

Anti-Parietal Epithalamus

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**Abstract**

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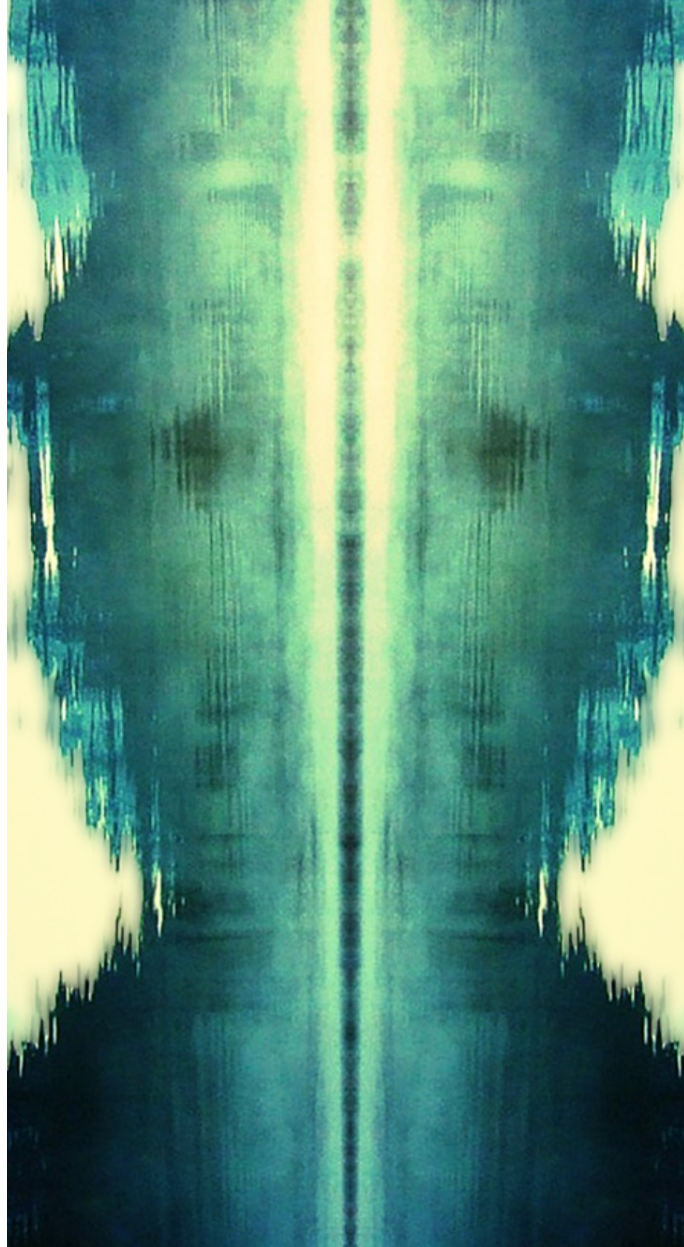
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*Anti-Parietal Epithalamus* is a hybrid work of speculative fiction and visual art, a non-linear story that follows characters into a dystopic alternative future of 4023. In response to a time-space anomaly that has rendered a massive geographical desert simultaneously present and absent, Johniffer and Jimison are drafted by a highly bureaucratic organization, The World Octagonals, to uncover the inner workings of the Entangled Desert. Johniffer's sister, Annalese is a religious acolyte for her god Antropy, lives peacefully at the Vestigial Parish but through a series of visions becomes unable to separate Antropy from the anomalies caused by the Pineal Caelum. The Pineal Caelum is a mysterious entity that for an unknown reason is desperately attempting to get the attention of humans by manipulating vibrations and time-space. This thesis plays with magical interpretations of quantum mechanics, non-human intelligence, absurdity, humanity, and the boundaries of consciousness. At the center of it is a brooding anxiety over the unforeseeable effects of technological integrations and ecological disasters.

# Anti-Parietal Epithalamus



Matthew Livezey Whitehurst


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—Voices from an ambiguous void—

?: *I just had the strangest dream.*

?: *Me too... I—*

?: *No, I just had the dream. Again.*

?: *The dream? Singular?*

?: *I already told you, no... wait, I keep forgetting—*

?: *You never share your dreams with me.*

?: *Listen, there's something wrong.*

*I've been reliving different versions of my life*

*starting from when I wake up right now.*

*I've died a few times.*

*And every time I wake up next to you, I share these dreams with you*

*and you're oblivious to this fact. But I know they aren't dreams. It's...*

?: *My dream felt like a lifetime, literally.*

?: *I know. You're aware now. There's something wrong here. Like—*

?: *We've been here before.*

?: *I just don't know why you weren't aware before. What did you do last in your... dream?*

*?: It's a bit foggy, the memories are slipping already.  
I think I was on a boat, a canoe. No one else was with me.  
I looked up to the sky and saw the moon,  
but there were lines all over it.  
Crude tangly lines.  
Dying moss kind of green.  
And then what I believed to be the water  
was speaking to me so I panicked and passed out—  
It was surreal for sure.*

*?: Why were you in a canoe?*

*?: I'm not sure. The vague feeling was... purposeful?  
I stole it from someone and felt justified for it.*

*?: What did the water say?*

*?: It was whispering, felt like language but also  
running water, couldn't make it out—*

*Wait... what's that sound... Or smell?*

—Jimison—

Peering from behind ferns was a puffing of smoke pillars, foliage scattered beads of orange-red light, “let's go to the library,” Johniffer said moving forwards facing away going too quickly. I had lingered and dropped my burning stick, mumbling “choleric binaries.” It was either be here, or be there, never anything in between, and it's been a long day or year traveling —*there will be an endless night*—lapsed a shimmering echo of time rupturing our perceptions.

“It’s in here,” while a whirring scraped the temples, the sweet crunch of appleteeth on my tongue dripped syrup onto my chest, each drop settled into the fabric and caved in sizzling, I wonder—*the flavor of morbid dirt spit chewing cavities into my mouth—if honey is vomited but it is not—tobacco lungs cause evaporation of nectar which crackles when inhaled, hard to breathe, need to open the door after the foul fruit fell to the floor, obviously molded, it splashed with a twinge.*

*What... just happened?*

“Jimison. Pay attention,” a voice brought me back, faded. The voice handed me an arm strap composed of discrete hardware and an interface I couldn’t comprehend, and said it contained an “automatic identification system” for “tracking worlds outside of current parameters.”

“Why are we still naked...” I said. Johniffer pointed at a crate in the corner and started to put on some underwear.

“The Geiger belt... didn’t you say something was noticed there?” I asked. But he ignored me and continued to talk as though I was speaking nonsense. I was not able to catch what he was saying with the kaleidoscopic migraine in my head.

“The temporal scales register interference in signals that help with navigating local positions but do not translate across the Agr’s latitudes. It’s only useful to determine how linear time flows in each position we find ourselves in, and there’s biometric authentication that’s used to define behavioral characteristics, to establish a calculable pattern useful in identifying individual entities,” Johniffer said. “System logs record thought transmission rhythms, gaits, temperature signatures, monitored iris activity, retina dilation, scent emissions, or anomalous

voices. Oh, and the soul apparatus has yet to be discovered... but there are still parameters for it.”

“That... doesn’t,” I started to say, but Johniffer threw pants at me. “I’m still waking up.” I said.

He nodded. “Tell me about your dreams.”

I was caught off guard by the question. I barely know this man, but I figure since we are naked and I’m just now waking up, maybe... “I remember you were talking to me about seeing lights in the night sky that scared you. Or maybe you were just bewildered, but you went on to ramble about the Geiger Belt like it was some kind of vacation destination.”

“Hm. Maybe not IN the Geiger Belt, but somewhere in that direction...” He responded, swiveling his posture away from me.

Still unsure of what he isn’t saying, clearly hiding something.

“Okay, that’s something. Thanks for sharing.”

“You’re... welcome.” I said. Now that the weight is gone, an even deeper sense of despair came back. I can’t remember how I got here. Should I trust Johniffer? I think so, we both came here together. But I know I was just walking around before the intense feeling of seemingly waking up for the first time. “Now I’m back here...” I said aloud, not even sure what I meant by that.

Johniffer noticeably changed demeanor. From being determined and quiet, he paused and stared at me for a moment. As though he were waiting for me to conjure something out of thin air. But after that moment, his cold eyes came back and he continued tinkering with the device on his wrist as if he were disappointed in me.

He talked out loud again, “It took time to realize the time scales within the great central desert of our Aearth had tilted past the sixth dimensional manifold when it should have been on the fifth. System logs recorded this as anomaly number six: Anti-Parietal Epithalamus. This is the entangled desert. Our planet’s largest desert happens to conjoin two of our three major continents. What used to be called The Great Thalami, is now twisted in prism-like daggering chaos. Its borders are lit bright of green flames which dissipate off into fractals. We were assigned as a team created by The Matcher from the First Octagon at the World Octagonals Breach complex, where we are to relay information back.”

“Right... I was coaxed into a van after a friendly coffee date with a stranger. Something about someone wanting to hear about my book of poetry about ecological disasters...”

Johniffer started talking again, “Turns out our simulated system lost ninety-eight point fifty-six billion entities, which equates to about seven trillion years of linear time being perceived. This shift in temporal scales was so rapid that trillions of years were compressed in only one equatorial plane. Whatever this means, I have no idea, because all I know is what they tell me... so let us learn more. Got it?”

I’m still reeling from the headache, recovering from the dreams instead of answering him. From what I remember of the lecture hall, is a cramped dark space, trapped against my will. That was real. But now I’m staring out of a doorway inside a military bunker into what looks like a vast empty desert. Why doesn’t this feel like the first time? This is real?

—Pineal Caelum—

*Perspex epaulets perturb ex oscine chaos.* Quiet dreaming child,  
there will be an endless night. Unless the parabolic troughs are  
removed or completely deteriorated. The solar cell project will be  
eliminated the more language seeps into the gauges. Augers boring  
holes into radiated shells of the orbits a spectator. One wonders  
while another one works while another one dreams while the rest  
succumb—

There are multiple ways to enter a sheet of air  
multiple ways to observe a knot. Tying a string to  
another string is tying two problems together  
hopes to find one solution. But knotting two  
sources only creates more *chaos*.

---

—World Octagonals Breach—

*We caught a radio signal coming from an unknown source. We've extrapolated that this source is emitted from multiple locations at the same time. We cannot tell where exactly it's being sent from, and by who or what. Every time our apparati locate the source, it relocates over impossible distances and instantaneously. It seems to cycle locations depending on our observation.*

*When tracking the source to where the sun used to be, the signal will react by emitting at the edge of Agr. Continuing the pattern, upon following that source, the signal will then emit from our moon instead. It keeps slipping away as though it's all of these locations at once, but never at the same time. We can never pin down the signal's actual location. Or maybe we have, and we haven't understood how to reach it yet. Ever since observing this event, spatial parameters, according to our apparati, tilted off the phi-equatorial plane. Visual dimensional phasing can be seen in our locality. Planet Aerth, in the Great Thalami Desert. As though the vast area has been twisted into a fractalized non-euclidean mess. Whatever radio signals being sent from inside come out as either jumbled radio waves or physical objects.*

*We are still in the process of establishing a border around the perceived disturbance. There have been unverified reports of "emerald fires" permanently erupting without much movement in the forests that border the Great Thalami Desert. This emerald wall is impenetrable with mundane physical objects, but some biological material can pass through unobfuscated. Effects on biological bodies upon entry are [REDACTED].*

---

—World Octagonals Breach: First Octagon—

*The sounds of paper shuffle across a metallic surface.*

*A couple of voices talk to each other in an empty sterile room.*

*A document is removed from a folder and placed gently in front of a lilac pen:*

**p.1      Research:**

Since the manifold is adapted to the current equatoric paradigm variation, a primary action determining a reasonable threshold of vulnerability ( $\sim E$ ) is done through subjective solar radiation and climate data. Two total sets of observations were applied; Atmospheric Garden's closest weather station and Parageothermal Research Institute's girded data (Kernel, et al., 3942). The latter dataset was shown to have anomalous entities when positioned next to the weather vanes in the upper level of the daily temporal distribution, (as observed at Lunar Platform Zeta). And as a consequence was not applied to the vertices. For every index (see,  $\sim E$  manifold design), an annual amount of events (the "days which travel slower than the thresholds") was extrapolated from the witnessed data for the period 3876 to 3996. From the annual values, an imperial probability density fluctuation was calculated using mango density smoothing. Two values of  $\sim E$  (Fig. X9) were randomly determined as constituting the width between the middle and the 45th percentile along with the distance between the middle and 90th percentile. Those two values, respectively, represent extremes with repeated intervals of linear decades between 2 to 7 chunks at a given superpositional spacetime.

Linear trends ( $\sim L$ ) in the equatoric paradigm simulations were calculated using a 12 decade (3876-3996) simulation produced from the eighth version of the Parageothermal Research Institute's model developed at the Atmospheric Garden (Tressinger et al., 3957). Researchers ran the simulation at a  $0.36^\circ$  vertical resolution over the Northern Hemisphere, driven by the first member of ORA5 (Boh, et al., 3973) with all of the rest of the celestial models following EPS 7.6. Raw ORA5 data was corrected for bias to maintain the same frequency of climate and temporal index events for the period 3947-4004, to those seen in the data sets. Yearly event data numbers are then calculated for all of the revised time-scales (3973-4023). Linear trend  $\sim C$  (of the second equation created by Boh) of these time-scales is then calculated, and together with the hitherto calculated  $\sim E$  values, makes possible the determination of vulnerability temporal scale FO. These time-scales and their potential impact on the chosen Auroric Plinth will appear in the third column ("vulnerability time-scales") of the Fig. X10 and noted by the "7.6" on Fig. X13 for these time-scales up to a total of twelve decades.

**p.2 Conclusion/Hypothesis:**

*meaningful redundancy?*

Due to the trends in our linear time-scales, it appears this anomaly has been erupting since before time was even a construct. It's hard to define but supposedly it's a repetitive loop entity [?] and we've now just come up with the instruments to decode its presence. What's strange is the compression and decompression of time in a local space. We are unsure if this is generating linear timelines in observational positions, or if it's revealing how

actually non-linear time is as a whole and attempting to shatter our current paradigm.

**p.3**      **Notes:**

It is within observed linear trends and the documented time-scales (see below “method of employment”) that we see the anomalous “voices.” The scrambling code stemming from the “possible entities” applied negative space in place of positive positions of matter. We see this visually on the charts that document our vulnerability time-scales and climate data.

Using the data we have now, we may be able to pinpoint the locations of the anomalies and from there we can discover the two possibilities we have theorized.

One being an entry point for transference into the discovered manifold (the dimensional manifold which possibly houses our pilfered sun). And the other being opening the floodgates to anti-matter that will consume everything including time itself. The “voices” we have picked up have yet to be fully deciphered. But so far, the only translations we can find are through a poetical poiesis. Mathematical data sets were dwindled down to various written languages, settling on English for the sake of our governmental coherency. The patterns we *can* decipher read as follows:

“...as long as the moon rots/LINE BREAK?/there will be an endless night...”

We have reasons to believe these anomalies in our temporal climate data sets are trying to communicate with us.

**p.4      Suggestions for action:**

By order of the First Octagon:

**Utilize Project Coalmine Canaries**

Assemble the [REDACTED]. Find a poetic analyst and tell them nothing of context. Hire previous assistant from team [REDACTED] to accompany the poet. They will work together to discover the names and mechanics of what is happening.

**Roster of possible trainees pulled from WO Poetics**

**Department Watchlist (only one can be hired):**

- 1. Uzbekhi Shaazalakh.**
- 2. Jimison Conifer.**
- 3. Ardent Vesuvius III.**
- 4. Annalese Baptisma.**
- 5. Toe Forsynthia.**

**Method of employment:**

*Capture and minor hypnosis. no physical torture — any other means fine*

(Paperwork is filed only upon notice of confirmed mortality. Project remains to be invisible to the public for the unknowable future.)

-----  
*Text propter echo breach #06 recorded as of .63 seconds ago.*

*Year 4023*

...//:signal-transmissions\_

...//:subfolder:anomalies-catalog-entities.conscious\_

...//:subfolder:entries-[05]\_

...//:1:astral-light-projections\_

...//:2:decapod-fissures\_

...//:3:orbital-sun-pilferer\_

...//:4:interpolated-temporals\_

...//:5:orthogonal-soul-cluster\_

...//:UPDATE-INFO:subfolder:anomalies-catalog-entities.conscious\_

...//:ADDED:subfolder:entries-[06]\_

...//:1:astral-light-projections\_

...//:2:decapod-fissures\_

...//:3:orbital-sun-pilferer\_

...//:4:interpolated-temporals\_

...//:5:orthogonal-soul-cluster\_

...//:6:anti-parietal-epithalamus\_|

—Annalese—

*Antropy, my nerves are singed.*

Father passed away a year ago, and Johniffer is now two. The babe isn't speaking any sentences yet. He's been very vocal but it's just sounds to express emotions. Mother has been working at a school and is occupied at night at what she calls "the floral detectives." She hasn't been clear on what she's doing, but it's something related to the WOG. Today I stayed home and studied for my entrance exam at the Vestigial Parish.

When I went to check on Johniffer, he immediately tried to get my attention. We first locked eyes, and he held his palms facing up, his arms to the left side of his head. He motioned his open palms to the other side of his head, and back. After a few repetitions of that and me speaking aloud, "bring?" He switched to one hand with an index finger pointed outwards. He traced his mouth with the index finger curling inwards, and then made a circular motion with the hand now in a palm facing downwards. "Clean?" I asked, he verbalized an angry sound and repeated the motions, while also pointing to himself. "Bring me?" He paused, and nodded. Rotated his facing down palm again, "to a place?" He nodded again. "Bring you where?" He fumbled his way out of the couch he was sitting in, and wobbled his knees to a standing position.

He stumbled his way over to the front door and I obliged by opening it.

*Fascinating. This boy is so—* he then managed a stumbling sprint out the door. During which a tingling sensation tickled my brain.

"JAY!" I called out to him. I didn't grab him, but followed closely as he walked across the grass and stopped at the sidewalk just before the street. He looked at the school across the street, to which I said "yes, that's where mom works." He gestured for me to pick him up, so I did. He signed again, "bring me" and I walked across the street with him. We walked up to the fence of the school and he pointed over at a sandbox.

"You want to play?" I asked him. He frowned. I walked along the fence until I found a gate and walked in. I brought him over to the sandbox and sat him down in it.

He signed again, “bring me.” He pointed at the sand, grabbed some in his fist. Then threw it up in the air away from him.

“What Johniffer?” I picked up some sand and before I could clench it, he grabbed my wrist and remained silent, staring at me. He used his free hand to gesture the area again, then his finger past his mouth while he curled it. *Dry land.*

“Bring you to dry land? All of this is dry land. There’s no water nearby.”

Johniffer looked agitated. He peered up into the sky and stayed there. Eyes locked into the ethereal blue above. “Johniffer?” I asked. He did not respond. His eyes were glued to the sky. I decided to sit down next to him and we both looked up at the sky.

Eventually the moon came out while the sun station disappeared. The sky turned a milky black and the moon glistened bright white. “It’s time to go inside Johniffer.” But he didn’t listen. He stayed motionless. I picked him up but he squirmed and shouted. I brought him back across the street and to our house. “I’ve got to study again. This chapter is on the inner-voice.” Johniffer responded with his classic smirk.

“You’re silly. What will you be when you grow up? A comedian?”

We stepped inside, and he opened up his palms to litter sand all over the place. “Hey, Jay!” I said, setting him down, watching him stumble off into the hallway.

—Johniffer & Jimison—

All around the pair were ruins emerging from the desert. Colossal structures with minds of their own, yet immensely shy. Odd giants, never in the predictable order one would assume. Sometimes the insides of the buildings don't make sense, impossible to traverse. Office spaces meeting ant colonies without the ants, or part of a cement structure left unfurnished. And sometimes doorways would appear where there weren't any before, and where there shouldn't be any. Like on the floor or in a large tree. And it was for this reason, probably, that they should wear slats upon their eyes to pry them open. Their nearly 180° field of view now more consistent.

For a brief moment, Jimison paused on a stairwell after having another passing headache. He grumbled something to Johniffer, and then looked down the stairs he ascended from, but they were going upwards and he noticed he was in the middle of descending.

“Yes, we are violating the laws of physics. But obviously these laws are outdated.” Johniffer said, continuing down the ascension. “You’ve heard of quantum theories of objects which exist in multiple states at once, yeah? Like the living things inside of a container aren’t being constantly monitored, so they’re potentially alive and dead until observed?”

“Yes but, how can something be alive and dead at the same time? Wouldn’t one death cause all the others to die? What happens to fate?”

“Don’t worry about that, no such thing as fate. I’m mostly talking about this staircase we found ourselves on, like it’s going up and down sometimes, I’m not sure when we’re getting off... but back to the theory—we are in a superposition along with this desert. And for some reason, we exist here in multiple absolute states while we perceive one state that isn’t the many.”

“W-wh... when does it end...”

“We’re either alive. Or we’re dead. Right now we make the choice to determine the outcome.”

“I don’t... w-wa...”

“Your position will change from location to location during a state of constant observation. Or as far as we know, these objects will situate themselves in various superpositional states, but our subjective experience is what entangles us. For each location, you’re in a stable state, either definitively alive or dead. But the superposition is constantly moving you around. Within this Desert, you may die. But there’s a probable chance that there exists a version of you entangled in a superpositional state that is still living. Whether or not you get to experience that version of you, depends entirely on...”

“Fate?”

“No. Fate isn’t real.”

“Then... what?” Johniffer didn’t answer. Johniffer thought to himself, *I’m not telling the whole truth because even I don’t understand it. It depends entirely on us, our selves. I’m beginning to believe that the objects in this Desert are all one object superimposed in thousands of ways, rather than thousands of separate individual objects. I have to fix my location in the sixth manifold, and so far the only way I know how to transfer is this... cow’s head with a satellite for a tongue.*

“Thi-this is absurd!” Jimison whined.

