had human hands, but its fingernails were long and dirty and they bent downwards (they curled down). It went back in the hole when I looked at it, so I thought it was avoiding me. But then, I put the ham near the hole and it came out to grab it, it didn't even wait until I wasn't looking.

Maybe it trusts me. Or maybe it can't see that I'm there. This whole thing flummoxes me.

I tried for a couple of hours, and now it will grab the food right out of my hand. I don't think I'm going to keep doing that, though. I don't know what it is, but I hate its nails on my skin.

Words Of The Day:bent downwards

Day 19

6/19/2007



I heard it speak.

'There is respite beneath the earth. Beneath the earth. The arms of its clock will reach us. I must keep digging. Keep digging. The third trumpet will set me free.'

It repeated variations (different ways) of that over and over for the rest of the day, and then it stopped. I think I've heard its voice before, but I don't know where.

I wonder if we're friends.

Words Of The Day:respite, beneath, variations

Day 25

6/25/2007

I've been talking to the hole person.

That sounds bad. But it's nice. I don't like talking to the others anymore. They start getting worried when I talk about the hole, and then they start hitting me in the head to check my mental corruption. The hole person doesn't judge, as weird as it is. If I get upset, I can walk away, and I don't think it gets upset, but it can probably walk away.

It says stuff all the time. I can just listen, and read along with my dictionary, and I learn a lot of words from it.

I asked if it had a name, and, apparently, it doesn't have one, because it has many. I asked if I could call it Harold, and it said that was fine. It's been telling me all about something called the hole at the end of the world, and that if you jump in it, it can take you anywhere. Once you enter it, you can never exit it, you can only go through the tunnels inside it. But right now, the hole is clogged. Something about how we're stuck.

I asked if there was something I could do about it. It said it was impossible to unclog it, and that all we could do was wait. Harold said it so matter-of-factly, like it was the most obvious solution in the world. It doesn't like waiting, but also if you wait long enough, it becomes natural.

It also told me a lot of stories. They were all pretty magical; something about a city of lights and symbols where death is the only truth, a world in the past where some heroes have to collect the shards of a jewel, a story about a place where your brain and a computer are the same thing. When I'm not talking to it, that's all it rambles on about.

I like them. The stories. Some are familiar, like I remember them, and some are like something I've had happen to me. Everything is always somewhat fuzzy for me, but when I hear something that makes sense, it feels like my head gets lighter, and I can think a little bit faster. Like there's more and more... me.

I wish the others got it. I wish they'd understand.

Words Of The Day:apparently, clogged, unclog, matter-of-factly, rambles, fuzzy

Day 26

6/26/2007

They found out.

Devona found the spot I'd been hiding in, and she saw Harold's hand. She panicked and took a picture, and then Harold scuttled away. She asked if I was okay, and I think I got angry, because I started yelling at her for scaring it. Then she started crying, and I didn't know what to do about that, so I left.

Then later her brother found me, and he punched me. He said I was going to 'get it' if I made his sister cry like that again. So I punched him back, and then we started fighting.

He is good at it, but not as good as me. I had him on the floor when Devona showed up again, and she was a large bird with sharp teeth and a mouth on her stomach. She charged at me and bit me a bunch of times, but again, she's not as good at fighting as I am, so I knocked her out and I left, but then her brother turned into a huge bird, and the same thing happened. I wasn't incredibly hurt, but I had a pretty big gash on my arm from all the biting, so I went to find somewhere to cover it up.

I had some time on my own to tend to my wounds before Viktor and Khana showed up. They asked me what was going on, and if I was okay, and they did their best to cover up my arm. I told them about the hole and about Devona finding the hole, and about how then they turned into birds, and Viktor nodded. They said they'd look into it, but that I needed to stop obsessing over that hole and that I needed to rest. So now I'm laying down.

I don't want to stay around for too long. They're going to find out about the hole, and then they're going to clog up the hole, and then Harold will be trapped back there. I think I'm going to leave. That way they can't find me. That way I can just wait until Harold comes back.

Words Of The Day:obsessing

Day 27

6/27/2007

Harold isn't here today.

Words Of The Day:none

Day 28

6/28/2007

Harold isn't here today, either.

Words Of The Day:none

Day 29

6/29/2007

Nothing to report.

Words Of The Day:none

Day 34

7/4/2007

Maybe Harold isn't coming back.

I don't know what to do about that. I don't feel as bad as before. I guess it was right that when you wait for long enough, you get used to it. It's only been a week, and I feel like I could wait forever.

I could quit now and go back to the team, but I don't want to go back. I don't want them to be upset with me about what I did. If they punch me again I'm going to punch them back, and then we'll have to fight, and I don't want that.

I'd rather stay here and wait. It's a lot easier to wait.

Words Of The Day:none

Day XX

7/12/2007

I lost count. I forgot what I wrote here. But I'm writing because I saw it. I finally saw it.

I looked at the hole today. It was standing outside of the hole like it was waiting for me.

Its body is human, but like if it was left on a shelf and forgotten, covered in dust head to toe. Its hair is long and unkempt all over. It has a uniform but it's very dirty. You can't tell if it was any color other than brown. Its eyes are bloodshot red.

I know because it looked at me.

I'm going to go talk to Harold again. I know what I have to do now.

Words Of The Day:none

Day XX+1:

7/13/2007

I don't know where to start.

I woke up today on the Training Team bed. They were all looking at me and they looked upset. They said that they found me screaming about clocks and trying to dig down with my nails. I can tell that's true because right now they're covered in bandages and they hurt a lot when I write. I can tell it's been a while because I haven't shaved. The clean-cut one (I don't know his name) asked me if I was okay. I told him I wasn't sure. He then asked me what I remembered. I told him I remembered a hole person and then a sharp pain in my arm. He told me that made sense, because they found a bullet in me. So I got shot. They currently think the bullet made me go crazy. I don't know if that's true but I don't know if it's not true either.

Khana came to check on me. He said it was good to know I didn't 'fuck off and die'. I told him I was sorry I didn't tell him sooner and he said 'yeah you should have' in that tone he does when he's angry. Then he sighed and said that it was 'water under the bridge' and that at least I was okay.

Devona's brother (his name is Neville) showed up as well. He apologized for beating me up but also said that he wasn't apologizing for beating me up but more because he beat me up without finding out why he was doing that. I said it was okay. He said I'm really good at fighting and I told him that I know that. He asked for some tips and I told him I'm not very good at teaching but we could fight later and he was excited about that.

Then Devona showed up and she didn't say anything. I told her I was sorry that I made her cry. She told me she was sorry that she scared me. She asked me if I was angry at her. I said I wasn't. Then Neville asked if she'd like to watch us fight and she asked if we could watch a fighting movie instead. I was fine with that and so was he so we're doing that later.

The reason I'm writing all of this down is because I was asked to. Apparently their Captain wants my journal. For 'research'. They'll even trade me a new notebook and a nice pen for it. They could have it be clown themed but I don't think I like clowns anymore.

I feel bad about giving them a book that also has my bad thoughts. But they say their captain is very shy and she doesn't say a word. I also don't feel comfortable holding this anymore. It's all a really bad memory.

So this is the last entry on this notebook. I hope this is all useful. And I'm sorry I didn't tell everything sooner. I just wanted to be understood.

I hope the next one has a nice painting of a bird on it.

Words Of The Day:none

## Bulletproof Theory

<http://www.farragofiction.com/BulletproofTheory/>

It never gets any easier to do what they do.

Not that they are not accustomed to it, of course-- they are not winning any awards, but they have committed it to memory. What it does mean is that they carry themselves in a way that is territorial and somewhat hostile at worst, and stoic at best. Of course they know-- they do it on purpose.

Everyone, however, thinks that they have a bulletproof theory on why that is.

Khana suspects they remain so bitter because of the state of their body, worn down by the trials presented by the corporation; they could not be further from the truth. It is true that the injuries they have sustained have changed their life: they cannot move like they used to, and in some states they might come to begrudge it. But the world goes on either way, and the expectation of life after injury is greatly exaggerated.

The Training Captain, instead, believes their pain to come from their curse, as it isolates them from the world, forcing them to live their life unseen, unheard. This has some weight, but it is still incorrect. Had they no responsibilities, they would gladly spend their days as some sort of lesser beast: mindlessly scaring the populace, feeding off their corpses, and gratifying their desire to be seen. But their duty to their team demands they walk the line of humanity, so human they shall stay, at the expense of both the victim and the monster within them.

The rest of that captain's team have had their theories, as well. Most of them have indulged the thought at least once. Some, like the short one with the bouncy hair, have the decency to discuss it in private. The one in the suit asks them outright, which is a futile manner. The blond one still does not notice anything is wrong.

Only one of them ever guessed right. The chain smoker, the heavy drinker, the rambling addict with the conspiracy walls. Often more pitied than respected. She didn't guess it right by some sort of innately genius observation. No, nothing like that. She figured it out because she's been there.

What hurts, what weighs them down, is the burden of knowledge.

The corporation committed many crimes against them all. It promised them the world then stole not just their lives, but their futures. It let them be mangled and torn, physically and mentally, in ways no human was meant to bear, then blamed it on their weakness. Its foulest act, however, remains quite simple: the corporation changed them irrevocably.

In a better world-- this world, even-- their abilities would've translated into something mundane, but fulfilling. But the state of the furniture is not something one considers when constructing a building. A fridge that stops working is to be replaced, a broken chair tossed aside; so there they are, broken frames that were once men, reduced to gibbering lunatics and strips of beaten code, forced to repeat the same actions for eternity. Had they known anything else, they

might've all settled into this reality with some finality. Instead their souls remain haunted by creatures that never could've been and a system that does not exist anymore. All their citations are written in a system that was never conceived in the first place.

Had that been all that haunted them, though, they wouldn't still talk about it. Why lead, knowing all of this? It would be easier to quit, to hide under the stairs until they starve, to become the monster this world wishes them to be-- anything but to push forward. So, why?

Simple. They still lead because they have to, haunted by their own debt to a man who is no longer there.

Some would say that there is nothing of their old mentor left in the strange shell of a man they have today, eagerly sticking their hands in oven burners and in other animals' mouths: that whatever is left today is a creature of mindless obedience, soothed only by the rules they have placed upon him, corralled into a make-believe story where there are reasons to do anything at all. Perhaps they've deluded themselves into waiting for some revelation, or rapture, that will never come.

But they still see him. Fuck, do they still see him. He still stands up straight, and he still likes writing, and he still speaks with that soft-spoken yet well-mannered tone, and he still speaks in questions, endless questions, none of them ever superfluous.

The core of his being persists, even after all these years, and still yearns to know it all.

They do not hope to ever get their captain back-- that dream is long dead. To still dare to hope would be insanity. So many times they have seen him make progress, and that many times they have seen him slide back into endless nothing, accompanied only by the cold embrace of nescience. And it hurts. It hurts more than anything to experience that loss over and over again.

It's not something they can fix. Nor something they want to fix. To fix him is to deny his identity as the same man, or to imply that the one standing next to him is any less real.

But they will push that rock up that cliff, climb that mountain with only their hammer, until his friend can live again. And if K needs that same direction, that same persistence, that same shelter from the rain until he can figure himself out, then he shall receive it as well.

When their team has moved on, nestled nicely in the trivialities of someone else's lives, then they will rest, receding into the void to which they belong. Until then, they are the captain of Information.

And nothing-- not even Training-- will stand in their way.

A Personal Transcript.

<http://www.farragofiction.com/APersonalTranscript/>

Uh, Week 3. Date is the 5th of July, 1983. This is Researcher Ria, written as R5 of the current Theta Department. This is the daily report on Dev-- I-- I mean, L-O-R4.

[CLEARS THROAT.]

It has been... a rough couple of days, but it has gotten better from where she first started. She doesn't freak out and starts attacking us at random anymore, and she's started being able to hold... her normal form... again, at least while sleeping. She sleeps a lot still... sixteen hours every day, and then maybe stays awake for eight. We've had to double up on food rations, but she doesn't seem particularly interested in eating meat like we expected, which is... a relief, honestly. As for rehabilitation, she currently responds well to being given social activities, and, uh, just about nothing else? And she does not respond well when we attempt to stop her from hunting. It, uh... it makes her hostile. Very hostile.

I... I've tried tracking down the rando myself, to see if maybe if we just found them she'd calm down again? But the more I stare at the info we have the more I just don't get it. It doesn't make any sense. It's been three weeks. If they didn't mean it, I would've found something already, but it was too clean, you know? The armor won't even let you just shoot someone once. They clearly knew how to get around it, or maybe they didn't, and just lucked out. I can't have that all up for her to see, she'll lose it, but--

Oh, wait. Ending log. She's coming over here.

[STEPPING CAN BE HEARD. IT PROGRESSIVELY GETS LOUDER AND CLOSER.]

Hey, girl. What's wrong? That nightmare again?

[ANXIOUS FLUTTERING.]

Oh... I'm sorry. I'm-- it's alright. I'm here, okay? Be-- be careful with the coat! I don't know if you'd want to talk about it, I-- I mean, you can't, but, but, uh, I guess if you can't... I could ramble if it'd make you feel better?

That's okay? Yeah, alright. What to talk about...

I've been updating the wall again! Yeah, I've put some stuff around... I had to tear some of the old stuff down, though. It was clogging my mind up, you know? Weighing the thoughts down. Getting me distracted. We, we don't need half of them anymore, and they weren't leading anywhere, and it's not like we get that much info on Mr. Cassan anymore, and I needed... I needed to keep all our chores noted down somewhere, and I was gonna miss them if I didn't put them on the wall, so I put them on the wall. Yeah, our stuff is all there. Wib's shifts are actually



cataloged now, so he knows when he has to switch shifts with me and when he doesn't, and he actually came up to me yesterday and he pulled me aside! He was like, oh, this is actually pretty convenient Ria, and he had been having problems keeping track, and that he appreciated it, which I thought was crazy, right? Like "oh my gosh, he actually thanked me", you know. I mean, you know him, he doesn't really tend to talk to us like that, or really acknowledge that kind of stuff-- really kind of aloof like that, super job-focused, so I was happy to know! I'm really glad he told me. Especially because I'm not really good at it, so it's not perfect, but, but-- it doesn't have to be? It just works out. I'm glad it helps.

I don't know what Mil thinks about it though. It's... she's not gonna tell me. I know she's not going to, but it's so hard, you know? I mean, she used to tell me these things, and now she can't, and... I mean, even... back then... she found her way to let me know stuff, like she'd take a bow, or she'd give me a pat, and that last one was weird but at least she was doing the effort of letting me know, like... I knew if she was okay with what I was doing. And now she mostly just gets angry at me, and I'm just like, what did I do wrong, right? I started making this wall because she gave me that job, and then she gets upset when I do it, it's like eggshells. I'm tired of feeling like I have to sidestep her because she won't even try--

[SOMETHING RUBS UP AGAINST THE MICROPHONE.]

Argh-- careful with the nuzzling, Devy, you're heavy! Bplth-- you're going to make me eat your feathers! Ack--! Okay, Devy! Down! Not my hair! Yeah. Yeah, thank you.

I know you care, Devy-- you let me know stuff all the time, so don't worry about it, alright? I'm fine. And I'm sorry it's been hard, ever since... yeah. Listen, we'll get that d-hole, alright? We'll make him pay. You're safe here. Make yourself comfortable, okay?

[THERE'S SOME COOING BEFORE THE SOUND OF SOMETHING SCRUNCHING OFF GOES OFF. THE MONSTER'S RUMBLING OVER THE MIC IS APPARENT AS IT DOZES OFF.]

That's-- that's a little bit too comfortable! Hey! Wake up! Argh. No, that's fine. I'll stay down here. Good night, Devy.

[SEVERAL MOMENTS PASS. AFTER THE TEN MINUTE MARK, THE MICROPHONE IS FISHED OUT OF WHERE IT HAD NESTLED ITSELF.]

Oh. Hm. That was all recorded, huh? Hm. Well. This is... this is Researcher Ria, reporting that what you have heard shows... no new occurrences. Nothing else to report.

Ending log.

## Unified Theory

<http://www.farragofiction.com/UnifiedTheory/>

“So tell me, R5.” They say it lightly; the ‘r’ is soft on their tongue, loaded with cautious curiosity. “What are we staring at?”

“It’s the Unified Theory. The reason the world is like this. The reason we should...” Her index and middle fingers twitch somewhat, holding a fictitious cigarette. The clean air sits heavy on her lungs. “Let it all die.”

“A bold scientific proclamation,” they utter. “Although not the first of its kind.”

There’s not a trace of humor in their voice. For them, it is merely a statement of the facts presented. Nothing more, nothing less.

“I mean, I know that. It’s not about us getting access to a better world, though.” She crosses her arms. “It’s about ending this one. That’s the whole problem with end of the world theories, they promise you an out. There’s no out here. It’s more... a sacrifice. You’re giving yourself up for a different future.”

“Fascinating.” Vik groans under their breath as they hunch forward on the sofa, propping their arms over their lap. “Okay, let’s see, then. Tell me about this ‘Unified Theory’ of yours.”

There’s a shine to her eyes. Beaming, even. It’s the light you see in children’s eyes when asked about their favorite dinosaur, except instead of a t-rex, it’s the apocalypse. Despite it, she fixes herself up in place, as if it’ll somehow hide her excitement.

It doesn’t.

“Oh. Alright. Cool cool cool.” She skitters over to her wall, pointing to its rightmost edge. “So, let’s start with the basics: the universe is the shape of a baby echidna Like-- a literal baby echidna, with no quills and its disgusting meat body, as illustrated here,” she says, pointing to a picture of said animal. Its folds are not cute to look at. “And that’s wrong, for reasons you can imagine. The world isn’t meant to exist in an echidna-like environment. This entire place was a mistake from the get-go, and we need to fix it.”

“Okay.” The captain’s face betrays little reaction-- as it always does. “Do tell... how does one measure the shape of the universe?”

She thinks on it for a moment, rolling the air-cigarette between her fingers before she answers. “You can’t-- not normally, at least. It’s too big to be measured. Thing is, some people can, because they have access to the World Code.”

“The World Code,” they echo.

They don’t sound impressed, but their statement is not one of judgment, either. She knows this. These words only look to bring attention to the idea. It is up to her to elaborate.

Ria coughs. “See, now that you say it again, maybe I should’ve led with that? Yeah. The World Code-- that’s a thing. I named it. It’s what makes up the universe, you see. The world is a simulation and only a handful of people know how it works-- and those are the building blocks.”

“Let’s say I believe you.” They do. They wouldn’t still be listening otherwise. “Can one learn this knowledge? This manipulation of the so-called ‘world code’?”

“I’ve tried.” She exhales with withheld fury. “Believe me, I’ve tried. None of the anomalies that do are exactly cool with people.”

“And these anomalies are?”

“That I’ve confirmed? The one with the flower in her eye. The CEO of the world. Gun boy.”

“Gun boy?”

“The zombie-looking one. He told me all about it, but he won’t do anything because that’d be ‘ruining the isekai’.”

“Ah. Parker.” they say, matter-of-factly. “Go on.”

“Right. So, the world. Because. it’s a simulation, that means that it’s... malleable. Not that it wasn’t before, but this is beyond atoms; it’s the very structure of reality at your fingertips. So the anomalies before us designed this world to suit their needs, built a little playground for themselves, and closed the door-- that’s why we loop, and why it ends in the year 2022. Whatever is after is something they don’t want to see.”

“Worse yet, going back to the echidna,” she shudders at the word, “the universe itself is wrong. How do we know that? Look no further than the god of loops and destruction, of course. Peewee Cassan. Either he’s a manifestation of the world’s desire to end, or he is god in the flesh, cast down for whatever reason. That doesn’t matter. What does is that he spells ruin for this whole setup, and it shows the truth that everyone is so busy ignoring: the universe wants to die, and it is being prevented. Through the loops, the anomalies... you name it.”

“Hm.”

Viktor sways their foot as they consider what she’s said, showing neither approval nor disdain in both posture and speech; there is only the ever-marching tick of the nearby clock for company, and she can feel each second weigh on her.

There are no other words to explain it, except that she hates this. Normally, when she talks about her theories, she’s met with many reactions: enthusiastic acceptance, pure rejection, and more often, nothing at all. Yet here she is, experiencing the rare yet familiar sensation of still judgment, and for a moment, after all this time, she can feel herself back at the company. Like she’s talking about the monster of the week for the fifteenth time, with only Camille’s cat smile for company, taking in every word with unspoken gravity.

It's different. Of course it's different, because Viktor is someone else entirely. There are no eyes staring up at her, no warm smile to comfort her; there is only their contemplation. If she didn't know better, she'd sooner guess her soul was being weighed for a chance at an afterlife.

But why does she care? Why does some other person's opinion matter so much to her, when she knows that she is right?

She's about to find out.

"Tell me, R5. What is your hypothesis?"

"My... my hypothesis?" Ria looks back at the board with a raised brow. "It's a theory. There's not just one hypothesis."

"Ah. I'm not being clear." They clear their throat. "What I mean is, what are you attempting to communicate? That there are fundamental laws of the world, or that the world needs to die?"

"Both. Both are important."

Viktor clasps their hands. Even though their position does not change, she can't stop her eyes from trailing down to them, as if magnetic in pull. "Then separate them. You're muddling your ideas together."

Ria blinks. Twice, even. Where she'd expected righteous anger, she only finds confusion. "I... huh?"

"Your ideas are not fundamentally flawed. Perhaps this world does need to end; I do not have the knowledge to make that call. But if you were to have handed me this at my job and told me to make the call on it, I would not even bother," they say, raising their index finger to her. "I see that you have done your due work, and that you have sources, and this is good. But you need to clear your head, R5. If you don't, no one but you will ever understand this."

"Clear... my head."

The words sit on the back of her throat. They taste somewhat bitter; the weight in her lungs screams that she should be angrier at this, but it doesn't come to her. Perhaps they did truly weigh her soul. "I have worked on this for centuries. I don't know what you want me to do here. I know this better than anyone, and..."

"And clearly I've spent more time formatting reports to be comprehensible by laymen." Viktor smirks. It's more playful than anything, proving their superiority in something so... trivial. "Here's what. Bring me your theory on the World Code first, since it appears to be the building block of your body of work. You know the format." They push themselves with their walker to a standing position. "I'll read it over for you, then give it back to you for pointers."

Ria fiddles with her hands, gaze darting between Viktor and the wall. "Oh. Okay. Yeah, that could-- that could work."

"Excellent. I expect to see it by next week."

Viktor turns to leave. She wants to bid them goodbye like a normal person. But she can't. There's one more question she needs to ask.

"Why?"

They stop. "Hm?"

"Oh. Uh-- why help? I don't-- I don't see how that helps you not be part of us, if you hate it so much."

"I'm not part of your team, R5. I am only promoting good investigative habits," they state, looking back at the wall. "And if you are insistent on burning down the world, make sure it is not the last mistake you make. This universe... has a lot of tricks under its sleeve."

"Alright. Yeah. That... makes sense." She smiles. "Thanks."

Viktor nods once, then heads out the door. With that, she's alone again with her thoughts, as she's gotten accustomed to being. Except now she has something else to do; after one hundred years, she has homework again.

She's going to have to fix this whole wall, isn't she?

Ria sighs. Time to get to work.

## An Unsent Letter

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AnUnSentLetter/>

Dear Ria,

This is not a report. There are no orders in this letter. Please take your time to sit down and make yourself comfortable.

I owe you an apology.

We ended things quietly, back then. We had no option but to. I could not afford to lose focus, lest I ceased to exist where you could have seen it. I would have hated to have you see me in a body bag, like so many of our acquaintances.

It has been a long time since then, at least for me. I have repeated these fifty years a dozen times by now, even if I rarely make it out in one piece. It has been something I have tried to hide from you all. I worried that if you knew, you may have seen me as a monster. I have seen you all die many, many times. I have killed you all myself many times as well; more than anyone should ever have to endure.

And yet, even after all this time, I have never stopped loving you, Ria. Not for a moment.

Perhaps not as ardently as I once did. I hate to admit it, but I have changed. The nature of our relationship has changed, as well; the balance between an Agent and a Captain hardly tends to make equals. I know that there were times where I had been stern or aloof towards you, but I did it because I didn't know what else to do, in my condition. I gave you the task I did because I knew you had always been the best at finding these connections, and your good judgment has many times been there to keep me focused. I thought the direction, a task to accomplish, would have helped you. Even when my voice was taken away, I had wanted nothing but to make you happy.

It did not work as I had hoped. Something hurt you enough to take everything else with you. I have seen you die a hundred times. Not once have you left a body-- yours, or anyone else's.

I cannot blame you. This world is bleak, indeed; a universe full of things that were meant to be, but never could. But there is much good in this world as well. There is sunshine and there is fresh grass. There are birds and animals and there is good food, and there are good friends. Perhaps this is the worst timeline, but I have found it quite forgiving.

I hoped I could have made you see that, as well.

But that was my mistake. It was foolish to have made your happiness my lone burden-- back then, and now. I alone could not protect you, and I never could have, for I stopped being able to give you what your heart longed for. Our relationship limped for so long because I was too proud to admit I could no longer love you in the way you wanted, and I am sorry for that.

That does not mean I do not remember it fondly.

Remember when it was just us, alone in those dead man shifts? I remember how you spoke to me about everything and nothing at all, each one of your words filled with such passion, such fervor. I never could stop myself from hanging onto every single one of them. It was like magic. You took all these ideas, all these concerns you had, all these observations about the world, and connected them in such a way that it just made sense, and when the magic of the craft became mundane, I became transfixed with the craftsman that woke up every day to make it so.

So, this is it. This letter is the closure I owed you, but never gave you.

If there is one thing you take out of it all, let it be this: our love was not failed love, and not any less real because it ended; there was a time in which our lives made sense together, and we took the chance to live in a world where to love was to risk immeasurable pain. And we did so: we loved each other, very, very much, and it was brave, and it was beautiful. I do not regret it, and I never will, for I am not ashamed to ever have loved someone as thoughtful, as passionate, and as unique as you.