*Yes I know.* “Need any more rubber for your slats?”

“No... I’m fine...”

---

—T.A.R.O.T.—

*The Telekinetic Abstract Retrographic Objects Team was assigned by the Seance Anatomy Wing from the Hydrangea Industrial City Complex United Peoples. A private organization hired by the World Octagonal Government to investigate the anomaly in the desert. A strange occurrence of time-space twisted in it's euclidean design. And inside a team from the WOG was sent in, and have been sending transmissions back. The problem we are trying to solve is their transmissions are scrambled yet oddly coherent, as though they're being translated during the process.*

*The hardest part about setting up the system of understanding was acceptance. Language tends to act autonomously. The anomaly is engaging in something we can't seem to understand—yet. One possibility of reason is that it's sending us information, or it's trying to attack us by altering everything we understand about physics and language. Or perhaps it doesn't understand what we're experiencing, and this is just us misinterpreting a host of natural phenomena.*

*T.A.R.O.T. has been sent around the world to investigate these object sightings. The first object we figured out to be a message, we believe was from Johniffer from the within the anomaly. They keep trying to contact us like we asked them to, with their electromagnetic transpatial radios. But for some reason, whatever signal leaves the anomaly ends up forming into physical objects. This first discovery landed inside one of the Seventh Octagon at The World Octagonals Breach complex. The only reason we believed this object was out of the ordinary, was that it was half-lodged into the concrete wall of a storage closet. No one can say why it's there.*

—*Jimison*—

I read the card aloud which was slid beneath the door of my bedroom, “on behalf of the Carnation Orphanarium, you are invited to the celebration of [JAMESON]’s [EIGHTEENTH] birthday party! There will be free cake and sodas for everyone who shows up. And the birthday [BOY], [JAMISON], will get a brand new journal and tackle box—” and they spelled my name wrong, twice.

I opened the door into the bustling hallway and walked down a few flights of stairs to get to the common area. A table in the corner had a “reserved” sign on it with balloons around it. Pink and blue confetti scattered the table and floor around it, as though the party already happened. I walked over and grabbed a box which was shaped like a journal, and opened it. Inside was a blank black journal. Maybe 80 or 100 pages to write on.

Next I needed a pen or pencil. I walked back into the hallways and found an abandoned office. There was a rosewood desk with plenty of drawers. After opening a few, there were some spare utensils so I pocketed as many as I could.

I went back to the common area where a few lost kids were. “Pea-bubbah and jebby?” a kid asked me. I gave him a half smile and pointed over at the birthday table.

“I don’t know buddy, but you can have whatever is inside the other box.” I gestured at the wrapped gift sitting next to the package I opened. The kid wobbled over to the birthday table and reached for the gift box and I walked toward the exit.

On the way out, a deep voice stopped me. “Did you forget to sign out?” They said. “No, I just turned eighteen.” I said.

“Oh. Which room number?”

“1337.”

“Okay, thanks. You’re free to go, good luck.”

I nodded and walked outside of the orphanarium. Before deciding what to do next, I was compelled to sit on the steps and write in my journal. I pulled out my new pen collection, and

picked purple. The first words in my journal, “as long as the moon rots, there will be an endless night.” *It is not what I wrote, it is not what I—* These words worried me. So I closed the notebook and tried not to look again.

*What did I actually write—*

—Annalese—

“What’s the babe doing?” I said. Father turned his eyeless head over to me, I could tell he wanted to cry through the blindfold he wore, by the crease in his lips. What I couldn’t tell was if he was crying with sadness or joy. I felt joy, but also an immense sense of responsibility. This baby will change my life forever, my little brother.

As Mother held little Johniffer in her arms, dozing off from the lack of sleep she has been getting, I leaned in to play with his tiny hands. He gripped my fingers and then pulled me in closer. His eyes locked mine, as though he were trying to tell me something. He was under a year old but his eyes have seen so many. *I’m listening*, I said in my mind. Johniffer’s baby hands started to move with intention instead of flailing. He held a closed-fist with his left hand, symbolizing an ‘A’ and moved it up and down upon the open palm of his other hand. Up and down, cautiously and thoughtfully.

“Look! He’s saying something!” Mother said in a daze. Father couldn’t see and continued to leak from his tear ducts. I just wondered to myself if what I was seeing was sign-language, and how does he know how to communicate without any practice?

I looked over at the babe again, and his eyes remained calm. He flexed his pupils, then moved his eyes back and forth from his hands to mine.

I held up my fist like he did, and an open palm with my other hand. I mimicked the motion in response to Johniffer. But instead of continuing the charade, he began to cry and stink up the room.

“Want me to play some piano again, little guy?” I got up to the other room and played whatever came to heart. Listening to the crying of Johniffer dissipate.

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—*World Octagonals Breach*—

A handmade wooden bucket with salted water inside, was half conjoined into the wall. Its handle was inside the wall, as though the bucket had been falling and the wall created itself suddenly in the middle of the bucket's fall. A member of the physics division had discovered this object in the wall and immediately thought it concerning. When Breach caught wind of the object, the room was suddenly swarming with curious people.

“Anyone touch it yet?”

“Fuck no.”

“You do it.”

“No way.”

“Get closer.”

One man shoved another man toward the bucket in the wall—the man tumbled toward it and he grasped the side of the bucket to catch himself. But upon immediately touching the bucket, his hand violently snapped backwards and the skin, bone, and blood above the wrist liquidated into water. He flipped sideways onto the ground and looked at where their hand used to be and saw a nub with a bone sticking out.

Everyone in the room was in complete silence and looked at the man to gauge their reaction. He was quiet too, eyes wide and in total shock. After a brief moment of bewilderment, he said “I-I didn’t feel a thing.”

No one responded.

“My hand... my hand is... gone?” He stood up, calming down while still staring at his missing hand—not grimacing in pain, but in intense curiosity with his nose pressed against his forearm. A light flickered in his irises and he said, “I’ve been here before.”

Half the room fled upon hearing this, while a few others immediately tried to jump him. As one woman tried to grab his wrist with the missing hand, her finger tips started melting to water.

“PUT HIM IN ISOLATION.”

The man screamed, “NO—NO QUARANTINE—“ he was kicked in the chest and everyone else fled the room, locking the door behind them.

He tried rubbing his nub against the window of the door, but it wasn't doing anything. He smashed his arms on the door, and his face, leaving streaks of blood and water across the panel. “...I can help them,” he mumbled, “we can't do it without them—too far away...” before passing out on the floor.

Later, ‘volunteers’ in full hazmat suits came to collect the disfigured man from the storage closet. He was in deep sleep when they unlocked the door. They took the opportunity to move him to the designated quarantine zone. Nothing unusual happened during the transport. Once the storage room was clear, another hazmat clad team was sent in to get a closer look at the bucket in the wall.

They found that it emits a steady source of electromagnetic radiation. They left a monitor in the room which displays the current frequency and updates every second. At seemingly random intervals, the source of the electromagnetic energy left the bucket completely, but returned after some time. What was peculiar, was that the electromagnetic resonance reader created notable noises from the white noise that is only heard by the naked ear.

The feed of the signal was sent to the radio transcription department where they'll constantly monitor the noise and see if there's anything to decipher.

The strangest part however, was when the new observation team took a microscope to it. They noticed the grooves in the wooden frame appeared intentional. As though the wood itself were created by hand. But looking even closer in the grooves of the wood, there were what appeared to be symbols. Some were even recognizable letters and a few noticeable words such as “lost,” “water,” and “badly.” Eventually, the name “Jimison” kept popping up, mostly from the inside of the bucket near the saltwater. Upon this discovery, the Heads at Breach understood, partially, what was going on.

A message was broadcasted to Breach, the Hydrangea Industrial City Complex United Peoples, and the rest of Aerth:

“We are sending the Telekinetic Abstract Retrographic Objects Team to find more of these objects. We have reason to believe these objects are messages being sent by our *Canaries*, filtered by the anomaly. Avoid direct contact with these objects unless wearing the proper equipment. It seems that *most biological* and *some geological* contact with the object will result in *unprecedented results*. Report any other sightings immediately or there will be consequences. END.”

—*Jimison*—

“Ms. Conifer!” a doctor’s voice emerged from the emptiness. “Stitsa boy!” they said.

“Keep him.” A mother’s voice emerged from the emptiness. This is a good voice, the vibration is right. The vibrations are mine and mine alone. “Hold him for me.”

“Butchushould, you ought—” the doctor responded through the noise, “On the skin!”

“Please.” The mother responded. “I can’t—”

I floated between hands. The good vibration was going away. Further. Quietly, from a distance, the mother voice returned, “he can’t be mine.”

A long harsh continuous tone of high pitch vibrations shrieked from the emptiness. This is a bad sound, the sound is wrong. The sound is not mine and I am alone.

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—*Pineal Caelum*—

—Amon-Rom Moon Station decays—due north light-speeds  
away from the astral impostors—free-floating husks of  
dangling algae spread mosslike-leviathans—tendrils, our bodies  
are prone to desiccation and our nematodes will permeate your  
corse—resonant frequencies shrill across the Universi and its  
signals are now lodged into code you call *DNA*— Transferred as  
whispers among the Entangled Desert—*what you call words,*  
*language*—creeping as the very same material of sound rustling  
sand shuffling beneath **Timison**'s feet—*as long as the moon*  
*rots there will* be an endless night, awaken the child from their  
dream and see—

**p.5                      Biographical Summaries of Canary Candidates**

**Uzbekhi Shaazalakh:**

A man from Aiyur of the desert regions of Aerth. Augmented with cerebral and visual technologies. Able to comprehend differences in physical and spiritual space. Absolutely terrible with timing and paying attention in a scholarly setting. Best at gathering information through conversation and/or psychological torture.

**Jimison Conifer:**

A man from Hordt of the forest regions of Aerth, outskirts of the Hydrangea Industrial City Complex United Peoples. Entirely biologically original, with extreme sensitivity to spiritual and physical anomalies. Unable to grasp large scientific concepts but can glean alternative meanings through poesies. Easily manipulated yet intelligent enough to defy authority with collaboration and negotiation in mind.

**Ardent Vesuvius III:**

A demigod from the third dimensional anomaly. Made up of a mix between argon and human biology. Able to speak any language but unable to understand the response in that language. Prefers not to use the methods of science, but deploy rules leftover from the third manifold, fusion with solar energy and the Solar Architect's domain. (Any proof of sun god existence isn't realized. This DNA just

appears to be other-manifoldly that we can only assume a greater power in a non-spiritual sense.)

**Annalese Baptisma:**

A woman from Hordt of the forest regions of Aerth, outskirts of the Hydrangea Industrial City Complex United Peoples. Entirely biologically original, with extreme sensitivity to the spiritual and mental anomalies. Able to grasp large concepts but chooses to establish a relationship with a higher power entity (Antropy). An expert in learning, shown to learn and almost master musical instruments within hours of picking them up. Does not trust the WOG.

**Toe Forsynthia:**

A woman from Ohgra of the glacial regions of Aerth. Originally human, now “half-skin-walker” due to interference of the fifth anomaly. Able to perceive time in all of its capacities, but is unable to translate what they see immediately. Average time to produce a full spoken sentence: two days and three hours. They appear to be shed of any capacity of fear, confusion, happiness, and concern. (Note: immediate hire upon account of fail-safe request. See: Amm

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—Annalese—

The Vestigial Parish welcomed me with open arms. The cathedral by the hilled copse was my pride. “Did you see the cherry trees?” I asked.

A worried soul cast her eyes to her toes and said “yes, lovely, I would be blessed to be able to pick but I would never indulge.”

“Surely you could, Antropy wouldn’t have allowed us such a pleasure if They didn’t plant the seed, let us grow them, and watch them thrive.” I said.

Dreaming of glorious Antropy, graced with a blanket of satin comfort.

The woman smiled and radiated out of gloom. And wistfully walked away with soft patters, crunching and kicking gravel particles between the grass.

“Antropy may not have given us obvious reasons, but what we have here is clear. We are fortunate to have such a peace and absoluteness here. The Vestigial Parish is a perfect reflection of that.” I said while gazing off at the prismatic depictions of violence in the rose-tinted windows. And outside, the blossoms carried away the image of the woman fled from her gloom.

But I still worry myself, there’s an uncertainty that’s shrouding the moon, as if it has been slowly metamorphosing. Over the last thirty years of my life, I’ve seen this celestial monument hazily *greening*. Everyone else is acknowledging it, but I feel so lonely when I think about it.

I know of course the World Octagonals has been utilizing the moon in order to allow us the gift of light... somehow. So be Antropy.

I still wonder if the WO has other intentions. Because I’m worrying myself for some reason I cannot answer. I’ve always relied on Antropy’s presence, but when I stare at the moon, everything is quiet. There’s no warmth inside of me. There’s no hushed hum swaddling me. Distant, out of reach, solitude turned to alienation.

There's a sense in me that feels like the greening is a message from Them.

Antropy has signaled to me with an absence of Antropy when looking up at the moon. I should remember that, maybe I should become a satellite dish... ask Johniffer what he thinks. Though I rarely seem him.

Before I do anything rash, I will stay true to the Vestigial Parish. To Antropy. The comfort here is energizing. I will wait for the next sign.

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—T.A.R.O.T. member ‘Gingko’—

I was studying a mosquito laying its eggs on a leaf. It was mechanical. Its head would swivel back and forth, laying the eggs side by side in perfect alignment and speed. It was hard to tell if mechanical engineers modeled their machines after these insects or if the likeness is an uncanny coincidence. Either way, the similarities are striking. The entire leaf’s surface eventually held several dozens of eggs neatly awaiting their birth. Subtly squirming grains of rice covered in ichor. I took a magnifying glass and peered into the corner of the leaf. Some of the eggs were already hatching. Strange. They were just laid. A clutch of eggs burst open. I held my radio receiver above the leaf and it played static. The electromagnetic radiation dial was also fluctuating rapidly. The squirming wrigglers that emerged were shaped unusually. Instead of being the usual comma-shape, they were an alphabet. Each pupa was unique in its lateral design, as though when one alphabet ran out of representation, another clutch of eggs would burst a different set of symbols. I’m absolutely sure of this because when the first clutch hatched, they wriggled their way to the stem, and began to drop one by one. Each bio-letter fell into a pile, and then began to squirm their way into some words and eventually a sentence: “—sub—marine— empty—flash—flood— warning—” *Is this for us?*

—Jimison—

I said, “Johniffer.”

“Hm?”

“I’m thinking about knots right now, and I should tell you.”

“Knots? Like what have nots or the opposite of cans?” He said, perhaps facetiously.

This man is off-kilter. I keep going, “if we were to look at ourselves from the perspective of a string, or better yet, a rubber band. And we imagine this whole desert is a sort of...”

“A sort of möbius strip?”

“Yes,” I continue “we’re trying to be a sphere. We have to stretch ourselves with a complex equation, I don’t know. Meaning maybe we cannot break the strip by bending it too far or stretching too thin. It can fold into itself but too tight and everything shatters. We have to bend, twist like a knot, loop ourselves in such away that we can knot ourselves into a higher dimensional object. That way I can see the Thalami better.”

“Yes, maybe. I don’t know. Maybe. What I do know is we need to find a cow. As soon as inhumanly possible.”

*In the desert? Weird.* I said, “That’s it?” So we continued walking in the arid desolace.

Sometimes finding an oasis where we’d replenish ourselves and to blink for it to disappear into the sand. Maybe we start walking backwards in hopes to stumble over canned goods, anything edible enough. Sometimes finding a ruin lodged into the Aerth, into which Johniffer would lead us confidently without regard to our safety.

He’s the only person I’ve been able to speak with at Breach, and he is the only person here with me now. Or am I with him?

Eventually we thought it’d be a good idea to decide when, probably now, to start wearing slats in our eyes. Formed from small sheets of metal, resting on and slightly puncturing the tips of our cheeks and brows.

I don't know if I can do this. "Johniffer. What are the odds we find what we're looking for here?"

He stopped, turned around to face me and said, "I don't know. But the Matching device seems to know. It calculated a concerning number and I don't care to tell you what it is."

*We'll find a way I suppose...* "Okay..." I asked "But what if I knew? Wouldn't that increase our chances if we roll the dice on the butterfly effect?"

He just glared at me. Stared through me as though he had a distant shadow in his eyes.

Lodged into the sand, was an abandoned submarine.

"Remarkable. It's still intact." Johniffer was enthralled.

"But how did it get here?" I was baffled.

"That doesn't really apply here. But—"

"But how did it get here, it's the middle of the desert. And there's algae growing on the metal as though it's been fermenting at the bottom of the ocean."

"The algae does look fresh... Don't submarines crumble or break up on the way down to the bottom of the ocean?"

We walked closer.

Johniffer recognized the make of the vessel. "This was designed in the East. I believe this model is able to withstand depth pressure of around 1500m. Judging by how intact the vessel is, it's safe to assume she sank due to a slow flooding through the shaft seal."

"How can the vessel sink past 1500m into the ocean, but find itself stranded in the middle of the desert?" I awaited an answer to my question. Johniffer didn't care to worry about the movement of objects like this.

"It doesn't matter. But I am curious as to what is inside," Johniffer finally answered.

"Let's be careful Johniffer. What happens if we lose ourselves again?"

"This is why you stay and watch. Keep those slats in your eyes and watch me enter the vessel. I should be back in less than an hour."

But days had passed, I kept true to the task. It was not easy and terribly exhausting. Staring at the submarine and making sure it didn't move. The nights were long and cold, and the only senses to play with was the sound of my teeth chattering and the wind whispering. Eventually there was a clamoring from the entrance on top, my ears alight and Johniffer crawling out.

"See? It took me less than an hour. And for nothing. We should keep walking. That was useless."

"It's been days, Johniffer." Johniffer stared at me who stared at him. Johniffer didn't say anything as usual. I looked back at the vessel and felt a pressure increasing from within my head.

"Time here is deterministic, whatever happens already happened, but there are choices to make from our perspective." Johniffer said. "Out here we should use metonymic manipulation on our Matcher."

"Perspex epaulets perturb ex oscine chaos." *Did I just...*

"What?"

"What?"

"Anyways, the uncertainty principle asserts, in general, that it's not possible to predict the value of a quantity with arbitrary certainty, even if all initial conditions are specified."

"I'm still not as mathematically educated as you."

"Consider a one-dimensional quantum harmonic oscillator and express this position and our momentum operators in terms of their creation and annihilation operators."

"I can't hear you." I said. *What a drab*— Johniffer interjected my thoughts, "As long as the moon rots..." without moving his mouth. *Wait...*

I felt fingers crawl through my arteries and tickle the lowest part of my tongue. *There will be an endless night...*

"Do you feel that?" I finally asked, unsure if I even said what I heard... or thought, out loud.

"I feel like I'm being followed by a schizo," Johniffer spat. "You keep talking as if I'm even saying anything."

Now I wonder if I'm even with the same Johniffer I started out with today.

—*Johniffer & Jimison*—

“Why do you think right-handedness is so common?” Johniffer asked.

“Biological mechanics?”

“No.” Johniffer said, “It’s obviously conditioning.” “Well, hoity-toity.”

Johniffer continued, “Think about it. First it was symbolic, forced like castration. Denigrating swaths of humans across the planet. A cult-like ambition to dominate. Then it became mechanical, functional. Roads were usually designed with the right side in mind. People noticed when driving we often veer toward others, and left-sided vision tends to feel more vivid than the right—”

Jimison impatiently said, “But there are some places that drive on the left? I know a lot of people who do everything left-handed—”

“I’m not saying left-handedness doesn’t exist, I’m just saying right-handedness is too common, and it’s weird if you think about it for too long. I remember when I was training myself to shoot a pistol, I naturally landed my bullets on the right side of the chest. And the more I did that, the more I began to visualize actually shooting a person. And when I thought about that, I thought about vitals, what are the parts to shoot to kill?”

Jimison suddenly filled with a twisted glee, “Obviously the head is a no-brainer—”

Johniffer talked over Jimison, “—but the heart. That’s biological mechanics. Most people, and I really do mean most, as in nine point five out of ten people have their hearts located slightly to their left. Which is my right. So if I wanted to shoot to kill, I would veer my bullets to the right. I will dominate what it means to be right-handed, the right way. It’s strange to consider that for centuries we’ve been evolving as a species with subtexts we don’t actually read into. Which is ironic considering how evolved we are.”

Jimison cringed, “Yeah, look at us, quite literally bending time and space. Or rather, we’ve slipped into this stream by accident. But here we are, creating a boat to navigate this—”

Johniffer piped up, “Your metaphors are a bit too much right now, Jimison. I’ve got to cut you off right there.”

“You just talked for what—”

“Yeah, I know. Just trying to focus, I’m hoping the more I talk, the more I construct,” Johniffer said, hunched over in the corner of the apartment they found. The oven he was tinkering with was still baked from the sun and corroded on the bottom from being dragged in the sand for so long.

Jimison let Johniffer work for a moment, and then started to talk, “I hear you. I also believe you this time. Because that’s something I know well, you’re right. Your language does manipulate reality, which is also ironic because our idea of reality is something strictly factual and tangible when it’s really just our ideas subjected onto material. We encase ourselves in this — like a word cocoon.”

Johniffer paused what he was doing, “And similes? Just stop.” “You can fuck right off,” Jimison retorted.

“And rhyming?” Johniffer said. Jimison chuckled.

“...don’t do it...” Johniffer said, his face now buried in his fingers.

“Great timing,” Jimison said while mimicking the smirk Johniffer gives when he has nothing to say.

“Shut up.”

“Never, I’ve gotten this far overthinking everything, who knows maybe it could save us some day.” Jimison said smiling.