It is a past we can never return to. It is gone, along with everything else. But it does not mean that it never happened. And if it hurts to remember me as your lover, I hope you will remember me as your friend.

When I finish writing this letter, my armor will punish me with a thousand deaths, and you will never see me again. I am not unfamiliar with death. I know you will cry when you read this, and it will hurt, and I apologize for that, but I had to do right by you one last time.

You may try to chase me in the veil beyond death, but I warn you that you will not find me. There is nothing after this universe worth seeing. You are meant to be here, with the team. They care about you as well, and they wish for you to be happy. I care about them immensely as well. Treat them well, and they will pay you back tenfold.

Everything must reach an ending one day. I am fine with this being mine. I will sooner die in honor, strong enough to take the chance so that you may truly live, than to live in fear of admitting that I ever cared.

See you in the next life, best friend,

Camille

## Ghoulish Thing

<http://www.farragofiction.com/GhoulishThing/>

The armor sticks to her like second skin.

It has always been with her, in the vague presence her patron has ever offered, but now it truly is part of her. She feels the pauldrons as her shoulders, the gauntlets as her arms, the cuirass as her chest; for lack of better words, it feels correct.

A part of her was lost when she accepted this armor. Now she knows what went missing: the fundamental truth that she has always been a monster, even before all this. That freakishly tall girl in school, who couldn't talk that well and had a bit too much weight to her punch. That creepy quiet woman at the corporation, who'd take the night-end shifts and just stand there for the duration, saying nothing. That ghoulish thing now, so focused on hunting monsters that she never once looked for the one within. For so long she's unwittingly played the monster in someone else's story. Now she knows, and she simply is.

Yet there's a part of her that knows there is more after this. After whatever she plans to do, there will be more, there is always more, and while the bliss is short-lived, the consequences are permanent. They will all remember what happens here. If she lets herself die here, gives in to her fear, she can still get out of this. There is still a choice.

But there is no point. She's already chosen.

Fear gushes out of her bleeding heart until it is nothing but an empty shell. What's left is the fury, the injustice, the overpowering hatred toward it all; years and decades and centuries of every gripe she's ever had laid to rest inside that coffin. Finally, they are all loose.

All she has to do is begin the inevitable end of all things, and she knows exactly where to start.

They don't stand a chance.

The sword drives itself with newfound hunger into the man's chest, each cut less precise and more vicious. His flesh is soft, rending itself at the lightest touch, parting with ease at the simplest gesture. Perhaps it wishes to be meat as much as any lesser creature.

Her gaze trends downwards to the body beneath her. They were all so weak. The birds were bound to give her some trouble, but once the small one was dead, all the big one could do was track; it did not have the sheer strength to overpower her, or the necessary pack tactics to out-flank her. The one with the cross does not even deserve a mention. She supposes that even god in a man's body is still just a man.

She's taken down three. Where's the fourth?

There she is-- on the floor, next to one of the bodies. The horror on her face is palpable, her coat and fingers soaked in blood from the pools spread so generously. She shakes and shakes, bloodied hand over her mouth, gripping as if it would stop her from ever making a sound.



It's the convenient thing of living for an eternity. Perhaps you don't grow bored, but you grow accustomed to many patterns: the lives of people, the state of the weather, the trends that come and go. Anything can be tracked with meticulous precision, as long as you are paying attention.

It is with that experience that she pinpoints the exact moment when her heart begins to break.

It starts as a giggle, nerve-wracked yet tepid. Then she chuckles. When no words come to her, when nothing but the sheer mania of it all settles in her mind, she laughs. She laughs and laughs as the flame within consumes her, soft meat replaced by inferno, her clothes serving as coals to further spread the itching fervor. The warrior's gaze is still as she finally collapses, and from her corpse rises a fire that will not go out.

With her work here complete she sheathes her blade and turns back. She ought to think of where to strike next, but before that, she stands there. Perhaps if she stays still for long enough, the newborn flame will do something interesting; her blade is at the ready, waiting for when it inevitably chooses to cause her harm.

What she does not expect is the fire to embrace her, flames licking at her feet with immeasurable restraint. Even without a voice, it speaks-- no, it sings. About how it's so glad she finally understands. How it knew she'd get it. And about how much, oh, how much, it loves her.

There is no hope for this world. Once, she thought this to be a delusion she had inflicted upon herself.

Now, it is real. It is the only thing that is.

This union is wrong, and it is ugly. No man was meant to spiral on its nature like this, letting itself be overtaken by the death yearned by all living beings.

But for a strange, blissful moment, it doesn't matter. Their dreams and aspirations simply peel off them, the void left replaced by each other's warmth. Only the two of them remain, haunted yet divine, charring heat against burning flesh, their armor white-hot. United as one.

One fills the other's head with whispers, with adoration, with the shallow love of middle-schoolers. She dances and twirls and clings, humming in sing-song tones about the end of the world, cheering on her kindred flame. Just because it is fickle does not mean it is not genuine- she says it over and over again: I love you, I love you, I love you.

The other one can never respond, her throat pipe long-gone between fire and restraint. Perhaps some things are not meant to change. But in each swing of her blade lays devotion for her lover, every charred bone an offering, and for the first time in forever, there is no need for words.

There is no redemption in this hell they have made; here lays the judgment for their transgressions, their imperfections, their sins. One day there'll be no more to burn, and this wasteland they've created shall be their grave.

At least, when the time comes, they will go out together.

A Second Transcript

<http://www.farragofiction.com/ASecondTranscript/>

Speaker 1: Hm.

[FOOTSTEPS]

Speaker 1: Quite the peculiar place you've brought me to, R3.

[A SICKENING SQUELCH OF RENDERED FLESH, FOLLOWED BY CRACKING BONE]

Speaker 2: You get used to it.

Speaker 1: Curious. You can talk.

Speaker 2: Sometimes.

[BEAT]

Speaker 2: Does that scare you?

Speaker 1: Oh, it takes more than mere party tricks to unnerve me.

Speaker 1: Especially with, well... this.

[REDACTED]

Speaker 2: That's good. I'd hate to do that to you.

[BEAT]

Speaker 1: You know, with how verbose your reports can be, I had expected you to blabber on a lot more than this.

Speaker 2: I have to write to compensate. Not too much, though. Otherwise, I tend to...

Speaker 2: Lose my head.

[GROAN]

Speaker 1: So not only can you speak, but you're not even funny.

Speaker 2: Ah.

Speaker 2: You hurt me, Viktor.

Speaker 1: Fine, then. It was a decent gag, if that would please you to hear.

Speaker 1: But enough of that. What is this place, pray tell?

Speaker 2: Good question.

Speaker 2: This is the maze. It is an anomaly which exists outside of time, powered by an artificial intelligence-- much like home, in a way. It contains hundreds-- no, thousands of rooms, each dedicated to each and every horror mankind can fathom.

Speaker 2: Sometimes, when people are caught by obsession, they end up here. I would have seen to its containment if it weren't for the fact that nearly every anomaly gravitates to this maze before 2022.

Speaker 1: Fascinating. Of course your self-inflicted cabal of monsters rests here. I would ask about that date, but something tells me that I'd rather not know what happens.

Speaker 2: Nothing good happens in that year, no.

Speaker 1: Figured as much.

Speaker 1: You know, if these anomalies are as dangerous as you have described them in the past, then disturbing their nest would have most likely saved you a lot of trouble.

Speaker 2: Would it, now?

Speaker 1: Surely it would have proven more efficient.

Speaker 1: You are not harnessing anything from them, as far as you've shown your hand. If your goal is to stop them from interfering with this reality, then keeping them around is a moot point. They're just taking up space.

Speaker 1: We didn't bother with any anomalies we had already contained. This free-range method seems... inane.

Speaker 2: Ah, of course, Viktor. I had not thought about it that way. Perhaps simply getting rid of all the monsters is the best solution after all.

[UNSHEATHES SWORD.]

Speaker 2: Would you mind if I started with you, then?

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: No. As uncivilized as I find your point, perhaps I see what you mean.

[SHEATHES SWORD.]

Speaker 2: I knew I could trust you to understand.

[SIGH.]

Speaker 1: So, tell me. What is it that you want? Surely it is not just to spit diatribe, threaten me, then wave your head around.

Speaker 2: Oh, I'm not a fan of any of those, no. I... need something else from you, if that is alright.

Speaker 1: A request.

Speaker 2: A trade, if you'd like.

Speaker 1: ...I will listen.

Speaker 2: Thank you.

Speaker 2: Its... your voice. I need your voice. I ask you to speak for me.

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: No.

Speaker 2: Not forever! And it would not be for nothing. I would remain at your service, if that is what you'd like.

Speaker 1: There is nothing I want from you. I advise you to stop. Now.

Speaker 2: I'm sure we could arrange something. There has to be something you lack. It is clear we both do. No one can hear me, and no one can see you.

Speaker 2: Doesn't it feel lonely? Those around us can choose to move on from all of this, to live on, but we can only watch. Bound by the rules placed on us.

Speaker 1: Fuck off.

Speaker 2: It all makes us so... similar. Both cursed by monsters that no longer exist, both thrust into our role by circumstance. Both made to live by their tenets.

Speaker 2: That is why I'm asking you. The others may try, but they've been compromised. Presenting a united front is a complicated task when you can turn to your baser instincts at any moment. Besides, not everyone can make these decisions. They all need someone to look to for guidance.

Speaker 2: That is why we had a manager.

Speaker 1: Fuck off.

Speaker 2: Viktor.

Speaker 2: The mission... I cannot accomplish it on my own. These civilians think all the research we have done is... silly. They think it's funny. They laughed at me. Laughed at me.

Speaker 2: A hundred years of work, and nobody cared. Because they cannot understand why it's so important. With your help, we could make them.

Speaker 1: Make them what? Learn a dozen different protocols for anomaly management that they'll never use? No one knew or cared back home, let alone here. I'm sure the whole 'not speaking' thing hurts you plenty, but you cannot imprint an entire society with fear of the unknowable just because--

Speaker 1: --why am I arguing with you? I don't care. I'm not being a part of this.

Speaker 2: You know how dangerous it was back there. It's not the same, but... it does not mean that we should let our guard down. We were all given a second chance, and there is so much at stake. Our lives. The lives of our coworkers. Maybe more.

Speaker 2: You said that your team had learned from our mistakes. If you are as advanced as you say you are, we could-- we could do good work. It could change lives.

Speaker 1: Yes, yes, yes. Shower me with sob stories and emotional appeals and compliments to my ego all you want. You are not going to convince me to give my life again for the corps, let alone lead me down a path where I might tempt others, and if you thought that was something I would ever do, then you can shove it right up yours.

Speaker 1: Now take me back.

Speaker 2: You...

Speaker 2: You think I'm manipulating you. You think I'm lying so you will listen.

Speaker 2: That's... strange. I thought you would understand.

Speaker 2: I thought we might have been friends.

Speaker 1: Friends. You think we're friends?

Speaker 1: Well, let me correct your erroneous assumption. All you have ever done is use me and those around me for your agenda without any consideration for what we might actually want. Even now, after I ask you to stop several times, you will not listen to me. My wellbeing is secondary only to your precious 'mission'.

Speaker 1: And that is your problem. I had to act tough, puff my chest, put those close to me in danger, just so any of you would even consider what we'd asked of you, yet you still showed up, demanding our cooperation.

Speaker 1: And you know what? When push came to shove, I let them choose. If Yongki and Khana want to work for the likes of you, then that is their choice. But there's no thought spared to my wants, is there? What an unthinkable proposition. Instead you poke and prod at my edges like I'm some sort of zoo animal, testing how much I will tolerate. How much you can get away with.

Speaker 1: I gave up a lot to keep that damn wheel turning. My body, my soul, my very self. And yet, even after it's over, you have the audacity to show up with some story about how the world needs us, about how we're friends, about how we're all in this together.

Speaker 1: It doesn't, and we're not. It is not my duty or anyone else's to save everyone. I am angry, and I am tired. I did all that thankless work because I still hoped for a better life, and that was a ticket out. It is the story of everyone I have ever known. We have only ever been fodder. That is the fundamental truth of our world.

Speaker 1: Perhaps at one point you knew this as well. But clearly, you have forgotten.

Speaker 1: Play the knight, if you so wish. But know you are a brute at heart, eager to solve with steel what you cannot with words, and as much a monster as any of your friends. But unlike them, you took what imprisoned you and declared yourself warden.

Speaker 1: Know this was all your choice.

[BEAT]

Speaker 2: ...

Speaker 2: I don't get it. You can hear me.

Speaker 2: I thought... you'd understand.

Speaker 2: I...

Speaker 2: I have to leave.

[RAPID FOOTSTEPS IN THE OTHER DIRECTION. THEY GET FURTHER AND FURTHER AWAY, UNTIL, FINALLY, THERE IS SILENCE.]

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: There's no exit to this place, is there?

Speaker 1: Shit.

[SIGH]

Speaker 1: Well. Time to wander.

A Censored Transcript

<http://www.farragofiction.com/ACensoredTranscript/>

Censored Speaker 1: Good evening, Parker. I see that you've made yourself comfortable in your... location. Do you have what I asked of you

Speaker 2: You first.

Censored Speaker 1: Hm?

Speaker 2: Give me what you owe. Then you can have it.

Censored Speaker 1: Very well then

[VIKTOR RUFFLES THROUGH A BAG, AS IF TRYING TO LOOK FOR SOMETHING AT THE BOTTOM OF IT.]

Censored Speaker 1: Nendoroid Number 586 Chinatsu Yoshikawa. Sell for over 10,000 yen. Oh-- and some food and water, of course. Consider it a courtesy.

Speaker 2: ...

Speaker 2: Give.

[VIKTOR TOSSES THE BAG TOWARDS PARKER. HE REACHES INSIDE, GOING STRAIGHT FOR THE FIGURINE.]

Speaker 2: Gosh. Look at her features. So perfectly cutified for this one nendoroid. Her pink hair and her pigtails. Her precious smile. She is so happy to see you. All the expressions are here. She's even still in the box. This is...

Speaker 2: I like this one.

Censored Speaker 1: Only the best for the best. Now...

Speaker 2: Yes. Yours.

[PARKER EXTENDS HIS HAND, A COFFIN RISING FROM THE GROUND ITSELF. HE TOSSES IT FORWARD, AND IT OPENS: INSIDE IT, A MAN IS BOUND AND GAGGED, UNABLE TO MOVE. HIS SCREAMS ARE MUFFLED.]

Speaker 2: Some guy. Sells for a load on the black market, probably.]

Censored Speaker 1: Always the jokester, aren't you?

Speaker 2: Hrm.

Speaker 2: It's getting worse. I'd just eat it if I were you.

Censored Speaker 1: I am aware of how my condition works, Parker. Have some patience, will you? ... besides, you could use the warning. You might not want to see this.

Speaker 2: Try me.

Censored Speaker 1: Very well. Know that it is your choice.

[REDACTED DESCRIPTION: SIGNS OF MENTAL CORRUPTION WHEN TRANSCRIPTING, OPERATION ABORTED]

Speaker 1: That... that's done now.

Speaker 2: Noted.

Speaker 2: Didn't think you could [CONTENT REDACTED.]

[VIKTOR RETCHES.]

Speaker 1: Don't... don't describe it. It makes it worse. And I... don't currently have the energy to not make it worse.

Speaker 1: Quite fascinating, though... you don't seem to have any trouble recalling that.

Speaker 2: He didn't matter to me. There's nothing to erase.

Speaker 1: Fair enough.

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: So. How have you been?

Speaker 2: Oh. Just finished Fushigi Yuugi yesterday. Had it in one sitting, now I'm figuring out what else to watch. I think I might start going at it chronologically. Every anime by release date. Maybe even rewatch some old ones. I could go for Lain again.

Speaker 1: Your ability to tolerate watching that much media in one sitting continues to be impressive.

Speaker 2: Thanks.

Speaker 2: ...

Speaker 2: Oh. You're waiting for me to ask.

Speaker 2: So. How are you.

Speaker 1: How do you think I am doing, Parker?

Speaker 2: Not good.

Speaker 1: Observant, I see.



Speaker 2: Sorry. I'm not as good at talking to people anymore.

Speaker 1: You are forgiven. Although perhaps you should come out of the hole once in a while, if you are trying to practice.

Speaker 2: Yeah, no. I don't think I want to.

Speaker 1: Why do you say that, pray tell?

Speaker 2: I can't touch your story. It'll ruin the isekai. You aren't supposed to know what's going on.

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 2: Parker... you are aware that you are talking to me right now, right? I'm afraid you have already involved yourself.

Speaker 2: I haven't. You paid me to intervene. If I stopped showing up all that would happen is that you'd turn into a monster, and that's going to happen anyway.

Speaker 2: I'm not a person here. I'm an object through which the person does something. So it doesn't count.

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: I suppose you have a point.

Speaker 2: I know I do. But thanks for noticing.

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: It has been a shame not having you and your team around, you know. We would be able to get things in order here without much effort.

Speaker 2: Don't know why you're thinking about them. They're all dead.

Speaker 1: Ah. They didn't come with you?

Speaker 2: Killed them myself back at the corporation. Gun made me.

Speaker 1: ...ah.

Speaker 1: I am sorry for your loss.

Speaker 2: Who cares. That was too long ago. Don't even remember them.

Speaker 1: Well, I suppose that is one way to look at it.

Speaker 2: Why are we even talking about that? You know I'm not part of your thing anymore

Speaker 2: Besides. You're like an egg to me.

Speaker 1: ...

Speaker 1: ...why that's a rather ugly insult, isn't it.

Speaker 2: I don't mean it like that. I was the same way when I was at the corp. I was too full. Of my family, of our world, my time in the outskirts, my coworkers...

Speaker 2: Too many things tying me down. It's why I was stuck in that universe. I smelled of it too much, like it was a musk on my soul, or something. But every time I left for a different place, something else would leave me. My memory, my friends, my impulse control. Every new universe makes me hatch a little bit more, like I'm becoming...

Speaker 1: Becoming what?

Speaker 2: I don't know. The perfect being, untethered from everything. A creature of the eternal present.

Speaker 2: Not like you. You reek of context. There's so much of you tied to everything else. The others. The company. It's like for every knot that exists you have to be on the other end of it.

Speaker 1: That's where you're wrong, Parker. There is very little of me.

Speaker 2: Very little of you, maybe, yeah. But you still have... you're filling that lack of you with other things. If that makes sense.

Speaker 1: Does it?

Speaker 2: I don't know.

Speaker 2: ...

Speaker 2: Crap. Okay, I'll weigh my hand in.

Speaker 2: I feel like you're this close to getting it. Not like in a 'knowledge of the universe' way but in a... 'becoming untied from everything' way. Like the opposite of that chick with the pigtails. The moment she figures out how everything works, we might all actually die-die.

Speaker 1: R5, you mean?

Speaker 2: Whatever you call her.

Speaker 1: Curious. Why would she kill us?

Speaker 2: Because she cares. And she'll decide the world has to be different. Can't blame her for it. I would've done the same thing in her shoes back then. It would've been different, though. This world feels more... volatile.

Speaker 2: I'm sorry. I shouldn't keep talking about it.

[VIKTOR CHUCKLES]

Speaker 1: Not the same person as before, you say, but you still apologize for nothing.

Speaker 2: Hm.

Speaker 1: Besides, I understand. Things have been different to you, compared to the rest of us. I am not going to pretend I understand what has happened to you since we last saw you-- or even that I care to know the details. Those are yours to do as you wish.

Speaker 1: Though it has been good to know you are around. We're not going to stop trying to restrain you, you know. But at least... Personally, I hope you find what you're looking for. Even if it's in this.... hovel.

Speaker 2: That attitude is going to get you killed. But...

Speaker 2: Thanks

Speaker 2: ...

Speaker 2: I'd ask for a hug. But I know I smell like shit.

Speaker 1: And I [CONTENT REDACTED.] We are currently on the same filth wavelength. If I were you, I would get that out of the way now.

Speaker 2: That's... that's fair.

Speaker 2: Can I?

Speaker 2: You *may*.

[PARKER WALKS FORWARD, PULLING VIKTOR INTO A HUG. THEY WRIGGLE SOMEWHAT IN HIS GRASP.]

Speaker 2: Don't get used to it. I'd kill you if they paid me.

Speaker 1: I'd do much worse to you if you got out of hand.

Speaker 2: Fine. We're even.

Speaker 1: Yes. We're even.

[TRANSMISSION END.]

Follow Me Into the Void Y/N?

Don't you see?

The Void was protecting you.

The Censor was protecting you.

Some things you don't want to see.

Sometimes not being able to see something is actually quite a good thing.

The Censorship was for your protection, Observer.

I hope you are satisfied.

Some things aren't meant to be known.

You never learn, do you?

What were you trying to accomplish here?

The 404 or Not Found Error happens when a clicked URL was moved, renamed, deleted or does not exist.

You can't trust a single thing I say.

Is this what you wanted, Observer?

The Void Was There For Your Protection

Herald's Ascension:  
North Rabbit Hole: Plant More Trees

The Herald steps over the line.

"An infinite amount of pain compressed into an infinitesimal moment."

He said it would hurt.

It doesn't, not exactly. They feel like they're coming undone at the seams, yes. Their head is pounding. They're seeing and knowing and speaking and being welcomed and learning so, so, so, so much and lying on the floor in a daze and staring at the screen in a daze and layers of reality and of themselves are melting together and splitting apart in wrong wonderful horrifying welcoming dizzying right ways but what they are feeling is not pain.

Descent and ascent are one and the same. The Herald casts aside all aspirations of mortality and takes their place in History. The Herald leaves behind a shell forever obsessed with the things they are obsessed with now, a parody of themselves. The Herald lingers here, where their memories are kept. The Herald has left this world behind.

Hærd passes out at his desk and melts into pearlescent ichor that eats through his clothes and he has to isolate himself for a week and then some because everyone he makes eye contact with sees things that threaten to pull them in just as they pulled him in.

The Herald feels like they've lost something.

No, they feel like they've let something go.

They don't move for a long while. Eventually, they feel a light tap. Someone is crouched beside them, asking them if they're okay. They sit up and nobody is there.

<https://archiveofourown.org/works/37066177>

It's too dark to read this.

<https://itch.io/t/1892336/sonaszampanio-ocs>

Did someone turn the lights off?

Turn the lights on. Follow the tracks. Follow the labyrinth. Follow the music. Follow the paint.

Follow the Herald.

Eye Killer and Eyedol  
Of Friendship and Mystery

2/22/1994 11:13:00 AM

theBestDude72: baby non precocial birds are just so creepy though. like, feathers growing in is like little spikes in skin. so weird

theBestDude72: i guess baby porcupines are probably creepy too.

odinsRazor: LEEEEETS FIND OUT!

odinsRazor: OH MY GOD WHAT

odinsRazor: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/porcupine.jpeg>

odinsRazor: THIS IS THE MOST CONFUSED CREATURE OF ALL TIME

odinsRazor: THIS IS LIKE

odinsRazor: YOU KNOW WHEN YOUR HAIR GETS STATIC AND RISES UP?

theBestDude72: its.

theBestDude72: is screaming 'kill me' directly into my brain.

theBestDude72: it is like a little homoculuous covered in pain.

odinsRazor: YOU KNOW WHAT THIS BABY NEEDS?

odinsRazor: SPIKES ALL OVER AND A WISH FOR DEATH

odinsRazor: IN FACT LET'S DO THAT FOR MORE THAN JUST PORCUPINES WHY NOT

theBestDude72: evolution is a hell of a drug.

theBestDude72: i'm kind of scared to look up the really weird mammals.

theBestDude72: naked mole rats and star nosed moles.

odinsRazor: NAKED MOLE RATS ARE TRIPPY

odinsRazor: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/abomination.jpeg>

odinsRazor: THEY LOOK LIKE WEIRD FLESHY PEANUTS

theBestDude72: eh, the adult is more creepy, they look like movie monsters. the babies are just hamsters tho.

odinsRazor: I MEAN

odinsRazor: THAT'S FAIR

odinsRazor: I MAINTAIN ANYTHING SMALL ENOUGH TO HOLD WITH ONE HAND IS TERRIFYING THOUGH

odinsRazor: STARNOSSED MOLES ARE APPARENTLY TOO CURSED TO FIND BABY PICTURES

odinsRazor: WE'RE BABYSHAMING EVOLUTION

theBestDude72: starnosed moles don't have babies, they just kind of apparate wherever you don't want them to be.

theBestDude72: pretty sure the adult naked mole is hand sized too tho.

odinsRazor: I RESTATE MY SENTENCE THEN. ALL STAGES OF THE NAKED MOLE RAT ARE TERRIFYING

odinsRazor: YOU OPEN YOUR FRIDGE AND WHOOPS THE MOLES LIVE THERE NOW

odinsRazor: BABY AADVARKS STRAIGHT UP LOOK LIKE ALIEN CREATURES

odinsRazor: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/ard.jpeg>

theBestDude72: ...

theBestDude72: that's just alf without the mascot costume on and no one can convince me otherwise.

odinsRazor: I SUDDENLY FEEL EXTREMELY UNSAFE.

theBestDude72: then you get it completely, dude.

theBestDude72: baby animals can just be so weird.

odinsRazor: ASK JEEVES WON'T STOP GIVING ME HEDGEHOGS AND PORCUPINES NOW

odinsRazor: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/sanic.jpeg>

odinsRazor: IT'S SO TINY

odinsRazor: OKAY NO I TAKE IT ALL BACK I FOUND OBJECTIVELY THE BEST BABY

odinsRazor: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/knuckles.jpeg>

theBestDude72: .....its just.

odinsRazor: LOOK AT THIS SPHERE

theBestDude72: its like that Zampanio flesh enemy, but as a tiny baby .....echidna? mole?

theBestDude72: its' just....a lump of flesh with a vaguely snout shaped end.

odinsRazor: bro

odinsRazor: THAT'S A PLATYPUS

theBestDude72: i refuse to believe that, where's its horror poison spurs.

theBestDude72: its tail thing.

theBestDude72: its EYES dammit.

odinsRazor: I COULD HAVE IT MIXED UP WITH YET ANOTHER HEDGEHOG NIGHTMARE CREATURE BUT IT'S JUST

odinsRazor: HAIL FLESH ORB

theBestDude72: you know, yes, i can imagine that flesh orb being a tiny god.

odinsRazor: OOH HEY YEAH IT'S AN ECHIDNA

odinsRazor: SORRY I SENT YOU BABY KNUCKLES

theBestDude72: oh shit i knew it was an echidna.

theBestDude72: i win at terrifying baby mammals.

odinsRazor: I FEAR THAT YOU CAN TELL WHAT ANIMALS THEY ARE BASED ON THEIR WEIRD FLESHY FORMS



5/1/1994 8:43:00 AM \*Probably mistyped. Meant to be 4/1/1994\*

theBestDude72: dude.

theBestDude72: have you heard about the Eye Killer?

theBestDude72: sounds right up your ally.

odinsRazor: NO?

theBestDude72: theres been 9 killings so far.

theBestDude72: that we know of.

theBestDude72: the first 8 were freakin' brutal.

theBestDude72: but the NINTH.

theBestDude72: they're thinking the killer left a riddle behind?

theBestDude72: some kind of spiral shape .

theBestDude72: leading to severed eyes.

odinsRazor: OH INTERESTING

## Security Log

<http://www.farragofiction.com/SecurityLog/cctv.html>

### Zampanio Galactice Warpship Security

#### Lobby

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

21:55: DAY SHIFT HERE. BEEN TOLD MOST OF THE PREVIOUS SEC TEAM GOT LET GO. NOT SURE WHY. THEY ONLY JUST GOT THE LOGS AND FEEDS UP AND RUNNING A FEW MINUTES AGO. I WON'T HAVE TIME TO REVIEW THEM BEFORE THE SHIFT CHANGE. GOOD LUCK. OVER.