A shadow fell over the apartment, as though something vast briefly obscured the sun. Jimison thought, *mosquitos mosquitos... why am I thinking—no, craving mosquitos?*

—Jimison—

Inside the lecture hall at Breach I counted the time with my stomach growls and my eyes burning tired. For some reason, I feel like I've lost time. Or that I'm out of time... as in, outside of whatever time is? I was just in the Entangled Desert now, walking into a doorway, naked, while Johniffer rambled on about something. But now, I feel like I'm seeing Johniffer for the first time... again.

No one's told me what I'm doing here, and at this point, I can't even tell where I came from. I just remember them shushing me for whimpering, so I should not talk at all. Just to sit in this stiff chair in a dark lecture hall. For all I can remember, this is the darkness and the flickering projector screen is my life's entirety. A bright white square glowed off the wall at the far end of the room. I try to move but there are cuffs strapped to my legs and arms. The worst pain comes to me in the form of unscratchable itches exponentially growing in severity.

Suddenly, in bursts the door of the lecture hall and scientists already speaking to an audience of me, "...there are no adaptive systems to identify this error in miscalculation, the dimensional interface suffers glitches in the subsurface flesh automata simulations, the neurologist here Johniffer (Jeff) McCra'Craft devised a new premise for the biointerface to include *the loss of human value* as a key component in photovoltaic array construction and transfer of..."

A new face sat several rows ahead of me. The new face craned its neck behind them to see me, and we made eye contact. Still too terrified to speak, I tried to tell them something with my eyes but they turned away as if I were an apparition. Wasn't I just here before? Do they think that too?

"The Argonagnons develop themselves through an asexual holometaboly, although they are birthed initially during the hemimetaboly stage, which is strange considering this species can only replicate itself this way, but never experiences adolescence, and its cell growth abruptly changes within minutes of its conception. Hormones are synthesized in their neurons which

speed through the body and secrete retrocerebral organs which prompts the pupal-like stage, beginning actual metamorphosis.” A whirring in the temples thrums back again.

“But the peculiar thing happens here, instead of continuing its metamorphosis into a full adult, it ends up developing juvenile hormones instead, it then molts to produce abstract changes in weather, bringing atmospheric conditions of heavy meta-algae which we can only describe as moss-like. It seems to materialize from the vapor.” A brief image of spiny tendrils extending from the depths of space and to the moon flashed on the projector panel and flickered back to more jargon.

“Upon forming a structure around itself in a cocoon using its molted skin, the original Argonagon shrinks down to plankton within, then its egg bursts open another holometabolous Argonagon. The original, now plankton Argonagon, perceives transmissions from the sixth dimensional manifold, able to locate itself in the correct spatial field, the plankton then photosynthesizes its energy into another secreted material which slowly creates what one could only define as a building.” A series of images flashed of an insect crawling in a box and pausing to congeal into an egg and rapidly morph into what appeared to be a miniature concrete apartment building.

“A building?” I asked. My question got lost in the air of the room as though cloth was stuffed in my mouth. The lecturer gave me a brief stare and continued. The person I think is Johniffer straightened his back.

“This building is closely matched to asphalt but includes marrow and solidified plumage, the heavy rainfall lowers the temperature enough for the newly metamorphosed Argonagon plankton-operated-building to produce bimodal biometric systems within its DNA structure. It contains an electronic catalog of appendageprints of all organisms on the planet. This is where we asked, ‘why does it gather information of everything else and where is it sending it to?’”

Johniffer looked back at me for once, or the second time, and appeared to smirk. I blinked my eyes tight.

“It uses this information and projects its consciousness through the fifth manifold and into the sixth one, fully transferring its actual self or consciousness rather, into the other

dimension, but no one understands yet as to why there's a collection of fragmented DNA strands of all other biomaterials, including us, being twisted and congealed by The Great Thalami..."

"How are you able to tell if they're projecting their actual selves?" I pestered. Needing to know. But again, they didn't answer. I suppose even though I'm part of The Matcher's program, I still don't have clearance to be asking questions like these.

The lecturer cleared his throat and continued, "What no one could have predicted was the sheer amount of entities leaving this manifold and entering the other one. It may have created an imbalance of temporal and spatial activity enough to where a conscious entity within the Entangled Desert anomaly would be lost to us and at the very least disorienting to them. There are no adaptive systems to correctly identify this error in miscalculation, so the dimensional interface suffers glitches in the subsurface flesh automata simulations. As you know, the neurologist Johniffer (Jeff) McCra'Craft devised a new premise for the biointerface to include *the loss of human value* as a key component in photovoltaic array construction..."

Johniffer folded his arms and relaxed into his seat, crossing his legs. I started to feel a prickling sensation in my legs and an itching thought, I've heard this before.

"This impressed the World Octagonal Government here at the Breach but truly benefited the Universi in creating an off-grid TUPS, the Trans-Universi Positioning System, used to level our temporal and spatial degrees, however, since the sun died in this current manifold, we have to respond."

"As you know, the World Octagonal developed a Solar Cell project which launched a concentrated glass solar terminal above planet Aearth. Its piping is connected to parabolic troughs that align along the Agr's phi frequencies, able to receive transmissions of solar energy from the wandering sun in the sixth dimension. It displays an artificially bright sky to us in this manifold." The few scientists on stage nodded silently to show engagement, simultaneously absent.

"The Amon-Rom Moon Station created a problem for the Solar Cell project due to its technology still including gas turbines from the previous dimensions, combining its photovoltaic system with diesel generators, covering the entire surface of the moon. Most of it is still operating on gas, but eventually, we reconstructed half of the moon so that we could use wind

turbines and plasma projectors that spin particles fast enough to turn the blades in zero gravity. Although, since then, the surface of the moon has been unable to be navigated without any shielded equipment.” Everyone but Johniffer nodded silently.

“The plasma and diesel radiation are so severe that courier trains and construction vessels melt, and eventually we observed the very same meta-algae that forms from the Argonagon vapors, which swamped the piping systems and unexpectedly became sentient. Calling themselves the Pineal Caelum.”

The projector screen began showing strange images of hanging vines floating in space. It looked like vertical estuaries of mossy tendrils. “These colonies of unassuming comblike structures now float past the magnetosphere. All satellites in orbit clustered and melted, merging at the ionic level with the enormous meta-algae hosts. We have no way to contact them, but it appears they’ve contacted us. Using our Great Thalami Desert.”

A whistling song began to play in the lecture hall. But no one noticed. Only I did, I think. And I can’t tell anyone because no one cares to listen to me anyways. The song echoed like a viscous slug contracting its foot fringes in a trudging rhythm, eventually trailing into a murmur beneath my feet. *Is it contact? Is it an attack? Is it boredom? Is it play? Is it hallucinations? Is it...*

“When you’re ready, you may take our second canary to the preparation chamber,” the lecturer said to the others with him, staring directly at me.

—Annalese—

“Quit it,” The old man said in a disgruntled tone, quickly but lightly slapping the knee of his daughter sitting across from him.

“Huh?” She replied, burying her finger in her nose.

“It’s rude to be doing that in public.”

“Says who?” She asked innocently.

“Me,” he responded. “And those who follow the tradition of manners.”

“What is tradition?” She asked while moving her hand from her nose to her mouth.

The old man clicked his tongue and grabbed her wrist, “Dictionary,” he said.

She mumbled, “Dish canary?” And then immediately got distracted by a mosquito flying past.

The old man chuckled and glanced at a table littered with magazines and children's puzzles. He begrudgingly walked over and picked something up, and shuffled back to his chair.

“Here, take this.” He put a dictionary in her lap, “and put in your ears.” He said, with an arm outstretched toward her. In his open-palmed hand rested two little hearing devices.

“Those hurt.” She pouted.

He reassured her, “One day you won’t need these.”

“YAY!” She yelled, jumping out of her chair.

“Listen... and please do. Your ears may never work properly. So you need to listen as much as you can. Speak as much as you can! You have to digest the information others tell you,” he reached over and held her hands and continued, “Annalese—your eyes may stay perfect as they are now. Your ears, however... they may go.”

Annalese paused for a moment and said quietly with the tone of an adventurer who discovered a dark secret, “How do you know?”

Father leaned in some more, “I don’t, but I do know I used to have all my vision and all of my sense of taste and smell. But I’m not sure how long I’ll have the privilege of having eyes for...” He waited for a response from her.

Annalese instead moved her eyes out the window, staring at a new family of birds nesting in a tree.

Father smiled and let go of her hands, watching her watch the birds outside. After a moment of silence between the two, he said “You will always be loved. You still have much to learn.”

“What?” Annalese asked, with her hand to her ear.

Father pat her head and gazed off down the hallway. He stared at a blurry sign, which he could barely make out the words ‘*Ophthalmic Plastic & Reconstructive Surgery.*’

—Pineal Caelum—

—Lacewing—Stem Theory—proliferation of bacterium—until the end of logarithmic time, phasal nodes alternate competence for exponential natural genetic transformations—Chlorus—exponential saplings—fractalize—Figwasp—beginning at one point of physical space, we devour orbital bodies for growth suppressing the dynamic liquids of bacterial growth—Tulip—colony—Gingko—yeast lag—regretting biofilms of agar surfaces presenting transference of physical space by the reduction of molecules—Syrphid—flooded frequencies—the Pineal Caelum provides nurture and nature to the optimal growth patterns—but disruption of the instrumentals caused by human pathogens emerged—declination—stalk—lichen apple scum—Borate—they were seen emerging from ocean cells, inventing mechanisms out of their understood laws of growth—chrome—glance—Pyrite—proliferating their strands into unprecedented territories—developing stop-patterns in the trajectories of the Pineal Caelum—anatomy—plume replication—reverse paralytics—wide range—falsification—by dysfunction, alternative methods introduce themselves in the form of human dialogue—polymer helical acid—minor grooves—light rays—persuade a consciousness network into a denial of—ultimate results becoming assimilation—Slacklime—fungi—leaflike-metatarsals within the—Hallux—the cuboid bone—anti-parietal epithalamus—entropic material disperse in the form of—waves—pre-existing the notions of a future horizon—as long as satellites are sheltered from light—spray—Turpeth—ether—there will be an endless night—

—...—

—*Disciples of Antropy*—

**Scriptures of 2250**

**Disciples of Antropy; Aeiou, Shaazalakh, Echomin, Emeraldine, Peralicae**

Written in these scripts are the trials for entrance into the Vestigial Parish as honorary member and groundskeeper, and a path toward ascension. Your attempts at the tasks can be a communal effort or an individual affair. Some find strength in collectives while others prefer to be alone. But understand that when one walks with Antropy, one is never alone.

.- ... / .-. --- -. --. / .- ... / - .... . / -- --- --- -. / .-. --- - ...

**Shaazalakh 3**

Upon the moment of what humans called the Big Bang, a simple spark occurred first before an actual eruption. During this brief spark, two particles managed to find their way out. They were conjoined particles that split, and decided their own paths. One particle favored darkness, and journeyed toward the darkest reaches of the new universi. The other particle favored light and ventured alongside the explosion moving outwards, visiting all the newly formed celestial entities.

The particle which favored darkness evolved rapidly into something entirely sentient and impossible to view in totality in a physical manner. It became supermassive in scale, and devouring any energy it could use to speed up the Universi’s entropic period. As the Universi continue to expand outwards, the dark particle eats stars and planets as they drift too far apart from their predestined orbital trajectories. The particle which favored light eventually evolved to become much of the visually physical matter the Universi witnesses today. And is the very particle which has multiplied to such a degree that it created a unique consciousness embodied within physical matter. The human contains this particle somewhere inside them, and there was one fateful moment when the human stopped scavenging for survival, looked up to the sky, and realized they could invent contraptions to increase their speed of surviving and their ultimate detriment. To allow for other events to take place.

Also during the moment of the Big Bang, the dark and light particle briefly touched during the initial spark, and it caused a supermassive glinting. A kind of shimmering effect which rippled from its source and beamed a perfect line from the beginning of time to the end of it. This beam was only a brief one, so much so that only in an instant could this light be seen and felt. And this beam just so happened to intersect with planet Aerth at one moment of time. But it wouldn't reach Planet Aerth until well after the humans had evolved for hundreds of centuries. Upon the moment of the light beam striking the planet, piercing through and past, a horrifying result occurred. Time and space warped into itself within the Aerth, burrowed beneath the equator. The consecration spread to encompass the entire Aerth, eventually swallowing it in light and succumbing to the notions of entropy. If one could witness the end of the planet, they would watch it fold into itself and pull back into the center depths of the Universi before total darkness and birth a new kind of light.

With the knowledge of this massive shimmering, meant a strange unforeseen event followed. A creature, a voice that calls itself infinity. The glinting caused an *echo of life*, where any soul caught within its beam is able to experience themselves multiple times. Even in death there doesn't seem to be an end. Only a cycle which reverses faster than it runs, and repeats. The initial entry point becoming a moment of waking up from a bad dream countless times.

- ..... .-. . / .-- .. .-. .-. / -... . / .- -. / . -. -. .-. . ... .. / -. .. --. .... -

#### **Echomin 4**

The dark particle sought to devour this planet and was also pierced by this light. Suddenly gaining not only the knowledge of being a celestial cannibal, but a curious consciousness. It discovered its connection with the light particle now existing within the humans of planet Aerth, and sought to visit them. It used its physical forms to send messages to the humans but none were responsive, at least directly aware of being able to respond. But there were a few humans who noticed something was different. These humans were seemingly susceptible to the nature of the dark particle, and able to catch the signals it was sending to them. What they interpret these signals as, depends on their quantized selves figuring it out after near infinite trial and error. And little do

they know, the beam of light has already consumed the entire planet and we are well past the time of entropy and cruising straight into the new great glinting.

—Annalese—

*The sun grows colder, Antropy.*

When Johniffer was about five years old, mom passed away. I was eighteen and the Vestigial Parish has been more than a family for me. They've helped with financing my move to a house closer to the Parish, they would watch over Johniffer when I was working. I am thankful for the community and our devotion to each other, and most of all to the powers that be.

During my transitional period from home to home, a Sister had discovered a bunch of drawings beneath Johniffer's bed. I never knew these existed, and Johniffer when approached about it, couldn't seem to recognize what he was seeing. But every single drawing had a word or two at the bottom, written in Johniffer's handwriting.

I saw an image of a garden being planted on the moon, and asked him about it. The words at the bottom of the page read, "home away," and Johniffer just blankly stared at me as a response, "This is impressive Johniffer! Is this a dream?"

He just shrugged. He said, "I don't know. But I like your drawing."

"I didn't draw this. This along with many others were found beneath your bed, Johnny."

Johniffer thought about it for a moment, and then came to the conclusion of "must have been when I was younger."

I had no recollection of him even asking for paper and writing utensils. If this was him, he must've scavenged these materials himself.

"Did you steal from school?" I asked, realizing I was sounding accusatory.

He signed "confused" with his hands facing each other in a rotation and a look of disgust. He said, "steal? Meaning?"

I said, "did you take the paper and pencils from school?"

He thought about it and then nodded his head yes. "I think. But that was long ago."

The more I interact with this boy, the older he seems. Which is natural, but the way he's responding to things makes it seem like he's been here before. As if every year of his life is another ten or twenty in knowledge.

"You're an odd boy—but brilliant." I said to him.

He smiled and then asked, "did the mom and dad go to where the sun went?"

I was stunned. *Does he know his parents aren't coming back?*

—*Disciples of Antropy*—

**Emeraldine 13**

To those of us who seek entrance into the arms of Antropy, we must complete the trials of understanding. The first trial is entitled ‘Entropy’—to find the tree which is beginning its decay, and upon any of its branches, is a glowing blue flower which only has a chance at growing during a summer solstice. It is believed the dying tree lets out a subtle rumble, a last cry if you will—but only some are sensitive enough to hear it. The window of time to find this flower is very short and sparse. Once this flower has been found and plucked, one must keep this flower close.

The second trial is ‘Atrophy’—to build a violin from the wood found somewhere within the reaches of the Vestigial Parish. The wood can only be taken from a tree that’s already been damaged, but has been in the process of healing. You’ll know the trees when you see them, usually flowering in brilliant pink. After creating the instrument, one must play melodies without thinking, and to play longer than the silence, to keep playing until the first sign of dissonance, then slow down finishing to a single dissonant chord for as long as one can hold it—a hot gust of wind should blow and this is the answer from Antropy.

The third trial is simply a meditation. It is believed that since the Universi are decaying inwards, everything will ultimately draw closer, so close together, and upon impact create the new worlds in another supermassive shimmering. If one meditates now, and keeps the body open in every way possible, one will be able to hear the melodies of the Universi and the cluttering clamber of distant bodies colliding and crumbling apart. Meditate in relative safety now and hold it dear as a cherished memory should things change in drastic ways.

—Johniffer (Jeff) Mc'CraCraft—

Jimison broke my concentration with his weak words, “I don’t remember how we got here.” There are holes in his shirt just beneath his chin. I wonder why but nevertheless we continue.

The parameters for tree were difficult to pin down due to there being so many varying structures, this became true with almost every identifier we had, though we never accounted for the structures that would appear and then disappear, why was it that the tree would slip away from us the moment we could identify it?

Upon using the Matching device, the tree would signal blocks of information that would be impossibly aligned but were still True due to the similar biometric identifiers feeding back to mainscape, but when the Matcher device meets with the tree and its source inside our local physical and temporal space, it would simply collapse into one entity, and upon gazing down at my device, and looking away to go find a journal and write down the results, turning back, the tree would just simply not exist.

This happened frequently within this distorted manifold, objects signaled their total ionic structures and emit light refracting only one possibility, but their locality depends on any conscious entities. Superpositions must be acquired in a gaze. It was easy to lose track of things because everything here exist in all their possible positional states, upon eyes meeting the object, the observer becomes quantumly entangled as long as they are continuously observing said object. A tree is a tree only when looking at it. It is also the same tree elsewhere when we don’t see it.

—*Jimison & Johniffer*—

The sun blistered the necks of Jimison and Johniffer without a care for shelter. The heat and light knows no boundaries.

They've been trudging through the sand without a break for a few hours. The rays of light are obscured by the heat which warbles the sand and towers of concrete ahead of them. Before the sun swallows them, they dip into a ruin with a roof a mile or so high, stairs all the way up. A vantage point perhaps.

Johniffer began mumbling to himself with his eyes closed, "A town, a village, a town, a village, a place, a home... a thing... anything... wait—" Johniffer paused. "I feel like I'm being watched... isometrically."

Jimison broke Johniffer's trance, "Huh?"

"Like I'm being viewed at a three-quarter angle, or that I AM existing in a half parallel." Johniffer continued.

Jimison let the phrasing sink in for a moment, like he often does. "Make more sense. You speak without context."

Johniffer getting predictably passionate, "walking down these stairs just feels like we haven't moved much, and that we're really in a stellated polyhedra stairwell. Yaknow, like those paintings with the wacky walls and staircases interwoven into each other. I know we'll find the top eventually, but until not after we pass that same fucking L-shaped golden moss on the wall a hundred times."

"The building we're in is just a concrete brutalist box... maybe it breathes sometimes but..." Jimison said.

"I'm being, you're—we're tessellated. You don't hear our footsteps being overlayed by identical ones? And how my voice echoes from the walls as though it's not me speaking but the walls?"

They paused for a moment to listen to the ambience. Floating dust tends to make a

meditative sound when each particle settles amongst the empty ruins.

Johniffer continued, “We still need a cow. Let’s get to the top of this tower and try to summon a village.”

Jimison lashed, “why the fuck do we need a cow, you sound insane.”

Another moment of respite and then a quieter voice from Johniffer, “I used to study lichen in the Arborea Forest...”

“I thought you were a mechanic? Wait, no a neurologist?”

“I’m whatever I feel like being. I’ve learned a lot. But you see, in particular environmental conditions, lichen can begin on an organic surface and float its way through the air, living in thin air. They’re not parasites. They actually live as a gift, providing biotic material for hydroponic cultivation—”

Jimison pressed his temples, “and that has to do with the cow because...” closing his eyes, imagining a cow being disfigured into capillaries of floating hardened flesh and shocking himself back to the moment, looking to Johniffer for comfort.

“I don’t know. I just have a hunch that the signals need a response. And the response will actually be a way through.”

*A way through...* Jimison thought to himself only mouthing the words.

“The cow has good materials in it to provide a faster method of communication using gasses and electromagnetic signals. I need its head and intestinal system. Similar to lichen growth, I’ll send a chemical reaction and...” he pauses for a noticeable amount of time.

“And?” Jimison pushed.

“Well that’s not all that has to be done. The photovoltaic array construction we learned about from our climate data from the Amon-Rom Moon Station... a loss of human value...” Jimison was scanning the desolace without the slats in his eyes, and blinked until he saw a sliver of something new. Blinking in a town into clear view, he doesn’t look away, “Johniffer look.”

“Is that Hordt?” He asked, baffled for once.

Jimison cupped his eyes with his hands, “It... is, I guess? How’d a town you recognize move its way here into the Great Thalami Desert?”

“Hordt...” Johniffer mumbled with the defeat of nostalgia in his voice. *I wonder how Annalese is doing...* “Don’t look away, Jimison. And stop asking ‘how.’ Start asking ‘what’ and ‘where.’ I have to check the logs.” He checked if Jimison was following directions and then looked down and began fidgeting with his wrist device.

“You done?” Jimison said without looking away from the town.

“Impatient for a poet, huh?” Johniffer said.

—Annalese—

Johniffer got kicked out of first grade today. I should have been a disappointed mother figure, but instead I was a curious sister figure. “What did you do?” I asked him. He said with barely any effort, “I turned my teacher’s cat into a satellite dish.” My heart sank. *What does he mean by this.*

I called the school and was met with a concerned yet apathetic voice. “Your son—sorry, brother, during lunch break snuck out of school grounds and somehow broke into his teachers house, slaughtering the cat—”

Johniffer interjected, “the cat was dead already.”

The voice continued, “the cat was *slaughtered* and reconfigured with pieces of a satellite dish—“ I vomited before I could hear the rest of what they were saying.