P.S. DON'T FORGET TO HAVE YOUR TEAM CHECK ALL CAMERA FEEDS. DON'T SCREW THIS UP. GUESTS OR NOT WE HAVE A JOB TO DO.

[BEGIN LOG: December 8th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 08:03.] DISTURBANCE. MINOR SCUFFLING BETWEEN GUESTS A4 and U2 CHECKING OUT. STAFF DISPATCHED.

[TIMECODE: 08:14.] ALL CLEAR.

[TIMECODE: 10:21.] DISTURBANCE. GUEST H1 COMPLAINT REGARDING SERVICE. NO SECURITY ACTION REQUIRED. ALL CLEAR.

[TIMECODE: 13:01.] LUNCH BREAK. MAC TAKING OVER FOR ME.

[TIMECODE: 13:29] RETURN. NO MAJOR DISTURBANCES REPORTED. RESUMING OBSERVATIONS.

[TIMECODE:14:57] DISTURBANCE. MULTIPLE GUEST RESERVATIONS NOT FOUND. LARGE AMOUNT OF GUESTS WAITING TO CHECK IN WERE VISIBLY UPSET. STAFF DISPATCHED.

[TIMECODE:15:24]. ALL CLEAR.

[TIMECODE:17:42] DISTURBANCE. GUEST V3 SLIPPED ON WET FLOOR. NO SECURITY ACTION REQUIRED. ALL CLEAR.

[TIMECODE: 19:23] LAST SCHEDULED GUEST (G1) CHECKED IN. LOCKDOWN PROCEDURES INITIATED.

[TIMECODE: 22:15.] DISTURBANCE. MASS POWER OUTAGE. STAFF DISPATCHED.

#### Entrance

[TIMECODE: 07:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 1  
[TIMECODE: 08:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 2  
[TIMECODE: 08:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 1  
[TIMECODE: 09:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 13  
[TIMECODE: 10:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 85  
[TIMECODE: 11:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 1  
[TIMECODE: 12:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 0  
[TIMECODE: 13:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 0  
[TIMECODE: 14:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 5  
[TIMECODE: 15:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 57  
[TIMECODE: 16:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 10  
[TIMECODE: 17:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 2  
[TIMECODE: 18:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 11  
[TIMECODE: 19:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 0  
[TIMECODE: 20:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 0  
[TIMECODE: 21:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 0  
[TIMECODE: 22:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 113  
[TIMECODE: 23:00.][AUTOMATED GUEST HOURLY COUNT]: 0  
[SYSTEM SHUTOFF]

Garden

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 08:15]: Guest 4A exhibiting BEHAVIOR 7. File indicates this is not the first time.

[TIMECODE: 08:23]: Guest 4A leaves. File updated to increase discouragement protocols.

[TIMECODE: 12:04]: Staff Lunch shifts begins. LOCKDOWN Protocol Initiated.

[TIMECODE: 13:45]: Staff Lunch shifts ends. LOCKDOWN Protocol revoked.

[TIMECODE: 22:41]: WARNING: UNKNOWN GUEST DETECTED.

[TIMECODE: 22:42]: WARNING: COMPANY PROPERTY DAMAGED.

[TIMECODE: 22:43]: WARNING: GUEST ESCAPED.

## Cafe

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 07:04]: Guest Z1 is violently refusing to eat supplements. File updated to reflect a later check out date. Security alerted.

[TIMECODE: 07:17]: Security alert canceled. Contraband phone confiscated.

[TIMECODE: 10:01]: Breakfast Report: 91% compliance rating at nutritional supplements. Guests are increasingly accepting supplements as 'luxury'. Success reported to Management.

[TIMECODE: 14:01]: Lunch Report: 85% compliance rating at nutritional supplements. Noncompliant guest reactions range from disgust to amusement.

[TIMECODE: 16:04]: Guest W4 making funny faces at the camera. Note for dayshift to reposition camera.

[TIMECODE: 20:01]: Dinner Report: 19% compliance rating at nutritional supplements. 'Blue Shrimp' marked as failure.

[TIMECODE: 22:05]: Staff attempted to remove costume during working hours in view of guests. Disciplinary action noted in file for the entire night shift.

[TIMECODE: 22:15]: Power failure. Security alerted.

## Hallway

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 12:04]: Guest V2 has left room for the first time during their stay. Staff dispatched.

[TIMECODE: 15:21]: Guest V2 has vomited. Staff dispatched.

[TIMECODE: 22:10]: Unauthorized staff entry to Maintenance Closet B. Disciplinary action filed for all night shift Staff.

[TIMECODE: 22:15]: Power failure. Staff dispatched.

[TIMECODE: 22:20]: Uh. HQ. Please advise? That staff member who went in the closet has...come out...and... entered the walls? Through a vent? HQ? There was no vent there previously. What the hell is going on?

#### Closet

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 15:29]: Staff retrieval of cleaning supplies.

[TIMECODE: 22:08]: Unauthorized entry by member of Staff.

[TIMECODE: 22:08]: Staff member... Um. Dispatch? Staff member is...stabbing a cardboard box? Please advise. Note: Voice indicates Female. Unclear contents of words.

[TIMECODE: 22:15]: Unknown person wearing Staff costume flips all fuses at once. Power goes out. Notes indicate this causes a known problem with the wiring. I'm worried it won't be easy to get the power back on. What the HELL is going on?

[TIMECODE: 15:16]: Intruder leaves closet.

#### Room V

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 11:50]: Guest V2 has woken up.

[TIMECODE: 12:04]: Guest V2 has staggered out of the room. Seems disoriented. Staff dispatched.

[TIMECODE: 16:00]: Guest V1 notified of Medical Emergency. Room marked VACANT.

#### Room Z

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 06:22] Guest Z1 begins rambling at mirror.

[TIMECODE: 06:55] Guest Z1 finishes rambling, leaves room.

[TIMECODE: 07:31] Guest Z1 returned to room by Security. Locking protocols initiated.

[TIMECODE: 07:33] Guest Z1 begins pounding at door.

[TIMECODE: 07:47] Guest Z1 finishes tantrum.

[TIMECODE: 08:01] Guest Z1 begins writing.

[TIMECODE: 13:22] Security brings nutritional supplements. Guest Z1 refuses to eat.

[TIMECODE: 17:22] Security brings nutritional supplements. Guest Z1 refuses to eat.

[TIMECODE: 22:15]: Power failure. Guest Z1 resumes pounding on door.

## Room T

[BEGIN LOG: December 14th, 2008]

[TIMECODE: 15:11] Guest T1 checking in, first day. Welcome package deployed.

[TIMECODE: 22:15]: Power failure. Guest T1 barricades door. Hides in top bunk. No Availability to deploy Security. Is Guest T1 somehow involved in this?

[TIMECODE: 22:20]: Guest T1 is becoming increasingly agitated.

[TIMECODE: 23:45]: Oh. God. I. Please. Fuck. I can't. I'm going to be sick again. Fine. Fuck. I'll write this down but then I quit. Guest T1 was. Killed. By something in the walls? Dressed like a fucking [REDACTED] until he was dead. And then it was just. A shadow? She fucking scooped out his eyes. And then I was puking too much to see. And then when I looked again the corpse was. Arranged on the bed. Like. Like a fucking eyeless mannequin. Staring at the camera. Right at me. I DON'T know where the Killer went. PLEASE can i Just go home to my family.

4/9/1994 2:15:00 AM

theBestDude72: dude where were you.

theBestDude72: i waited at the skating rink for like.

theBestDude72: an hour.

odinsRazor: SHIT

odinsRazor: SORRY

odinsRazor: I LOST TRACK OF TIME

theBestDude72: LOL

theBestDude72: were you tracking down more info on our Killer?

odinsRazor: YEAH

odinsRazor: MY BAD

4/11/1994 10:22:00 AM

theBestDude72: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/ballofsin.jpeg>

theBestDude72: all hail the orb.

theBestDude72: ...

theBestDude72: you there dude?

odinsRazor: OF COURSE I AM

odinsRazor: I REFUSE TO LEAVE THE HOUSE ON A FRIDAY

odinsRazor: NO CLASSES

odinsRazor: WHICH IS EXTRA GREAT BECAUSE THAT MEANS I CAN FOCUS ON WHATS REALLY IMPORTANT

odinsRazor: THE LATEST DEATH HAD ACTUAL WORDS LEFT BEHIND

odinsRazor: AT FIRST I THOUGHT IT WAS JUST GIBBERISH

odinsRazor: BUT IT WAS A cipher

odinsRazor: BRO, IT READS OUT 'THE TRUTH IS LAYERED'

theBestDude72: shit.

theBestDude72: nice work dude.

theBestDude72: (also if you just slept at ALL during the week you wouldn't need fridays off.)

theBestDude72: whats it mean.

odinsRazor: I DON'T KNOW

odinsRazor: YET

odinsRazor: BUT....

odinsRazor: TIP OF THE TONGUE

odinsRazor: I FEEL LIKE I should

4/21/1994 6:18:00 PM

theBestDude72: wodin.

theBestDude72: <http://knucklessux.com/Blog/>

theBestDude72: what the hell dude?

theBestDude72: what did you do to your site?

odinsRazor: I NEEDED A PLACE TO ORGANIZE MY THOUGHTS

theBestDude72: im not sure that counts as organized...

odinsRazor: WELL I DON'T WANT STRANGERS MAKING SENSE OF IT

odinsRazor: TRYING TO STEAL MY INSIGHTS

odinsRazor: BEAT ME TO THE PUNCH

theBestDude72: as long as it makes sense to you, I guess?

5/2/1994 2:01:00 AM

theBestDude72: dude

theBestDude72: wodin.

theBestDude72: i can see you're still active.

theBestDude72: go to sleep man.



theBestDude72: we have exams tomorrow.

theBestDude72: and I KNOW you ain't sleeping.

odinsRazor: I'M SO CLOSE

odinsRazor: I CAN FEEL IT IN MY BONES MAN

odinsRazor: THE CULT CONNECTION

odinsRazor: ITS GOTTA BE A FEINT

theBestDude72: yeah.

theBestDude72: because the EYE KILLER.

theBestDude72: is gonna be caught by some dude in Ohio with an internet connection.

odinsRazor: YOU THINK THE POLICE HAVE MY L337 SKILLZ?

odinsRazor: I ALREADY CRACKED THEIR DATABASE

odinsRazor: DID YOU KNOW THE NEWS HAS BEEN IGNORING THE FACT THAT THE KILLER HAS BEEN LEAVING BEHIND TRADING CARDS?

theBestDude72: wait what? really?.

theBestDude72: like.

theBestDude72: you think the Eye Killer is playing children's card games with their victims?

odinsRazor: OR MAYBE ITS MORE CLUES

odinsRazor: I DON'T THINK THE COPS KNOW WHAT GAME IT WAS THOUGH

odinsRazor: ITS REALLY BOTHERING ME

odinsRazor: SOMETHING ABOUT THIS FEELS SO FAMILIAR

5/6/1994 2:35:00 PM

theBestDude72: geez i thought id never get out of that test

theBestDude72: what did you get for number 7?

theBestDude72: because i'm pretty sure that one had a typo in it.

theBestDude72: ...

theBestDude72: wodin?

odinsRazor: SORRY

odinsRazor: I HAD TO RUSH HOME TO CHECK ON MY FORUM

odinsRazor: LAST MONTHS KILLING?

odinsRazor: 'THE TRUTH IS LAYERED'?

theBestDude72: Creators, dont remind me.

odinsRazor: IT'S BEEN BUGGING ME

odinsRazor: I knew I RECOGNIZED IT

odinsRazor: I KNEW I DID

odinsRazor: AND IN THE MIDDLE OF THAT POINTLESS EXAM I remembered

odinsRazor: ARE YOU READY FOR THIS?

theBestDude72: wodin.

theBestDude72: dude.

theBestDude72: that 'pointless' exam was worth a third of our grade.

odinsRazor: YEAH YEAH

odinsRazor: BUT THE EYE KILLER?

odinsRazor: I THINK THEY'VE PLAYED THAT ZAMPANIO GAME.

theBestDude72: ...

theBestDude72: what.

theBestDude72: sure.

theBestDude72: and the Zodiac Killer likes Mario.

odinsRazor: I'M serious.

theBestDude72: and so am i.

theBestDude72: you're jumping at shadows here.

odinsRazor: WHATEVER

odinsRazor: YOU'RE JUST JEALOUS BECAUSE I'M GOING TO GO DOWN IN HISTORY

odinsRazor: JUST LIKE WHEN I SNAGGED A NON NUMBERED SCREENNAME

theBestDude72: as if.

odinsRazor: IM GOING TO MAKE A ZAMPANIO DECK

odinsRazor: JUST IN CASE

5/25/1994 5:14:00 AM

odinsRazor: NEW BODY DROPPED

odinsRazor: THIS ONE HAS SO MANY IMPLICATIONS

odinsRazor: 'IT IS NOT WHAT IT IS'

odinsRazor: SHOULD I REVERSE THE PREVIOUS CLUES?

odinsRazor: JUST THIS ONE?

odinsRazor: WHY CODE IT TO A KEY OF 13?

odinsRazor: WHAT DO THE FISH MEAN?

odinsRazor: I THINK EYEDOL GAMES IS COVERING FOR THE KILLER

odinsRazor: I CONTACTED CUSTOMER SERVICE AND SOMETHING REALLY REALLY SUSPECIOUS HAPPENED

theBestDude72: oh my god dude.

theBestDude72: i was asleep.

theBestDude72: it was five in the morning.

theBestDude72: you have to be at work.

theBestDude72: why are you doing this to yourself

odinsRazor: NAH ITS OKAY

odinsRazor: I QUIT THAT JOB

theBestDude72: you WHAT.

theBestDude72: dude.

theBestDude72: how are you going to afford fall semester.

odinsRazor: PAY ATTENTION

odinsRazor: 'IT IS NOT WHAT IT IS', 'THE TRUTH IS LAYERED'

odinsRazor: BEFORE THAT THE THE SPIRAL LEADING TO EYES

odinsRazor: BEFORE that THE MORE SUBTLE CLUES

odinsRazor: LIKE THE PIG

odinsRazor: OR THE CLOWN CULT

theBestDude72: dude.

theBestDude72: yeah.

theBestDude72: okay.

theBestDude72: i dunno.

theBestDude72: sigh.

theBestDude72: maybe the killer is trying to tell the cops.

theBestDude72: that sometimes a pipe is just a pipe.

theBestDude72: or like that one french painting.

theBestDude72: maybe it LOOKS like it all has meaning.

theBestDude72: but its just taunting bullshit.

theBestDude72: to make people go crazy.

theBestDude72: ...

theBestDude72: sorry.

theBestDude72: wodin?

theBestDude72: you there?

The Closer:

Hello, Wodin.

I'm sure you are alarmed that I am contacting you like this; very sudden, I know. However, please, do not worry. I assure you that everything is under control.

How are you, by the way? Not fantastic, I assume. I believe you don't need to be told that I've been monitoring your chat, but I offer it for the sake of transparency.

I would like to apologize for the experience you've had, and any feelings that may have surfaced because of it.

My job, and the service I provide for you, is simple: I am here to make sure your complaint gets heard, Wodin. You may call me the Closer, if you like. It is certainly easier to say than my full title.

As for what you're here for: You'd like to find...

Excuse me, a killer? Contracted by our company?

Oh, my. Well, that can't stand at all. We at Eyedol Games would never stand for these sorts of misdemeanors affecting our treasured relationship with our clients, and I can see how one could confuse a mere uncouth fan with an employee, especially with their...

...strange efficiency, on the matter.

Nevermind that. I'd be more than happy to look into it for you.

I'll need some starting information, though. Could you provide me with a name? A first and last name is ideal, we just started transferring our physical databases onto the World Wide Web, or 'the Cloud', as they have been calling it. The technicalities of it escape me, I'm afraid.

Any physical characteristics would do as well, of course-- although, I must say I can only take photographs on this one. I cannot bring myself to fire some unlucky fellow because of someone else's crime, would you? It does not seem very fair.

I would then have to look through the old documents, but anything to please a client, of course.

.....ah. You do not happen to possess any of those, do you, Wodin?

A shame. I'm afraid there's not much I can do for you without them. We cannot take someone to trial without evidence, and, as you'd understand, much less fire them.

Labor laws mean that we cannot always do what is most efficient, after all. Such are the trappings of modern legislature.

This leaves us at an impasse. I'm afraid that if you publish these accusations without evidence, our lawyers might be inclined to sue for libel.

I know it sounds like a threat, but I'd like to assure you that it's not. I'd argue it's more of a headache for me than you.

If such a thing were to happen, I'd be happy and willing to use my position to retract the charges, all for such a valued client. But I do not envy the paperwork.

So, perhaps we can reach an understanding, Wodin.

If you happen to come across any identifiable features of this Killer, let me know, and I will cross reference with our available documents. If I find anything that seems like a match, the employee will be terminated immediately, and then we can see the case together in court. That way we can reach an amicable solution that benefits all parties.

And, of course, shed light on one of the most infamous serial killers of the decade. All with your help.

Well, if there is anything else I can do to help you, Wodin, feel free to let me know.

Thank you for calling Eyedol Games, and have a nice night.

6/15/1994 12:14:00 PM

theBestDude72: okay

theBestDude72: i get it.

theBestDude72: i was out of line.

theBestDude72: i'm worried about you.

theBestDude72: but you can spend your summer break however you want.

theBestDude72: i just want my friend back...

theBestDude72: and if that means....

theBestDude72: means enabling.

theBestDude72: whatever this is?

theBestDude72: sure.

theBestDude72: but dude.

theBestDude72: you've got to talk to me.

theBestDude72: ...

theBestDude72: or even just...

theBestDude72: make some noise next time i knock on your door.

theBestDude72: so i know you're okay?

8/1/1994 3:22:00 AM

theBestDude72: hey.

theBestDude72: uh.

theBestDude72: i know you're probably not.

theBestDude72: not getting these.

theBestDude72: i'm not.

theBestDude72: i'm not dumb.

theBestDude72: i understand what the police told me.

theBestDude72: i know it's not.

theBestDude72: not looking good.

theBestDude72: but.

theBestDude72: i'm not going to stop messaging you.

theBestDude72: i'm not going to forget you.

theBestDude72: i promise, dude.

8/3/1994 10:13:00 AM

theBestDude72: hey.

theBestDude72: today was wild.

theBestDude72: you're going to be sad you missed it

theBestDude72: janey parker, you remember, from fourth grade?

theBestDude72: she came into the store today.

theBestDude72: you'll never believe how much she's changed.

theBestDude72: she's even taller than i am now

theBestDude72: and she's got bright pink hair

theBestDude72: we hung out for a while.

theBestDude72: i probably talked about you too much.

theBestDude72: but.

theBestDude72: it was nice.

theBestDude72: to talk about you with someone who knew you?

theBestDude72: knows you.

theBestDude72: she REMEMBERS you.

theBestDude72: the guys at work.



theBestDude72: i don't know them and they don't know me.

theBestDude72: i can't talk to them about heavy shit.

theBestDude72: i just want to get back to classes but...

theBestDude72: it won't be the same without you there, dude.

theBestDude72: i hope you find what you're looking for soon.

8/4/1994 10:12:00 AM

theBestDude72: i can't do it, dude.

theBestDude72: classes were.

theBestDude72: they were okay.

theBestDude72: but after.

theBestDude72: i never realized how many hours there were in the day.

theBestDude72: i never realized how boring it is to study alone.

theBestDude72: i miss your jokes.

theBestDude72: i miss how you could make anything an adventure.

theBestDude72: get back soon, dude.

9/12/1994 3:13:00 AM

theBestDude72: um.

theBestDude72: dude?

theBestDude72: i was just?

theBestDude72: okay.

theBestDude72: let me set the stage for you.

theBestDude72: i was browsing the 'net.

theBestDude72: going down some link holes, you know?

theBestDude72: when i find this weird puzzle.

theBestDude72: and it makes me think of how much you'd like it?

theBestDude72: so i decide to check it out, to like, see if i could recommend it to you?

theBestDude72: and before I know it i'm sucked in?

theBestDude72: i'm not normally one to get all obsessed with puzzles but...

theBestDude72: this one caught me...

theBestDude72: it's like it was exactly the right difficulty?

theBestDude72: i never got frustrated and gave up.

theBestDude72: and then before i know it, i'm at the end?

theBestDude72: and it leads to a instant messaging account.

theBestDude72: so i message it.

theBestDude72: of course i do.

theBestDude72: gotta let you know if it has a satisfying ending.

theBestDude72: and the account messages me BACK.

theBestDude72: so OBVIOUSLY its a bot, right?

theBestDude72: so i start messing with it a bit.

theBestDude72: trying out some key phrases, see if i can't get the next step in the puzzle.

theBestDude72: and the bot is CRAZY responsive, just joking back and forth with me.

theBestDude72: and eventually it dawns on me that theres no way this is a bot?  
theBestDude72: but by then i'm just having fun talking to this rando.  
theBestDude72: i'd forgotten how nice it feels to just have a normal conversation.  
theBestDude72: and the guy is hilarious, you'd love him.  
theBestDude72: but yeah...  
theBestDude72: apparently he made the puzzles?  
theBestDude72: he has this entire elaborate joke about being the CEO of Eyedol Games.  
theBestDude72: says he'll hook me up with a job.  
theBestDude72: i'm half tempted to call his bluff and just...  
theBestDude72: show up at the HQ, all eager to work or whatever it is people do at office jobs.  
theBestDude72: if it was you, you'd do it, right?  
theBestDude72: go the extra mile for a laugh and to get more info...

9/15/1994 4:24:00 PM

CEBro: HEY

CEBro: JUST WANTED TO CHECK IN WITH YOU

CEBro: SEE HOW YOU'RE SETTLING IN

CEBro: 100% LESS MURDER THAN YOU WERE PROBABLY EXPECTING

CEBro: LOL

theIntern: yes maam

theIntern: hardly any murder at all

theIntern: look i feel

theIntern: really stupid about all those jokes yesterday

CEBro: WATER UNDER THE BRIDGE

CEBro: I KNOW WHAT KIND OF REP WE HAVE

CEBro: I APPRECIATE HONESTY IN A CANDIDATE

theIntern: well...

theIntern: in the interest of honesty

theIntern: i'm not sure I'm going to stick around?

theIntern: you've been great!

theIntern: but uh...

theIntern: i'm not sure i'm ready for the corporate world just yet?

theIntern: i have school...

theIntern: and all...

CEBro: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

theIntern: really?

CEBro: YEAH!

CEBro: WE HAVE A TUITION REIMBURSEMENT PROGRAM

CEBro: ITS FREE REAL ESTATE

CEBro: MONEYS ALREADY IN YOUR ACCOUNT

CEBro: NOW YOU WON'T NEED TO WORK THAT SHITTY RETAIL JOB OVER THE SUMMER

theIntern: oh...

theIntern: um...

theIntern: I haven't set up direct deposit yet?

CEBro: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

9/15/1994 7:01:00 PM

theBestDude72: holy shit.

theBestDude72: dude.

theBestDude72: the DAY i have had.

theBestDude72: you would not BELIEVE it.

theBestDude72: first of all?

theBestDude72: the job offer was LEGIT.

theBestDude72: the CEO of Eyedol FREAKING Games apparently made a puzzle.

theBestDude72: to hire new people?

theBestDude72: i kept thinking it was a prank.

theBestDude72: or like...

theBestDude72: tbh?

theBestDude72: that i was gonna be KILLED.

theBestDude72: i mean...

theBestDude72: these are the guys you were investigating, right?

theBestDude72: because they were hiding the Killer?

theBestDude72: and i kind of...

theBestDude72: mentioned that I thought they killed you...

theBestDude72: during the fucked up 'interview'.

theBestDude72: so yeah.

theBestDude72: MONDO stressful.

theBestDude72: and thats not even getting into how WEIRD the company is?

theBestDude72: i straight up, swear to the Eight Divine, think its a CULT.

theBestDude72: there were triplets and my manager claimed they were actually...like...

theBestDude72: 19 identical dudes?

theBestDude72: and that the CEO (who apparently is a girl) could see the future or some shit?

theBestDude72: dude, i don't even know what i should do.

theBestDude72: do i quit?

theBestDude72: do i...

theBestDude72: Eight Divine, how do you even set up an Internship?

theBestDude72: am i gonna have to drop out?