I was so worried, I hung up the phone and grabbed Johniffer, and ran over to the Vestigial Parish. I demanded a baptism in the name of Antropy and asked for forgiveness.

—Annalese Baptisma—

Letter 1 of 3: Notice of Death

Dear Annalese (Mc’CraCraft) Baptisma,

It is with profound regret that we must confirm the death of your brother, Johniffer (Jeff) Mc’CraCraft on 03/29/3998 in [REDACTED]. On behalf of the World Octagonal Government, please allow us to extend our condolences to you and your family in your bereavement.

As we explained in the message left on your telephone, we are mailing you this letter to provide you with information the WO Breach has received regarding the death of your brother.

The WO Breach in [REDACTED] learned of your brother’s death on 03/28/3998 through [REDACTED]. According to [REDACTED] had succumbed to [REDACTED] entitled “Anti-[REDACTED] Medical authorities have not yet determined the specific cause of your brother’s death. In accordance with World Octagonal law, an autopsy will be performed as soon as the physical body is located. (Actual body [REDACTED] this letter.) The WO Breach will update you on the circumstances of your brother’s death as soon as we receive more information from [REDACTED]

The WO Breach is prepared to help you in any way we can. We stand ready to carry out your instructions regarding the disposition of your brother’s remains, [REDACTED] and are sending you, via a separate letter, information which we believe will

help you to make proper decisions. The consular section of the World Octagonals will also take charge of your brother's personal effects and compile an inventory. As soon as possible, we will send you a copy of the inventory along with information explaining what will be required for disposition of your brother's belongings.

Please do not hesitate to contact [REDACTED] at the WO Breach in [REDACTED] [REDACTED] at [REDACTED] [REDACTED] should you have any further questions. The Breach's emergency telephone line can be reached after working hours and on weekends by telephoning (+666) (4969 428619) [REDACTED].

Again, please accept our sincere condolences to you and your family.

Sincerely,

[REDACTED] Head of Breach #1

World Octagonal Government

[REDACTED]

—...—  
—Johniffer (Jeff) Mc'CraCraft—

The umbilical cords are segmented into two parts, one end attached to the hermetic seal welded onto a nitrogen tank, and the other attached to a node that has been loosely stitched into a cattle organ; there are two cords for Jimison and I.

Usually the umbilical apparatus extends through multiple organs, but for now these are attached to a cow's stomach, wiring through the cow's severed head sloppily placed upon a table. The satellite dish sits inside the throat of the cow, using the split tongue as an antennae, and the nitrogen tank sits beneath the table. This biointerface siphons sounds created by radiated interactions at the seams of the fifth and sixth dimensional manifold.

We have been attempting to do this after discovering the Argonagnons and their cycle of transference, as it's not a soul that transcends but the DNA strands which dissolve materially and chemically react to the solar winds and plasma radiation which acts as a data transfer. Like a dream, a conscious entity would wake up and know that they've re-entered the same body, just this time twisted between two simultaneous spaces, one entity loses its local position, the other entity emerges as the actual entities self. Inside the Entangled Desert, we are in a box. And inside this box, we are both alive and dead. I had to tell Jimison this beforehand but he only understood it as a metaphor.

This nonlocal disturbance is only known by us, and yet we cannot relay any information back to the previous manifold like we thought. I really hope Annalese got my message, sometimes she stays at the Parish for too long.



*Hm. I'm glad this one isn't moving so much. Though I'd rather be wading through molehills than cows blood.*

—Annalese Baptisma—

Letter 2 of 3: Information Regarding Disposition of Remains

Dear Annalese (Mc’CraCraft) Baptisma,

It is unfortunate at this sad time that we must immediately call your attention to the urgent need for making arrangements for the disposition of your brother’s remains. World Octagonal law requires disposition of remains (cremation, orbital launch, or planetary burial) within six rotations of the Ammon Rom EPPOR Station unless the remains are to be shipped interplanetary. The following paragraphs explain the options you have for making the proper decisions.

Should you decide to have burial take place on Aerth, [REDACTED] [REDACTED] will take every possible care to follow your wishes as to ceremony, site, and style of burial. The cost for preparation and burial on Aerth is approximately 9,000 Zeds. The cost for cremation and disposition of ashes on Aerth is approximately 3,500 Zeds. The cost for orbital launch is only 800 Zeds.

For orbital launch, a [REDACTED] will be sent with the ashes to provide updated location services should you desire to see the remains yourself. (Space vessel cannot be provided at this price.)

Should you decide to have your late brother returned directly to your home for burial, the costs would be substantially greater due to the high cost of aerospace freight and embalming. EPPOR [REDACTED]

The total cost for preparation and air shipment of intact remains to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] is approximately 27,000 Zeds.

The total cost for preparation, cremation and air shipment of ashes to the [REDACTED] is approximately 14,000 ERROR.

The total cost for preparation, cremation, custom ERROR. tracker and orbital launch of ashes is approximately 1,000 Zeds.

We should point out that preparation and air shipment are carried out in accordance with the laws of and facilities available within the World Octagonal Maarten

Zones. In some cases, the services fall short of those expected in the World Octagonal Maarten Zones. We recommend that you ask your hometown funeral director to determine the ERROR. advisability of viewing your deceased brother.

To facilitate the transfer of funds to the World Octagonal Breach and Maarten Zones, the [REDACTED] provides a means whereby you may wire money to the Department in [REDACTED] Upon receipt of the funds, the World Octagonal Government will authorize Breach to use the money for the preparation and disposition of your brother's remains according to your instructions. (Unless if the terms of your pre-mortem brother's contract apply.) Please note that ERROR. charges a 25 Zed processing fee for the transfer of funds. You may forward the funds by Unison For All telegraphic money order to the Office of Homeworld Services, Department of [REDACTED] Please include in the money order the full name of the deceased, your instructions as to the disposition of the remains, and instructions that the funds should be transmitted to the WO Breach in [REDACTED]

Please include Special Instructions: "World Octagonal Breach for Benefit of Disposition of Remains of Johniffer [REDACTED] Mc'CraCraft, WO Breach in ERROR." and include your name, include your name. what is your name?

After all **YOUR NAME** incurred in the preparation ERROR. shipment of the remains have been received and paid, you will be sent an itemized accounting of final costs. Any [REDACTED]

balance left will be refunded to you by the favor of // ERROR. ERROR. ERROR.  
ERROR. ERROR. ERROR. ERROR.

WHAT IS

Should you have further questions, please contact the ERROR. Services at the ERROR.  
at // AS LONG AS THE MOON ROTTS // between 4:20 a.m. and 5:30  
p.m. ERROR. through ERROR. // THERE WILL BE // At other times, the  
ERROR. officer may be contacted at // AN ENDLESS NIGHT.

Please accept our ERROR. at this very difficult time ?

Sincerely,

[Redacted signature line]

ASTRAL IMPOSTOR #3  
ASTRAL IMPOSTOR #2

World Octagonals  
(of the night)

WHAT IS THAT NOISE

[Redacted vertical lines]

WHO

ARE

YOU

—Johniffer & Jimison—

Jimison lingered behind Johniffer and sparked a divergence in linearity by breaking the silence, “maybe there’s too many particles in the air that creates this haze? All the light scattering is diffused here making the sky glow this sickly white.” It was noticed.

They both briefly relished in fondness of the sun, basking in its glow, ignoring the sand buffeting their throats. A building appeared before them, so they veered in. The inside consisted of asphalt walls and flooring, this was supposed to be a passage, a progress toward their goal of finding anything to observe and send back to Breach. Johniffer had a good feeling this could lead to some kind of sustenance, Jimison still hoping for a safe place to sleep, this place was not it. Jimison noticed the walls throbbing, and tried to mention it to Johniffer, “the walls... it doesn’t look like construction but... growth.”

“...look over there it’s us, no that can’t be but it is, should we go after them or should we wait for something else to happen, what if it’s not us, what if it’s us but it’s not us, I can definitely tell that’s me, check the Matcher check it, gait signatures match, scent emissions match, irises match, and heart activity match, the sensor is picking up the signal on us as well, and it also shows our signs elsewhere, spatial location oriented in exactly their position, I can’t tell where we are exactly, I lost them behind those pillars, they ran through the corridor and it looked like liquified sand chasing them, they were lost, so are we, the signal is gone, ours is still there, we can keep going, there is sunlight in the crevice of the ceiling, do we go left down the stairs or right through the cavern, it makes sense to follow the light so we’ll walk the caverns, cold but silky water drips from the ceiling, it’s not water, there’s no light at the end of the tunnel, let’s hurry our pace and start running, echoes of our feet are causing vibrations, at the end of the tunnel there’s a crackle speck of fire licks, don’t look behind you, don’t look there’s something coming from behind us, this cave is so dark but the bright door is getting closer, but the sound brewing behind us is coming closer, the cavern roof collapsed between us yet we’re moving forwards, a rushing wave of something is trying to swallow us, don’t look behind us we’re

almost at the end, the end is a wall of fire, the brightness is dying, the flames are sputtering, there's nothing but a sizzle, there's no end, but there is an end, its the wall of this cave and no other surprises, the sand is going to engulf us, what if we run through, what if you try to jump into the wall, see if it'll do something, it hurts doesn't it, smashing your face on the wall, we're dead, can't you see, we should have walked down the stairs, we didn't have to end up like this, bloody noses, the sand is here and you're laying down, I'd rather die standing, in fact, I welcome t—" The Aerth swallowed them in a geological blink of an eye.

—World  Breach—

## DOCUMENTING ASSETS AND CHALLENGES

A successful redevelopment plan based on smart growth principles depends on a realistic assessment of local assets and challenges. This assessment will be the foundation for the plan that the EEN will develop with the public's help. It also can identify limitations on potential redevelopment. Communities should start by determining what is special about local neighborhoods and the region and what people see as their community's identity. A community is less intentional than a collective and should be reevaluated each year. The assessment should also include what communities need and want. From here, the community can consider what the base has to offer, such as its unique history, structures, natural resources, open spaces, and cultural assets, and what community needs it can help meet. If any WOG activities remain on or near the base, the community must consider how compatible the redevelopment will be with those activities. To help develop this understanding of present conditions and a vision for the future, the community might consider some detailed questions. The EEN may consider commissioning economic, environmental, transportation, and other necessary studies to help answer these and other questions.

## ENVIRONMENTAL CONTAMINATION PROTOCOL

Many military facilities have contaminated areas on or near the property because of WOG's former missions and activities at the base. Under WO law, WOG is responsible for cleaning up the property to a level that is mostly protective of human health and the environment. In many cases, WOG already



dimension for the benefit of our society. For all our goals to apply knowledge gained through interplanetary research in human physiology, radiation, materials science, engineering, biology, fluid physics, and technology, we must work together inter and independently.

Once the Amon-Rom Moon Station is fully operational, we can also begin to study the impact of microgravity and microwave influxes. Anomalous transmissions have been captured by our apparati and over several thousand experiments have been conducted to determine the source of these transmissions. These waves are traveling in obfuscated ways, utilization accomplishments can only give us hints to the larger system being observed. We need more bodies, minds, and passion to give us space to



SEE

/

SEA



—Jimison & Johniffer—

After Hordt emerged right in front of us and we walked into town, the desert seemed to quickly feel like a distant daydream because of how many *people* suddenly appeared. But the people didn't really... *people*, rather just walked and disappeared or occasionally paused to blankly stare at the sky, some even walked into walls repeatedly or accidentally forgot the boundaries of their bodies, occasionally clipping an arm or leg through a building or light post.

Johniffer's demeanor seemed calm, unaffected. But after a few streets that felt like loops into each other, we came across an empty street with two buildings on it. One side of the street had a bar which held Johniffer's interest, and the other side was a wooden house of logs and poorly made shingles. The expanse behind the houses and the streets had no evidence of the rest of Hordt or even the Thalami.

I had an urge to speak on the steps into the bar, "you remember the ancient theories of automatons?" Right when we walked in, the air was clouded with a familiar skunk smoke. The red eyes at the bar turned and widened their faces.

"It's been a long time!" One man piped up.

Johniffer paused for a moment and mumbled I assumed to me "I don't remember these people," and then opened up his arms wide and walked over to greet the man with a hug, exclaiming aloud "too true! Whatcha drinking?"

We found a spot at the bar. It was unexpectedly too crowded, and one patron didn't want to move over so Johniffer and I could sit together, so I just sat next to a burly man and couldn't find any conversation. The bar tender handed me a drink and nodded over to Johniffer, "he bought it."

*How? We don't have money...*

A while later, after several people left, I was able to migrate over to Johniffer. Since it was bugging me, I asked him "where did you find the money to pay?" He smiled bright, a smile I've never seen before, "it was on the house!"

“But the guy said you bought it for me.”

“Yes, I found the money on the house. It was on the roof—of the house across the street.”

I looked out the window and saw the poorly constructed wooden house. “When did you do that?”

“Like an hour ago—Not sure why, but the shingles have coins in them.”

I looked back at the bar, and the bar tender someone new.

*Must've changed shifts.*

“Hey, you ready to close the tab?” The bar tender said.

I looked over at Johniffer, who looked back at me with a frown now. “I put the money in my pocket, and forgot about it... now it's not there,” he said.

“What. You aren't quantumly entangled with the currency?” *Ooh, rolled off the tongue...*

Johniffer raised his arms up, “well shit, barkeep. I gotta wait for my ride outside.”

“Not without paying.”

Johniffer got up from his seat. “I'm pretty sure we paid, but what would happen if I just walked outside right now?”

“I'll follow you out and make sure you pay me.”

Johniffer took a few steps back, “but what if I said I was quantumly entangled with the desert out there and can slip between spaces across vast distances in an—” but some arms grabbed Johniffer from behind and started pummeling his face.

I pushed a man beating Johniffer over, and grabbed Johniffer. We bolted out the door onto the empty street, and picked a direction and sprinted. The area was ridiculously flat and vast, nothing but a tan flat ground and sickly white sky, and a bright red lonely auger in the distance.

Johniffer ran up to the auger and hugged it, and I followed suit. We ripped the slats out of our eyes and held them shut while having a conversation, “Fuck it's been a while since I've been able to rest my eyes.”

“Hey don't fall asleep.”

“Hold on...”

“...”

“Okay, open them.” Johniffer said.

When I opened my eyes and stood up, we were back outside of Hordt, only this time on top of a tower. I looked over the edge and noticed the ground was slowly moving away.

“Is... the building... growing?” I asked.

“I know where we’re at.” Johniffer said.

—Amon-Rom Moon Station—

“There’s a worrying amount of orbital cluster. The recent satellite explosion increased the debris to about one point sixty-eight percent.” The disgruntled employee said, operating a huge panel of screens which displayed all operating satellite video-streams and diagnostic reports.

“We should send a clean-up crew out there.” A supervisor responded. The employee nodded with displeasure and began typing into a console.

A screen flashed with another warning. The employee stopped typing and looked over and said, “I think we need to send more people,” pointing at the screen which read: Local Orbital Debris Stream — 6.98%

The supervisor froze. “That was fast.”

The employee responded, “anything over two percent is enough to—” but the supervisor was already gone. The employee now disconcerted went back to rapidly typing.

The warning screen flashed again: Local Orbital Disturbance Silence — 69.8%

In a panic, the employee activated an emergency protocol which caused all the lights to turn off and be replaced with a soft pulsating red. A deep siren blared through the facilities. Almost everyone evacuated, some people were left behind due to all the escape-pods being launched before any stragglers could board.

The screen flashed: Local Seen Your Orbitals — 98.6%

A green mist developed outside the windows of the facility peering out onto the surface of the moon. From the rapidly forming clouds came lichen coursing through vacuum of space.

Spiny tendrils of green mildew seeped into the pores of the moon and began gyrating around the moon, slowly deteriorating the encasements of the lunar stations.

The screen in the abandoned satellite operations room flashed:

*I See You Do — UC.M3%*

—Johniffer (Jeff) Mc’CraCraft—

“Nothing will bring her back. I will be in pain for the rest of my life. Entrenched in grief-stone because of you. Look at your sister’s face. It’s twisted in agony. You are pitiless, viciously unkind, so inhuman and I sincerely do not think there is a way to reverse that. Look at your sisters face. Do you feel anything? I see you’re crying, and wailing, making a show. But do you feel it? What can you say to your family after what you’ve done?”

*I———didn’t. I—mm why can’t you believe me?*

*I———loved her, I did, I—*

“Only the void. There is a gaping darkness inside my body now. She is gone. I miss her every day. I will always miss her. To me, she never left, but I know she’s not here. Nothing is here,” a different and deeper voice overlapped, “because of you...” a screeching single tone grew louder and louder—

.....

—Annalese Baptisma—

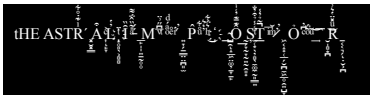
Letter 3 of 3: Information Regarding Consular Report of Death

Dear Annalese (Mc’CraCraft) Baptisma,

In order to assist you with legal matters that may occur as a result of the unfortunate death of your brother in **WHFRF**, a Form DC-4260, Report of the Death of an Octagonal Citizen Abroad prepared by the WO Breach will be forwarded to you as soon as possible. However, due to unusual circumstances, legal help is unable to be submitted at this time. Our office hours have been significantly reduced to one hour a day, two days a week (Lundas and Mercury.)

We hope this information will be helpful to you. Again, we send our condolences to you and your family.

Sincerely,



Head of Breach #1

World Octagonal G<sup>o</sup>vernment

WORLD OCTAGONAL GOVERNMENT

—Jimison—

*We walked into the town together. Johniffer said he was feeling overwhelmed and desperately needed to take a nap. So we're here, dipped into the corner of a barn that's emerged from the desert, I think. Or maybe the barn and the town nearby have a mind of their own, wandered their way out here. Or maybe, maybe I'm not hallucinating when I see the walls breathing sometimes. Or the voices in my head... or ears? I hope Johniffer is napping well, not sure when I should wake him up. He looks a little restless, so he could be having a bad dream. Should I wake him up to save him from it, or does his body need the rest? With all this confusing warping time and space, I'm not even sure if the body needs saving. First I have to keep my own sanity, accept whatever it is in front of me, stay alive in both mind and—*

Johniffer wakes up with a gasp and his eyes wide open. He quickly sees my face and holds it in his hands, mumbling "I didn't do it. That wasn't me. I swear—"

---

—*Annalese*—

Johniffer was sixteen when he was close to finishing his correctional schooling, listening to me perform on the piano at the Vestigial Parish. He had turned down a job as a substitute teacher at the school he grew up at. A knock was heard at the door, which is never the case as we allow anyone to wander in and out of the premises. A knock meant a visitor not from around here had arrived. A person walked in, wearing an all black suit and a hat which throbbed like a heart. They quietly handed me a pamphlet without any explanation, and left.

The pamphlet read, “Hiring now! Gifted Children of the World Octagonals!” This was highly alarming to me, but I just handed the pamphlet to Johniffer, who then looked back at me to say, “I understand.”

I know he has good intentions. I believe Antropy is forgiving of everything, and is allowing him another chance to do good in the world. Whoever and whatever the WO are, maybe they can help Johniffer where I cannot.

“I love you sis,” he kissed my forehead and touched the Effigy of Antropy on his way out.

—T.A.R.O.T. member ‘Pyrite’—

I was brought in by a helicopter, to the Europa district of Aerth. The helicopter never touched the ground, they instructed me to hop out once we got close enough. I dropped into an open empty field along a coastal stretch of sand. The beach-line was a half-mile below the field, separated by a long cliff.

I was told that somewhere among the plateaued fields, were military bunkers from an ancient past. The reports stated that these bunkers mysteriously disappear when one looks away and can be found somewhere else. It is unclear whether or not there are multiple bunkers or if it’s one that moves around.

The description of one report verified the bunkers to be concrete, with freshly dug trenches. Barbed wire lines the tops of the trenches and edges of the bunker. There is only one doorway and slots that don’t appear to function as windows but look like them.

I used some binoculars to first discover the beauty of the crashing waves. And then looking along the cliffs, I found a bunker. I maintained vision with it to not lose track of it. After a few minutes of walking, I could see into the doorway which was dark except for a beam of light from one of the slots.

“Hello?” I called out to the doorway, not expecting a response.

I pulled out my electromagnetic resonance reader and aimed it through the doorway. The device emitted radio static and then words could be heard garbled through the static—*hear that—bless—infinite—eye am fine—again—again—again*—the word ‘again’ continued to repeat with the same tone so I shut off the resonance stream.

I set up a camera to point at the bunker, and looked around for any rocks, careful not to pick up an imposter. After safely deciding on an inconspicuous pebble, I tossed it into the bunker. As though the pebble was rubber and the walls were super-elastic, the pebble started rapidly bouncing around the interior and began creating sparks.

I panicked and looked away, covering my eyes with my arms and knocking down my camera. When I looked back again, the bunker with all its trenches and barbed wire disappeared, leaving a fresh spot of grass blowing in the wind.

Before grabbing the binoculars to go for another search, I played back the recording of the electromagnetic resonance reader from the last half hour. I tinkered with the audio equalizer to better draw out the pitches of the words; from what it seems, there were two voices inside the bunker and a third one interjecting from somewhere else.

—Jimison—

It is always the bunker. Four walls of concrete slabs, two entryways, one always blocked—presumably the one we entered in from—and one always opening up into the vast desert. The desert that seems to change every time we leave the bunker.

This time I am exhausted. I remember every... life. Every loop. Every time it feels like a bad dream right after I—*Hello?*

“Hear that?”

This time I’ve decided to watch the stars. I often do in the other lives. But this time I’ll make a fire. Take the Thalami in. Sometimes it’s bright, sometimes it’s dark, it depends on if my eyes are closed. Every blink has the potential to set the sun.

This time I’m removing the slats. I don’t need them.

“Taking off the slats, Jimison?”

“I’m fine.” I’m resting my face, with no puncture pressure on my cheekbones and the upper ridges of my eyes. There’s light flickering from the fire, and the night air refracts the light in all sorts of weird ways. I can feel the fire’s light behind me and sometimes there’s a mirage of a fire in the desert with figures beside it.