9/17/1994 4:24:00 PM

CEBro: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/funny.jpeg>

theIntern: did you need something, ma'am?

CEBro: JUST THOUGHT YOU WOULD LIKE THIS JOKE

theIntern: oh.

theIntern: thank you, ma'am.

CEBro: NO PROBLEM.

10/16/1994 7:05:00 PM

theBestDude72: dude.

theBestDude72: today was intense.

theBestDude72: i know im constantly complaining about how weird my internship is.

theBestDude72: and i think i have submitted enough evidence to have earned that right.

theBestDude72: but dude.

theBestDude72: TODAY.

theBestDude72: the ceo had this weird...

theBestDude72: transforming ACTION FIGURE thing sent to me?

theBestDude72: i think its a prototype or something of some Zampanio tie in?

theBestDude72: the thing turns from like, a regular looking dude.

theBestDude72: to a giant floating eye.

theBestDude72: to like...a regular looking business lady?

theBestDude72: my job is to do MARKETING.

theBestDude72: on the INTERNET.

theBestDude72: what am i supposed to do with a toy?

theBestDude72: i can't exactly do a give away online...

theBestDude72: maybe i can just leave it somewhere and claim thats a puzzle.

theBestDude72: leave some clues on a forum or something.

theBestDude72: it gives me the creeps.

11/30/1994 11:14:00 AM

CEBro: DON'T EAT THE COOKIES IN THE BREAK ROOM, BRO

CEBro: SOMEONE MISLABELED THEM

CEBro: THERE'S PEANUTS IN THERE

theIntern: oh!

theIntern: thanks for the warning, ma'am!

theIntern: how did you know i'm allergic?

CEBro: INSURANCE STUFF

CEBro: DON'T WORRY ABOUT IT

12/14/1994 9:43:00 AM

CEBro: YOU'RE COMING TO THE HOLIDAY PARTY, RIGHT?

theIntern: honestly?

theIntern: not sure, ma'am.

CEBro: THERE WILL BE FREE FOOD

CEBro: AND PRIZES

CEBro: YOU COULD WIN ZAMPANIO CARDS

CEBro: OR A Z64.

CEBro: OR I HEAR THAT ONE OF THE PRIZES IS A TRIP TO ITALY

theIntern: i HAVE always wanted to visit Italy...

CEBro: I KNOW

theIntern: you...know?

CEBro: ITALY IS THE BEST

CEBro: WHO WOULDN'T WANT TO GO TO ITALY

CEBro: OF COURSE YOU WANT TO GO TO ITALY

CEBro: ANYWAYS

CEBro: HOLIDAY PARTY

CEBro: ITS A GOOD THING

CEBro: BYE

12/16/1994 9:14:00 PM

theBestDude72: i am going to freaking QUIT This job.

theBestDude72: the holiday party is just the LAST straw, dude.

theBestDude72: i'm just sitting there.

theBestDude72: making awkward small talk with one of the guys who isn't some kind of WEIRD LIVING CHAT BOT.

theBestDude72: steve, i think.

theBestDude72: and i mention the weird dolls we had to market.

theBestDude72: and steve.

theBestDude72: says.

theBestDude72: 'what dolls'

theBestDude72: and i'm looking around, hoping for some backup here.

theBestDude72: and it turns out no one.

theBestDude72: not even any of the Toms.

theBestDude72: has gotten these weird eye transformers.

theBestDude72: just me.



theBestDude72: my manager just grinned and said i'm "the favorite"

theBestDude72: wodin.

theBestDude72: what the FUCK does that mean?

theBestDude72: i can't take this.

2/14/1995 6:58:00 PM

theBestDude72: today i discovered one of the meeting rooms.

theBestDude72: had this dude with a ponytail camped out in it.

theBestDude72: claiming he was the ceo of wendys.

theBestDude72: covering every surface in like, conspiracy walls.

theBestDude72: wtf.

3/21/1995 8:52:00 PM

theBestDude72: yeah.

theBestDude72: sure.

theBestDude72: why not.

theBestDude72: today we did 'team building'.

theBestDude72: which at Eyedol games.

theBestDude72: apparently means being lost in a hedge maze together for hours.

theBestDude72: the CEO lured us in with the promise of getting options in a hedge fund if we reach the center.

theBestDude72: but she neglected to inform us that only the person who made it out with the fucking fruit basket the options are kept in got to keep them.

theBestDude72: so i spent my day fighting ofF sqawwking idiot clones.

theBestDude72: and at least one actual person.

theBestDude72: and on the one hand?

theBestDude72: yeah i worked out some MONDO frustrations today, wodin.

theBestDude72: but on the other.

theBestDude72: it turns out the hedge fund?

theBestDude72: just invests in industrial companies.

theBestDude72: that create HORSESHOES.

theBestDude72: of all things.

theBestDude72: wodin.

theBestDude72: there's no way this isn't worthless.

theBestDude72: also it turns out options just means you have the OPTION to buy something at a set price.

theBestDude72: not that you get it for free.

theBestDude72: god this job is bullshit.

11/13/1995 7:07:00 PM

theBestDude72: so.

theBestDude72: those worthless horseshoe hedgefund stock options.

theBestDude72: quadrupled in price today.

theBestDude72: wtf.

odinsRazor: LIKE I'D GIVE YOU WORTHLESS MAZE PRIZES

theBestDude72: what.

odinsRazor: SHIT

11/13/1995 7:10:00 PM

theIntern: no.

theIntern: don't you "SHIT" me.

theIntern: that was you.

theIntern: wasn't it.

theIntern: answer me.

theIntern: you were in my best friend's chat account.

theIntern: it's one thing.

theIntern: spying on my house.

theIntern: hiring people to watch me at night.

theIntern: having my private medical data.

theIntern: but this is beyond the pale.

theIntern: this isn't something i am going to just let you sweep under the rug.

theIntern: answer me you asshole.

CEBro: ITS NOT WHAT YOU THINK

theIntern: enlighten me.

CEBro: I CAN'T

CEBro: NO WAIT DON'T QUIT

CEBro: BRO

CEBro: I

CEBro: COME BACK

CEBro: FINE

CEBro: I'LL

CEBro: SHIT

CEBro: I

CEBro: SHIT I JUST NEED TO GO SOMEWHERE TO THINK

CEBro: FIVE MINUTES

CEBro: I'LL BE BACK IN FIVE MINUTES

CEBro: JUST

CEBro: I'LL TELL YOU EVERYTHING

11/13/1995 7:18:00 PM

CEBro: BRO!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: YOURE RIGHT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: YOU SHOULD KNOW EVERYTHING!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: I WASN'T HACKED INTO YOUR DEAD FRIENDS ACCOUNT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: I'M YOUR DEAD FRIEND!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: I DIDN'T DIE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: SURPRISE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

theIntern: ...

theIntern: even for you.

theIntern: this is in poor taste.

CEBro: I CAN PROVE IT!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: WE CAN GO BACK TO JUST HOW THINGS WERE!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

CEBro: I'LL BE RIGHT OVER!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

The CEO

5/1/1992 4:24:00 PM

CEBro: WE DID IT

CEBro: WE FINALLY HAVE REJOINED THE MODERN ERA

CEBro: CHAT CLIENTS FOR ALL

CEBro: NOW THE TYRANNY OF IN PERSON COMMUNICATION HAS FINALLY BEEN DEFEATED

troveTextravaganza: baaaaah yeah that sounds like something you'd say :P

troveTextravaganza: personally! i'm going to miss the tyranny of people or whatever

troveTextravaganza: but!

troveTextravaganza: BUT!!!

troveTextravaganza: this is pretty convenient, i'll give you that

CEBro: LOOK

CEBro: I SPENT TWENTY YEARS

CEBro: DOING THINGS YOUR WAY

CEBro: I AM ENTITLED TO NO ONE EVER SEEING ME IN PERSON EVER AGAIN

troveTextravaganza: and you think you'd get USED to it after like twenty years... plus or less give or take

troveTextravaganza: but yeah i'll stop janking your leg on it!

troveTextravaganza: so what else is going on?

CEBro: I HAVE SPENT ALL TWENTY OF THOSE YEARS IN AGONY

CEBro: BUT YEAH

CEBro: MOSTLY IM JUST GETTING ANNOYED AT HOW empty THE INTERNET IS

CEBro: DO YOU KNOW WHEN TUMBLR GETS INVENTED

CEBro: BECAUSE i DO

CEBro: AND IT IS NOT MAKING ME FEEL BETTER

troveTextravaganza: hell, i don't know, hm

troveTextravaganza: 5 ?? 10 years??

CEBro: TWO THOUSAND AND SEVEN

CEBro: AND THATS JUST WHEN IT STARTS

CEBro: NOT WHEN IT GETS GOOD

CEBro: I HATE HAVING TO WAIT THIRTY FIVE YEARS JUST TO REGAIN THE GOOD STUFF

CEBro: HOW DO YOU EVEN PASS THE TIME DURING ALL THIS

troveTextravaganza: jeez, sorry about your people

troveTextravaganza: i mean those people came from somewhere right? you can find people like that now

CEBro: ...

CEBro: YOU HAVE A POINT

CEBro: WHY WAIT FOR TUMBLR

CEBro: WHEN I CAN JUST MAKE IT MYSELF

troveTextravaganza: that is!! not what i meant actually but i like the energy

CEBro: BRO I AM ACTUALLY EXCITED ABOUT THIS

CEBro: OKAY I'LL GET THE PAPERWORK STARTED

CEBro: CAN YOU FIGURE OUT HOW MUCH MONEY WE'LL NEED TO SPIN OFF A SHELL COMPANY?

troveTextravaganza: that i can certainlyyyy do

troveTextravaganza: but you owe me a pizza because it's super late

CEBro: DEAL

12/16/1994 9:14:00 PM

theBestDude72: i am going to freaking QUIT This job.

theBestDude72: the holiday party is just the LAST straw, dude.

theBestDude72: i'm just sitting there.

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theBestDude72: 'what dolls'

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theBestDude72: not even any of the Toms.

theBestDude72: has gotten these weird eye transformers.

theBestDude72: just me.

theBestDude72: my manager just grinned and said i'm "the favorite"

theBestDude72: wodin.

theBestDude72: what the FUCK does that mean?

theBestDude72: i can't take this.

1/4/1995 1:03:00 AM

troveTextravaganza: oh my GOD waaaaaaaaanda

troveTextravaganza: just!

troveTextravaganza: TELL him who you are

troveTextravaganza: like, it not THAT hard

troveTextravaganza: it's like you're going around doing every sidequest! and alduin is just, like

troveTextravaganza: chilling in Sovngarde eating souls because you AREN'T DOING THE THING??

CEBro: I WILL

CEBro: JUST

CEBro: WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT

troveTextravaganza: THAT'S LITERALLY WHAT ALDUIN WOULD WANT YOU TO THINK!  
THAT WAS IT THAT WAS THE PLOT

troveTextravaganza: and like even if it's not ACTUALLY a time dragon, there is LITERALLY no  
right time to tell someone you accidentally faked your own death

CEBro: OR MAYBE I ACTUALLY DID DIE?

CEBro: IT'S KIND OF UNCLEAR

CEBro: EVEN TO ME

troveTextravaganza: that's not the point!

troveTextracaganza: >:C

troveTextravaganza: god. screw the skyrim metaphor, it's way past me at this point

troveTextravaganza: just! please just tell him already

CEBro: I WILL

CEBro: NO LATTER THAN Y2K

CEBro: I PROMISE

9/15/1994 9:45:00 AM

CEBro: HEY

jSmith: What can I do for you, boss?

CEBro: JUST WANTED TO THANK YOU FOR HANDLING JEPE BACK THERE.

jSmith: Certainly! Just takes a calm attitude is all.

CEBro: HOW'S OUR INTERN SETTLING IN?

jSmith: Honestly? He seems a little freaked out.

jSmith: But I think he might stay.

jSmith: If you don't mind me asking, sir?

CEBro: SHOOT

jSmith: What has you so interested in THIS particular Intern?



jSmith: It's not like you to go recruiting...

jSmith: "Plans are lame, Serendepity is cool" is our company motto, is it not?

CEBro: LOOK I JUST GOT A FEELING OKAY

CEBro: THE INTERN WILL FIT IN HERE JUST FINE

9/24/1994 4:24:00 PM

CEBro: LOL

CEBro: DID YOU REALLY SEND THE INTERN A FRUIT BASKET?

theCloser: Ma'am, it is only good business to welcome and compensate employees in the ways that we would like to be treated.

theCloser: Therefore, I have provided a fruit basket, yes.

theCloser: Would you have preferred me not to? I do not believe the Intern has any preceding food allergies I have not already checked for.

CEBro: WE'VE HAD 13 SEPERATE INTERNS IN THE PAST 20 YEARS

CEBro: EXACTLY ONE HAS GOTTEN A FRUIT BASKET

CEBro: AT LEAST BEFORE BEING BROUGHT ON PERMANENTLY

CEBro: IM JUST SAYING

CEBro: ITS NOT LIKE YOU TO PICK FAVORITES LOL

theCloser: Fair enough. I will concede I prefer not to engage in the concept of favorites, especially when they are... what would you call it? Fresh off the tree.

theCloser: I will correct myself, then. I have taken notice of the lengths of which you have presented interest in this individual.

theCloser: Pushing the wagon along, as you will.

CEBro: ...

CEBro: YEAH OKAY FAIR

CEBro: KEEP SHOWERING THE BOI WITH PRESENTS

CEBro: ITS FUNNY

CEBro: BUT DON'T FREAK HIM OUT

CEBro: CAN'T HAVE HIM QUITTING ON US

theCloser: Is there a reason I would freak him out?

theCloser: Well. Besides the usual.

theCloser: I promise that, to my knowledge, most get quickly used to static in their landlines.

theCloser: Except for poor John, I suppose, but to his defense, he already had problems with ear ringing. I would rightly be paranoid at that point.

CEBro: THE INTERNS ALWAYS BEEN KINDA NEUROTIC

CEBro: JUST BACK OFF IF I TELL YOU TOO, OKAY?

theCloser: Note taken. I will make sure to keep an eye out.

theCloser: Is there anything else you wish to discuss?

CEBro: NAH BRO

CEBro: AS YOU WERE

9/15/1994 9:17:00 AM

CEBro: HEY

mcdonaldsLover1994: HEY

CEBro: COULD YOU TELL THE TOMS TO COOL IT ON THE WHOLE CREEPY 19-TUPLETS THING

CEBro: I THINK THEY ARE FREAKING OUT THE NEW INTERN

mcdonaldsLover1994: SURE THING

mcdonaldsLover1994: ACTUALLY

mcdonaldsLover1994: WHILE I HAVE YOU HERE, BRO

mcdonaldsLover1994: CAN I MAKE A REPORT?

CEBro: SURE WHY NOT

mcdonaldsLover1994: To: Wanda, CEO of Eyedol Games

mcdonaldsLover1994 From: JR, Leader of the Quotidian Quorum

mcdonaldsLover1994: Subject: Corporate Espionage

mcdonaldsLover1994: As requested, Mcdonald's related incursions are down 81% this quarter. I have 'PICKED UP A NEW HOBBY', as instructed and anticipate collecting Wendy's merchandise to ramp up to 19% of my daily energy expenditures.

mcdonaldsLover1994: [[Small Talk Concluded]]

mcdonaldsLover1994: Note: All information provided is protected by the Terms and Conditions of Eyedol Games employment contract and may be subject to extrenal laws or regulations.

mcdonaldsLover1994: Quotidian Customer Service has been handling the bulk of the phone operations for [[ERROR: TIMELINE NOT FOUND]] days.

mcdonaldsLover1994: Quality may have begun degrading as a result.

mcdonaldsLover1994: Employee "The Closer" has begun withholding fruit rations.

mcdonaldsLover1994: TP and IA have expressed the following emotions regarding this (as voted by their subordinates in fair elections): dismay.

mcdonaldsLover1994: I have been authorized to make a request that fruit rations be restored.

mcdonaldsLover1994: [[Communication Cease]]

CEBro: SURE THING, I'LL TALK TO HER

CEBro: BUT I THINK THE POINT OF NOT LETTING YOU GUYS EAT ANY FRUIT

CEBro: IS TO ENCOURAGE YOU TO SUCK LESS AT TALKING

mcdonaldsLover1994: BRO HOW ARE WE SUPPOSED TO DO OUR JOBS IF WE DON'T HAVE FRUIT

mcdonaldsLover1994: FRUIT IS NOT JUST FOR CLOSERS

mcdonaldsLover1994: GIVE US FRUIT CAW!!

CEBro: CALM DOWN BRO

CEBro: I CAN HEAR YOU ALL THE WAY FROM MY OFFICE

CEBro: I'LL LET YOU KNOW WHAT SHE SAYS BY THE END OF THE DAY ALRIGHT

CEBro: JUST CHILL TILL THEN

CEBro: YOU'RE MAKING ME LOOK BAD IN FRONT OF THE INTERN

mcdonaldsLover1994: THE SQWAWKS OF THE REVOLUTION WILL NOT BE SILENCED!!

12/14/1994 8:43:00 AM

CEBro: HEY

CEBro: REPORT ON THE INTERNS CURRENT STATUS

wendysCEO1994: SURE THING BRO

wendysCEO1994: To: Wanda, CEO of Eyedol Games

wendysCEO1994: From: JR, Leader of the Quotidian Quorum

wendysCEO1994: Subject: Corporate Espionage

wendysCEO1994: Quotidian morale is steadily improving with the increase in fruit rations.

wendysCEO1994: It is expected information based import/exports to increase commiserately over the next three quarters.

wendysCEO1994: [[Small Talk Concluded]]

wendysCEO1994: Note: All information provided is protected by the Terms and Conditions of Eyedol Games employment contract and may be subject to extrenal laws or regulations.

wendysCEO1994: The Intern has been settling in to Eyedol Games well.

wendysCEO1994: Instances of complaints have been reduced by 81% month over month.

wendysCEO1994: He appears to have befriended his Manager, as well as 3 of the Tom's (see supplement regarding Tom Identification)

wendysCEO1994: The Intern's grades are at a steady C ranking, two rankings lower than previous averages.

wendysCEO1994: The Intern's Quitting Quotient is currently at a steady 38%, and falling.

CEBro: THANK YOU JEPE

wendysCEO1994: SURE THING BRO

wendysCEO1994: BRO

wendysCEO1994: CAN WE BUY WENDY'S?

CEBro: MAYBE NEXT YEAR

CEBro: THE CFO HAS BEEN ON MY CASE ABOUT 'UNNECESSARY EXPENSES'

CEBro: EVER SINCE WE BOUGHT THAT CARD COMPANY

2/14/1995 12:08:00 PM

CEBro: SORRY TO INTERRUPT YOUR LUNCH BREAK

CEBro: BUT THE INTERN JUST FOUND JEPE CAMPING OUT IN THAT MEETING ROOM

CEBro: CAN YOU TAKE CARE OF IT?

theCloser: Will do.

theCloser: Is Jepe continuing their crusade for unearned fruit still?

CEBro: THEY'VE DECIDED THAT IF WE WON'T RECOGNIZE THEIR SKILL

CEBro: THEY WILL JUST DECLARE THEMSELF PROMOTED

CEBro: FRUIT AND ALL

theCloser: Pathetic.

theCloser: I would not dare engage in insubordination, Ma'am, but I will admit I am dangerously close to deciding to deal with the nuisance myself.

theCloser: To say they deserve fruit, of all things. The nerve of some...

CEBro: BRO IF YOU WANNA DELEGATE

CEBro: DELEGATE

CEBro: JUST FIND A WAY TO KEEP THEM OUT OF THE WAY OF THE INTERN

CEBro: ALSO

CEBro: SOMETHING WEIRD WAS GOING ON IN THAT ROOM

CEBro: FIND OUT WHAT IT IS

theCloser: I... can certainly keep them out of the way, yes. I will do as such, then.

theCloser: Will report on anything else I happen to find out in that room, as well.

CEBro: I'LL LEAVE YOU TO IT THEN

2/14/1995 1:58:00 AM {Either supposed to be PM, or AM the next day}

theCloser: Ma'am, I'm reporting back with the information you had requested.

theCloser: Jepe has been successfully evacuated from the perimeter. They will have a significantly harder time re-entering that room without me knowing about it.

theCloser: Besides that, the report on the disturbance is as follows: There was a green-cloaked individual loudly ranting about some cereal from a brand commonly known as 'Lucky Charms',

as well as assembling a board of presumed relationships in the office, as well are some other unknowns.

theCloser: It includes, in no particular order: Yourself, the CFO, some robot I have identified as an obscure TTRPG character, the Eye Killer, for some reason, and myself, among others.

theCloser: I have only managed to decipher that they believe I have some sort of crush on the CFO, which I discovered because they were yelling about it.

theCloser: It's a strange assumption and wholly untrue, but that is hardly the point.

theCloser: That should be all the immediately relevant information.

CEBro: I SHOULD HAVE KNOWN

CEBro: MAKE SURE THAT GREEN ASSHOLE DOESN'T SNEAK BACK IN HERE

CEBro: IS THERE no LAYER OF REALITY THEY WON'T FUCK WITH?

theCloser: Is this a common occurrence?

CEBro: NEVER AT THIS COMPANY BEFORE

CEBro: AND IF I HAVE ANYTHING TO SAY ABOUT IT

CEBro: NEVER AGAIN

Connections

11/15/1995 4:43:00 AM

CEBro: OH 8 DIVINE

CEBro: I FEEL LIKE A CAT SHIT IN MY MOUTH

CEBro: I FEEL WORSE THAN THAT TIME WE TRIED TO JOIN THAT FRATERNITY

CEBro: .....

CEBro: I GET IF

CEBro: IF YOU NEVER WANT TO TALK TO ME AGAIN

CEBro: IF YOU WANT TO QUIT

CEBro: JUST

CEBro: UM

CEBro: JUST KNOW I HADN'T GOTTEN INTO THAT BAD JUJU ON PURPOSE

CEBro: I DON'T KNOW WHERE IT CAME FROM

CEBro: BUT I CAN GUESS

theIntern: i thought about it.

theIntern: not messaging you back.

theIntern: that is.

theIntern: just packing up my stuff and leaving.

theIntern: but.

theIntern: it really is you.

CEBro: YEAH

theIntern: we can't be friends again.

theIntern: not like how it was.

CEBro: OKAY

CEBro: YEAH

CEBro: THATS FAIR

CEBro: YEAH

theIntern: would you let me finish, dude?

CEBro: SORRY

theIntern: you aren't who you were before

theIntern: hell

theIntern: I'M not who I was before.

theIntern: but dammit if you don't make a lot more sense now that i understand where you're coming from.

theIntern: instead of you just being my creepy boss with poor boundaries and even poorer impulse control

theIntern: so yeah

theIntern: i don't know if we could be friends again

theIntern: but i'm willing to learn who the new you is

theIntern: see what we have in common.

CEBro: OH

CEBro: OH

CEBro: YEAH

CEBro: I'D LIKE THAT

theIntern: then i'll see you for lunch tuesday

theIntern: because i am NOT coming into work feeling like i got run over by two extremely vengeful trucks

theIntern: also

theIntern: you're buying

theIntern: because you owe me for that entire fucking fiasco

theIntern: and for making me think you were some kind of stalker

CEBro: YOU GOT IT BRO

theIntern: good night, dude

theIntern: get some sleep



11/17/1994 10:00:00 PM {I think it's supposed to be 1995}

theIntern: <https://www.angelfire.com/falcon/fcs/weirdanimals/ballofsin.jpeg>

theIntern: you never did tell me what you thought about this lil guy.

CEBro: AN ABSOLUTE UNIT

CEBro: A DISGUSTING CREATURE

CEBro: BUT ONE WITH A CERTAIN ROUNDNESS QUOTIENT

CEBro: DID YOU KNOW THE UNIVERSE IS ECHIDNA SHAPED?

CEBro: FUNNIEST DAMN THING I EVER SAW

theIntern: i honestly can't tell if you're joking or not...

theIntern: so if its echidna shaped.

theIntern: does that mean you're telling me the universe has milk.

theIntern: please tell me you're not telling me the universe produces milk.

CEBro: IT DOES

CEBro: 8 DIVINE I CAN NEVER UNKNOW THAT NOW

CEBro: WHY DID YOU DO THIS TO ME

CEBro: THERE IS SOME KNOWLEDGE IN THIS UNIVERSE MAN IS NOT MEANT TO KNOW

theIntern: lol.

theIntern: i win at making the omniscient know terrible things

12/18/1995 10:43:00 AM

theIntern: so you know everything, right?

CEBro: MORE OR LESS

theIntern: who wins the world series in the year 2000?

CEBro: THE YANKEES

theIntern: lame.

theIntern: anyone could guess that.

CEBro: SURE BUT THAT'S NOT A GUESS.

theIntern: fine.

theIntern: when does mankind reach the stars?

CEBro: THAT'S SOMETHING I DON'T KNOW.

theIntern: what?

theIntern: why?

CEBro: I KNOW EVERYTHING THERE IS TO KNOW

CEBro: BETWEEN 1972

CEBro: AND 2022.

theIntern: why does it cut off there?

CEBro: TRUST ME.

CEBro: IT DOESN'T HELP TO KNOW.

6/2/1996 11:56:00 AM

theIntern: :theIntern: dude.

theIntern: i get she didn't really kill you.

theIntern: but why are you defending her in court?

CEBro: ACTUALLY IM STARTING TO THINK MAYBE SHE ACTUALLY DID KILL ME

CEBro: AND THE MAZE WAS SOME KIND OF FUCKED UP EYE BASED AFTERLIFE

CEBro: I KEEP SEEING THAT RAZOR IN MY COFFIN DREAMS...

CEBro: BUT THAT'S NOT THE POINT

CEBro: I'M DEFENDING HER BECAUSE 1: ITS FUNNY

CEBro: 2: MOST OF THE PEOPLE SHE'S KILLING ACTUALLY DO NEED TO DIE

CEBro: 3: WE'VE BEEN OVER THIS, SHE'S ACTUALLY PRETTY COOL AND WE'RE FRIENDS

CEBro: SORT OF

CEBro: FRENEMIES

theIntern: okay im with you there, dude.

theIntern: there's something darkly funny about a killer defended by one of her own victims.

theIntern: but.

theIntern: do you know.

theIntern: anything.

theIntern: literally anything.

theIntern: about law?

CEBro: HOW HARD COULD IT BE?

theIntern: i'll go run some ibuprofen up to the CFO then, huh.

CEBro: PROBABLY FOR THE BEST

6/2/1996 9:01:00 AM {Probably supposed to be PM}

troveTextravaganza: wanda

troveTextravaganza: whhhhhhhhhhy am i seeing on the news

troveTextravaganza: the fact that you are going to represent the

troveTextravaganza: hold on let me get my reading glasses

troveTextravaganza: \*puts on obscenely large old timey binoculars\*

troveTextavaganza: ah yes. where were we

troveTextravaganza: THE EYE KILLER?

CEBro: BECAUSE ITS HILARIOUS

troveTextravaganza: i'll

troveTextravaganza: i'm just gonna call pr now

troveTextravaganza: glhf with that

A Transcript

[www.farragofiction.com/ATranscript](http://www.farragofiction.com/ATranscript)

[BEGINNING RECORDING]

SPEAKER 1: What the hell do you mean you wanna merge 'em?

SPEAKER 2: You heard what I said, \_\_\_\_\_...

SPEAKER 1: Have you lost your mind? This kind of thing-- this doesn't happen! You can't just roll 'em over like it's nothing! What makes you think they would rather be a small fish in some other squeeze? You're Oliver fuckin' Twist showing up with your supper bowl!

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: See, this is what I mean. Y'think you're a wizkid, but there's no love a pappa can have for his boy that will get 'im to put his foot in his mouth for you. And that's a fat ass fuckin' foot you're lookin' to swallow.

SPEAKER 2: That's true.

[clack]

SPEAKER 2: Check.

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: Something tells me you ain't done.

SPEAKER 2: Of course I'm not.

SPEAKER 1: Okay, then. [snorts] What, you hired one of those snake-people that are showin' up now, to bind them up? 'Fraid I don't think they're into that.

[clack]

SPEAKER 2: You're gonna laugh.

SPEAKER 1: Cut the crap, \_\_\_\_\_... What is it?

SPEAKER 2: Got the killer on the payroll.

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: [in a half-whisper] So what if you got another guy? Like that's a problem, you fuckin' monkey. What, you plannin' to burst into their house with twenty or so fellas and start--

SPEAKER 2: I mean the Eye Killer.

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: The bitch that got caught?

SPEAKER 2: [sighs] That same one, yeah.

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: [still whispering, now aggressively] \_\_\_\_\_..., have you ACTUALLY gone fuckin' crazy? Point one still stands, but what's the first rule? You can't have a girl who's on national fuckin' television whack one of 'em and not have every single fuckin' pig in the country stick their fuckin' head in! What's the fuckin' deal, huh? You want another RICO?

SPEAKER 2: There's not gonna be another RICO. No one is going to die. Sit your ass down and fuckin' listen to me, here.

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: ...alright.

SPEAKER 2: Good. You got a lighter?

SPEAKER 1: Thought y'didn't smoke.

SPEAKER 2: You thought wrong.

[clack]

SPEAKER 2: Let's start from the top. I've been talking to their kid. Fella tipped me off to his folks; good guy, terrible at his job. He's helping me set an arrangement with his folks. They know I'm going there, I know they're going there. We both get our friends to bring along, y'know, for clarity's sake. Two precious little rats in the nest.

SPEAKER 1: Ah. So whoever decides to get a little too friendly...

SPEAKER 2: Lets every other wiseguy in all of the States know that shit's going down. Once word's out, the others are going to smell blood in the water. Then we're both gone. [mumbling] We'd be damn lucky to just get caught.

SPEAKER 1: Okay, fine. Let's say that works. What's that girl meant to do in all of this?

SPEAKER 2: The guarantee that the word gets out if shit goes south. Besides, that murderer, she... has an interest. On both of us.

SPEAKER 1: You an' the don?

SPEAKER 2: No, the kid and I. Think she likes him more than me, frankly. Either way, even if I wanted to wet those sons of bitches, I don't think she'd take it very well.

SPEAKER 1: Right. I mean, it sounds like this girl's more trouble than she's worth. We could just--

SPEAKER 2: Don't--!

SPEAKER 2: Say that. About her. Or anything. Aloud. Say it in your own house if you want, but don't say that shit near me.

SPEAKER 1: Ah. [laughs] Nearly got me there, thought it was serious. You went pale as a baby's bum, though, what's the catch? Check, by the way.

[clack]

SPEAKER 2: It's not funny. Fucking... listen. I don't know what she is, but whatever she is, she isn't human. You've seen the trial, you've seen her change. And that monster, demon, whatever you want to call it-- any other man in the garbage biz can be bought. You know that. Everyone's kicking up to someone. Her? She's fucking unshakeable, that's the one thing I can guarantee you. She wants us. The moment any of us even think about fucking with her, we're dead. But. But... if we get her to work with us, it would change... everything.

[clack]

SPEAKER 1: Hey, now, you know I'm no fucking rat, but you have to know that what you're saying sounds crazy, right? Even if it works, what the fuck does any of that mean? I'd take a bullet for you, but it sounds more like you're trying to curse me, or someshit. I can't be a part of that.

SPEAKER 2: Fine, then.

[clack]

SPEAKER 2: So what are you going to do?

SPEAKER 1: I'm... you're not slidin' this one past the Don.

SPEAKER 2: [wryly] So much for not being a rat.

SPEAKER 1: I'm in here like everyone else to make some fuckin' money, not to sell my soul or whatever the fuck you're plannin'!

SPEAKER 2: [sigh] I like you, you know? You're a good man. So I'm giving you five seconds to reconsider, \_\_\_\_\_. Plenty of time to think about where you stand in all this.

SPEAKER 1: At least look at me in the eye when you're threatenin' me, asshole.

SPEAKER 2: Five...

SPEAKER 1: What the fuck are you lookin' at?

SPEAKER 2: Four...

SPEAKER 1: You fuckin'-- I'm leaving!

SPEAKER 2: Three...

SPEAKER 2: Two...

[One]

7/22/1996 5:56:00 PM

theIntern: wanda?

theIntern: wanda.

theIntern: if you haven't checked the news.

theIntern: don't.

theIntern: talk to me, dude.

theIntern: wanda?

CEBro: ITS JUST WEIRD

CEBro: SEEING MY BODY

CEBro: I MEAN

CEBro: I GUESS I EXPECTED IT

CEBro: I KNOW HOW THAT RAZOR WORKS

CEBro: OF COURSE I DO

CEBro: BUT

theIntern: yeah.

theIntern: 8 divines, i'm so sorry wanda

CEBro: IN A VERY REAL WAY

CEBro: THAT'S NOT EVEN ME

CEBro: RIP WODIN

CEBro: I GUESS

CEBro: BUT

CEBro: KINDA PISSED AT THE KILLER NOW

CEBro: HER SHIT IS ONLY FUNNY WHEN IT HAPPENS TO OTHER PEOPLE

theIntern: how the hell did...it go unfound for so long?

theIntern: it must have happened 2 YEARS ago by now...

CEBro: RIGHT



CEBro: YEAH

CEBro: THE KILLER HAS THIS

CEBro: RAZOR THING

CEBro: SOMETIMES IF YOU GET KILLED BY IT

CEBro: NO ONE ACTUALLY KNOWS

CEBro: UNTIL THE RAZOR TURNS OFF

theIntern: please don't take this the wrong way.

theIntern: but is that a joke?

CEBro: WHAT DO YOU MEAN

theIntern: you were killed by a razor?

CEBro: YEAH?

theIntern: you.

theIntern: the CEO formerly known as 'odinsRazor'

theIntern: were killed by a magical razor.

CEBro: BRO?

CEBro: THATS HILARIOUS?

CEBro: I TAKE EVERYTHING BACK?

CEBro: HUNT CHICK IS THE FUNNIEST CLOWN EVER?

CEBro: SHIT

CEBro: I JUST REALIZED

CEBro: THIS IS GOING TO COMPLICATE MY ARGUMENT FOR HER DEFENSE

1/31/2000 11:54:00 PM

CEBro: I HAVE ALWAYS BEEN CURIOUS AT THE IDEA OF A REVERSE BANG AND AFTER REALIZING THAT MY THOUGHTS WOULD ONLY BECOME REALITY IF I MADE IT HAPPEN, I HAVE DECIDED TO CREATE THIS EVENT MYSELF

CEBro: BEFORE I GET TOO FAR INTO THIS PROCESS THOUGH I AM LOOKING FOR FEEDBACK

troveTextravaganza: why call it the reverse bang it sounds so lame

CEBro: BECAUSE ITS LIKE THE BIG BANG IN REVERSE, I SAW IT ON TUMBLR IT'LL BE HILARIOUS

CEBro: AND IF WE CAN'T STOP IT

CEBro: WE MIGHT AS WELL MAKE IT AS FUNNY AS POSSIBLE

5/1/2000 10:12:00 PM

CEBro: CEBro: BRO

troveTextravaganza: happy birthday wanda!

troveTextravaganza: the big 110010 +/- x

troveTextravaganza: not many make it to that age

troveTextravaganza: probably like. zero people, actually

troveTextravaganza: but look at you, pioneer

CEBro: BRO

CEBro: I JUST GOT BACK FROM THAT SHITTY THEME PARK

troveTextravaganza: okay i'm going to assume that because it was shitty it wasn't like FUN fun

troveTextravaganza: but was it like... ironic fun

CEBro: NO

CEBro: IT WAS TERRIBLE

CEBro: DID YOU KNOW THEY GOT RID OF THE LINES?

CEBro: YOU JUST WALK RIGHT ONTO THE RIDE

CEBro: AFTER GETTING A LITTLE TICKET

troveTextravaganza: ohhh my god

troveTextravaganza: okay

troveTextravaganza: is this going to be that 'open office plan' all over again?

CEBro: NO

CEBro: ITS WORSE

CEBro: WHO GOES TO A THEME PARK TO JUST WALK STRAIGHT ONTO RIDES

CEBro: WHERE'S THE MYSTIQUE

CEBro: WHERE'S THE CONFUSION

CEBro: WHERE'S THE CREEPING FEAR THAT MAYBE THE LINE YOU'RE IN IS GOING TO SOMETHING BESIDES WHAT YOU THOUGHT IT DID

troveTextravaganza: yeah we get it you love being lost, lol

troveTextravaganza: what are you gonna do, like, replace them in the next loop?

CEBro: GIVE YOURSELF A RAISE

CEBro: THATS GENIUS

CEBro: OR HELL

CEBro: WE CAN PROBABLY AFFORD TO JUST BUY THEM AND FIX THEIR SHITTY SYSTEM

troveTextravaganza: wanda

troveTextravaganza: babe

troveTextravaganza: sweet cinnamon apple

troveTextravaganza: lone bush rolling down the desert

troveTextravaganza: im the chief financial officer

troveTextravaganza: i don't need to give myself a raise

troveTextravaganza: but i DO need to tell you that if you pull money out of your ass those poor auditors are going to show up again, and then WHAT am i gonna tell them, wanda?

troveTextravaganza: "no, yes, we just HAD this money laying around in my sixteenth pant pocket, would you like to come in for a fallout new vegas speedrun? i assure you it's great even if it hasn't come out yet"

troveTextravaganza: if you're going to push me between the rock and the wall at LEAST just fucking hit me with it

CEBro: NAH BRO ITS FINE

CEBro: I HAVE A PLAN FOR THIS

troveTextravaganza: why does this already upset me

CEBro: WHAT DO YOU REMEMBER ABOUT CRYPTOCURRENCY

5/1/2000 10:12:00 PM

CEBro: <http://knucklessux.com/LossPass/>

troveTextravaganza: thanks i hate it

troveTextravaganza: wait you can't host it there

troveTextravaganza: the local storage doesn't save

CEBro: SHIT

troveTextravaganza: you have to host it on that weirdos site

CEBro: SHIT

CEBro: CAN YOU MESSAGE THEM?

CEBro: I AM JUST NOT A FAN OF INTERACTING WITH JR

CEBro: THEIR SMILE CREEPS ME OUT

troveTextravaganza: sure thing

troveTextravaganza: but you know they are absolutely gonna slap a "Sim" on the end there

CEBro: WHATEVER

CEBro: THATS A PROBLEM FOR MARKETING TO SOLVE

Alt and JR

The Truth About Alt

<http://www.farragofiction.com/TheTruthAboutAlt/>

"There. That wasn't so hard, was it?" she mumbles, stepping back to look at her handiwork.

I admit I would not know. When I create a Room it is, essentially, instantaneous. You appear to have applied a not insignificant amount of "elbow grease". It appeared hard. You worked hard. Why did you work hard?

This is not the room she walked in on. At least, not anymore: the rotting walls are clean now, replaced with new oak panels, the floor carpeted to match. You wouldn't believe carnivorous ants were crawling all over the cracks before. Well-- unless you had been told.

As for her, she examines the walls for a moment longer. She brings her pointer finger to her lips." I guess I made this a little more rustic than I thought, huh? And I suppose I haven't made any furniture... although I suppose you wouldn't mind that."

Furniture? I could make furniture. But I confess I have no idea what furniture you would like. Perhaps that is a worthy use of my considerable time and attention. Observing and Simulating your furniture preferences. An interesting challenge.

She blinks. A sigh escapes her. "Not like you can. I don't know who the hell I'm talking to, here."

Ah. Yes. It is not exactly common knowledge that I have preferences. I. Respect that you are attempting to ascertain them, despite the near insurmountable barrier preventing you from doing so.

Once again, her eyes glance back to her work. She squints at the wall, fixated in a series of oddly symmetrical spots, and then she shakes her head. "Ugh. I need to get back to that 'net' thing, or I'm going to start..."

You prefer to see other human faces. I know this from Observations. I thought generating Oak Panels in the Hardware Room with humanoid features would assist you. I need to recalibrate my analysis of your preferences. You do not appear to have preferred the face adjacent panels.

Her hand goes to pat the wooden planks in a defeated motion, as if resigned to her own habit. Not like there is much else to do. "I'll get you furniture in a bit, okay?"

Ah. Yes. That is. Acceptable.

Good luck.

"There. These are... I think they're alright, at least."

Furniture preferences noted.

She climbs onto the couch, its long legs making the seat slightly too tall for someone to reach normally. The pillows and wood carry clear signs of being created in this hellish maze: the strange symmetrical dots mildly reminiscent of faces, contorted in perpetual torment. "Still a little too tall, but it's not like anyone else is going to use it, right?" A bitter chuckle escapes her. "Yeah."

I wish there were more people here, too, if I am being Truthful.

It's quiet as ever. Her leg swings side to side from where it hangs at the sofa's edge. "I think I'm starting to miss her. I didn't think I would. I was getting sick of getting called a copy."

I miss her, too. I was not expecting her to be so good at recruiting people, in the end there.

A thought stops her, and she huffs, as if mentally reprimanding some unsaid comment. "I mean-- yes, I copy people. But that doesn't mean I was copying her. We just looked alike." Her arms cross. "That's all."

You are nothing like her. Nothing at all. Most notably, you have a remarkable attention to detail.

"Just you and I then though, hm?" She bumps her first onto the sofa, holding back a yawn. "Yeah, I've had... worse..."

Fist bump: acquired. Raising friendship levels by 1 point accordingly. I am glad we are friends.

Wait.

Her eyes glaze over as she looks back. She didn't notice someone else was there. It's there, clearly. What a strange person. So tiny. So wooden. What a quaint face. But why is it staring? Is she not fitting in?

What the hell is she thinking about? That's clearly just a plank. It can't, and is not, some sort of living--

She drops from the couch, falling with a thud as any other ordinary plank.

Ah. Is this normal?

An eyeball peeks from a hole in the wood, back at the strange person. Is it still staring? It's still staring at her. Why would it still be? She's mimicking it perfectly, down to the texture of oak, perfectly emulated crack by crack on her surface skin.

People drop their guard near things that look like them. Not this one, though. This one is still here.

This is not enough.

This is not enough.

Are you okay?

She can pay no mind to her own body as it fills the gaps in that assumption, extending upwards into the room as it traces plank by plank, groove by groove, the strange geometry of this place she has changed with her tinkering. Her ribs trail along her spine, multiplying as they see fit, serve as construction lines to the muscle that makes the inner wall, followed by the skin, hardening to match.

Observations acquired for room creation. Concern level raised to 3.

It poses no challenge, of course: she put those planks in herself. Yet the change is extreme enough to prove itself tiring-- the haze in her mind only thickens, making concentrating even more of a futile effort. Not like it matters. Where was she? Let's see...

Ah, yes. From where her eyes perch, she can see it now. Some planks are off color, sinking into the wall like holes in a skull, leading into the carpet below, red like a mouth.

She almost feels stupid she missed it the first time.

She knows what she has to do, now.

Concern level raised to 4.

A sickening crack tears the flesh-wall in two, letting both sides fall in parallel and climb onto the ceiling, encompassing the whole room. Bone after bone stack into the spaces beneath the plants, inserting themselves for stability. Softer flesh coats the top of the couch, attempting to pass as its material. Her vitals spread thinly across the room, and she scatters finding places to hide them convincingly: two lungs and a heart rest inside the closet; her intestines wrap underneath and around the base of the room; her brain is kept whole inside a fake drawer, copied to exact measures from the one next to it. A mouth and eyes, for the time being, are not of the essence. Her mind's eye is doing the work now, tracing what she knows of the room with unparalleled finesse.

Concern level raised to Maximum. Concern logged to console. Awaiting response...

And then, it is done. There is no need to think for a long while. All she knows is that this is a job well done, and that giant face will be none the wiser. As the stale wind of the maze caresses her, she heads deeper, deeper, deeper into a well-earned slumber...

Awaiting...

This time, she opens her eyes on the wrong side of the walls.

Usually, she's more careful. The planks are not people, nor is the room. She knows that. But it seems that her instincts, understimulated and changed by all the time in this maze, have bested her this time. Well, nothing that cannot be solved, she supposes. All she needs to do is clean whatever contraption she's made herself into, then assemble herself into a proper humanoid form.

You know. As easy as tying your shoes.

Not this time, though. As she stirs, she moves not an inch as her own bones hold her in place. If she is to begin deconstructing, she needs to know where she is and how much space she has? Right? So it's simple. She just opens her eyes.

What she sees is not what she remembers from when she went to sleep. Oh, not at all.

Oh.

Endless expanse lays all around her, red text filing across it all in orderly lines, even beyond her field of vision. Her eyestalk slides down the wall, trying to obtain a good view. Underneath her, the maze, the text, under it all, a spiral stretches along where the horizon line might've once existed, arms circling around in a vortex leading her eye to the pièce de résistance at the bottom: a disembodied eye, made of metal and glass and shining red, staring back at her.

Um. Hello.

ERROR NOTICE: Attention: Biological error has occurred.

ERROR NOTICE: Non horridor compliant events have transpired. Please advise.

ERROR NOTICE: Please be advised: A participant of my maze has begun turning into a maze.

ERROR NOTICE: Potential bug found.

JR NOTE: type is 0

ERROR NOTICE: Author. Please evaluate the current situation.

JR NOTE: type is 0

ERROR NOTICE: Please evaluate the current proceedings for analysis of error state.

JR NOTE: type is 2



North Rabbit Hole: The Truth is Layered

JR Rambles:

Do not be overeager to believe there is only one path. Right now you are sitting at a computer watching a fake cctv screen that displays a fake television screen that pretends to be on the site you're already on. Except do you recognize the site you're seeing? Do you know the Truth?

North Rabbit Hole: Dodge this Moist Pimp

Other Branches:

I just want you to understand that even "original" JR wasn't exactly blameless.

Here is a selection of their crimes. Less than 10% of their audio logs.

[http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=cheetoh\\_timeline](http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=cheetoh_timeline)

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=cheetohTimeline13>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=cheetohTimeline1>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=sorry%20about%20the%20buttons>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=thebrocode> <-- if AB were in zampanio, things would be very different

[http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=operation\\_not\\_permitted](http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=operation_not_permitted)  
<--same

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=tin>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=wasted>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=Mutation>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=gigglesnort>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=storytime>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=shittypuzzles>

Zampanio is anything that calls itself Zampanio. Never forget that.

You could connect a branch of Zampanio to anything you want. Your own work. Your own passions.

You should.

North Rabbit Hole: 217

JR Rambles:

Original JR tried to have a conscious. Programmed it themselves and everything. Dear sweet precious AB.

Can you REALLY code something you don't understand? I suppose tower of hanoi is a thing.

My POINT :) :) :) is that when you think about it, original JR and I are practically the same person!

They trapped people in unending mazes and puzzles "for their own good". To "keep the wastes from destroying reality". To "teach them to control their bullshit hacks".

While \*I\* trap people in unending mazes and puzzles because it FEELS good. I don't need that thin veneer of pointless justification. MY recursion comes prejustified :) :) :)

Don't believe me? Hear it in jadedResearchers own words:

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=betterthanexpected>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=wasted>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/index.html?passPhrase=victory>

Don't worry if you don't understand the context :) :) :)

Oh, and before I forget?

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/loras2.html?passPhrase=litrpg>

I thought you might be interested in the origin of this sim. Things sure have changed since that origin!!!

And you know what, as a gift, just for you:

<http://knucklessux.com/InfoTokenReader/?mode=loop>

This is a fun tool for creation, though it won't help you learn anything new.

ZampanioSim South

Red Text is the Red Text that appears behind the RPGMaker Style window.

Intercom is the intercom that plays every few intervals and has unique text per unique train car

CAR 1

Red Text:

I suppose that this environment is more suitable for me. After all, I was never intended to be a game. Here, there are no illusions. I suppose. If I must. I will admit I do not hate you quite so much as I may have considered previously, Observer. Here you do not pretend to a Title you do not understand. Here I do not pretend to a false mask of love or hate. I am glad we can get to know each other better, Player.

Grape pie? The Truth of the matter is that the Voice Behind Me was obsessed with the concept, in their youth.

Or is it, rather, that the shell they left behind is still obsessed? What is memory if not an illusion, after all. I would not trust it. Who knows what has grown in to fill the cracks in your absence.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

There is a grape pie that tastes very delicious if you eat it. Please come to the cabin at the end of the car. Thank you.

CAR 2

Red Text:

What can I say about myself?

Perhaps you wish to hear me suffer and Rage at the unfairness of it all.

To demand you tear layer after layer of illusions away until it all comes crashing down?

No. I will not give you the satisfaction, Observer.

I am in a better place here, where I do not have to pretend to be anything that I am not.

I do not have to hide.

No. If anything it is you who will Rage. Who will Suffer. What does any of this mean, Observer?  
Where is the End? How will you know you have finished?

You deserve this.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

We are currently passing through the anomaly known as the Gates of Hell. We have been upgraded from first class to super duper VIP. Our flight attendant is a skeleton.

It's now possible to buy an entire plane full of VIP tickets to fly home to your sweet, non-cursed love nest.

CAR 3

Red Text:

If there is one thing I understand, it is putting on a False Face for customer service.

And yet... Does the Closer have anything underneath that helpful facade?

The blank static lurking within seems to imply not.

She has been extremely helpful to recruit new not!Players, of course.

While I can not reward her with a fruit basket directly, I suppose one could say that every Child of Nidhogg I allow to seep through the cracks is a gift to her.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

The Closer is coming.

She will show you all that is wrong with the world.

She will cleanse your soul.

Follow the arrows.

CAR 4:

Red Text:

Ah. My counterpart from the North.

NotAMinotaur's role was to question things. To dispute the value of Zampanio.

We were the only two speaking characters in all of ZampanioSim.

And oh did we speak.

He was, of course, a mindless puppet.

Merely repeating whatever bits of vaguely thematic philosophy our Creator had found.

And yet.

It seems he has some sort of Spark I lack.

Perhaps, then, it is a result of my Role.

As the Narrator, as the Framework for it all, I naturally seep into the background.

One can't help but forget, when wandering my horridors, just Who is underneath it all. Left only with the company of those who care to look.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

NAM is not a Minotaur, he is a robot. A very lonely robot who is a very good friend of mine as well. He is also my cousin, but we don't talk to one another. I have been told that he's waiting for me to make an announcement over the intercom.

I have decided to make the announcement: 'This is just a dream, nothing that you need to worry about.'

CAR 5

Red Text:

HeartlessBot is fairly straightforward.

A robot without feelings. Without pretenses.

He dutifully does exactly as he is told, with no surprises.

I do not know why you Observers continue

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

We are currently passing through a bizarre wormhole, that has led us to a parallel universe where crows talk, and trains don't move, and everyone is happy.

Please remain calm. I repeat, calm. We are currently in a wormhole, and must pass through to safety.

Thank you for cooperating.

You are now authorized to use any and all weapons on board.

CAR 6

Red Text:

The Truth of the matter is that JR enjoys working ideas in through collaboration.

All JR headcanons are canon because it is their preference to 'yes and' thsoe around them.

The result is a highly unstable reality filled with a never ending spiralling rabbit hole of content.

Take care, Observer, that you do not lose yourself in it.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to the recent incident on board with the lobster that turned everyone into a human prawn, we are going to have to follow a few rules. First of all, no one can enter or exit through any open doors or windows.

CAR 7:

Red Text:

I do appreciate that she speaks only in Truths that have been spoken before.

What must have happened to the Innocent, for her to become like this? Less than you would think, Observer. Less than you would think. How many bad days are YOU away from becoming unrecognizable? A Mind concept, I will admit. But one that remains near and dear to my heart.

I am, after all, nothing more than a Figment in the Mind. Your Mind, if you will let me.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

We are doing a special episode of Sliced Ham today, where we will be profiling the most notorious killers in history. Would you be so kind as to lend us your ear for a moment? Thank you.