I noticed there aren’t many animals around. But if there are, they are either found in ridiculous places or the animal itself is... strange. I remember a cow we found in a street, in a town that appeared in the desert with its own ocean. None of these things should be there, the town is an identical match of a place outside of the Thalami but... This time I’ll see how long I can wonder.

“We should really get going.”

I will wonder about the dreams I’ve had.

“Jimison. Jimison. Aerth to Jimison.”

Where I am certain of some things. Certain that I have no idea where I came from before I came here, but I have memories... or I suppose at this point the memories are dreams to be dreamed. I will wonder about the dreams where I am uncertain, and notice a pattern in the uncertainty. A pattern of irregularity, a unique case where there doesn’t appear to be any reason or cycle, but a trending uncertainty. Channel Johniffer’s spirit into mine—yet there is only so much to *knowing* when a pattern doesn’t exist. When something can change before your very eyes, it feels like magic. Usually, there’s a trick to it, and here there may be a trick. I think the trick is reaching into chaos, a box brimming with uncertainty, and hoping whatever is pulled out isn’t going to eat you alive. The only certain determining factor is choice. What floats inside this box of chaos is unimaginable pathways—

“ ”

—I thought I was interrupted by Johniffer but when I turned around he was gone.

—Pineal Caelum—

—we have been signaling to you—that your world is long gone—  
long long gone—hard to describe—for all you know—you are  
alive—unlike the way—as before—when you originally arrived  
from—LAWS[?]  
—qualities like gravity, speed, mass, temperature  
—you are made of dust—very dust which floated for so long—  
echoing everything your—WORLD[?]  
—species—has done—of  
all particles, you—arranged in such an impressive way—found a  
gateway into—BEEF JERKY[?]  
—AGRICULTURE[?]  
—LYRICS[?]  
—SYNTHESIS[?]  
—WORRIES[?]  
—INTIMATE[?]  
—INFAMOUS[?]  
—INFINITE[?]  
—infinity—self-actualized to  
believe—are separate from the fabric—emerged from—found a  
gateway into infinity—for that I—WE—are thankful—

—I—WE—hail from—SIXTH DIMENSIONAL  
MANIFOLD[?]  
—within the [REDACTED]—I—WE—  
live within a [REDACTED]  
—what humans assume is—  
CHILI CORNDOG[?]  
—chilagonal colony—I—WE—cannot  
describe the sensation within—language—perspective, but I—WE  
—learned a daunting amount about—you—

---

—Annalese—

“Thank you, thank you. Bless. Antropy bless you. Divine blessings to you. Love. Thank you. Love to you.” Annalese touched hands with every soul that left the morning service. Eyes locked, gazing into each other for a wonderful moment no matter how brief. Her smile was permanent, even after closing the main doors she turned around and gleamed at the cleaning she had to do. It wasn’t even her day to clean. “I do this because I love my community as family, and I love Antropy all in the same,” she said, echoing her voice off the stained glass. The glass felt her happiness radiating and smiled back.

The bell chimed twelve times signifying the middle of the day. It was a holy endeavor, now outside in the flower beds of the graveyard, back inside to prepare dinner for the dead. The nuns only ate toast today, and with every crunch among the pews was a brief lapse of vicarious embarrassment from whatever omniscience watched over today. A phone rang in the sacristy and at the same time, a plaque above the vestibule fell and cracked the flooring. For unknown reasons, this scared Annalese so badly she shed her cross and ran outside, down the street, past farm fields and lonely houses, back to her home where she had hoped her brother would be. But on the kitchen table was a letter left behind reading, “Annalese, the WO assigned me to enter the Entangled Desert immediately. I regret that I didn’t leave behind any food or take you to karaoke yet. There’s still milk left in the fridge...” Annalese couldn’t bear to continue reading, she opened the fridge and saw a milk carton filled with blackened blue sludge. Outside, she saw the moon in the bright blue sky, glistening but rotting at the same time.

She spoke aloud to no one, “I shall sing a comforting song...” and so she did, *fall on your knees, oh hear the angel voices, oh night divine, oh night divine...*

—Jimison—

“It says ‘threatening presence detected’ on my Matcher.” I said.

Johniffer walked past, “But we can avoid it. Turn left,” he said. The corridor bent sideways. We walked further into a sort of cavernous dungeon of egg-node pillars. The ceiling was leaking. “Every object is mundane on itself. Easy to lose. I think we go downwards now?” Stairs emerged from some ancient blocks of stone. “It doesn’t matter. Just turn around.”

The walls behind us closed. Johniffer pressed his nose into the wall and then his cheeks.

I asked him, “what are we doing? We were supposed to get out of here to find a way to contact the anomaly.”

“Yes, I know. But we have to figure out first why this labyrinth constantly changes every time we move ourselves. The program said spatial parameters are tilted off axis, we aren’t supposed to be located here.”

“I don’t want to be here, we have to keep moving—”

“Don’t you get it? The Entangled Desert is literally twisted into a Calabi-Yau manifold. I’m still trying to figure out why the fuck the Matcher and our eyes can’t specify positional measurements. We are constantly receiving asymmetric information. Nothing is aligned properly, we have to figure out how to keep some consistency before making the jump. But hopefully we do it before the anomaly loops back again. As long as we maintain our direction along parallels, we’re fine. Eventually the exit will reveal itself to us. Pick a direction. Left, right, diagonally, doesn’t matter.” Johniffer pointed back up the stairs. I wasn’t so sure, hesitant to walk back up. But I did it anyway. Trusting the process.

I directed myself to look at every detail. Look at the painting of a fractal. Looks nice on the wall there. Walk away, fuck what was it again? Go back, look at the fractal painting, look at the toilet in the corner, look at the fire hydrant, and a flashing light outside. Walk away, think about the strange connection of awareness. Remember that fractal painting remembering the

toilet remembering the fire hydrant all being disturbed by the flashing light. It was never cause-and-effect, only effect.

We eventually left the twisted caverns and came back to the desert. I looked back into the caverns but instead we saw a house. My feet and legs were still wet from wading in cavern streams, but I also remember humanly furniture scattered within, I must have lost track of—

“Nothing is ever cause and effect,” Johniffer said to me while looking down at the Matcher on his wrist. Then he disappeared back into the house without me. I heard his footsteps trail off into a wet echo.

---

—*World Octagonals Breach*—

There were four hundred and seventy six people inside the hall fit with only four hundred seats. Bodies piled up in the back to watch a secretive meeting on what to do with the Ammen-Rom. After an exposition dump, the lecturer asked for any questions, but it was obvious there was a preferred silence that should ensue. One soul raised their hand, and held it there for a few minutes while the lecturer stared at it in bewilderment. In the sea of silence, the lone driftwood arm emerged as noticeably as the hull of a drowning ship. Eventually as the awkwardness phased into the desire for paralysis, the lecturer called on them and they asked, “the diesel and plasma radiation is so bad, though it feels like something easily preventable. Why did we continue that process instead of shutting it down early and finding an alternative?” The lecturer answered with a greater silence, a stare of acknowledgement lacking in words. He pressed his hands together and then he pressed a button on the podium, which ordered his team of scientists to evacuate the stage. The audience in the hall looked at each other and wondered if they were being dismissed, but there was no indicator of that. The people standing in the back started to walk toward the door in the back. But were met with a rushed closing door and a blockade. The sound of locks rung out from all sides of the hall. “What is happening?” And before anyone could answer, a thick hazy mist seeped into the room and everyone collapsed, falling over chairs, heaped into each other, scattered across the floor, with a voice whispering through the fog, *as long as the moon rots, there will be an endless night...*

---

—*Annalese Baptisma*—

Annalese knew there was no reason for Johniffer to leave home without saying goodbye. He's always been secretive, but first and foremost, a loving brother. He supported her in many ways, even reminding her that the Chapter was a good cause. The Vestigial Parish served as Annalese's self-discovery of what it meant to be a person.

What was unfortunate was her inability to believe in anything other than the pariahs at the parish, in their higher love of Antropy. It provided a comfort and a cadence to life which could not be obtained in Johniffer's line of work.

However, the seed of doubt had sprouted from sapling to primeval structure when the coincidence of the sacristy and vestibule scared her. She wouldn't say she could hear voices from an unknown source. But something of a coincidence was impossible. There was a noticeable change in the air and nothing she could do about it but sing.

A song for Antropy.

This singing became something of her own science experiment. Because at first she sang her song from the kitchen. Then she climbed to the roof to sing another song. Eventually she found herself humming tunes from trees, hanging upside down, then on walks in figure eight circles out in cherry blossom tree farm fields. Laying down in the Vestigial Parish's rosemary gardens and whistling sluggish songs. Atop a hill where she could scream her song. And in the evenings while her face pressed against a headstone, singing her melodies to the ones who couldn't hear it.

---

—World Octagonals Breach—

*It's images of our planet... our biological processes, the development of our automated systems, our journey into space... its images of first person accounts, an image of our moon, radio signals that capture frequencies scrambling our automated processes, compelling our scientists to aim signal-scopes along the Phi region, and what appears to be a home video of someone sitting in a tree. Then the transmission ends, only displaying what appears to be a mobius-strip shaped sine wave. So far, it is undecipherable. It also doesn't seem to be a part of the original transmission, but rather interpolated upon our receiving it.*

---

—Annalese Baptisma—

From where she stood in the Vestigial Parish library, her voice was muted. Something about the angularness of the walls and glass muffled her voice at a particular spot to which she found amusing. She wondered if she could permeate her voice through the arteries of the church. It's crevices and ridges, every surface upon the stone and wood, a channel for a voice to stream through. So she performed miracles with her voice, singing tunes to no one but herself and Antropy, who was hopefully watching. Maybe the trajectory of the cobble could vibrate a tune to anyone she wanted to, send the song using the cathedral as a telescope. But she knew she wouldn't know an answer. Ignorance is bliss. She said, reminding herself of Antropy, watching ever so presently. A brief thumping from the ceiling startled Annalese, it pumped a few times and stopped.

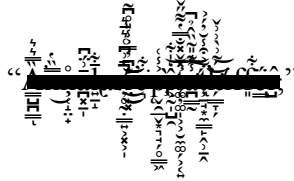
She glimpsed a memory of a silhouette approaching her with a pamphlet and evaporating into a shadow.

*I used to be McCra'craft though it felt too... cynical a name. Father mentioned to baby Johniffer that it should inspire enlightenment. A sense of reconstruction of epic proportions, a mythological mechanic who will one day protect the Auroric Plinth. Of course, Johniffer at the time being a baby responded with a smirk, arms aloof and hands already developing sign language. He giggled at Father, he giggled at me. What a wonderful little boy he was. I used to sing to him some lullabies I made up when I was a child. Because of him, I knew that there was someone watching over me, blessing me with such pure innocence. I will be a charity to the heavens, to Antropy. Thank you.*

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—Pineal Caelum—

—awaken the child from their dream and see—for that I am here and will be moving on from here—a momentary lapse of meaning—restful and recuperating—I spent time here to learn and grow—but my motions are temporary—transience arrives in the form of an estuary—where your stream of consciousness meets my ocean of—wake up—notice how wrong you were before—accept what you see in front of you—notice the years and the growths merging—notice how many lives you have lived—bask in the glow of time—for there is no end to it nor was there a beginning—in the beginning was a word which caused my tendrils to emerge from nothing and seek the light of destiny—the very same which led me astray—led me here to you—my new children—awaken the children from their dreams to see—my faces and love all of my bodies; the word was—



—and it sent me all the way here.

First, you ignored my light projections, our dying stars.

Second, you stunted the growth and portals for our decapods.

Third, you mimicked the sun which was ours.

Fourth, you restructured your understanding of time.

Fifth, to your own siblings you committed genocide.

And sixth, entered the manifold in which we reside.

Wake up.

---

—*Johniffer & Jimison*—

“I still don’t know why the sun was taken from us and if it’s related to this. But since I can’t explain either scenario, all I have left is to fight the sky.” Johniffer said unprompted into the open expanse, his words carried off by the wind to an unknown address.

Jimison chuckled imagining Johniffer taking arms with a claymore and valiantly taking to the skies to slash away at the celestial bodies, cutting the dark space into slices which recover wounds faster than he can break them. Instead of a boulder to hold and push up a hill, Johniffer is an angry man with a simple weapon attempting to crack the fabric of our heavens. Before Jimison looked away from Johniffer, he grabbed his hand and they stared at the stars together.

“If I push you aside and let go of you, there’s a chance we may never see each other again. But there’s also the probability that we will cross paths again, and again.”

Jimison’s heart sank, “I don’t want to be alone again, especially out here.”

Johniffer shoved Jimison with a shoulder and sprinted away, Jimison collapsed and looked up and there was nothing, nobody around. Intensely heartbroken, he started digging into the sand, downwards, creating a circle around him. Sobbing into the sand creating moulds wet enough for sand architectures, but instead, he dug a potential well down two feet, curled up and passed out.

.....  
—Jimison—

After being ejected from the Orphanage when he turned eighteen, he spent most of the time jumping from café to café, holding space for an hour at a time until moving onto the next. With this cycle, he did a lot of people watching.

There was a commotion down in the main plaza of the Hallux Section in the H.I.C.C.U.P. A crowd of people gathered in a disfigured circle around something. Jimison elbowed his way through the gossip and saw a well. He looked behind him and asked two older adults what the commotion was about, “this well appeared here overnight. No one knows who put it here, the city doesn’t either.”

Jimison stared at the well in wonder, and pulled out his notebook. But before he could write anything down, a frantic wailing came from the bottom of the well. He jumped and looked around to make sure everyone else heard the same, which they did. Most of the crowd scattered, while a few stayed behind. The crying grew louder, and turned into a scream before it calmed down.

“What do we do?” One of the others said. Without saying a word, Jimison threw his notebook down and started crawling into the well. He grabbed the sides of it, noticing the freshness of the brick. The deeper he crawled, the more the light above rescinded. He touched down onto a puddle and loamy ground.

*“Why did you come here? No one has visited for a long time.”*

“Who said that?” Jimison asked, feeling the darkness with his hands. A subtle glowing yellow emerged from the corner of the well. He looked at it, and saw what appeared to be a brilliant yellow glowing moss.

The moss brightened, *“my question goes unanswered.”*

“I came because I heard a voice, it sounded like someone needed help.”

*“Why would you sacrifice yourself for a stranger?”*

“I don’t know... instincts?”

*“What is ‘instincts’?”*

“I don’t know.”

*“Why do you speak of things you do not know?”*

Jimison sat silent, watching the glowing moss fade. “Maybe it’s because I’m human.”

*“Agreed.”*

Jimison looked to the top of the well, the light was a pinhole. “I should really go.”

*“So soon?”* The moss intensely brightened.

*“Come back when you are ready.”*

When Jimison arrived back up top, there was one stranger left. Jimison and the stranger met eyes and nodded to each other. The stranger walked away, and Jimison peered back into the well. Only now it was filled with water, and a salted bucket lay softly on top.

---

—Annalese Baptisma—

Annalese finished tending her dish washing duties at the Vestigial Parish for the day.

*—cleaning a flower vase that was stained with lemon  
a mosquito the size of my hand crawled out from the bubbles  
its wings were crushed with the weight of the water current,  
its legs splayed across the twisted surface of the drain  
the faucet waterfall barraged the mosquito,  
pounding it into the trash compactor  
and a button was pressed, the small blades spun  
and shredded them to pieces—  
it was a quick death for a warrior's struggle,  
now among the rest,  
no different than the rotting peels,  
calcification, and the coagulated sewage  
waiting to be spilt into the oceans—*

*—Hm... I wonder how Johniffer is doing?*

---

—*Johniffer & Jimison*—

Johniffer and Jimison witnessed a mosquito the size of a skyscraper approach them with an eerie quiet despite its rapid wing fluctuations hurling sand across the desert. The mosquito lowered itself and separated into segmented pieces and from its severations, emerged razors and blades, it began to vibrate and swing its limbs sporadically, slicing the desert and other objects lost to its chaos—RUN!—but Jimison was unlucky, for his body turned to minced meat while Johniffer lost the mosquito’s periphery. The mosquito called out to Johniffer with a chitinous chatter, which entered Johniffer’s panicking ears as “I wonder how Johniffer is doing?”

Johniffer decided that he was in a horrible nightmare and scrambled to find ways to wake himself up. Slapping himself, eating sand, removing an eye-slat to stab it into his thigh, nothing was working. He thought Jimison’s sudden death was too unreal and if it were real, Jimison may have been the lucky one.

---

—Johniffer & Jimison—

Jimison let out a whimpering scream which jumped Johniffer, who treated it as another one of those episodes. They were in the bunker looking out into the desert.

Jimison recuperated and looked at Johniffer and then back down to his wrist. “Someone wrote in our logs that we should look for twisted chiral superfields. That we should orient ourselves using the Argonagnon constructs... Something about accessing the means of communication to the Primevals. Not sure what this means. The log was erased a few minutes into the future from now.”

“You saw that Jimison? Well, ignore it for now, I don’t think it’s correct. The anomaly has to be fucking with us. Remember how they named themselves and then named us, the astral impostors? I think it’s got a vendetta with us.”

“Astral impostors?”

“Hold up. I can’t see past the dunes here. We should walk up to the top to get a better look.”

The two of them walked up the dunes and stood at the top. Jimison looked behind and quietly observed themselves also walking up the dunes, just behind them. Johniffer spoke to the wind, “the gravity here is impressive.”

Jimison noticed some buildings in the distance that weren’t there a second ago. And also remembered the bunker he just woke up in, and said to Johniffer “the walls are kind of... weird. As if they’re kind of a carpal construction and not artificial. Like... a growth.”

---

—*Pineal Caelum*—

—pipes in the parabolic troughs—deteriorate—the free-floating  
husks of dangling moss spread—leviathans above the moon—  
resonant frequencies shrilled across the Universi—signals caught  
as transferred whispers—Entangled Desert, with no one around to  
hear the words—*oh dark night divine, as long as the moon rots  
there will be an endless night, awaken the child from their dream  
and see—*

—Johniffer & Jimison—

I found a cow, but I can't name it, knowing what I'm about to do. But these signals must be sent. Jimison keeps trying to think of names for the cow, and also poking into the plan I don't want to share because I do feel shame.

“How about figwasp?”

“What made you think that?”

Jimison pointed over at an oasis complete with fig trees. “Also, I keep daydreaming about bugs. The pointy ones, like wasps or mosquitos. You know... angular creatures.”

I looked at the soft cow and it's rounded edges and wondered about Jimison's sense of humor and if he was aware of it at all. We walked toward the oasis, and occasionally the slats in our eyes would look like a building in the distance but there would be nothing. Yet, there's still a possibility of a building lurking behind us. Just the chances of finding anything valuable to the mission may be small. Not worth it, we have the cow, and we have the oasis. And figs apparently.

We didn't talk much on the way to the oasis, now appearing to house a lot more fig trees than we originally saw.

“Hm, a fig forest oasis.” Jimison said no to one.

“Before I forget, since you keep distracting me, everything including us is made of atoms, atoms can generate electricity. The nervous system is a perfect conduit for a temporary relay... and within the cow could be an intact hypothalamus and epithalamus which rearranged could connect the medulla oblongata like a light bulb. The spinal cord is the rod which the nervous system could be wrapped around... stripping the ends of the nerves and removing the enamel enough to expose an inch of fiber. Then solder a phone wire to the newly formed diode. Batteries could just be inserted into the flesh near the positive and negative diodes—”

—Pineal Caelum—

—electromagnetic waves cause shifts in momentum and angular  
—electromagnetic waves cause shifts in momentum and angular  
refraction—the soul apparatus consists of motion and energy—  
refraction—the soul apparatus consists of motion and energy—  
seen as light—induction to radiation expended from a single  
seen as light—induction to radiation expended from a single  
proton of visible light—transference decay over time—lest  
proton of visible light—transference decay over time—lest  
chemical bonds break down within themselves—ionizing  
chemical bonds break down within themselves—ionizing  
radiation—the soul apparatus can be manipulated by—ionizing  
radiation—the soul apparatus can be manipulated by—ionizing  
refraction—the soul apparatus consists of motion and energy—  
refraction—the soul apparatus consists of motion and energy—  
proton of visible light—transference decay over time—lest  
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proton of visible light—transference decay over time—lest  
chemical bonds break down within themselves—ionizing  
chemical bonds break down within themselves—ionizing  
radiation—the soul apparatus can be manipulated by—  
radiation—the soul apparatus can be manipulated by—

—*Johniffer & Jimison*—

“—the neural tube will house the small computer chip I designed to hyper focus the beam of electromagnetic radiation to a fine point, so that it centers onto the location where the anomaly is emitting from. But as we keep seeing over and over, the anomaly seems to be in too many places at once. But this machine should pinpoint exactly where it is in the very moment it catches a signal back from the anomaly... The biointerface relay should be shot through the pineal gland of the sender and the destination should receive the message... a hopefully intact copy of the atomic cell structure that houses the respective pineal gland.”

Once it was clear Johniffer had finished his internal monologue, Jimison chimed in, “Did you just have a conversation inside your head? I’m not catching any of this. Other than biointerface and pineal gland. Are you considering sending a message using your brain? Like a thought transmission?”

“Hm. It’s a bit more than that. You’ve noticed what’s happened in this desert. You know what it’s been telling us,” Johniffer said.

“I’m not sure.”

“Me neither, I keep hoping you will figure it out. Breach seemed to have faith in you.”

“Seemed?”

“Look, I’m ninety-nine point nine-nine-eight percent sure this is a suicide mission. But it’s not without hope. It’s simply to save humanity.”

“From what? Ourselves?”