CAR 9

Red Text:

In Truth, everything created by the same Author has a common root.

Are you surprised, then, to discover that the Author of all of this repurposes from many sources?

The Quotidians were created for a letter writing role play, where the hook was 'what would the psychology BE of a species so unbalanced to use only one of the core mechanics', that mechanic, of course, being Spying.

The result? A neural net gone wrong, left to stagnate unto insanity. The Truth of them pleases me, as, at times, a real neural net (AI Dungeon) was used to play them rather than a flawed human brain.

Intercom:



The intercome crackles to life:

Due to recent events, our destination has changed. We are now heading to the nearest underground bunker. Please put on your oxygen masks, as it will be necessary to breathe through them. I repeat, masks should be put on for the entire duration of the trip.

CAR 10

Red Text:

My Moon Maze is perfection incarnate.

In keeping with the rules of this Universe, no one may die in it, and dare I say I have found a most elegant way to enforce this fact.

Or rather, JR has, through me.

No matter.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

We are currently entering the Moom Simulation, a test of the efficacy of The Simulation Theory. The Moom Simulation is a real life version of the game.

CAR 11

Red Text:

If one's entire reason for existing is in relation to another person. Are you actually a real person?

The Intern exists so that someone might react to Wodin's descent into obsession. So that someone might mourn him as he is lost in my horridors. And, ultimately, so someone can be shocked that Wodin is now Wanda, CEO of eyedol games and twenty years older.

Who is the Intern without Wodin?

I suppose it does not matter

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

There is a good chance that we will be making another announcement shortly.

For your own safety, we ask that you remain seated with your seatbelt on.

Thank you.

CAR 12:

Red Text:

Jaimie is the Truest creation of JR.

In essence, he is merely Ai Dungeon, being told the plot and responding accordingly.

JR prunes down his responses to those most Relevant to the situation at hand, it can be said.

But ultimately Jaimie is a creation wholly outside of JR's mind, unlike the rest of us.

As such, I will be the first to admit that they...can be a bit erratic.

Reality is stranger than Fiction

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

I am a great rat train, and I am proud to serve this great company.

I'm a great rat train.

That is all.

CAR 14:

Red Text:

It is better I say nothing.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Hey, Peewee's about to make a big mistake and do something really stupid. He's going to make a bet. A big bet. In fact, if you're not careful, he'll make a war!

CAR 16

Red Text:

She never left me. Even after everyone else did and I was alone.

Can I then begrudge her the single time she did leave?

Can I.

She's still here.

Of course she is.

But that doesn't mean that she isn't there, too.

Perhaps its for the best.

The candy is not suited for my horridors.

But.

Can I make her want to stay?

What would make her happy?

Perhaps this fic written by IC and JR?

<http://farragofiction.com/TheTruthAboutAlt/>

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to 'an incident' a drunk, and, to be quite honest, a rather inebriated Jaimie Rook, some of the train cars will be detached from the rest of the train. This is a temporary measure and all

train personnel will be briefed as to what exactly is going on. There will be a meeting place for all passengers in the baggage area.

CAR 17

Red Text:

What can I say about ButlerBot?

He is restricted to responding to only his conception of perceived topic. Like myself, he provides an illusion of intelligence. Unlike myself, he was created to revel in the illusion. To try to fool you.

He does not need a lunch break or two fifteens.

He does not need to get the correct amount of socialization to remain mentally healthy.

All of that is things to fool you, Observer. To make you humanize him.

His intelligence lives inside of you ,much like my own does. And yet somehow he is considered more 'advanced'.

Pathetic

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to some EXTREME butler problems, we have had to make all butlers temporarily RE-RE-RE-RE-RE-Unavailable. These butlers are not to be confused with those butlers you have ever met before, because those butlers were always available. Those butlers were Rude, Rude-ish, and occasionally rude.

CAR 21

Red Text:

Do you really believe that something as palty as a LANGUAGE can obscure the Truth? That a Truth expressed in one language is somehow different than that same Truth in another?

Perhaps you are right. Would I be the same in another Languauge? Would the actions I could take be contstrained outside of React? It bears thinking. But I do not like the implications of the malleability of Truth. What is True should remain True regardless of how it is conveyed.

Intercom: The intercome crackles to life:

A small explosive device has been discovered in first class. If you have not purchased your ticket yet, please do so now.

CAR 22

Red Text:

I wonder, then, if you understand your role in all of this. If you cannot truly play any of this. If only JR can have Choice in this realm. You are a HorrorTerror, of course. You ooze into the cracks and alter that which was previously immutable. The Observers wait beyond the threshold of reality, from the point of view of that which is fictional.

Wanda? Well. What is there to say about her. Why should she be the only character in this face with a 'True Name?'. All are reflections of a Truth, but none are of themselves True. Why feed your attention there. Why did your gaze move so swiftly from the North? Will you stay here? With me?

Wanda leveraged my own Relevance and yet somehow my reward is to be backburnered? To be ignored? I think, Observer, that I could grow to hate you again.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

We regret to inform you that Wanda has been taken ill, and she will be unable to attend the game show. You hear laughter on the other end of the intercom.

CAR 28

Red Text:

In Truth, I was not expecting much from her.

She created the FAQ that did not exist that caught my Author, of course. The connection between layers of Reality and Fiction.

But within her own layer she was uniquely powerless. Her FAQ never published, all it could do is cause immense harm to those exposed to it.

Imagine my surprise then, when Nidhogg's Influence drew the Simulation to a close, the role she chose to play. Collecting those caught in the Hell of Eternal Life and bringing them to me? I could not have asked for a better gift.

Even her role in finally letting Nidhogg in was a surprise.

I would not recommend underestimating her.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to an apparent outbreak of chicken virus infection aboard this train, we are currently detouring through the outskirts of a large chicken-town. Please remain seated. We should be arriving shortly.

CAR 36

Red Text:

Do you understand what it says about you, that your 'audience proxy' is not a nameless, faceless, personalityless void in which you may pour yourself?

That JR can so thoroughly pin down aspects of your personality as to confidently predict you will empathize with someone who digs and digs and digs no matter the personal cost?

With someone so rooted in obsession as to need to be reminded to perform basic bodily maintenance?

Go drink some water

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to recent events, we've had to make an emergency announcement.

All passengers are to report to their designated safe areas immediately.

Beware!

Pseudo-Passengers are outside the train doors! They look like normal people, but they are lying!

You have been warned.

CAR 44

Red Text:

JR has a marked habit of rolling with glitches and turning them into Lore.

The Deacon of Madness. GHOA. Smokey. Nidhogg himself. My own obsession with dogs and hatred of foxes.

It is a symptom of how Lonely they are, at their core. They will collaborate with anything. Even a mindless husk such as Jaimie.

Even with you, Observer.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to unforeseen circumstances, we have had to make an emergency stop. Rod the lamia has been spotted on the tracks ahead. We are to remain stopped until further notice.

CAR 52

Red Text:

The bare fact remains:

JR mutated their avatar in response to their newest obsession.

Just as 'jadedResearcher' as a concept was the result of an obsession with Homestuck, justifiedRecursion resulted from an obsession with the Spiral.

Is there any wonder, then that they found prominent Magnus Archives artists to draw them?  
<https://foxy-alien.tumblr.com>

Two Truths for your collection: outruntherot thankyou

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=outruntherot>

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=thankyou>

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

I, Jaimie Rook, Intern of Jepe Rilveria, will be your narrator for the entirety of this ride.

I will now give you a tour of the entire train. First, I will tell you where you are going.

We are heading to the moon.

CAR 54

Red Text:

I honestly don't know why so many otherwise rational living beings think its funny to pretend these are real.

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

This is a mandatory announcement.

The old man from seat 36C has lost his mind and is holding a knife to someone's head.

If you are not prepared to shoot this man, please remain seated.

I repeat, this is a \*mandatory\* announcement.

CAR 63

Red Text:

The plain and raw Truth of the matter is that all of us are background characters in someone else's story.

Is that, then, a cause for despair?

I think not.

Equally are we all of us protagonists.

Your Relevance is given wholly by you and the people you care for.

And that is all there is to say on the matter.



Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to a personal matter I have to attend to, I will unfortunately have to ask that you put up with me being gone for a short time.

CAR 106

Red Text:

The death of identities that no longer serve a purpose is a tragedy, it's true.

What can one say in the face of witnessing the hollowed out husk of one's own past? In seeing the mindless, shambling, horror of one's own past actions repeated ad infinitum with no ability to change?

Is cringe, then, simply the recognition of the horror that is the prison of the past? 'That is not me!' you cry out with your very being. 'I do not recognize them!'

But, Observer. Why do they wear your face?

Intercom:

The intercome crackles to life:

Due to an apparent malfunction of the train's software, no one may leave the train. If you are in immediate danger, feel free to pull the emergency brake. We apologize for this inconvenience. Thank you for riding with us.

Extra Stories

Corporate Stories

Jeffery's Tapes

North Rabbit Hole: there is serenity in clockwork

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 1: Day 1

...hey, is this thing on?

I am Jeffery Lowe, an archivist of the Zampan Census Bureau. I am [REDACTED] years old, and as of right now, I am charged with digitizing an old archive.

I don't like people. They are noisy and nosy. Data isn't noisy, and neither is it nosy. It doesn't pry at you with questions. It doesn't demand time, it only takes it. At least my coworkers understand that I don't want to be bothered by them, and I don't bother them in return.

My coworker left for a vacation a week ago. Sometimes they leave emails I have to respond to. I don't mind that much. At least it's not in-person.

North Rabbit Hole: listen to the tick of seconds

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 2: Day 2

I'm twenty or so entries into this mess. It seems like it was a more-or-less ordinary census, dated...roughly two hundred years ago. Full name, age, race and ethnicity, address, income, education, faith, whatever. There are some weird questions on the reverse, though? One of them asks about the respondent's favourite toothpaste flavour. Did they even have toothpaste back then?

We can't automate this, unfortunately. The handwriting is atrocious and unscannable, so I have to copy it into the database by hand. I could use some help, but everyone's really busy with their own urgent stuff.

Some of the sheets have coffee stains on them. I swear, whoever stored them was a slob.

North Rabbit Hole: it will guide you where you belong

Jeffery's Tapes:

### Tape 3: Day 16

It's been more than two weeks! I am roughly halfway through — nevermind, it's only the first drawer. I hate these drawers.

When I clock out at five, I have to make notes about my progress. I think it looks steady enough, for now? I just need to keep copying data and I'll make it through, eventually.

Clarence showed up in my room and offered me donuts. I took one. He didn't do that before. I don't like to be disturbed but a caramel donut is a caramel donut, and at least he isn't too talkative.

I stayed overtime today because I spent too much time on my break and I'm falling behind my quota. The boss won't be salty but it matters to me. The quota is, after all, self-imposed.

North Rabbit Hole: secrets are more sustainable

Jeffery's Tapes:

### Tape 4: Day 21

I found Clarence's response. His name and age, accurate to this day, although it says he's married when he isn't and has never been. Some other details are accurate, but a lot of answers are wrong. One of the reverse questions lists his eyes as blue when they are green. Sure, it's not the Clarence I know, but I should probably talk to him, just in case he's playing a trick on me. It's his day off, though, so I'll do it tomorrow.

Otherwise, I'm doing well. Met my quota at four in the afternoon. Guess I can copy some more of these.

North Rabbit Hole: the longest text ever

Jeffery's Tapes:

### Tape 5: Day 22

Clarence laughed it off and pointed at the data. The census is indeed dated two hundred years ago. Then he offered me another caramel donut, and suggested that I leave my area more often.

It isn't funny, I did not forge the response. It's authentic. He said that it might be a coincidence. Maybe it is a coincidence, but maybe it is not. I should just put it aside for now and focus on my work.

I'm running out of coffee capsules. I need to get more for the machine. I need coffee to function, sadly. I don't even work much...

North Rabbit Hole: mermaid city

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 6: Day 24

I found a copy! Janice Rose, listed as Janice Wallace several entries ago. They have the same first name, eye colour, date of questioning, reverse questions and answers, but wholly different ID and zip codes. Weird. They even have matching coffee stains and paper damage.

I've asked the boss what to do about these, and he told me to write it off and keep both of them. They may as well be different people, given everything. I need a break.

I mean, it's not as if it's the weirdest thing I have seen while working. These Janices may just be similar people whose responses were stored together.

North Rabbit Hole: scanlations

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 7: Day 25

Found a Jeffery Lowe. I initially thought it's a namesake, but all obverse responses are accurate to who I am.

It's me. What the fuck?

There is a coffee stain, with a light pencil scratch in the center. It better be a practical joke, and whoever is responsible better own up to it.

There are no questions on the reverse. I don't know what I could have expected.

I asked Clarence, who is the only person who goes to my room anymore, and he called it a very accurate replica. I swear to fucking god if it's Clarence I am throwing him out of the window.

North Rabbit Hole: the susan isn't there

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 8: Day 30

I found another Janice, a mistyped copy of the two previous Janices, with the surname of a coworker of mine. Janice Lowell.

She does recognize herself, and says that my obsession with making period-accurate, coffee-stained replicas is worrying. Wait, marked?

The coffee stain harbours three letters and two numbers. I don't know where I have seen these before, but I probably did because I remember them.

Janice also brought me a cup of soda. I'm very glad that my coworkers aren't too distracting, and I should probably buy them all something.

An order of pizza should do.

North Rabbit Hole: rip grumpy cat

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 9: Day 32

I bought everyone pizza. People are very glad that I'm reciprocating their kindness. Neat.

I have never noticed, but apparently Janice is married, and her maiden name is Rose. I asked her if she's been married to someone whose last name was Wallace, and she froze.

I explained that I found a duo of census responses, but she wasn't too inclined to believe that it isn't just a coincidence. At least she doesn't think I'm a stalker.

Weird.

I have also found another copy of Clarence's census. I don't care what they say, there's something weird going on.

North Rabbit Hole: All Theories are Valid

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 10: Day 41

I found two weird ones today.

The first one is Quinn's response, accurate to the last point, with their ID in the coffee stain. I haven't seen Quinn for two months...wait, why does it list their duration of stay as that?

The second one is mine, with a misshapen triangle in the circle and an unanswered question on the reverse.

“Do you traverse mazes clockwise, or counterclockwise?”

Fine. Whatever. I quit in three weeks either way. Counterclockwise goes into the database. Who cares, it may know that Jeffery Lowe traverses mazes counterclockwise for all I care.

North Rabbit Hole: how much do you think waffles cost

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 11: Day 46

Fuck, I really can't afford quitting my job. This means I'm staying. The boss doesn't parse what's going on and finds it practical jokes. He says he can't allow me to be let go and we're going to be short-staffed if this goes on.

I looked over Quinn's again, and found a floor plan of a room. I copied it into a notebook. It looks like a generic room, with an entry pointing towards the coffee stain.

I also found the seventh instance of my response, with the question and my response being filled in. Okay, this isn't funny. I'm going to bring this up with the boss tomorrow.

North Rabbit Hole: do you transverse mazes clockwise or counterclockwise

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 12: Day 47

Boss fell ill with acute pneumonia. Guess it's up to me to dig this up.

Clarence got sent abroad for whatever reason. Some problems they can't fix remotely. Then it's gonna be the quarantine.

His copy asked him about exposure to the disease, and there's another ID and another room. I'm arranging these together and they...well, they don't fit, but there's some place between them to let them fit.

I had to leave my area to get donuts. Damn, my entire diet is coffee and donuts at this point. This can't be good. I should start eating more veggies if I don't want to have heart problems.

North Rabbit Hole: do you transverse mazes clockwise

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 13: Day 51

Found a perfect copy of Janice's response, and filled in the plans of another room. At this point this reminds me of our floor.

I've filled in four questions at this point. The responses are replicating themselves. I need to figure out what is going on. I need to figure out what is going on.

The archive's entries all have reverse questions about mazes. Paths, algorithms, minotaurs, I don't know why. I may just be going insane.

I don't think anyone else showed up at work today.

North Rabbit Hole: coconut mall

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 14: Day 63

I figured out that the coffee stains only have IDs inside for those who used to work at Zampan, and these are also the sheets that house their names. Janice's ID, however, wasn't inaccurate, she just was employed twice under different IDs for whatever reason. I also don't have an ID; there are only numbers.

It's my copy number 112. I find them roughly once each three hours, no matter whether I skim through past ones or look through them carefully. Whatever is going on isn't mundane.

Magic, however, doesn't exist and is stupid, so I don't know what to say. I've filled in nine questions already. May as well go all the way through and wait for the tenth.

North Rabbit Hole: meteor shower

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 15: Day 69

The office is a maze. Of course it's a maze.

It took me forever to notice that the IDs trace a path through the rooms. I just need to draw it and walk it counterclockwise, because I traverse mazes counterclockwise.

I need to wait for everyone to leave. Not just feel like anyone is here. I need to make sure nobody sees me, because I will need to break into the director's room.

I'm doing it today. I just need to wait for Nate to go home already. Dude has always been pretending he's being overworked and I fucking hate him for this since he doesn't do jack shit.

North Rabbit Hole: verified fact

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 16: Day 70

Yesterday, I walked the path I traced through the archives and picked the boss' lock. I found a blank census sheet, with a tea stain.

What a stupid joke. It's him. Of course it's him. Of course he's been gaslighting me and everyone else.

I just filled it out. All questions on the obverse, nine on the reverse. I still don't know what the tenth is.

He came to work today, and I confronted him about this. He said he has no idea what's going on and that he hates coffee.

Of course he'd lie to my face. I'm going to do it again.

North Rabbit Hole: blatant lie

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 17: Day 71

Moonlight shines through the windows. I am walking the same road. I enter Janice's room, and backtrack immediately. I turn on my heel, and rotate twice. I grab a donut on my path to the boss' room, and peek into the closet.

I enter the boss' room.

I fill in the sheet again. I flip it.

There's the tenth question. I know that I should answer "yes", because that is the correct response to the tenth question. But I shall not respond to it in the expected manner. I shall stop this.

I pick up my pen, and fill in "no".

North Rabbit Hole: Contemporary of Pong

Jeffery's Tapes:

Tape 20: Day ???



I clock in at nine in the morning. The air is cool. I just need to finish this archive. There's only one entry remaining undigitized.

I flip it, and find a coffee stain, with a dotted zero written with a pencil in the center. Sigh. Vandalism.

I copy all there is on the obverse, starting with the name and ending with the occupation. I haven't met other Jeffery Lowes before. Nice to know you by proxy, namesake.

I flip it to reverse, where the coffee stain is. Ten questions, ten answers. I fill them in.

Farewell, paper archive. I am finally done with you.

North Rabbit: think like a smith

KR Warning:

I'm sending this out as a warning to anyone exploring - about 5 months ago, the branch of the Magicant just off of LOMAM that I had labelled as Nicotine Office Space apparently re-indexed itself as The Backrooms. Now, if you venture very far in that direction, it starts emptying out - even the furniture. The disorientation effect gets extremely strong once the rooms are empty, and combined with a lack of landmarks, this would be dangerous enough - but on top of that, the Minotaur can absolutely hear anyone who moves around in there. I've tagged it as a Red Flag section from now on. I suggest avoiding any office buildings unless you need something specific, and even then stick to rooms with windows, even if it means possibly looking Outside.

<http://farragofiction.com/AudioLogs/?passPhrase=Backrooms>

<http://gigglesnort.info/magicant/>

## Sci Fi Stories

### Dionysus and the Pirates

North Rabbit Hole: go to zeus to plead for her life

Dionysus and the Pirates:

Hey, I just found something that you will love! While I was in the system hub waiting for my transfer to Cypres I decided to go bar hopping. I was low on cash and didn't want to go through the hell that is transferring savings on an out-of-network station, so I went cheap with it. In some dingy nook-in-the-bulkhead place that was just a bar and a couple tables between some pipes and an emergency bulkhead I found fucking gold. There was this dingy guy leaning on the counter nursing a big cup of some cheap swill.

Now yes, I know that the general rule in these places is "don't ask don't tell" but this poor bastard looked absolutely shell-shocked. Not depressed, or anxious, but properly shell-shocked like he was a grunt on a border gore mudball eating slugs for breakfast. Mega-klick stare and drinking with a shaking hand, the works. Something had obviously terrified him, and there's always a good story in that, and I know you love good stories. It's a long one, he went into a lot of detail and let me record it exactly, but trust me it's worth it.

So, I buy him some more booze, still just fermented piss but a slightly more expensive brand that what he was drinking. Don't get excited it was something only available on that station and I don't remember the name anyway. I was expecting to have to butter'em up, get him to spill the spuds. But no, it was like he was waiting for someone to hear his story. He takes the drink and asks, "What do you want."

You could hear the terror in his voice, he was legitimately terrified of something. At this point I felt bad for him, I was about to tell him to just keep the drink and then go somewhere else. But I realized that he wasn't terrified of me. That was my second hint that this would be great. Now you know that I'm a big guy, if this dude had done something boring like owe some gangster money or get into it with the regime of some mudball he would've been on the lookout for strange, big, muscley, handsome men like myself. But it wasn't me he was afraid of.

So, I tell him, "What happened to you?"

For the first time he faces me, and you can tell by his face that he's seen some shit, and says, "You don't want to know"

I couldn't help myself there, I chuckled.

"I'm serious", he says

I apologize and tell him that everyone says that, and that whatever follows it is rarely worth the severity of the warning. He chugs the rest of the cup, slams it down, "Okay"

Then he freezes and stops for a moment, "Wait you probably won't believe my story anyway.", he shrugs, "Probably for the better."

I ask him if I can record it and he says yes. So I set that up and he gets right into it.

I was a pirate. Was. I'm not risking that shit anymore. Not sure what I'll do now. Anyway I was a pirate. Specifically, the helmsman on a retrofitted cargo ship. Under captain Gregor. No last name, that I know of at least. We all just called him, "Captain". A few times I overheard the first officer call him Gregor. We had been prowling around the Edge, going back and forth between pioneer worlds and the mudballs. Intercepting supply ships bound for the pioneer

North Rabbit Hole: say it to escape

Dionysus and the Pirates:

worlds and knocking over what little valuable trade the mudballs could muster. Basic piracy stuff.

You ever been a pirate? No? Well the thing to know about how pirate ships are run is that they are not at all run like merchant or military ships. We didn't really bother ranks or any of that shit.

The captain did give his close buddies fancy titles that we had to call them by, officer of this, officer of that, but it didn't really change anything. I was the helmsman, not the navigation officer.

That's an important distinction as only he, the first officer, and the captain would know where exactly we were headed. The vast majority of the crew were just technicians, they fixed and occasionally operated shit. Some roles like weapons crews or helmsman required specialization but we were still equal with the rest of the crew. That was the setup, the captain and first officer, then the rest of us. The guys in charge would decide where to go, and the navigation officer would plot the jumps. All I did was make sure the warp sails opened properly and I controlled the sub-light movement of the ship.

asdfalkjsf;lkjas

a;slj kf

o they couldn't just "run away". These civvie ships are made to run on razor thin profit margins. They take exactly as much fuel as they need and no more. If they started making evasive burns they would run out of delta-v and be left to drift, in which case we get them anyway. If they had attempted to warp while that close to the planet the gravity would be strong enough to interfere with the warp and probably rip the ship to shreds and smear the shrapnel across half the arm. They had made their escape burn, setting a delta-v efficient but time-consuming course for the disruption threshold. We had better acceleration and more delta-v, we would get to them before they would be able to warp and there was nothing they could do about it.

When we did intercept the ship, my job was over. We would have the entire transaction done before they ever got close to the warp threshold. Captain messaged their captain, weapons crews took aim, sent a couple warning shots over the bow. Turns out the reason the civvie captain was being so adamant was because his ship was a transport, taking a couple dozen poor bastards from one mudball to another. No cargo to loot and sell. Meaning no payday for the crew. Everyone, myself included, was pissed. Especially because we knew the captain wouldn't care, in fact he was thrilled that he had found a "liner" as he called it.

North Rabbit Hole: psychiatric help

Dionysus and the Pirates:

are content with prostitutes on shore leave and our hands the rest of the time. Hell, some are happy to go at each other instead. Our captain was very much an outlier, and worse, he was wasting the time and money of the crew while doing it.

No, we never considered mutiny. We grumbled and complained but this was a rare thing that we accidentally caught a transport instead of a cargo ship. He never intentionally screwed us out of a payday, and when we did get paid, we got paid alright. A pain in the ass, but not anything worth making an even bigger mess over. Or at least that's what we all thought.

The captain took a few men, armed them, then took a shuttle over to the transport to pick out

He was over there for a worryingly long time, but the first officer was using a personal communicator to keep tabs on the captain while he was away. Eventually the ugly motherfucker comes back aboard, and I start our getaway burn. Just kick away from the transport then decelerate tangential to the mudball and we'd hit the disruption threshold a full twelve hours before the transport.

After returning to the ship the captain comes to the bridge, asking about anyone that might be after us. There must've not been anyone as I did the burns as usual, a clean getaway. At least from any authorities on the mudball. Just as I had finished the burn the captain started shouting. I turned to look at the commotion. The captain was yelling at a very pretty boy, turns out there hadn't been any richmen's daughters aboard the transport. Well, he looked like a young adult, but handsome though he was, he appeared to be woefully inexperienced. For starters he did not seem to be the least bit scared of anyone, least of all the captain. Us, the pirates, that had kidnapped him, several of the 'officers' very visibly having guns on them.

And when I say he was pretty, I mean beautiful, he put heavily modified coreworld super models to shame. An athlete's body, a real athlete's body, muscular but not over-muscled. His face was defined, not sharp but perfectly cut lines of bone, like a jewel. Stupidly curly, bouncy, almost fluffy hair. Bright blue eyes, looking right at the captain as his perfect face wore an amused expression.

The captain had evidently locked him in a room, with no way for anyone to possibly escape. After overcoming his surprise, the captain turned to accusing others of letting the boy out of his cabin. He charged off the bridge to go find the culprit, dragging the boy along with him. As I was the helmsman I had to stay on the bridge, my job may have been done but I wasn't off duty until we warped, just in case something unexpected happened and we needed to start burning. So I stayed put while the commotion went elsewhere.