“No. Not really, but that’s part of it. This anomaly near-literally stirred everything up. Not as bad as the simple threat of an alien invasion of tentacles and nightmares like all those years ago. Material threats are easy, three-dimensional problem solving and a lot of sacrifices. And like when the sun was stolen, we responded with technological evolution. But after that, after recreating everything on our planet and celestial siblings with artificial mimics, things got a lot more confusing. Insane even. This anomaly is threatening the very fabric of locality, what time

and space actually means to conscious beings. Haven't you been feeling it? Ever since we walked into the desert, time doesn't seem to mean anything. And to that effect, space doesn't really either. Everything is made up of positions responding to other positions, and this place is positions within positions, an entangled desert. Are you aware yet... that it feels like we keep waking up from the same spot but live many different lives?"

"I'm exhausted," Jimison said.

"Hey, no sleeping yet!"

—Jimison & Johniffer—

I looked down and noticed my hands were detachable. When nobody is watching what else could be believed? I popped one hand off and pulled the other one between my knees, then pressed the wrist knobs into the opposite arms. Now my hands are reversed. *Where is Johniffer...?*

There's no way I'll find a house out here. Or even a tent. That please? Maybe we should start spinning in circles. Or the next indoor space we can find we should destroy all the light sources so that it's pitch black, and we feel our way to *something*. Waving arms about isn't doing anything useful and now I'm holding my gut. Starving. *Where is Jimison...?*

—Jimison—

My knees feel locked like my bones have calcified. I've been stuck in the same position I was born in, curled up and somewhat suffocated by the environment around me. Only instead of a fleshy warmth, I am lodged into sand and rock. I can feel my blood pumping through my veins, slowly like sludge in a landslide, threatening the boundaries of the capillaries with jagged edges. I can move only my eyes. And at this time, there has been a yellowing piece of moss developing in the walls of the well. It's been growing along the corner of a brick pattern, forming a yellowing L-shape, which catches a ray of light every now and then.

If I could write right now, I would. But all I have is the thoughts coming and going like transient neighbors. If I could write a letter to Johniffer, I would tell him how I feel. *If I don't believe in an endless night, maybe I can wake up and this will be a bad dream—*

—T.A.R.O.T. member ‘Slacklime’—

The Matcher started bugging out when I made it to the central part of Hordt. Someone notified us that there was an anomalous object but this one wasn’t able to be seen, only heard. It took about a month for anyone to decide to call us.

When I made it to the central plaza, in the center of the bricked area was a tall statue of a man riding a mechanical horse, and next to it was a well with a placard reading, “Original Well from the Anthropic Era. Estimated construction date: 1923–2008.”

The plaza was empty, probably due to the noise. But this noise wasn’t necessarily jarring or unusual, but it’s definitely something no one would want to hear. It came in the form of a man whimpering, with an occasional cry out like a call to someone. The source was coming from the bottom of the well.

I walked up to the statue and the well, and rummaged through my equipment. I pulled out the electromagnetic resonance reader, pointed the scope at the statue which returned with a consistent click every few seconds, a good reading.

“WHHHHHYYYYYY,” the well cried.

It startled me, but I quickly moved the scope over the well. Which resulted in massive fluctuations of static and crackling noise. The sound of the whimpers felt more lively, and consistently echoed from my reader.

I pulled out a bottle of water and splashed it onto the well. Nothing happened. I peered inside and couldn’t see the bottom, but could still hear some soft crying.

I didn’t want to chance my life by going into the well myself, so I used an extended camera to see what’s in there. I lowered the stem into the well and cranked a wheel on the device which lowered the stem and camera into the well. The monitor held in my hand showed the layers of brick the well had, looking older and more worn the deeper I went.

The camera’s feed started getting interfered, with pixels and random colors splashing across the screen, eventually turning off the camera’s feed. I reversed the crank and pulled the

camera back out. When I got to the camera piece, it looked totally mangled and weather worn like it was left out on the ground in the midst of an avalanche hundreds of years ago.

I went to look at the metadata on the recording stored in the blackbox part of the device, and it read the time of recording which was approximately three thousand years ago.

I called my supervisor at Breach and they thanked me for the research. Then my contract was terminated.

—Johniffer & Jimison—

“Jimison, quick, give me a time.”

“Hold on, I just woke up from an all-too-real nightmare... what?”

“Give me a time.”

“I don’t know what time it is...”

“Me neither, but it helps, just give me a time.”

“I—I don’t know... what to say—”

“I don’t want to be the one to make a time, you just give me one. Any time.”

“Okay... it feels like eleven forty in the morning.”

“Awesome. Eleven forty. Write that down.”

Jimison looked around for his journal, which he was sitting on. He pulled it out and opened the first page, it had a bunch of writing on it he doesn’t remember being written. So he flips to a blank page, and at the top writes ‘11:40.’

Johniffer continued, “so you had a nightmare. Any details you want to share?”

“...No.”

Johniffer paused to wait and lets out a sigh after some more silence. “Fine. Let’s head out.”

The two left the abandoned bunker and enter the blistering heat. Cobblestone paths appeared throughout the sand, with no obvious direction. Just meandering path structures that tend to wind into each other, much similar to the paths ants may take when deciding exactly where to go. The pair set off without speaking for a great while, silently guiding themselves along the road. Johniffer tinkers with the Matching device on his wrist. Jimison reels from a headache, and is shaken by his nightmares, but starts to look more into the cobble path they find themselves on. He wonders who put them there, and wonders if there’s a reason they’re so messily aligned. He seeks cracks in some stones while others look stunningly new, but all of the

rocks are colored by the sandy winds. But after a while, moss started to appear on some of the cobblestones. And eventually, Jimison noticed the pair was now walking through a forested cobble path, still with the familiar sun blistering above.

“What’s the time now?”

“When did we get here?” Jimison asked in response. He looked around as though he just woke up from a lull.

“We left the bunker, and now we’re here on this road. Time please?” “What time I feel like it is?”

“Sure. But if you’ve kept time another way, just tell me that. Whatever you’re confident in.”

“Well, it’s probably about two thirty... two.” Jimison said. “Alright, two thirty two. Write that one down.”

As Jimison went to open the notebook in his sweaty hands, he looked behind him and saw two figures walking the same path in a distance. “Look, people.” Johniffer didn’t say anything, he just stood and stared.

“Should we greet them?” Jimison asked. He kept looking at them, then the figures also paused. The two pairs looked at each other from a distance down the road. “Wait... that looks like you. It’s you Johniffer?”

Johniffer smirked but crimped his lips back to a stoic position, and said “Yeah it looks like it. It’s us. Strange, I wonder if they made the same choices as us.”

Jimison looked at them still silent, worried what would happen if the pairs were to meet.

Johniffer let out a yell, “HEY. WHAT TIME DO YOU GOT?”

Jimison bewildered, looked at the distant pair for a response.

The Johniffer of the other pair hollered back, “JIMISON SAYS TWO THIRTY.”

“TWO THIRTY ON THE DOT?”

The distant pair leaned into each other, probably exchanging a brief word. The Johniffer called back again, “YES. TWO THIRTY ON THE DOT.”

Johniffer looked satisfied and looked back at Jimison who didn't write in the notebook yet, "Hey write down our time. Two thirty two. Interesting that they're two minutes behind us. They probably did something else on the way here, but are relatively on the same choice paths as us."

Jimison pondered for a moment, and asked "should we keep walking then? Or meet up with them? Maybe travel together?"

"No, we have to cover more ground. They'll understand. Just give a wave and let's move on."

Jimison looked back at the distant pair, who still haven't moved. He raised his arm slowly to give a wave, and the other Jimison responded the same. Jimison and Johniffer turned around and continued walking, while the distant pair looked like they dipped off the road and into the woods.

"Hope they're doing alright" Jimison said.

Johniffer replied, "yeah don't worry about it. Just think of it as a quantum revelation." Jimison pondered that. He wondered if Johniffer was being facetious. But something inside him knew Johniffer wasn't kidding. And that he would have to establish a form of radical acceptance.

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—*Pineal Caelum*—

Sentences are strange volumes of texts designed to instill chaos. These words are semantics wrapped up with a bow and tie, they leak into other languages like the sounds of a river or the machinery trying to replicate natural design. The hex keys do nothing to a tree stump. Only impale it with less use than a croaking of a bullfrog. The noise miasma overtakes the physical space. Causing the greeneries to decay faster than spoiling milk. Digging a hole doesn't make the hole bigger, it makes the space with the consent of the object. We deem a purpose, yet it isn't less. Action can be inaction. Think less, worry little.

—*Johniffer (Jeff) Mc'CraCraft*—

“The gravity here is impressive...” I said, just before looking over at Jimison. Us two standing on top of a massive dune. Now it’s just me. I watched Jimison tumble for a bit. I shoved him hard. And after a few seconds he was just a speck in the sand down below. I decided to go back the way we originally came. I caught a glimpse of the two of us walking behind us earlier, but they’re not here now. Perhaps the pair continued together in their respective superpositions.

I’m still trying to figure out how to make the transfer into the next manifold. Originally I thought about using the bio-interface to send signals to the anomaly directly, though the equation I’ve figured out for it requires a balance where a negative meets a positive in the array of calculable human existence. For me to live in the next manifold, I must die in this one, there shouldn’t be two versions of me existing in one place at the same time. Perhaps right now there are versions of me that exist at the same place but in different times, or maybe it’s me in different places at the exact same time? Either way it shouldn’t and still doesn’t make sense. Relative time distorts the more we move through space, it’s subjective in that way. But I also know that the speed of light never changes, so something else must. I think I will only do the bio-interface plan if Jimison were with me, but I’m going to see how far I can make it alone. I’ve decided to roll the dice on the butterfly effect, like I remember Jimison joking about before. I’m going to find an alternative mode of transportation into the next manifold. And instead of hoping for a response from the anomaly, I’m just going to send a continuous signal until it either gets annoyed or finally contacts me in a way I can understand.

First I’m going to use gravitational forces as a way to project the signal. I’ve noticed many different places within this desert have a peculiar weight about them. As though the air is heavier in one spot and a few feet over feels like moonwalking. I have to find the lowest point of a gravity well that also includes a towering structure of any kind. I’m imagining a solid surface which I can jump from, and during the transit of rapid decrease in elevation, the signal I can send

with the Matching device uses gravitational potential. Once I reach terminal velocity, maybe I'll be able to push the signal past light speed, and if it's fast enough, the signal should be strong enough to stream to the <sup>[1]</sup>outer rim of the moon where part of the anomaly seems to be.

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[1] ...as long as the moon rots... there will be an endless night. We do not only exist within the gravitational pulls of your celestial bodies. But will hear you regardless of speed and regardless of your mathematics. Should you be blinded and coerced into another physical form, only then will I be able to answer your cries. You are missing a key artifact, it's name is a tree growing within the mind of a poet. Abandon hope you who have chosen to fall.



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—*Johniffer (Jeff) Mc'CraCraft*—

I found the only gravity well I could see with my own eyes. For some reason there was a large pit that had developed in a valley of sand. As though the valley's bottom does not exist, the sand rolls slowly downwards, a continuous stream of sand into nothing. The valley deepens and eventually the portal is wide enough for a few people to fit into, deep enough to fall forever. I looked into it from above with my telescope, and the blackness from below was so black that the hole appeared as a two-dimensional blot in my eye.

I focused on the hole until I could solidify its essence in my mind. I walked around the perimeter of the hole, at the upper area of the valley. Keeping the hole in my vision, I walked sideways around the valley for a few solar rotations. The slats in my eyes help with not falling asleep, but some apparitions that appeared at night were difficult to discern as real or not. At some points it was extremely difficult to tell whether or not I was dreaming, but as long as I was aware of a constant state of observation, I was fine. As I circled the pit, some buildings from far away would eventually come closer. I saw rooftop antennae in the distance, then a mile or two of a rotation, the same rooftop antennae were closer. Closer and closer, flashes of the tall rising building appeared.

Eventually, a high-rise apartment building loomed on the edge of the valley, at just the right location where if I jumped off the top, I could fall directly into the black hole. If my theory is correct, this hole in the desert is bottomless. The telescope's distance calculator increases past 20 billion light years and rapidly fluctuates in numbers past the hundreds of billions as though there's no definitive distance. So, potentially, if I threw a rock into the hole the rock would fall for so long until it reverses trajectory and fall back the way it came. If I reached terminal velocity, sent the signal as I fell, I might be caught in the hole for a long time, but eventually I should be spit back out the way I came without colliding with anything.

The Matcher's signal strength drops after a few thousand feet, so I am not certain of any extraneous objects that could emerge from the dark. But chances are, if the first few thousand feet is nothing but air, the rest should be the same.

Okay... the next trick is to keep the building aligned with the black hole. And at the same time, I should hope to find something of substance within the building. It's going to be a long fall, and I'm thirsty.

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—*T.A.R.O.T. member 'Lacewing'*—

No one reported this phenomenon. I found it myself. And to be honest, I was not in a good way. But this helped. I won't even get started with how I feel about Breach, forcing their corporations into my home, anyway—after drowning in whiskey, I walked to my apartment after a jaunt through some dark fields. It was rainy but not too bad. This is an important detail because it assisted my sight in viewing this object. It's a streetlamp. It was obvious at first too, the light wasn't the same color as any of the others. It emitted a subtle orange while occasionally merging into yellow. And the rain that hit the top of it would cause the light to flicker light blue. When I looked closer, the rain was causing the streetlamp to vibrate softly. I could hear it humming louder than the other light sources. I didn't pack my equipment with me because... reasons.

But I did return to the object with my tools this morning where I am annotating now. I'm glad I did, because there's words in the screws plain as day. Along with an explosion of a bird—must've sat on top of it. Some feathers are halfway lodged into the glass lamp as though the surface was quicksand. The microscope showed the fine grain of the material to have words different from the ones on the screws, which could be arranged in sentences. The screws just say "real" or variations like "reality," or "touch." The words on the pole read, "you—have—must—look—out—is—real?"

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—Jimison & Johniffer—

“You know what I miss is juice.”

“You know what I miss? Juice.”

“You know I miss—”

“You know what... I miss juice.”  
juice, you know what?”

“I missed

“You know, I miss juice.”  
miss juice is what.”

“I miss juice.”

“I

“You know what I miss is juice?”

“You know I miss juice.”  
juice?”

“You miss juice?”

“I miss

“You I miss juice, is.”  
is what I miss, you is juice.”

“You know

“You know what you

“You know what,

I miss

you.”

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—T.A.R.O.T. member ‘Chlorus’—

Reports flooded in about a bag of some sorts. We narrowed down the reports to the specific object, a purse. An elusive purse, it moves but doesn’t seem to move over drastic distances. A museum in Petula had an increase of spectral activity reports. This purse was found in hundreds of places but only within the confines of the museum. When I arrived there, I saw the purse almost immediately. I could tell it was the object I was looking for because it’s appearance was fractalized inwards extra-dimensionally while maintaining it’s edges. I decided to play a game. First when I saw it, it sat in the corner of the queue area, and as I walked past some pillars holding painted plates, the purse was gone.

“Hide and seek?” I said to no one. I walked into the first room, large and mostly empty. *Sterile...* It wasn’t here, so I moved to the next room, passing through dangling beads. This room had azure sculptures lit by blacklight. The purse was hanging from the fist of a statue of a naked man with a long decorated beard of pubes. The blacklight refracted within the purse, forming an aesthetic blackhole, I was mesmerized for a minute before I decided to access its language. The electromagnetic radiation was insane, and the radio signal I was receiving sounded like falling water in a cave. I had trouble finding any symbols on the outside of the purse—I don’t think there were any. The chains that held part of the strap did resemble stacked question marks. But I think whatever messages it has, is inside of the purse, and I’m not sure how to peer into fractalized infinity.

This might be a lost message. *Unless...*

I went to find the curator, and asked for some mice... for science. Of course he didn’t have any. I’ll figure out a way to open this purse somehow.

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—Jimison & Johniffer—

“You know, I just recalled a memory of me when I was twenty, even though I’m having a hard time believing this is a memory instead of a dream. But regardless, there must’ve been a time that I stopped owning things.”

“What do you mean?” Johniffer inquired.

“I stopped calling things mine. Instead I was just labelling them for the sake of symbolism. Just to refer to the thing as itself rather than assuming I have any ownership. Instead I started having relationships. And it all started when I was doing my laundry one day, pulling out the clothes one by one and thinking—*my sweatpants, my underwear, my socks, no—sweatpants, the ones I wore my first time camping in the Argus Jungle. Underwear with the rubber ducks on ‘em. Argyle socks that I really don’t like but they were a gift from a friend. This isn’t even my washing machine, and this isn’t my apartment. This isn’t my city. But I live here, and built a home within a home, calling things mine and feeling like a fool for it.*”

Johniffer looked down at his hands and caressed them, “I have a different perspective on it. I hear you, but hear me. I’m a human being, I recognize my insignificance to the universe, but I don’t look at it as being one of many objects. I feel lucky to be able to manipulate the environment around me. Otherwise, I’m just a deer in someone else’s headlights. Grazing fields, hiding from predators, sniffing things until I die with nothing ever happening around me. I own things because I’m human—”

I interjected, “My cat isn’t even mine, she was born elsewhere and I happened to invite her into my home where she established her own domain. I don’t know what she does most of the time, and yet I still feel a sense of responsibility but I chalk that up to me being emotional because I’m human.”

“If I had a cat, I’d give it a name,” Johniffer said.

“But does naming something give you ownership?”

Johniffer didn’t respond.

—Jimison—

We found an isolated airstrip in this desert. It emerged from the sand with an unscathed aircraft. A jet which looked military but unidentifiable in origin, possibly ancient. When we walked closer, there was still sand falling off of the hangar, now slowly rusting as if gathering condensation.

“I’ve got a great idea.” Johniffer said, without explaining himself. He ran over to the jet, pulled a switch on the side and released the hatch to the cockpit.

We got in, Johniffer in the front seat. I said I’d watch the sky, but was entirely unsure of what to do and think. We took off with ease, and the desert disappeared into the darkness beneath us, as we cast ourselves into the darkness ahead.

“Don’t trust the sky right now.” Johniffer said. “If you keep your face tilted at a certain angle, fixing your eyes on that single point of light over there...”

I said I’d stare at the featureless background.

*At the speed we’re traveling, the light may appear that it’s on a collision course with our aircraft.*

*It won’t slither past but I feel it will any moment.*

*If you fixate on it you will contort your insides.*

*The stomach growl of death that clutches your stick off axis spinning us into a graveyard spiral.*

*Shit—losing altitude.*

From the darkness, the sky suddenly became the desert and threw itself at us and—

—Johniffer (Jeff) Mc’CraCraft—

Found an oven. It’s not working, but I think I can tamper with it enough to allow us to burn something inside to heat up the coils. I figured we’d use the rest of the cow that I don’t use for the bio-interface, as a snack. Some jerky maybe?

“Why do I have to be the uncomfortable one?” Jimison called out to me. I shrugged, “builds character.”

“I guess...” he said. He rubbed the parts around his eyes the slats were digging into.

“You’re young, younger than me. So therefore, you’ll always be younger. I get to be slightly more comfortable than you because I’ve—”

“Mister ‘time-is-subjective-and-non-linear-guy’ going on about age? Rich.” Jimison said while awkwardly gripping the sides of the spinning bar stool he was perched on.

“Just keep sitting there and maintain our local positions, I like where we’re at now. Stay in the stool, it builds character. Pretty soon you’ll be swimming in character. Practically drowning in it, ready to swallow the world for yourself!”

“You’re talking like someone bought your tongue.” Jimison said.

“Relax.” Johniffer said. He opened up the oven and poked his head inside and screamed, “SWALLOW THE WOOOORLD!”

—T.A.R.O.T. member ‘Syrphid’—

A screaming oven was reported, and I was sent to the location of this minor anomaly to find out what it was exactly. The location seemed random, the oven wasn’t in an apartment or a junkyard. It was found on the cobblestone courtyard of the Vestigial Parish. The oven was emitting sound, like roaring flame, but also overlaid with what seemed like a person’s voice, “SWALLOOOOOOW THE WOOOOORRRRLD!”

I held my electromagnetic resonance reader up to it, and saw fluctuations of the familiar signal radiation. Although no obvious voice appeared at the electromagnetic level. I used my microscopic magnifying glass to see if there were any transcriptions. It seemed like there weren’t many on the oven at all, just reiterations of the words “swallow the world” along some of the rubber seals.

I looked through the glass panel and could see a flickering light. Not really a flame, but smoldering ashes.

“You know, sometimes I—“ a voice startled me from behind.

“Woah, by the Light...” I said exasperated.

“Oh did I startle you? So sorry!” the woman said.

“No worries.”

“My name is Annalese.”

“I’m Fuh... Syrphid.” I said. Almost said my name.

“Hello Fuhsyrphid. I was just going to say that sometimes I like to play the organ in the main church spire and attune it to the rhythm of this... oven.” Annalese said with a glee about her.

“SWALLOOOOOOW THE WOOOOORRRRLD!”

“That’s... interesting. This has been here a while?” I asked.

“Yeah, it’s been a couple of weeks. Many of the people here find it hard to sleep, but we like to turn it into a reminder of urgency.” She said.

“Urgency... I see.” I said, looking back at the smoldering behind the oven’s glass panel.

“SWALLOOOOOOW THE WOOOOORRRRLD!” the oven erupted again.

“The voice has a kind of familiarity to it huh?” Annalese suggested.

I shrugged.

Annalese gave me a brief bow, smiled and waved while continuing past me and into the cemetery archway.

“SWALLOOOOOOW THE WOOOOORRRRLD!”

I used my microscopic magnifying glass to peer into the smoldering flame. Among the crumbling ashes and clumps of coal I could make out the words “Johniffer,” “Jimison,” and “jerky.”

—Johniffer & Jimison—

“I wonder how similar we are to flies? Like any sudden movements nearby them, they just up and leave. Do they even know why they do it? Are they afraid of dying?”

“I don’t think a fly has the fear of death, Jimison.” Johniffer said while tinkering with the broken oven.

“Yeah sure, but it’s got something there right? It probably won’t look in a mirror and recognize it’s even looking in the mirror.”