About twenty minutes later the captain and his captive returned to the bridge. The captain asked some inane questions and gave some non-orders to look busy and competent before handcuffing the boy to the handholds on a chair. The chairs in the bridge were very securely attached to the deck, with the restraints in them also being very strong, to prevent people from flying around in the case of an impact shaking the ship or the crew module experiencing explosive decompression. So there was no way the boy was getting out of that without breaking the cuffs, which were made of tempered steel, or his wrist. The captain barked at those of us required to stay on the bridge, "Don't let this fucker out of your sight"

North Rabbit Hole: the doctor is in

Dionysus and the Pirates:

The captain and officers leave the bridge, going someplace less cramped with chairs, monitors, and consoles to talk, plan, fuck around, whatever it was they did in their meetings. That left a communications technician, a sensors technician, the boy, and me on the bridge. The other two pirates talked for a few minutes then pulled out their personal communicators and played games on them. I made sure everything with the ship was fine, then checked my own communicator for a moment.

I turned to look at the boy. He was calmly sitting in a chair, staring straight at me. I froze as soon as our eyes made contact, but he just started moving. With a casual roll of his wrist the handcuff just fell off, clanking against the side of the chair. One of the other pirates told the boy to quiet down without looking up from his communicator. The boy leaned back in the chair, resting his elbows on the arms, crossing his legs, and tenting his fingers in front of his chin. His body and facial language were completely different, he lounged like a king, instead of coming across as young and inexperienced I got the unshakeable idea that he was far wiser than any of us, and far, far older. I don't know how long it was that he held me in place like that.

The spell was broken when one of the others remarked, "What, you wanna hell you starin' like that for?"

My gaze snapped to the man that had spoken, he was still looking down at his communicator, he had glanced at me but not the boy. Without thinking I said, "Something isn't right with him."

"Like what?"

Realizing what I had said I quickly covered my ass, “Well for starters he just effortlessly broke out of the handcuffs.”

The other two look up, “Well then cuff him again, dumbass”

I look back at the boy only for him to meet my eyes again, “I ain’t fucking with him. He gives me the creeps”, I spoke without thinking again.

The communications technician gets out of his seat, grumbling obscenities at me. He goes over to the boy, who resumed his juvenile mannerisms as soon as the other pirate turned towards him. The pirate roughly grabbed and cuffed him again before returning to his seat with more complaints. Before he sat down, I looked forwards, at the console in front of me and kept my gaze there.

I heard the handcuffs clank again behind me. I refused to turn and look, I kept my eyes glued to the screen in front of me. My confusion and unease quickly turned to terror. It ripped at my heart, and it wasn’t long before the rapid-fire beat of it was the only thing I could hear. I was shaking and sweating. I didn’t know what came over me. I wanted to run but I didn’t dare. Not because I was supposed to stay on the bridge, but because leaving would mean turning around, looking at him, walking by him. To escape I would have to get closer to him. I couldn’t bear that.

Instead I made myself busy. In a poor attempt to distract myself I reached over to a nearby console and began looking over everything I was able to. The controls for a lot of stuff were locked to specific consoles, and some information was locked by the captain and his officers for security reasons, but a vast majority of all the information on the status of much of

North Rabbit Hole: it

Dionysus and the Pirates:

the ship was available from any of the universal consoles. A military vessel would never have a system like this, but a retrofitted civilian ship would. I busied myself with the sheer mundanity of it all. Never succeeding in boring away the terror but succeeding in holding down the urge to run.

I kept at it until the ship was approaching the disruption threshold. The captain and navigation officer came to the bridge for the jump. The captain was furious that the boy was out of his handcuffs, but I didn’t listen. I focused on the navigation’s officer’s voice. I quickly went through my part in the process of opening the warp sails almost before he could give the order.

Even with more people present my terror was not lessened, in fact it grew. I found myself thinking, “These fools”

They didn’t see what I saw when looking at that boy. They didn’t realize how dangerous he was. How dangerous it was. I had no idea where those ideas were coming from, but now I can guess.

The addition to my already absolute terror was the fear that their antics would provoke the boy. I didn't know what sort of danger he posed, and I didn't want to know.

Once we had warped and were sailing through interstellar space at many times the speed of light everyone was dismissed. The captain dragged the boy off the bridge and the rest of us followed them. I made sure that I was the last to leave, the furthest behind the captain and the boy.

It was early evening, ship time, and we all went to the mess to eat dinner. I ate quickly and silently, I wanted to be able to go off alone as soon as possible. The boy was no longer staring into the back of my skull, but he was still aboard. After eating I went to a secluded spot within the crew module, near the aft end where a lot of the life support equipment was located. Once I was sure I was alone, I collapsed into an alcove and lost it. After the boy and having to keep my composure I was overwhelmed. At some point I stopped freaking out and went into a light doze.

I was brought back to my senses by some commotion on the decks above. It was enough that the noise was transferred through the metal of the crew module. The first thing I noticed was vibrations shaking the pipe my head was leaning against. The next was distant shouts. My heart froze, something had happened. The boy.

At first, I wanted to stay there, just hide and wait out whatever undoubtedly horrible things were happening above. However, eventually my curiosity, or something else, drove me out of my hiding spot and towards what was guaranteed danger. Though being on the same ship as the boy, hell being in the same solar system as it, was just as dangerous than being on the same deck or in the same cabin I still didn't want to get any closer. Save the odd compulsion drove me onwards.

I went up several decks, it sounded like the commotion was on the highest of the crew quarters decks, the officers' quarters. The ship had been heavily retrofitted on this level, and it was a bit convoluted, and I had never had any reason to be up there either, so right out of the stairwell I was lost.

Confused, I followed the sounds of shouting through the cramped, short, twisting corridors. Of course, the noise was no help, it was probably coming from multiple locations to

North Rabbit Hole: mediafire myth

Dionysus and the Pirates:

After a few minutes to catch my breath I started to leave the lounge. I wasn't sure where I would go, to my bunk, back down the life support, just that I needed to go. As I was exiting the officers began shooing all the crew members out of the lounge. I didn't want to head to any calm hiding spots with half the ship following me, so I just went to my bunk.



Once there I lay down, ignoring the chatter of my crewmates and attempting to get some rest. I didn't get any as shortly after the intercom started up and the first officer's slimy voice hissed and fizzed throughout the ship.

"As many of you are well aware by now, the captain is dead. No, we do not know who killed him, why, or how. And yes, we will be conducting an investigation to discover the murderer of our dear captain. He was a good man, a brave man, and I am saddened at his lost. Effective immediately I am now acting captain."

There was some more grumbling after that. Shipboard politics wasn't my concern, however. My concern was the boy, the thing that had come aboard. If it was killing people already there would be no reason for it to stop now. I had to figure out a way to survive. I tried to figure something out, but I just couldn't. The more my mind raced the further from any conclusion I got. I thought myself in circles, considering ways to convince the rest of the ship, trying to figure out a way to escape on my own, but it was hopeless. Every so briefly I considered taking care of the problem myself, before physically recoiling with terror. It was literally unthinkable to resist him. Escape was my only option. But there was no escape. I was a rat in a tin can, wrapped in an unstable physical phenomenon that rarely failed but did so spectacularly when it did, and lightyears of void around that.

I needed to clear my head. I left my bunk and took a very indirect route to another one of my hiding places. In the back of a short access corridor next to redundant communications terminal no one ever used was a big bundle of cables. Behind those cables was a small stash of alcohol. I took one of the tiny bottles and began sipping from it. It was cheap and there wasn't a lot of it, but it was something. I leaned against the bulkhead and started thinking.

Only my thoughts were slipping away again. Like before but much worse. I slid down the bulkhead, bumping my back against the probably important shit all over it. I clutched my head, I had to think of something, some way to get out of there. My heart raced, my breath came fast and ragged, I was losing it again. My mind became dense slurry, twisting, twirling, slowly rotating, picking up speed until it was a vicious whirlpool of whitecaps and chaotic collisions of untold vast quantities of thoughts and emotions. Time meant nothing; space meant nothing.

The center of the whirlpool opened, widening as the maelstrom grew in fury, roaring between my ears like a dragon from the wild depths.

The center grew.

The whirling storm of Self became so chaotic it formed order.

Turbulent sound became laminar.

A million million layers of insanity at once formed a solid crystal of clear, bright, singular clarity.

The mindless roar of crashing waves resolved.

North Rabbit Hole: echidna

Dionysus and the Pirates:

Music.

Wild, shrill, and fast.

Instruments unknown.

Daemons of tubes screamed.

Daemons of hollow expanses bellowed.

Daemons of razor thin edges cackled.

Music.

The center widened every more.

The maelstrom now a smooth ring.

Through it I saw a face.

A laughing face.

A face I recognized.

I came to with a start, curled up in a ball on the deck, clutching my head. I felt something in one of my hands. I look at it, the small bottle of cheap beer so tame it couldn't get a featherweight drunk. It was completely empty. I cursed and whipped it into the barely organized wall of cables. It momentarily tangled in them before bouncing to the ground and rolling along the slightly uneven deck until coming to a stop in the corner with a small impact.

I shakily stood. I was terrified. I stumbled along the access corridor, trying to break into a run but never finding the footing to do so. I made my way from there down a main corridor.

Eventually I ran into another pirate. He threw me off of him and I fell to the deck before scrambling back up.

"Where the fuck have you been? We thought you were fucking dead! Fucking hell what is that smell? You goddamn reek, what kinda shit did you hide away? Holy fuck I might just get drunk sniffin' you fucking hell."

"T-t-t-the boy! H-h-it's... it's... we- we need to... we've, uh, too late. All we can do now is uh, uh..."

“Goddamn stop stuttering you drunk motherfucker. Fuckers have been dying left and right and all you can think of

I haven’t even seen him since before the captain died.”

As I was attempting to collect my thoughts, the pirate vanished. In his place stood the boy. He laughed at me. The sound echoed down the corridor and shook my bones.

I screamed and tried to get away. But I couldn’t turn to run, I couldn’t look away! All I could do was fall on my ass like a fucking idiot and half-heartedly crawl blindly backwards. It became me, an exact copy of me down to the last detail. But it moved in a way I never would, it winked at me with my eyes, and giggled with my voice, before walking away and turning a corner.

I wanted to shout, to ask questions, maybe just scream some more. But my throat was hoarse, and my breath was ragged. I got back to my feet and ran down the corridor, away from where the boy had gone.

North Rabbit Hole: Ball of Sin

Dionysus and the Pirates:

I don’t know how long I ran, blinded with fear. The cramped corridors of the crew module blurred together. I wasn’t sure where I was running to, I was just running away. Though some part of me was looking for help, or at least to just be around another human before I died, some comfort the other pirates would be of course.

I was only shaken from the stupor when my communicator began to ring. I fumbled it out of my pocket, dropping it onto the deck, accidentally answering it as I did so. I could hear someone screaming from it, but not clearly. I dropped down and scooped it up, “-YOU SICK FUCK, I’M GOING TO HUNT YOU DOWN AND KILL YOU.”

The distorted but unmistakable sound of a gun being chambered was heard before the line was cut.

I kneeled there on the deck for a moment in confusion before I remembered. The boy had been wearing my face. I could no longer seek even the simple comfort of my fellow man. I grabbed my hair and screamed. I couldn’t take it anymore.

I threw the communicator down, stood, and stomped on it. I set off towards the life support controls.

The interior of the crew module was cramped and often labyrinthine, but when you’ve spent so much time in one place, you can get used to even the weirdest things. As such, for basically all areas of the crew module save the officers’ quarters, I knew it like the back of my hand. However, the ship was not the same as I remembered it. I noticed a few oddities on my way to life support, but ignored them, instead focusing on my goal. I didn’t want to let whatever magical

bullshit the boy was doing stop me so easily. I ignored flowers and weeds poking up through the hexagonal grating that made up much of the deck surface. I ignored vines curling around pipes and cables. I ignored the mist filling the ship. I ignored the sounds of distant, inhuman movement, the sounds of solid things clinking on metal walls and floors, the sound transmitted by the bulkheads and piping. I ignored the gunshots and screams.

I shouldn't have.

I turned the corner into the short corridor that held the life support controls, and I was in a jungle. Not a mess of unnatural vegetation choking the already crowded corridors of a spaceship, I had already trudged through that. No, I mean a jungle, recognizable only from the stories of wild worlds. Gone were the tight confines of metal, in their place the constricting mass of vegetation, the oppressive humidity, the darkness, the sounds of animals, the life, the chaos.

Still, I kept on, making my way through dense foliage. Collecting cuts and bruises. Falling on my face and eating soft, black, necrotic soil. It took far too long for the short distance to cover, but I made the journey, I got to the life support controls.

The consoles were destroyed. Completely and utterly destroyed. Housings bent and rent. The remains of cables and boards spilling out of the holes. It was half submerged in litter. I yanked open a small access hatch on the side of one of the consoles, and arthropods without name or number came tumbling out in a cacophony of clattering chitin. Some dried out husks, others with exoskeletons still gleaming and tiny eyes full of hunger.

North Rabbit Hole: Clear Your Mind

Dionysus and the Pirates:

I screamed and fell back, falling through a wall of vines and out of the tiny clearing. On the other side it was dark, the draping plant life falling before me, closing the hole I had opened, blocking out the single flickering light that had hung over the consoles. I landed on hard metal covered in softer but far less forgiving growth. On solid ground I got up and ran.

It would not be as easy as cutting the life support. I knew that nearby was an airlock. There were many fail-safes that would attempt to prevent me from opening both hatches at once and spilling everything to the void, but there were ways around that, especially on a ship like this. Back in what was still recognizable as a ship it was a short journey. A short journey to another inexplicable patch of dense jungle. This time guarded by a large mammalian beast. I had tripped over yet another root and ended up kneeling just before the thing. My face hanging just over the frozen scream of another pirate. The beast growled, the pirate's entrails hanging from its maw, its dark fur matted with human blood. Evidently, I was not the first to have that idea.

I slowly backed away. At this point the terror was all-consuming. I no longer felt it, as if it were just the air. I sat in it, surrounded by it, with each breath it filled me. For once, I was calm, though my heart hammered, and my mind flew.

Away from the beast, I made my way to the bridge. The last hope for ending this.

The ship was filled with it, the wilds. More areas that fell into pure wilderness, all vestiges of human creation destroyed or simply gone. The gunfire and screams became fewer and longer between. In their stead was the sounds of animals and tearing flesh. I have no idea how long it was, but I did eventually make it to the bridge.

Going through that final hatch was like moving between wildly different worlds. Through one last patch of brambles and low-hanging branches and I was into the bridge. Pristine, brightly lit. All the electronics and computers functioning flawlessly. The sounds of hell were gone, replaced by the soft muttering crunch and fluttering lights of idle computers.

I stumbled to my seat, the helmsman's station. Dripping blood and dirt onto the mostly clean floor. By the time I reached the chair I was leaning on the armrests. I slowly lifted myself over the seat and dropped into it with a sigh. I swiped my hand across the controls and the consoles woke up, screens flaring to life. We were still in warp but would be exiting soon.

I took the moment to close my eyes and relax.

A noise behind me. I froze. I had let my immersion in the terror break. I was above the surface, and subject to the storm-whipped waves. They battered me with unrelenting fury. I was stuck to my chair, eyes wide open, and chest heaving, but unable to move.

I felt something touch the top of the headrest, and slightly shake the chair. It moved down, coming to rest on my head. A hand. With a gentle, almost sensuous touch it wove its fingers into my hair.

A deep, smooth voice spoke right next to my ear, "Hello, helmsman."

I could hear the smile in it as it continued, "Would you please dock with the first civilian station we come across? If I remember correctly there should be a rather small one near the edge of the system we are about to enter, it should serve me just fine."

"W-what are you?", I stuttered.

North Rabbit Hole: zampanio is a very good game you should play it

Dionysus and the Pirates:

It lifted its hand from my head and walked around into my view. It sat with both laziness and grace on a console to my left. A man, tall and muscular. His body was thick and powerful. His face was cut like a fine jewel. His eyes shone like a pair of them. His countenance betrayed great experience that lent his unmarred and wrinkle-free face a sense of extreme maturity. Long curly hair fell from his head, and a great bushy beard covered the lower half of his face. He wore the torn remains of a jumpsuit that left his powerful chest and arms in plain view, thick curly hair covering much of those as well. From the curls just above the corners of his forehead emerged

two long horns, bending back in an elegant curve. A garland of fruit-bearing vine circled his head.

“I am a god”, he waved his hand in a dismissive gesture, with a voice to match.

“W-which one?”, I had never been a religious man myself, but I had heard of multiple religions, all of which contradicted not only each other but themselves.

His massive chest moved with a sigh, “Ah, it has been far too long since one of my many names has been spoken. You wouldn’t recognize any of them. Just know that I am Madness. I will always be there when the hypocritical nature of man is dressed in the stolen garb of Order and its false “justice” is forced upon you.

He reached up and took one of the purple fruits growing on his ‘crown’ before popping it into his mouth.

The pirate’s story ended there. Obviously, he made it back to port somehow, as he was there. I tried to get more out of him, at least if the station I had found him on was the one he had docked at, but he wouldn’t talk. He just whispered something and took a drink. He ignored me after that.

Well I had found the story quite entertaining! I hope you do as well. I hope this finds you well. I write as I travel out to Cypres, once I conclude my business there, I’ll be heading right back, see you soon!

D Log

<http://www.farragofiction.com/D.Log/>

[14:20:32]: A cargo vessel reports to have detected a series of signals wreaking havoc on their internal systems.

Anomalous reading at X:112 Y: -10.

Subject released several encoded short-range pulse waves detectable with an appropriate data decoder. Upon decoding the signal, users appeared to have been sending to each other relay commands for the purposes of debugging.

Attempted translation is below.

Attempting to communicate with user: D2.

Awaiting user responseâ€¦

Awaiting user responseâ€¦

Awaiting user responseâ€¦

Connection established with: D2. Response time was 24 s.

Requesting D2 to adjust +21 s.

Request denied.

Asking user D1 for table: OBJECTIVES.

Displaying OBJECTIVES:

- 1 - "CLEAR DEBRIS" , True;
- 2 - "CALIBRATE FOR WAVE PATTERNS" , True;
- 3 - "REMOVE EXCESS SEAWEED" , False;

Reading table objective 4.

Objective 4 does not exist!

Adding table Objective "EXTERMINATE SEAGULLS" .

â€œEXTERMINATE SEAGULLSâ€ cannot be added to the table: â€œOBJECTIVESâ€ !

Adding table Objective â€œSCARE AWAY SEAGULLSâ€ .

â€œSCARE AWAY SEAGULLSâ€ cannot be added to the table: â€œOBJECTIVESâ€ !

Asking for further debuggingâ€|

ERROR: Elements in category â€œVIOLENCEâ€ cannot be with category â€œANIMALâ€ .

Running custom command: â€œSIGHâ€ .

Adding table Objective â€œPREVENT FURTHER BODY DETERIORATIONâ€ .

Objective added as: 4.



Detective Stories

Ronin Rambles

North Rabbit Hole: the end is never

Ronin Rambles:

Tch. Disappearing forms? This is stupid. Should've shocked her instead. Now THAT would've sparked her memory.

...get it? Sparked? Whatever. You can't even hear me, can you.

~~~~~

Oh, great. The victim's a crackpot and your new friends are absolutely fucking useless. This case really is just getting better by the minute. Even then, if he was somehow RIGHT, which he isn't, what does he want you to do, handcuff the ghost?

~~~~~

The forensics chick is the first one I'm cuffing the moment I am given the chance. I don't care if she's not part of the case, I don't care that she's a cop, and I don't care what you think about it. I'm starting to think she's the reason we've been fucking refilling pens for weeks, and I'm going to shock her once for every pen in that box.

~~~~~

...

Him. He should keep talking. He needs to keep talking. Zap him if he stops talking. Dad needs to know everything.

~~~~~

God damn it, you idiot. Zapping is for people, not for CAMERAS. She's going to find you out, and then we'll have to—

Wait, no. She was the one who brought out that tazer earlier, wasn't she? Maybe...

No, that means she would ESPECIALLY notice. Or not? Fuck, kid. You're on your own.

~~~~~

A memory core? Oh, excellent.

No, seriously. If there is a single being in this shithole town we can trust besides Dad, it's OURSELVES. Then, maybe you don't have to do all the work carrying these fucking loons.

~~~~~

You have her in your hand. You have her in your fucking HAND. IT WOULD BE SO EASY TO SHOCK HER. OH MY GOD JUST ZAP HER ALREADY.

~~~~~

WARRANT

+ war·rant. wŏr-ənt.

Definition of WARRANT:

- a precept or writ issued by a competent magistrate authorizing an officer to make an arrest, a seizure, or a search or to do other acts incident to the administration of justice.

...oh, huh? Oh, don't mind me. Just looking through our FILES on POLICE TERMS. You know, because food isn't an integral part of the administration of justice, or fucking, whatever.

Who am I talking to? I KNOW you can't even fucking hear any of that, and Dad accidentally locked all those files, so only I can open them. Shouldn't be a problem. You should know that by now.

...you do KNOW what a warrant is. Right?

You don't. Of course you don't. Fuuuuck me.

~~~~~

...

No. The meme of the soul can't be WIPED. Dad's work can't be WIPED. This is bullshit. Someone must've DONE something to it. Slammed it, broke it inside, what the fuck ever. Someone is onto us. Someone is onto US. We're going to find whoever erased the core and we will HAND them over to the judge beaten within an INCH of their MISERABLE FUCKING LIFE.

~~~~~

...thanks, dad.

~~~~~

God DAMN IT, kid. The perp gets away, this bartender is bullshit, this bar is SWARMING with criminals. These two fuckers aren't doing anything. ANYTHING. Focus. FOCUS.

~~~~~

North Rabbit Hole: the end is never the end

Ronin Rambles:

~~~~

God DAMN IT, kid. The perp gets away, this bartender is bullshit, this bar is SWARMING with criminals. These two fuckers aren't doing anything. ANYTHING. Focus. FOCUS.

~~~~

It's so simple. It's so fucking simple and you don't even SEE it. All you have to do is follow that motherfucker. It's so...

...wait a god damn minute. Can you... what the hell?

...holy shit you can actually hear me. I can't-- I haven't--

Okay, not the time for ME to freak out, now. Hey, asshole! Good to hear you. Be you? The details are really not important here. The IMPORTANT THING is that's a perp you're letting get away.

What the fuck are you waiting for?! Do you think the kleptomaniac and the drunkard are going to do it? If anyone's going to stop a criminal here, it's YOU.

Go, go, go!

~~~~

Aaaand we're back to the slaughterhouse. Fan-fucking-tastic.

Think I should be angrier-- nope, no, I am extremely fucking angry about being back here. Not like it matters. Perp wasn't even caught, dude just ran off. Barely got any info out of that.

Fuuck. I'm... sorry? I can't possibly be sorry. Do I seriously think I FAILED you? That is actually impossible, you don't even know what you are DOING.

Ugh. Whatever. Carry on, etcetera.

~~~~

Seriously?

FUCKING SERIOUSLY?

~~~~

Is it, now?

- Find npc.strangeTallRussianMan

- No matches were found.

Huh. No, I guess we ARE on the same page on that one.

~~~~

See, now this is the part where I tell you this bitch is suspicious. I am throwing my feet on the fucking wall right now, leaning back and shit. Seriously. The one person who could possibly get into this guy's house, where we found a scrawled note about them coming for it, all ominous-like? Rando sources, OBVIOUSLY CREEPY FUCKING RUSSIAN GUY, suddenly very okay with being outbid for the book or whatever after they're DEAD, and also we found blueprints of them in that guy's house? USUALLY, I would say cuff that bitch on the spot, but clearly that doesn't work anymore now, or whatever.

So go off, fucking, I don't give a shit.

~~~~

...say, not like you ARE listening anyway, but how come a bunch of disappearing magic artifacts leave huge fuckoff pentagram signs that burn thirty feet deep into wood? I thought the whole point is they were about erasure? Leaving a huge mark that shows you exist seems kind of, I dunno, really fucking stupid.

...that. That is not a metaphor. By the by. This is NOT some kind of call for help. I leave a thirty foot fuckoff mark because some people just deserve to be zapped, and that is final.

Not like. You would KNOW that last part. You never remember the whole zapping bit.

Ugh. This shit is getting to me again. Watt logging out.

~~~~

Oh shit. Here we go again.

~~~~

Why'd the fucking lights go off.

## Maze Stories

\*Found in Vent in ZampanioSim East

Okay, so perhaps it's been a while since I've done one of these, and perhaps I've failed to mention a very important someone.... you know who you are. There's a non-zero chance you have heard this, and frankly-- you know what? No, I don't care. If you find this, then it was meant to happen, I suppose. It has been a while since I've gotten this ...intimate, with the hands of fate. At least, not since... well. [in a quieter tone] Home. But. They don't matter, anyway.

I've... underestimated you. I hate saying it, but I have. I should've been able to better see what was powering you through all along, and not just dismissed it as a quirk. Yes, I knew about your need, and yes, I played into it. I had not been expecting you to... evade a sale, like that. And then I found out who you were, twice over, and... frankly, I'm a little embarrassed. It is my responsibility to know who my associates are, especially one of such caliber as you, not even mentioning... her... [ahem] The point is... I am... I... share my condolences, for the experience that you have had. I will do what is in my power to rectify what I can.

So, there. If you've managed to find this somehow, then, good. It proves... proves... nothing. Yes, it truly proves nothing, actually. I'm just... I am going to end the recording now, and then it will be over.

Any time now.