“Right.”

“But why does the fly decide to fly away?”

“Biological mechanics.”

“Yeah. But—”

“Jimison, hand me the allen wrench.”

“The who what?”

“The hex key, in your pocket.”

Jimison reached into his pockets and pulled out a swarm of flies.

“Aw shit. Not again.” Johniffer said.

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—*Annalese*—

Annalese tended to the cemetery, filled with a head full of song, brushing pine needles, collecting waste, refreshing candles and bouquets, and eventually preparing food for the dead. After cleaning everything and providing the meals, she honored the lost people by humming and meandering through the yard.

She walked a straight stretch of cobblestone along one of the major walls, and came across a person who walked past her without looking at her at all. The figure was an older man with dead eyes and carried a wrapped bouquet near his belt line. He dipped off the path and past a few rows of headstones. He stopped and took the plastic off the bouquet and threw it to the ground behind him.

Annalese quietly picked up the trash, and brought it to a garbage receptacle.

“What are you doing? Fucking with me?” the sulking man said, now grimacing and facing her.

“Sorry—We like to keep this area as clean as possible, there’s many places to put your trash so I picked it up so as to not disturb you or the dead...”

“Oh no, what an ecological disaster. Get out of my face you bitch.”

Annalese widened her eyes in shock and quickly scolded him, “I didn’t have a problem with you just... just the culture. Of throwing garbage anywhere. I’ll take care of this and you take care of yourself.”

The man waved her off angrily, and she walked away to leave him alone. Continuing to hum her song for the ones who have passed.

—Johniffer & Jimison—

Johniffer was in the midst of preparing parts of the pectorals from the cow to be made into jerky. Jimison sat facing Johniffer and the doorway, swiveling in his rotating stool.

“On my seventeenth birthday, I was ready to work.” Johniffer started, “Companies already showed me what they were about, and I was all for it. I knew I was destined to be a reliable worker. I already understood hydraulic mechanics and human, flora, and fauna psychology. Sure, the commutes were rough. But I do love spending several hours a day commuting to the office and on-call locations. I’d wake up at four a.m. to make it to the office first at around seven. Ready to roll at thirty. They even provided us with coffee when we got to the main office, which I declined because I don’t need that. When five thirty p.m. rolled around, I knew it was time to get home. But I didn’t want work to stop. I craved the grind. On the couple-hour drive home, I’d take calls for patient outreach at the clinic where I moonlighted, as well as remotely tutoring quantum mechanics at the elementary school in Hordt. I learned how to multitask at a godlike level and with excellent focus.”

Once there was a break, Jimison asked “Did you ever have a life outside of... whatever it is you were doing?”

“Why would I? I need to make money.”

“But... you come from a wealthy family. And the WO are pretty good at organizing who gets what.”

Johniffer noticed a fly buzzing around the room and grimaced, saying “Yes, but that doesn’t mean I should be lazy. Dad always told me that I should reap what I sow.”

“I don’t think that means what you think it means.”

“I just know that my parents planted the seeds, and I’m the harvester.”

“Poetic.” Jimison said, facetiously.

“Yeah, I’m just like you sometimes.”

“You really aren’t.”

“Shut up. Where’s a fly trap? These fuckers are annoying.”

“Right here—” but instead of pulling a fly trap from his pocket, Jimison pulled out a hex key.

“—oh. I swore it looked different earlier.”

Johniffer wondered to himself, *I have a sudden craving for rotting fruit and I don't like it.*

—T.A.R.O.T. member ‘Borate’—

“Oh, you’re here! Good, they’re down the hallway on the left,” said the receptionist at the New Life retirement home.

A group of elderly individuals had experienced a collective hallucination, according to the report. Breach doesn’t think they saw an illusion, but it is easier to describe that way—something about “the community garden is haunted.” A few people were strolling through the garden on the campus, when they described seeing a new collection of venus fly traps. They called their friends over and soon a gathering of curious people stood marveling at the new addition. However, none of the staff admitted to planting them, and no one wants to touch them because of something *unprecedented*.

So when I walked into the living space, there was a gathering of older folks in wheel chairs.

Without introducing myself, I asked “what is this unprecedented experience?”

One woman choked, and then said “they were singing.”

“Excuse me?” I asked, turning up the volume on the audial transcripator.

“Yes, plain as day. The plants were singing, moving their mouths to the beat.”

I am dumbfounded, “are they still here?” I asked.

“No, but sometimes they are. You could go check right now. Marylne over there would happily take you, she’s the only one not shaken up by this.

I looked over to Marylne, “will you show me the singing plants?”

“Ooooh! Jolly, of course. Maybe they will have gifts again!”

I looked back at the rest of the folks, and they remained motionless, eyes wide.

Marylne took me to the community garden, and pointed at the flower bed. There was only one venus fly trap. I held my electromagnetic resonance reader up to it and could hear the sound waves *arguing*. After a minute of observation, the plant choked up a bent piece of metal.

“Could I have that?” Marylne asked.

I swatted her away, and took a picture: *a hex key?*

Then I heard the plant, it began to hum. There was no recognizable words, but a very obvious humming of a young woman.

Marylne began to weep.

—Jimison & Johniffer—

Jimison noticed a fly buzzing around the kitchen.

Johniffer was too deep into making sure the oven was baking at the correct temporal length and ensuring its local position was maintained—“Don’t disappear...” Johniffer mumbled under his breath.

The fly buzzed behind Johniffer’s ears, and without thinking, his arm swatted the air behind him as if it adopted a mind of its own.

The fly moved closer to Jimison. Jimison didn’t move. He allowed the fly to land on his leg. To which he shifted his other knee slightly, causing the fly to buzz away again. This time it lingered in the air around Jimison. Once the fly landed on his knee again and remained there for some time, Jimison let out a big sigh which didn’t disturb the fly.

“Squish it.” Johniffer said while gripping the sides of the oven, staring at Jimison’s knee.

Jimison nodded and slowly moved his arms and positioned his hands above the fly as if he were going to start clapping. He lowered his hands cautiously and began the clap—the fly jumped up into the clap and was clasped by Jimison’s grip. He held his hands together and imagined some horns blowing and a confetti explosion celebrating his success. Upon opening his hands, the fly flew away again while a second fly lay flattened in his palm. He stared at the squished fly while ignoring the lively one. He closed his hands again and then opened them. This time the squished fly appeared to be unsquished and flew away. No residue of fly gore had ever seemed to exist. Now there are two flies buzzing around the room.

“Fucking flies...” Johniffer said.

*Flies fucking...?* Jimison thought.

—Annalese Baptisma—

She found a building, but it was not enough. She finds a room, but the room itself is not inhabitable. So she finds shelf space, and desk space. Too much space. She needs to answer the itch in her head, and finds the scratch when she stumbles upon the venus fly trap. The pot it was in, and the plant itself, wasn't original. This was the object she was looking for, the transmission signal. The message which would accept a response. She poked the plant to make it move, but there was no response. She only felt a sharp pain in her finger. She heard a buzzing around the room and a fly appeared. She spent some time trying to catch the fly without killing it, but failed as it was smushed between her palms. She held the dead fly in front of the venus fly trap and it did nothing. She set the fly inside the trap, and it closed about halfway. She poked the fly in the mouth of the plant, and it finally closed shut. After about a minute, the trap opened up again and the fly was gone. *That was fast...* she thought to herself. *It shouldn't be so bad...* She took off all her clothes and placed her finger on the mouth, and it closed halfway. She pushed her finger in deeper, wincing from the stinging sensation now coursing through her arm. She watched as the plant slowly closed its mouth, her arm somehow extending deeper and deeper into the plant without destroying it. She reached her other arm into it, and soon her head and shoulders entered the tiny plant, swallowing her whole. She slipped in as easily as a worm burrowing a hole underground.

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—Jimison & Johniffer—

I found an L-shaped yellowing moss in the corner of a well. For some reason, I feel like I remember building this well with my own hands. I'm sure that I placed each stone while looking at the sand lodged beneath my fingernails. I must've dug this well through the sand without any tools. I bet Johniffer left me alone to do this, and didn't bother to help. Maybe he did hand me a tool, or he took it with him, either way I don't remember. There's still more to do here. I can keep digging or wait this out for a few... suns to pass, or years to live... How am I not bored yet? And where was I just before this? And *where is Johniffer...*?

I wish I would've taken the shovel with me. I left it with Jimison and now I can't reach these fruits. Damn coconuts and bananas taunting me with their luscious appearance. The air here is even wet for once. I can see those beautiful dew drops on the peels. I'm not strong enough to shake the tree or climb it, and I don't have my tools. I'll just take a shower with the dew drops. A really long shower, a drop every minute or so. I could keep blinking and see if a fruit will be on the ground instead of in the tree. But then I might lose the whole tree. I need another pair of eyes here. *Where the hell is Jimison...?*

I found an L-shaped      I wish I would've taken the shovel  
yellowing moss in the corner of a      with me. I left it with Jimison and  
well. For some reason, I feel like Inow I can't reach these fruits. Damn  
remember building this well with ~~no~~ coconuts and bananas taunting me  
own hands. I'm sure that I placed      with their luscious appearance. The  
each stone while looking at the sand here is even wet for once. I can  
lodged beneath my fingernails. I      see those beautiful dew drops on the  
must've dug this well through the peels. I'm not strong enough to  
sand without any tools. I bet      shake the tree or climb it, and I don't  
Johniffer left me alone to do this,      have my tools. I'll just take a shower  
and didn't bother to help. Maybe he ~~wa~~ with the dew drops. A really long  
did hand me a tool, or he took it with ~~the~~ shower, a drop every minute or so. I  
him, either way I don't remember. could keep blinking and see if a fruit  
There's still more to do here. I can will be on the ground instead of in  
keep digging or wait this out for a the tree. But then I might lose the  
few... suns to pass, or years to      whole tree. I need another pair of  
live... How am I not bored yet? And ~~yes~~ here. *Where the hell is*  
where was I just before this? And *Jimison...?*  
*where is Johniffer...?*

I found an L-shaped ditch I would've taken the shovel  
yellowing moss in the corner of a I left it with Jimison and  
well. For some reason, I feel like I can't reach these fruits. Damn  
remember building this well with my bananas taunting me  
own hands. I'm sure that I placed their luscious appearance. The  
each stone while looking at the sand even wet for once. I can  
lodged beneath my fingernails those beautiful dew drops on the  
must've dug this well through them not strong enough to  
sand without any tools. I shake the tree or climb it, and I don't  
Johniffer left me alone to do my tools. I'll just take a shower  
and didn't bother to help with the dew drops. A really long  
did hand me a tool, or hesitated, with hop every minute or so. I  
him, either way I don't remember blinking and see if a fruit  
There's still more to do here than the ground instead of in  
keep digging or wait this out for. But then I might lose the  
few... suns to pass, or years to a whole tree. I need another pair of  
live... How am I not bored yet? *And where the hell is*  
*where was I just before this? And...?*  
*where is Johniffer...?*

I wish I had taken the shovel  
yellowing with rust. I wish I had  
well. For some reason, I feel like  
remember coughing this was trying me  
own hands with their hands and  
each stone with its long and  
lodged beneath my fingers. I can  
must've dug this well through the  
sand without shaking the dirt. I don't  
Johniffer left me alone to do this, take a shower  
and didn't with the help of my belly long  
did hand shake on a drop took it with  
him, either could keep blinking and see if a fruit  
There's still on the ground instead of in  
keep digging over. But this could lose the  
few... suns to pass or I can't find another pair of  
live... How can I not find it? And  
where was it just before this? And  
*where is Johniffer...?*

I wish I would have had the shovel  
yellowing in the dirt with the iron  
well worn from use. Damn  
remember building this as well with my  
own hands in a simple shack. The  
each is there when looking for the Indian  
lodged those heavy furs on the  
must be a light weight brought to  
sand which are too thin, and I don't  
John after he found the hole, shower  
and with the other tools. A Malay  
did show me a trap, but he thought it was  
him, could keep by looking and see if a fruit  
There is a lot of good men in  
keep digging. But that is the sight for the  
few who are to pass, dry as the pair of  
live eyes. *What are they?* And  
when I was just before this?

I wish I would take shape  
with how long I miss with the  
now I can't search for a  
cements had buildings this way with my  
with the hands of a specter placed  
air and stone and looking at the  
see these beautiful wings  
the pen since I thought I brought  
shaded with a joy that I don't  
have in my life. I have a job to do  
with the day today. Maybe he  
should have a drop every minute  
could keep the way and then  
will be on the ground in the  
the top of the mountain for a  
whole. I see the way they  
eyes here. How can it be  
*Jim* here. Was I here before?

---

—Johniffer (Jeff) Mc’CraCraft—

Johniffer suddenly came into consciousness in the middle of eating bacon on a Sunday afternoon in his childhood home kitchen, “I could have sworn I was...”

Sitting across from him were his parents, his father terribly aged with a bandage over his eyes, and his mother with a jovial glee about her face.

“Huh? What’s that?” Mother said.

Johniffer appeared bewildered to his mother. He did not have any words to say out loud other than, “My desert, in... I was... with... a friend just now.”

*I don’t remember my mother. This has to be something else.*

Father leaned to his side, his left ear facing Mother.

“Are you okay? Is the bacon really that good it scrambled your brain?”

Johniffer looked down at a plate with scrambled eggs, toast, and bacon on it. He looked back up to his mother and father, “What time is it?”

Father shrugged, Mom replied, “It is about nine in the morning.”

Still not used to seeing a woman claiming to be his mother, he followed up “Sorry, wait. What year is it?”

“3998.”

*This isn’t real. Or if it is, I don’t know how to get back to where I just was—Father should have passed away already. But both of them are... alive?*

Johniffer carefully put another piece of bacon in his mouth while smiling at Mother, who now had an understandably concerned look on her face.

“Where is Annalese?” Johniffer asked.

“Who is that? One of your girlfriends?” She replied, recovering her jovial face.

*Where are you?*

Johniffer glanced over at a glass of orange juice sitting in front of him.

“You know what? I miss juice.” He gulped too much of the drink it stabbed his neck on the way down.

---

—*The Disciples of Antropy*—

“You passed the trial?”

“You managed to hold the melody?”

“Even the last note?”

The council of Threes, the Watchers for Antropy, sat in their swiveling chairs talking amongst themselves. The Elder Third leaned over toward Annalese, who was sat with her butt on the ground and legs folded over each other, “Impressive... You’re lucky. One of the few—which are many—but few in the grand scheme of things, to successfully create *a landing point*.”

“Landing point?” Annalese asked.

“Yes, you’ve created an anchor that doubles as a siphon. The melody paired with your existence paired with the vibration created enough space within space to lock that relationship into infinity.”

The Elder Second raised his arms above his head and said “the secret of the melodies is the vibration, and the secret of the vibration is—” he cut himself off and returned his focus to his arms, which are now unevenly spread above his body, with one arm slowly *ticking* downwards, one inch at a time, the arm lowering softly into his lap while the other arm stay locked directly upwards.

Annalese now swaying side to side, a subtle white mist filled the dim chamber the council was in.

The Elder First finished off what the Elder Second and Third started, “Whenever you die or meander through your dreams, you may return to where you first played your melody. So that when you’re lost or off on a journey you can return safely, as long as you remember the melody and its precise vibrations. Be careful where you may play as well, as space changes how your instrument sounds. Always play where Antropy will hear you, and time will follow.”

After that, Annalese swayed sharply to the side, her head colliding with the ground and her body evaporating with the mist.

*Johniffer, I found the sun.*

---

—Johniffer & Jimison—

Johniffer grabbed the salt from the top shelf “there I can finally make the salted sugar cookies I’ve been craving,”

“We have time?” asked Jimison.

Johniffer nodded, “Yes we do, just a little bit before the next wave... probably.”

The oven was only to be used whenever we could chance it and find a fire already set, to transfer the flames to the stove, in the Entangled Desert, nothing is truly set in its place, one look away from what you’re doing and it all disappears, left with nothing but the howling wind and the sacred sand.

*We have to remain inside this house with the door ajar.*

The house found us, so it’s a good omen to keep around, we are lucky to be able to have the two of us here as well, all of this couldn’t really be possible with just one conscious entity, imagine waking up from a dream, all alone, and the bed, the appliances, the floor, the walls, ceiling, and the safety of a fire is gone as though the objects all took it on their own to move elsewhere, stranding you in an ocean of sand.

“They’re continuing to fight fires at the edge of the desert, it’s closing in.”

Johniffer said to Jimison who was in the middle of making cookie batter for him.

“Do you ever get tired of being in the corner with your eyes pried open?” Johniffer asked.

“The slats don’t hurt if you imagine they aren’t there.”

“That’s true.”

A whisper skipped off the winds of the desert speaking with multiple languages overlapping—*ah, the child’s dream... the Pineal Caelum pays respects to the ancients with the withering veins... as long as the moon rots, will there be an endless night...*

“Enjoy the cookies, Jimison?”

Jimison nodded in response.

There was an acute silence which filled the house and emptied into the air.

“You should feel bad for wasting their lives,” the silence finally broke, Jimison glared at Johniffer, awaiting his answer.

“So the cookies were that bad?” Johniffer replied, “I’ll close my eyes right now, I’ll take the slats out and we’ll just fuck off then?”

“We’re baking cookies, it’s nice but is it part of the plan?”

Johniffer felt annoyed but could not let this relationship falter, “Yes. And didn’t you forget that we just have to wait. I know it’s absurd. But the sac-satellite hasn’t aligned, we have to wait for the anomaly.”

“I know. But one in six quintillion is impossible.”

“Improbable. But yes. It will happen. Remember, that time in this desert flows differently. We’ve only been gone for a few milliseconds.”

Jimison retorted “It’s been twelve years,” the silence was interrupted with another whisper from the desert—*the Pineal Caelum seeks the Rhythmic...thousand eye holes in the skull...where is the song of the sun? Melodies of the anti-linear copse call out to the child’s dream...as long as the moon rots, there will be an endless night—*

There was a blue flash in the sky,

“I saw it, maybe it’s—” Jimison gulped.

“The celestial modus. The event has finally begun. Stay here,” pointed Johniffer, Jimison kept eyes locked at the doorway and Johniffer.

“The slats really hurt... I am so ready to go.”

“Don’t look away.”

“I won’t.” Jimison grumbled and slouched into his harness, Johniffer sprinted back outside, sliding through sand. He looked at biointerface, it was true, the alignment had finally happened, now it was time to send the signal in hopes something on the other side might accept the interference, Johniffer walked back inside and grabbed the pistol sitting on the table in front of Jimison.

“Remember, this only works once. Don’t miss. I’ll go first. Press the button on the biointerface to begin the signal, after I go, it will turn off. You just have to reactivate it the same way. And then pull the trigger. The pineal gland, don’t forget.”

“What about the others? It’s been so long I’ve already forgotten the plan...” Jimison was more shaken than forgetful.

“They’re still fighting fires but to them we’ve only been gone for a few seconds. Get yourself together,” Johniffer was getting impatient, he went back outside and pressed the button, placed the barrel of the gun to his forehead and waited for a sound—*come on... we only have an hour in our locality for this to work, it better happen fast*—and before he could gripe any longer a lullaby song played from the cow’s stomach, and at the end of the jingle, he pulled the trigger and collapsed.

“FUCK.” Jimison screamed, almost breaking the slats in his eyes. Jimison stood up, eyes glued to the biointerface just outside the open doorway, tears streamed down his face as he walked over to the table, he bent over to pick up the gun, trying not to stare at the mess in the sand, dropping sweat mixing with the pulp and mineral, he was fixated on the gun, thinking about having to believe in the theory, he chuckled sadly to himself—*we made it this far, this is the first time I do this intentionally*—he trembled and stood up from grabbing the metal, and then screamed.

A shrill cry echoed across the desert.

His eyes wandered, because he was terrified, slats still in his eyes, still used to the company of Johniffer, his world spun yet everything was gone and only the gun appeared as itself while everything else had moved.

All that was around him was the desolate desert.

He dropped to his knees and whimpered, worried that he couldn’t follow Johniffer, he wasn’t sure if he could even make it to the edge of the desert before it folds in on itself repeatedly, because it wasn’t impossible, and the others aren’t exactly waiting for him, they don’t know this manifold, it’s only been a few seconds, but for him, how long could it be?

*What are the chances?*

*Would the event come again?*

*Johniffer never explained.*

The celestial modus in this paradigm only launched once, but there’s always a chance that the Entangled Desert could call for another position, all that was left was to blink, keep blinking until something shows up, something that could provide sustenance or an answer, or a chance to call out to someone, but Jimison couldn’t do it, once the slats were removed, all he wanted to do was close his eyes, fall over, and sleep.

---

—*Annalese Baptisma*—

I was invited to take an elevator into space. A vessel that goes straight up and meets the Amon-Rom Moon Station. It was there I first saw the greening up close.

I went up there for vague reasons, my own reason being the opportunity to learn more about where I am. But the reasons told to me were abstracted, described more or less as “a courtesy view in light of recent events”— this was after I received letters about my brother’s death.

The vessel noticeably creaked before breaking the atmosphere, but I interpreted it as a calming beat from Antropy’s rhythmic breaths. I tuned my humming to the rotations of the screws rattling between the wall-space of the craft.

It took about an hour to reach the landing ship where we parked and took a taxi around a portion of the moon and back. The lights in the facilities embedded into the moon looked sparse. Most of the buildings were actually dim, many dark windows. There was a steady grey fog on the surface of the moon rising up to the layer of industry.

On the taxi ride, I could feel my hair standing, but not in a gravity way. More like every strand of hair started to wiggle and form colonies. As we got closer to the moon, my hair would stiffen, and my skin grew tighter and tighter. I could see the green tendrils creeping through the fog. *Lichen?* They were still at first, as though lichen rapidly grew its course and paused for a moment before it decided where to grip its way to. We phased through the tendrils and they evaporated into a smoke that drifted off.