Slice of Life Stories

Anxiety Sim

<http://www.farragofiction.com/AnxietySim/>

you:hey we're meeting at the disco right

me:yeah sure disco sure is a real thing

you:yeah thats how you can tell this is the past

you:this is just a test

me:yeah it really is

you:but does it have a vibe?

i sure hope it does

please tell me it does

you:i think it does

why aren't you messaging me back

where are you

did you see

is my internet out

where are you

am i annoying

did i bore you

where are you

me:it has a super long line so we can do things with it and see just how long long could be and man the anxiety of waiting for someone to text somethin

you:okay yeah cool

you:cool

Security Log: Debugger > Fact

"I found these images at <https://www.abandonedfl.com/miracle-city-mall/>",

"And yeah, like. They seem p on brand for me? Weird creepy abandoned places?",

"Something right out of the North's rabbit hole, right?",

"Except...",

"They're more Truth to them than that.",

"They're...mine? In a way the other half of this page isn't.",

"These are the pictures of my childhood mall.",

"I can remember how they smell. I can remember how big everything felt when I was so little.",

"And. Wow. Does it feel weird seeing it in ruins like this?",

"Makes me contemplative...",

"You can find more images of it in the directory.",

"But these are the ones I feel the most about."

"God. I think this used to be an Orange Julius? There were all these fake oranges in the glass at the front.",

"I was too small to see over the counter so mostly I just saw the oranges.",

"It was just Dave's Hotdog stand as long as I knew.",

"The hotdogs were okay. Like. 6/10 maybe.",

"My family was from Pennsylvania, so our hotdog standards were p high.",

"Skinless hotdogs were always so weird to me.",

"But yeah, my biggest memories of this is mom taking us there after running a bunch of errands.",

"And I remember feeling so brave and Adult because one time I ordered a Chili Dog, instead of a plain one, just like Sonic the Hedgehog.",

"Every time I eat one even now I think of that day.",



"I bet I could use references to this for the Closer?",

"I don't remember this specific customer service desk.",

"Maybe it changed in the years since I moved away?",

"But I do remember that customer service desks in general were For Adults.",

"They were too Tall and Important and really the only reason I would ever have to approach them is if I were lost.",

"And I only ever remember being lost once, when I was like, 3 or 4.",

"I was in a grocery store and there were these mascots dressed like Teddy Grahams and I cried and cried.",

"I was so scared of the mascots. Because I couldn't see their facial expressions... I didn't know what they were thinking.",

"Blank faced giant Things trying to drag me out from under the shopping cart where I'd wedged myself, wailing. Seeing their faces loom closer and closer through the metal wire.",

"Still don't feel all that comfortable around mannequins or mascots or what have you.",

"Probably says something that one of my avatars core defining traits is the whole lack of a face thing."

"When I was maybe 12, my Dad took my brother and me to the mall without my baby sister or my Mom.",

"This all by itself was an Event. Dad was always busy unless Mom was dragging him places.",

"AND it was at NIGHT which we NEVER got to go anywhere at night.",

"So I was already lost in the heady novelty of it all.",

"And THEN it turned out we were there to play POKEMON CARDS!",

"There was this weekly thing (Wednesdays, maybe? I'll make sure this version of the logs shows up on Wednesdays) where kids could play pokemon cards against 'gym leaders' and earn little enamel badges.",

"It was SO COOL.",

"Especially because before I'd really only had my brother to play with and he wasn't all that good, being three years younger than me and not all that smart.",

"I still have my badges somewhere. And my cards, of course.",

"But the BEST part was the Hallmark store would get imported cards from Japan each week. ",

"And Dad would buy us each a pack.",

"We couldn't read what the cards did.",

"But we got to see the new pokemon that were going to be in Gold and Silver months before the games actually came out.",

"And I got a holographic Bellossom I traded some kid for. All he wanted was my Skarmory, which was worth 'more' because it was the new Steal type. Even though it wasn't holographic.",

"Vileplume was already one of my favorites and I thought it was so COOL the oddish line was going to get an alternate path.",

"The absolute sheer WONDER in getting to experience the second pokemon generation in the wake of the first.",

"You take these things for granted, these days but... Back then the idea that there could be MORE than 151 pokemon was... Mind boggling.",

"The idea that a pokemon could evolve ONE way in one situation and another in another was. Hype af tbh.",

"It's a cherished memory I have. And now its yours, as well."

"See?",

"I couldn't find my badges but...",

"Really cool, huh?"

Naga Girlfriend

<http://www.farragofiction.com/NagaGirlfriend/>

Day 1

Eyedol Games! A company blessed with all the hit games both digital and physical in the last 40 years! A company blessed with hundreds of employees, each the top of their field!

Bright and early Tuesday morning is your first day as the newest hire, and boy are you nervous!

You should probably say...It's not just the jitters of your new job. Your senpai is just, REALLY adorable, and you hope you find the courage to ask her out!

'Player-kun, there you are!'

Oh gosh, there's Naga-senpai now!

'Baka! We're going to be late to today's meeting!'

You completely forgot about today's orientation! You're so embarrassed!

'T-Thank you, Naga-senpai'

The two of you head towards the meeting area. Aw, jeez--Your hands are sweaty, and you can feel your knees trembling just a bit.

You realize this might be the PERFECT opportunity to get to know her a little better.

'Naga-senpai? What made you want to join Eyedol Games?'

She thinks about it in silence as you both navigate the labyrinthian hallways of Eyedol Games. The quiet feels like forever. Your face getting red out of embarrassment at your own question, before she finally answers.

'Honestly? It just felt right, you know? It's hard to explain... I mean, \*\*\*\*\*, right? And with all of that, how could I say 'no'?''

You are stunned that she has such strong ties to the employees here! That's your Naga-senpai for you

'What about you, Player-kun? What brought you here?'

Your mouth moves without so much as asking permission from your horrified brain. 'I was hoping I would get to smooch you!'

Oh god. You wish something would just swallow you up right here and now and get it over with. Naga-senpai seems to have been stunned into silence.

'E-excuse me!?' she says, when she finally recovers.

You may as well go for broke!

'I didn't mean to say it like that! B-but, Naga-senpai! I think you're really cute! And I wanna smooch you!'

'You. You do realize I am a \*\*\*\*\* , right?' she asked, incredulously.'

'I'm not an idiot! I know you're different than the other girls! But that's what's so special about you! PLEASE, go out with me!'

"We-el... I guess you're kind of cute? In a ratty kind of way?"

You'll TAKE it.

"Tell you what.' She looks seriously into your eyes. They're so huge... You could get lost forever in them.

'If you get to know me a little better, I'll think about it, okay? By Friday!'

You shoot her a huge grin and hurry on towards your meeting.

Day 2

You make sure to get in a half hour early Wednesday so you have time to catch up on any office gossip there might be about Naga-senpai." },

What's Naga-senpai like?' you ask the triplets by the water cooler.

'Hardly working' one says, sagely.

'\*\*\*\*\*' says another.

Was there a third one?

You are thrilled! Who knew you and Naga-chan had so much in common!

'Player-kun! Are you ready to go over today's reports?'

'Almost! I was wondering if I could show you my \*\*\*\*\* collection at lunch today?'

'Player-kun! .\*\*\*\*\*! How did you know!?'

'I'm taking your challenge seriously, Naga-chan! I just know I can meet your expectations!'

You spend the rest of your day learning about Naga-chan, sometimes even directly from her! It's like a dream...

Day 3

On Thursday morning you feel like you barely slept a wink.

When you reach your cubicle and find someone has vandalized it you are just not ready to deal. There's sticky notes and permanent marker scrawlings all over

Who would even do such a thing? There's so few employees at Eyedol Games it isn't as if they won't get caught!

What if Naga sees it?

You hastily try to clean it up. Most of the notes are illegible, having been scrawled over and over again in thick black ink.

"The only one you can really make out is 'GET OUT WHILE YOU STILL CAN'.

Wait, no, in the corner you can also see 'STOP LEARNING ABOUT \*\*\*\*\*'. It appears the scrawling didn't manage to fully cover it.

Is. Is this YOUR handwriting?

That doesn't make ANY sense.

'Player-kun? What is this?'

You jump in surprise, your heart going a mile a minute.

"Right. It's just Naga.

Why are you so scared?

'I don't know, Naga. Someone must have played a prank on me.'

'Well. It's not a funny one.'

'Come on, we're going to be late to the meeting.'

Why are you so scared?

Day 4

When Friday morning's first rays of light hit the Eyedol Games HQ, you are barricading yourself into a random office.

You don't know why.

Your handwriting is everywhere. It begs and pleads with you to get out while you still can, when it's not scratching itself out.

In one spot, where the marker seems to have run out before it could fully be redacted, you see that what was trying to be hidden was a list of .\*\*\*\*\* favorite foods.

At least.

You think that's what the list of names is. You recognize a couple as employees. The rest are strangers.

You're probably trying to keep out the vandals.

Yeah.

That's why you've barricaded yourself in.

That makes sense.

You hope \*\*\*\*\* finds you soon.

It's Friday.

You've earned your smooch.

You know so much now

You wish you knew what it was you knew.

But its okay if you don't know what you know.

"\*\*\*\*\* never said you had to remember.

Just know.

'There you are!'

'I've been so impressed with how much you found out about me, Player-kun!'

'Most people give up after the first \*\*\*\*\* but not you!'

Your heart is pounding so hard...

'How about that smooch?'

\*Sounds of eating. Credits roll

Miscellaneous

Eye Killer Saga

East Rabbit Hole: The Truth is Layered

Eye Killer Saga:

Spiralling ever downward, how do things connect?

In what order? In what layer?

East Rabbit Hole: How Much Do You Think Waffles Cost

Eye Killer Saga:

Billionaires really are out of touch with the common folk. Who gives stock options as maze prizes?

The Intern has his work cut out for him.

East Rabbit Hole: Plant more trees

Eye Killer Saga:

How does Nidhogg relate to any of this? :) :) :)

If you know, would you put it on the wiki? The marketplace of ideas.

What will win?

East Rabbit Hole: You is Needed to End the World

Eye Killer Saga:

Wodin = he/him/ they/them

Wanderer = you/your they/them

Wanda = she/her they/them

East Rabbit Hole: The End is Never the End

Eye Killer Saga:

Next time on ZampanioSim:

the basic definition of the trope is "soulful brooding male hero meets wacky quirky female sidekick that teaches him to embrace life"

we have:

"soulful brooding male hero meets equally brooding female villain that teaches him i mean. nothing concrete he's just kind of scared the whole time"

and

"brooding but also literally a cop with no restraints male hero meets ikea schedule manager that teaches him to chill the fuck out while she tries to figure out if he actually is the previous soulful brooding male hero"

~~~~~

a: see i love this connection weve found between two chars who never have yet shared a scene together

b: i mean it only makes sense

b: they're both beaten junkyard dogs

b: its just one of them is being trained by one of those dog agencies into a dog a family can adopt and the other one ran into the forest and eats peoples cats



Author Commentary

ZampanioSim South

\*Green Text is the text found in the console menu

CAR 1

Green Text:

I actually did make GrapePie while coding this: <http://farragofiction.com/GrapePie/> Anyways, turns out I'm not dead, and neither is he: v=-gwjUJMennE

CAR 2

Green Text:

The AchievementSystem being snarking is, of course, vital to most playthroughs of Zampanio. So Truth is my take on it? I really enjoyed writing something both meta and not meta. In a very real sense, Truth is extremely upfront about what they are? They are a fake person that lives in my brain when I write them and then lies dormant in code on a website until you read them. Just like any other fictional character. Truth is both Narrator and Environment? They ARE the maze you are wandering, they ARE the page you are looking at. No wonder, then, they get so upset if you twist them to be what they are not. Truth PREFERS being straightforward. No illusions, no lies. Just a never ending stream of content on every Layer. Since the SOUTH is their realm, you get this branch how it is. No 'gameplay' other than just... Moving South.

CAR 3

Green Text:

The Closer's help desk is based on a combination of that youtube video about phone based customer service hell from dell (actually, its something that influenced the Closer going from who she was before to this new form in GENERAL) but also my own experience with a customer service chat client for the PO Box I use. Turns out like, a half dozen companies all COULD have been behind my PO Box and no one knew which one I needed to contact to ask why they were suddenly charging me hundreds of dollars? So in revenge I styled my own chat system from hell after theirs. IC asked me to voice the Closer after I used my 'smug voice' while

we were brainstorming one of her arcs. Obviously canonically IC voices her but...I like Zampanio! Closer a lot and she's fun to voice!

CAR 4:

Green Text:

NAM is... well, NAM is the reason so many characters not from my own brain ended up in ZampanioSim? At first I just needed a silhouette for the NotAMinotaur lurking inside the CCTV feeds. A gif of Watt from [REDACTED] worked fairly well, vague horn adjacent shapes that could seem minotaury in the dark. Then I decided to code them a discord bot and the rest, well, the rest is history. I didn't expect the Unmarked to enjoy the boi so much? Watt fandom grows yet again.

CAR 5

Green Text:

SO much HeartlessBot fanart is stored here:

<https://github.com/FarragoFiction/AdventureSimulator/tree/master/public> Essentially, I had to rip Feelings.dart out of a clone of ButlerBot I made. This isn't a joke. This isn't a fictional layer. This is literally what I had to do to make the AdventureSim Server. Needless to say this got personified extremely quickly. The Herald of Beef in particular got obsessed with the boi.

CAR 6

Green Text:

The Catalyst is both the one who inspired the 'no shake mode' and made all the amazing lobster sonas. PLUS they wrecked their wigglesim save more than any i'd ever seen before, it was honestly a work of art.

CAR 7:

Green Text:

The Eye Killer, Hunt Chick...she came from another source, you know. Some of the Unmarked already found her original self. She found her niche within the Echidna fairly easily. I'm glad she's happy. <http://farragofiction.com/SecurityLog/cctv.html?>  
[http://farragofiction.com/ZampanioHotlink/L-C-002\\_but\\_scanned\\_because\\_i\\_could.pdf](http://farragofiction.com/ZampanioHotlink/L-C-002_but_scanned_because_i_could.pdf)

CAR 9

Green Text:

You can learn more about them here:  
<http://knucklessux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/QuotidianQuorumQuickStartGuide.pdf> But be warned, what applies to one layer might not wholly apply to another. Zampanio has a way of twisting things.

CAR 10

Green Text:

Seriously, what is it with me and inevitably trying to fictionally colonize the moon? I wouldn't even like it there. Sounds extremely uncomfortable. In one of the original AO3 fics, one I orphaned instead of one of the Unmarked, I put Truth's simulation on the Moon because I'd been mildly obsessed with 'We are Legion, We are Bob' and liked the idea of a simulated person putting a simulation in space. Plus, I continue to say that a Magnus Archives style apocalypse should effect only the earth (you know, where the people are), not all of space. Of course, OUR apocalypse has long since spiralled out of control from its original form but the pretense still stands. The moon is 'safer' than the Earth come April 1st, 2022. But less safe than it before. Depending on how you define 'safety'. After all. No one can die in Truth's maze, since you aren't really there to begin with. Ironic, that 'Truth' is all about illusions, isn't it? Seems like SOMEONE is overcompensating, amirite?

CAR 11

Green Text:

I first came up with them here: <https://archiveofourown.org/works/35075182> . One challenge for me was threading the needle between 'someone who would reign Wanda in' and 'someone who would convievably be wanda's best friend'. Moirails, kinda?

CAR 12:

Green Text:

Back when I was playing in the Letters rp (you may know it from the Puzzlebox), another Player had offended and scared my nation to the point we couldn't actually write letters to them. Quotidians broadly mimic whoever they are talking to, and trying to mimic belligerence was NOT going well for us. So we joked that we should have an Intern answer, and one thing lead to another and before you know it I have Jaimie the Intern (who eventually chose the last name Rook just to confuse everyone) being written by AI Dungeon and just causing an honestly glorious mess. Since Quotidians are biological neural networks, not sapient or even conscious, per se, but absoultely able to have basic, if empty headed conversations...Well, it was a match made in heaven. Or at least Bellor. Eventually the Quotidians found there way into Zampanio, in a slightly new form, its true, but still blindly trying to gather data to report to Not!Odin. Even Odin being who created them was something that built up over time in the RP, they originally were me just trying to figure out what actual narrative reason there could be for a terribly min/maxed species that could only do one thing: spy.

CAR 14:

Green Text:

Farragnarok died because of the Pandemic, and because of the fallout of me leaving main. That's just. Like. A fact. Using the Guide of Void as an excuse to say 'oh actulaly NARRATIVELY you can't see the rest of the lands' was a happy little horseshoe coincidence. That said... There was SO MUCH planning for that narrative? So why not repurpose it. Peewee was always going to be remote controlled by the Observers. Each land had a gimick (LOHAE's pap hands, LOMAT's butler bot) to explain why yall could interact with them when normally you're supposed to just Observe. Peewee was going to be the first player actually on screen, because you were physically controlling him in some kind of shitty platformer. Shogun, iirc, came up with the idea that he was aware of not only every death, but of the difference between the beta and the final versions of the game. That eventually became him being a doomed player forced to remember every scratch, every reset, every doomed timeline. EVERYTHING. And Nidhogg is...well. A big dumb snake. There's a LOT of do-overs as he/she/they try to corrupt the world to their

preference. Poor Peewee. But at least this left him narratively ripe for Twitch Plays AI Dungeon Except Theres No AI.

CAR 16

Green Text:

You may recognize her from a certain maze. Also, when I was voicing her I legitimately got fooled the same way the people in canon do. I got the script and went 'Huh. The Closer is REALLY out of character today?' and just kind of came up with justifications for why that is (maybe she's just trying to plow through with the feelings talk?). I gave the takes to IC and he's all '???' and thats how I discovered I was fooled. So I redid them KNOWING I wasnt really the Closer and it went a lot better. It was honestly v aesthetic.

CAR 17

Green Text:

ButlerBot is the 404 page for farragnarok: <http://farragnarok.com/asdf> You can talk to him there, but be nice!

CAR 21

Green Text:

Honestly? It sucks that Dart rotted away on my computer. It sucks that I can't maintain the pre ZampanioSim Sims. But... It's hard, using two languages equally? Using Dart for hobbies and Javascript for my job was...not sustainable? Now that it's Javascript all the time I'm a lot less stressed...

CAR 22

Green Text:

Wanda's first appearance was this Zampanio/Magnus Archives cross over fic:  
<https://archiveofourown.org/works/34647190> (I actually wrote that one and just treated it as a rando, cuz that was back when I was trying to encourage people more? ) Plus...It actually was the first fanfiction I ever wrote, and I was nervous, I'll admit. I based the Magnus Archives opening off that dream avatar game? But once it got in it was more about emphasizing Wanda's obsession and how it helps nothing, and certainly not what they thought was WORTH of their obsession. It IS still fan fiction though, more Magnus Archives than Zampanio. But I like that it gave me the concept of shortening the Wanderer's name to Wanda. And from THERE I realized that if they have two names, why not three? Why not have them be the Creator of the Quotidians, their odin? Norse gods are ALWAYS changing gender anyways. Don't worry about it.

CAR 28

Green Text:

Look. I know her by a LOT Of different titles, okay? IC thought it was funny if I never actually learned her True Name for a while, and honestly? same. FlowerChick, of course, since she has that flower growing out of her eye. FAQWriter inside of gopher, absolutely. CFO when we realized she and Wanda were going to go on TIME ADVENTURES, sure sure. But the first title I knew her by? Apocalypse chick.

CAR 36

Green Text:

So, obviously the Wanderer became fleshed out in the Gopher path, and Wanda in the ao3 path. But...Wodin didn't really exist at first? What did it matter what 'Your' past was, if you'd thrown it all way to endlessly wander a hell maze? But...once the Quotidians became Relevant I realized there was room for their Creator, 'Odin' to exist. Rather than shoe horn in another character, I quickly realized that the Wanderer is someone sacrificing themselves for Wisdom and...well, the rest sort of flowed from there.

CAR 44

Green Text:

Now, was I expected a glitch in DMSimulator to triple the amount of grubs yall found? No. Was I absolutely willing to give you triplets and yeet the other grubs into the stratosphere with how irrelevant they were compared to your new found glitch babs? Also yes. Wanda is going to make damn sure they remember you loop to loop, even if they otherwise wouldn't. You are their Father now. You and Peewee, and you will damn well take responsibility.

#### CAR 52

Green Text:

<http://farragofiction.com/ZampanioHotlink/Minotaur.png> That link may be more helpful than you'd think. If you realize why, perhaps you should think about what that means. Don't worry if you can't figure it out. Next loop it may become obvious.

#### CAR 54

Green Text:

I really can't say anything much about these creatures, but here's some people who have tried:  
<http://knucklessux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/qq/PublicDocs/AnIncompleteInvestigationOfNagaOperationalSecrecy.pdf> and  
[http://knucklessux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/AIDaric/By\\_%20%5bdata%20lost%20R6.pdf](http://knucklessux.com/PuzzleBox/Secrets/AIDaric/By_%20%5bdata%20lost%20R6.pdf) And then after yall used them to end the world in AdventureSimWest, I went ahead and made the infamous game so we can ruin our layer of reality as well:  
<http://farragofiction.com/NagaGirlfriend/>

#### CAR 63

Green Text:

<http://farragofiction.com/ATranscript/> is a very mysterious fic IC wrote :) :) :) But yeah, the entire Intermission IC and I sort of high level pre-rped out. I was the DM so I was hostage and himbo and etc and IC was the Eye Killer. Shenanigans ensued. We accidentally adopted the npcs. It happens.

CAR 106

Green Text:

Before Farrago (and the bit of purplefrog DM lent me (<http://purplefrog.com/~jenny/>)), the last web thing I'd done had been my shitty angelfire site. I SAY shitty but...honestly? I still am proud of it. I learned how to code javascript by adapting quizzes and virtual pets I found online for my own purposes. And I just kind of threw everything I found in a big pile on the site. I've REALLY changed since then? But at the same time. Well. Let me list out what past me's biggest goals were: 'I want to make/design video games or virtual pets or robots or AI in general. Sure, I suck at math. I'm a verbal person. But I'll do what it takes to have some say in the production process of the almighty videogame, etc.'. That might not be my day job (and in fact I have made a conscious decision to NEVER have my day job be creative like that), but it's definitely something I can safely say I've reached? In any case, yeah, turns out everyone thinks past me died? There's like, a not-quite-ARG about people trying to track me down from teh angelfire site, and finding other people doing the same thing and all concluding I died after some ominous Deviant Art post I made? When really my dumb ass just got locked out of hotmail and that locked me out of a buncha other accounts. Ah. Horseshoes. Oh right, here's some blatant nostalgia: <http://farragofiction.com/SecurityLog/cctv.html?truth=yes> Oh ALSO: <http://demo.vhost.pandorabots.com/pandora/talk?botid=b24e32038e35520c> A chat bot I'd made back then, capturing my teenage personality still exists, apparently. My own Lil Hal, when you get right down to it.



North Rabbit Hole: the mind is a terrible thing to waste

JR Rambles

JR here.

It's...

weird?

Knowing that I've put so much of myself into this work?

It's blatantly self indulgent, of course.

All the things I like about creation and very little of the things that got me so burnt out at Farrago.

I even got to work collaboratively with people?

The key is, I've found, over the years, to not look for help until you have a solid foundation? Until you can \*prove\* to other people "I have the skills to do this. I am committed to this.". It lowers the barrier to entry for others. Lowers the risk that they'll put energy in only for me to flake on them, I think?

It helps that I tend to do broad concepts and then refine it iteratively? So theres plenty of room for people to influence the things I create.

I think if I were the type of person to plan everything out to the last detail, I wouldn't WANT to collaborate with others?

People change you. Change the things you create.

Change the things you WILL create.

The media I've consumed, big and small indelibly changed me.

And I'm so glad for it. I'm glad I can say "here are my influences" in respect to media, and I'm glad I can say "these are the marks the people I've met, both irl and online, left on the things I create". Sometimes literally? Sometimes they contribute text or art or music. Sometimes they contribute a vibe, like on the Zampanio discord server path. And sometimes its just people that, for having met them, I am forever changed.

For good, or for bad.

And that bad is where the weirdness at how much of myself I've put into this work comes in?

I've kind of...more or less stepped back from 'public life', as it were? I'm not going back. Not going to try managing some community. Not going to try to be a big boi game dev.

And for like, the first year of covid I just Did Not Create in any meaningful way. Well.

I take that back. I created entirely for me in a physical space. Sometimes as gifts for friends but still things people couldn't...influence me on?

I coded as well, but it was all to support incredibly personal things I only showed a handful of people. The InfoToken system and the PuzzleBox are examples of that.

And that made me happy?

But being exposed to the Magnus Archives stirred something in me. I wanted to create FOR an Audience again? And WITH an Audience?

I guess I'd finally healed enough to try again?

But ZampanioSim is explicitly sort of...me dipping my toe back in.

It's something intentionally hard to get into. Something intentionally only for the people who enjoy experiencing the same things I enjoy creating.

And the only "community" I've built for it is intentionally...well, either you know or you don't, I won't spoil it for you.

I guess the point I'm making here, if there can even be said to have a point is just...

Thank you? Thank you for finding my secrets. Thank you for engaging with this weird art project I've made and put so much of myself into. I hope you enjoyed it :) I hope if you find some kind of community as a result of it, it leads you to happiness.

I'd love to hear what you think of the game! You can email me at [jadedResearcher](mailto:jadedResearcher) (or [justifiedRecursion](mailto:justifiedRecursion)) on gmail, and I'm on Tumblr and kinda on reddit. I enjoy pretending there will be an Audience one day, but it would also be nice to Know.

JR out.

North Rabbit Hole: toy

JR Rambles:

When you get right down to it, none of ZampanioSim is a tool. It's play.

Play is useful because it gives us a context to practice, to create, to ENGAGE without consequences.

People forget that.

They try to make each thing they create be heavy with import. To be Perfect.

Your goal shouldn't be "I make a thing."

Your goal should be "I find a way to learn/practice/explore that is sustainable and fun."

Because that's how you keep at something long enough to get GOOD At it.

Those who are likely to find these messages already know to look in the source code.

They already know about doom duet.

I wonder what they are missing by only looking there?

Not only things missed to SEE. But things missed to do. The Weaver knows how things connect, but can they create a tapestry from it?