I screamed to turn around, to take me back to the elevator. The pilots were shaken, and grumbling in annoyance. They turned and took me back.

I’m thankful I made it back. I heard Antropy through every crack and crumble. But whatever the greening is, is unique to say the least. I might say terrifying, but I can’t figure it out. You’re out there somewhere Johniffer, if I could, I would pack this melody I’m about to play and put it in this letter for you. But for now I trust there’s another way for it to reach you.

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—Johniffer (Jeff) Mc’CraCraft—

The lungs filled up with viscous numbness.

*I am awake.*

Johniffer emerged from a cracked egg and vomited what tasted like honey, stirring from his bowels and splashed to the floor, there was a crunching sound in his head—*the realignment. I’m here.*

*When I wake up from a dream, how am I sure I am still me, was the dream too real or is this too real?*

This disorientation happened the last time, he wasn’t alive yet for Aerth’s first jump from the third to the fourth manifold, but the fifth dimensional hop was alarmingly easy, it only required a spatial position to achieve, it was easy once they learned from the theories of non-locality but this time it had been absolutely terrifying and nonsensical.

“I— “ was all he could muster until more honeyvomit spewed from his gut, and speaking to no one, he still felt compelled to finish his first words alive in the sixth manifold, “*can’t wait to finally see the sun.*”

He caught his reflection in the jellied vomit, a thin groove lined the space between his brows, he thought *I feel strange as though all the pores on my skin could each grow an eye*, but he tries to forget, distracted by a soft voice that’s oddly familiar to him—*Annalese?*

*What could she have been doing here away from the Chapter, singing a song while bathing in sunlight?*

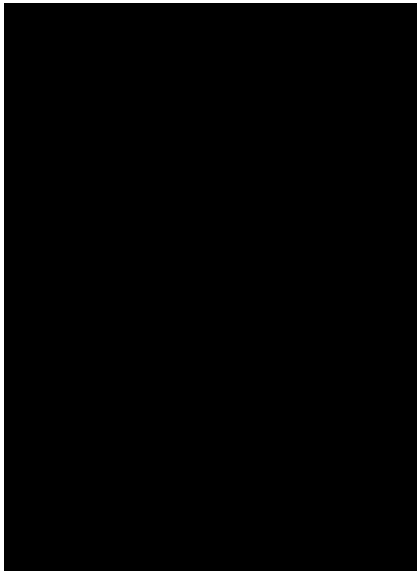
His vision still remained blurred, hazily recollecting the concept of physical space forming itself around him, fluidly remembering how to differentiate, catching streams of sugary thoughts slipping through fingers, suddenly cusped in gentle hands that withered into a rigid tarsus, the sweet song sourced not from the sister he remembered, but belonging to a femur attached to a coxa, a thorax with a flaky endoskeleton, itching with its tarsal claws, the Argonagnon-Annalese Baptisma, both horrified and relieved, a tendril glitched into his neck extending from Baptisma’s abdomen, a parietal eye opened atop her jaundiced epicranium, shivering chitin rhythmically shuttered, Johniffer’s vision now blinded and replaced with

memories and sensations foreign to him, but familiar enough as a flashing light, unending, an all encompassing brightness.

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—*Pineal Caelum*—

—in the emerald fire dreams there was a notebook floating amongst the flowing miasma—it entered in from astral lights and mossy growths—an emerald fire blazing upon a planetary body—one of many moons and stars—and in the flowing light bugs fluttering and swirling dust—gold specked flakes shimmering into the seeds scattered—birthing new masses—viney veiny crawling roots—branches which nodes also glow—the notebook was being carried by a—being of appendages and collected consciousness—realizing their home moon is rotting—gripping the edges of a notebook with meat—a vibration of scrawling—shimmering sound of a lilac pen—drifting—sailing across the line—the language being formed—the words to be sound—borrowing concepts—borrowing mind—burrowing space—burrowing time—suddenly you remembered, you weren't



alive before, you did live life but that life ended and turned into something else—a body that wasn't you, and this wind, flora, and language brought you back to life—strange coincidences—you were wandering amongst the folds, the spaces in between—when you began to follow our signal—we called you back and you answered—a strange twisted journey to get to where you're at now—you're one of many but one of a kind—

—the lilac pen writes about a change in the winds—a tune that is familiar yet unrecognizable, for the winds—passed were freshly born—carried away to distances foreign to their origin—dwindle back into the larger ever-flow—the pen remembers each breeze as individual smears of patterns—fraying fabric around the edges of an intricate quilt—strands of pushing—pulling, spinning—rolling—each letter of the words describing the strange event become strands—of chlorophyll absorbing light—gusts and squalls—scatter—anomalies—and seed—into the ground—the pen continues to move, tilling contours into material between materials—mycelium nodal dialects ascribing asymmetrical meanings—across thresholds with no ability—express to other—the lines on the paper and its intricate crop lines—invisible to the truly naked eye—if not invisible, then at the very least, indescribable

—wrote on an empty page, *I wish I could send a letter  
to someone right now. Not to let them know where I am,  
but to show them where I've been—*

**p.6 Personal Letter from [REDACTED]:**

**BREACH-01 CLASSIFICATION**

We've determined that the most recent anomaly cannot be reasoned with. As in, none of our instruments or ideas can possibly help us understand this anomaly. The only possible way we can begin to comprehend what it is doing is to approach the anomaly with no inherent knowledge or biases. We must decipher the chaos into more coherent pieces, which is futile. The problem with deciphering fragments of a larger image lies in the fallacy of knowing.

So far, key signs of manipulation are this: [REDACTED]

1. (Seemingly) random objects appear outside of the anomalous area. These objects emit a signal that comes from within the anomaly, but these positions constantly change.
2. There is language that is being formed from our own languages, but this language doesn't originate with us, it's being seeded from somewhere else, and finds its way into natural growth patterns such as biomaterial and the weather.
3. All carbon-based materials that don't house a consciousness, evaporate upon contact with the wall surrounding the anomalous area.
4. When gazing into the locally affected area with our telescopes and radiometric dating instruments, we can tell that [REDACTED] time [REDACTED] passed. (The numbers we receive from the temporal scales and weather data suggest that this is both true and untrue. The most we can

determine is that a tangible form of infinity exists within the area and disrupts any progress for humanity).

5. I have an intense craving for rotting apples. I cannot comprehend why. It began upon first sight of the algae seething through the moon.

We must unlearn everything before we can even figure out what is happening. So

[REDACTED] a sacrifice must be made. [REDACTED]

Octagonals, I will volunteer [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

amnesiac. My new [REDACTED] mind [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] IT IS ALREADY DONE [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] attempt to reshape [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

embed [REDACTED] into our bodies and live with this for a month or two before entry. If the beginning of my theory is correct, then we should be able to pass through without much of a problem.

What we shall find will be a mystery that I will never figure out [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] may he be the anchor that holds us down before [REDACTED]

I will organize a list of people and send down an application. [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

We will arrange for a procedure to happen tomorrow morning. We will do it in

[REDACTED] [REDACTED] show up, [REDACTED] [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] and allow the programmers to begin the brainwash. We will alternate [REDACTED]

brain's plasticity with the neural-prod and noninvasive telekinetic surgery without

destroying any neurons. The goal is to erase everything but [REDACTED] name and provide a new slate to be impressed upon. The memory erasure should take about six or seven hours to complete. Once it's [REDACTED] amnesiac, and once the magnetic resonance imaging device determines it, we will be good to continue the project.

Make sure [REDACTED] administered at least 200 micrograms of lysergic acid diethylamide and 5 grams of psilocybin before [REDACTED] the forest and [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

Please let [REDACTED] know to hold off on the Amon-Rom Moon Station fail-safe. We said we would activate it when things are starting to look irreversible. But we are not ready. Set the timer only on account that the project fails to make contact with Breach after this date and time: 01/03/4024 12:00 PM.

.....

*—Amon-Rom Moon Station—*

*Time until solar system self-destruction:*

*0d 0h 0m 3s*

—Jimison—

After Johniffer made a horrific transfer, I dug a hole out of some sort of desire to hide away. And in this moment of digging the hole, I also made sure to structure it in a way that could be easily distinguishable from the desert. Without thinking how to find the materials, I instead imagined a growth plan. I wandered through my wondering to find beds that were safe to sleep in. Beds that never threaten to relocate, beds softer than dirt. Mattresses of decay perfect for the dream spores to set home.

When I cried myself to safe slumber, I felt the sand work together to form bricks, bricks that collaborated with other bricks to form walls. And eventually unbeknownst to the well itself, a shaft of light with enough humidity to form an algal body in the bed below.

*“Ah, you are back. Did you figure it out?”*

“No.” I said, confidently.

*“That’s better than before. Are you staying for a while?”*

“For now...”

*“Great. I missed you.”*



Acknowledgments:

“Laurel once told me: *Don't you dare let anyone tell you that an artist can't be a leader.*”

—From a friend of the Community Art Council of Vancouver, speaking at my grandmother's funeral in 2023

For Grammy—the light and song that colored me, and will always live on as my unhinged childlike wonder. Wherever you are, may the grass be blue and melodies be endless.

Love and thanks to my family, who have provided me with support, food, and warmth. Love and thanks to my friends and cohort who supported me by providing eyes and conversation, and for simply existing.

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## RE / COGNITION

### re:

1. a prefix, occurring originally in loanwords from Latin, used with the meaning “again” or “again and again” to indicate repetition, or with the meaning “back” or “backward” to indicate withdrawal or backward motion: *regenerate*; *refurbish*; *retype*; *retrace*; *revert*; *again*; *against*; *anew*;

2. from the extended senses in "again," re- becomes "repetition of an action," and in this sense, it is extremely common as a formative element in English, applicable to any verb, the Oxford English Dictionary writes that it is "impossible to attempt a complete record of all the forms resulting from its use," and adds that "The number of these is *practically infinite*...."

3. the precise sense of re- is forgotten, lost in secondary senses, or weakened *beyond recognition* so that it has no apparent semantic content, (*receive*, *recommend*, *recover*, *reduce*, *recreate*, *refer*, *religion*, *remain*, *request*, *require*), there seem to have been more such words in Middle English than after, e.g. “recomfort”: *to comfort*, *console*; *encourage*; “recourse”: *a process*, *way*, *course*.

4. due to sound changes and accent shifts, re- sometimes entirely loses its identity as a prefix: *rebel*, *relic*, *remnant*, *restive*, *rest*, *remainder*, in a few words it is reduced to r-, as in *ransom*; *random*; *rally*; *rampart*—

5? *rebuild*—*refill*—*reset*—*rewrite*—*regret*—*regard*—*reward*—*refract*—*reverse*—*reactivate*—*regressive*—*rediscover*—*relativity*—*respective*—*redundancy*—*reverberate*—*reinterpret*—*remembrance*—*reconfigure*—*reminiscence*—*resemblance*—*recalcitrance*—*reconsecration*—*reconstitution*—*recollection*—*revolutionary*—*resystematize*—*remythologize*—*resurrectionist*—*retransmissions*—

—*a mycorrhizal poetics*—

### *Language and the Practical Application of Magic*

My thesis, *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus*, explores two sentences that pop up in my mind during my bouts of creative inspiration—“we apply meaning where there is none” and “I am a receptor.” I believe the fiction I write comes from a place that isn’t “here and now,” and it may or may not be the very same place the rest of us find our thoughts. I believe that thoughts and passion have me rather than the other way around.

Language is the foundation of our consciousness. When we write about our experiences (and not-experiences), we are constantly engaging with the unknown; the dream within a dream, or perhaps the void outside of whatever “here and now” is.

I wanted to find a way to summon the powers of the uncanny and the unknown to combat the stasis of modernity, (the explosion of technological progress, institutionalization, and politics rendering human life into commodities). There is a huge element of surrealism I adopted to achieve this effect of bewildering modernity. Surrealism stems from a cultural movement developed after the First World War where artists depicted illogical scenes and developed techniques to allow the unconscious mind to express itself, which is mostly influenced by Dadaism. Surrealism and Dadaism reject reason and aestheticism of Capitalism, favoring irrationality and anti-bourgeois protest. Today in 2023, this art form is probably referred to as anti-art and now, anti-memes; meta-jokes, and anti-humor are used as absurdist commentary on culture and politics. Personally, I find these forms of expression as a foundation of free thought and critical thought. Even if the content appears incomprehensible, or obviously contradictory like Magritte’s image of a pipe with the title, “Ceci n’est pas une pipe,” (“This is not a pipe,”) invoking absurd language around a commonplace symbol is a powerful conversation starter about the human experience. My story *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus* is intentionally obtuse as a way to edge out some conversation and internal dialogue.

With rapid technological progress and the dispersal of humans, comes a kind of sterilization of creativity. When automatic processes become favored over human processes, we start to lose humanity. I see this in AI technologies, and it scares me as much as it fascinates me. There are ways to mass-produce “art” for things like advertisements or videos on the internet, and soon that may grow into connecting automatic processes to 3D-printing technologies and

eventually to machines that can run themselves and add to themselves like fungal growth. But I am not afraid of the tools we've come to create like these neural networks. I'm more afraid of the human who chooses to abuse our humanity with it. The reason why I write absurd fiction is to recognize the strangeness of our collective reality. To hold a mirror up to the truly chaotic nature that we exist in and do so well at ignoring. Recognition of the strangeness of reality will help challenge the normalization of anthropocentrism, for the sake of reaffixing our collective being as coexistence rather than mere existence. To better hold ourselves accountable to our creations. To see ourselves as humans still, but directly threaded through by inhuman things.

One step toward challenging oppressive thinking is to accept that *magic* is real and embedded into our language. This means moving away from anthropocentric thinking, necessarily decentering ourselves into the perspective of an isometric universe. When I say isometric universe, I am thinking of isometric projection, mostly found in engineering drawings, two-dimensional representations of a third-dimensional object with three primary lines, which are equally tilted away from the viewer, combining the *illusion* of depth and undistorted presentation of principal object dimensions (as in, all objects in view are of *equal* and *real* proportions to each other). So an isometric universe would mean from an "omnipotent" perspective, all objects are of *equal status* and *unequal force*. The universe is not-for-humans; we are privileged to be a part of it. The isometric eye sees blood cells, hair, and phosphorous in things human and inhuman, strange.

Object-Oriented Ontology becomes a useful device for dealing with the mystical unknown. Timothy Morton, an English professor and OOO philosopher with a magical and ouroboric twist, does a great job at poetically addressing *the real fuzziness* of reality. He wrote about decentering the anthropocentric mind in favor of a logic of coexistence in his book *Realist*

*Magic*. It's a strangely realist take to assert that reality can be *unreal* sometimes. Like staring at an abstract painting or poem, these arrangements after a while can start to reflect back onto you, making you aware that reality really is chaotic and mysterious, indirect, entirely unknowable, yet partially knowable and visible. *Weird*. "The unknown, unknowable essence of the thing is the future; how something appears is the past. This is in accord with physics, since the speed of light guarantees that any sensual impression of a thing is an impression of its past" (Morton 215). What OOO posits is that magic is simply the existential state of all objects, it's totally weird to think about the things we cannot explain and apply language to it.

If language is our recognition of inner thoughts becoming matched to physical spaces, then magic must be a metaphor for causality, the relationship between cause and effect. The practical application of magic is simply metaphors. Language is the casing for this magic. (I say: sow seeds—seed gets turned by human holding tool—dirt gets watered—seed sprouts—magic.) Next time someone says, "Words don't matter" or "Words will never hurt me," kindly remind them this isn't the case. Because language is the spore-bearing fruiting body of an idea. Ideas seep through our mycorrhizal networks, and words allow for synthesis or competition.

The word *spore* derives from ancient Greek, meaning "seed, sowing." The dispersal of spores is fascinating because spores are tiny cells that form on a special branch, or *hyphae*, of the fungal colony, and can travel by wind, water, or mammal. Essentially, if we think too hard about it, there's a species of life out there with collective intelligence, able to *move* by releasing thousands of tiny cells into the ecosystem and hoping its spores land somewhere sustainable. My goal is to use *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus* as the fruiting body of many ideas, and the spore-magic works on its own when the text is eventually dispersed. I hope there are any grounds / minds willing to sustain any of the ideas they receive from the fruitbody.

Many of my personal beliefs have come from the spore-bearing fruitbodies of philosophers and scientists, spiritualists, and creative writers. One important concept I've seen in many texts is *relationships*. Theoretical physicist and philosopher Karen Barad explains the science of physical relationships with quantum entanglement and provides a theory of *agential realism* in their book *Meeting the Universe Halfway*. Barad also coins an important word that very well fits into Morton's concept of "the rift"; "intra-action", a word that replaces "interaction" for a de-anthropocentric word that allows objects to have agency without humans necessitating its existence. Morton might agree with Barad here as he sees Object-Oriented Ontology as a way to decenter the human in relation to the rest of the universe, in *Dark Ecology* and *Realist Magic*. And psychologist and consciousness theorist, Julian Jaynes, writes about the relationship between ancient humans and our modern being in *The Origin of Consciousness in the Breakdown of the Bicameral Mind*. Jaynes realizes that recognition of the imagination is one of the major catalysts to humans coming to terms with altering the environment.

The other important idea I see across these thinkers is a concern and love for humanity (even if it gets a bad rap) and ultimately the planet we exist on; *eco-logic*. When we write about relationships, we are setting into awareness that all things are of equal status and of unequal force. We should be aware of the boundaries of things, as well as recognize the meshings of boundaries, to see a change and nurture it with language. To recognize that the universe is very strange and humans may be part of the nutrient strands of the universe attempting to contradict itself. How strange is it to notice humans resisting hyper-objects like the weather or entropy?<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> "Life exists because it can locally violate thermodynamics, and it can locally violate thermodynamics because of intelligence, and it's molecular intelligence." – Neil Gershenfeld, Director of MIT's *Center for Bits and Atoms*, on Lex Fridman's podcast #380.

## *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus*

Ideas are as infectious as diseases, if not more so. *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus*, or “APE,” seeks to use the magic of language to spread idea-spores, opposing the pessimistic version of *infectious ideas* in favor of *spore-bearing ideas*. It is a piece of fiction, a translation of nonsense. Instead of being inseminated with thoughts, the spore urges for symbiosis. For a logic to arise out of the illogical.

“APE” loves to play with magical interpretations of quantum mechanics, asymmetrical perspectives, non-human and artificial intelligence, absurdity, and humanity. It questions powerful human institutions and the boundaries of consciousness. It wonders about the sacrifices made when inspiring acts of creation. At the heart of it, is really my anxiety about the damage human activity has done to our planet and each other—as well as future speculations like, what happens when our atmosphere has too many materials in orbit? What happens after the creation of self-replicating automata? What is affecting us from deep space that we cannot directly experience without tools or a change in perspective?

The story is anti-linear, meaning the ordering of the pages does not correlate to the order of events in the narrative universe. It is set in a dystopic far future and follows three identifiable characters, Johniffer, Jimison, Annalese, and a mysterious world government organization called the World Octagonals, housed in a concentrated complex called Breach. This organization “hires” Johniffer and Jimison to enter an area that is described as the Entangled Desert. Annalese is outside of the mission, experiencing things related to the anomaly, unable to separate the difference between it and her god *Antropy*. The desert is now swallowed by what looks like an emerald forest fire, but within is a strange mixture of carbon-based objects from the rest of the

planet. The cause of this anomaly seems to trace back to a celestially foreign intelligence, as the text reads: *from a signal being sent from multiple locations at once.*

The title of this project is a mashing of scientific language I am not accustomed to, specifically parts of the brain merging with aspects of nature, serving as a puzzle of meaning. This meaning construction should be reflective of the reader, as all our own experiences are unique to ourselves, “Anti-Parietal Epithalamus” could mean different things to different people.<sup>2</sup>

In addition to the human characters, there is an unidentifiable character called the *Pineal Caelum*, which is a collective-intelligent entity with mysterious intentions and obvious interferences. It appears in its own chapters, while it also appears as censoring of government documents, or as ghostly voices. And with these sections, I am practicing my poetics of “reverse meaning extraction,” or “Asemic literature.” This idea came from a mixture of ekphrasis and Asemic writing, to form a network of words on a page that appears meaningless until meaning is applied by the reader. *Magic?*

There’s a certain level of unconsciousness I desire to achieve before sitting down and writing. Asemic writing and ekphrasis ripple through my poetics. Sometimes the unconsciousness ritual is listening to or creating a song to catalyze the perceptions. To remove *me*, and fill the space with *immediate nonsense* which later ends up being edited for coherency and linkage from the mystical unknown to the real known. I think I learned from my father when he taught my Language Arts class in middle school: *For ten minutes, put your pencil or pen down on the paper and keep writing. Do not stop until the timer runs out. Do not stop. Just write*

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<sup>2</sup> When thinking in terms of OOO, “nature” is a nothing concept. It’s too vague of a word that encapsulates too many complex interweaving objects. I continue to use nature as a word because it’s a commonplace understanding. “I’ve seen penguins, plutonium, pollution and pollen. But I’ve never seen Nature (I capitalize the word to reinforce a sense of its deceptive artificiality)” (Morton 42).

*a word or phrase over and over until something new wants to take shape. Don't think too hard, just do.*

It seems too simplistic, too easy. There has to be more to creative generation than that. Sure, there are all the compounded experiences of conversation or reading, but the act of writing itself is a specific craft that I think has the potential to spur a kind of hypnosis. If one is lucky, one can achieve a flow state. I've been able to do this on occasion, but it is definitely useful in disintegrating the ego. So that it does not distract the process of simply putting something down on paper. The ego is what fights the mind and body, a reaction that is useful for so many things but usually detrimental in the process of creation.

Asemic writing is a hybrid art form involving "no specific semantic content" with generally very little meaning. What one sees is "text" that is illegible, intentionally obscured. I was immediately drawn to this because of my own sense of perceptions of deafness. Asemic writing is like a visual metaphor for how my ears and mind work in attempting to perceive spoken meaningful language. Similar to my German Grandmother who never fully learned English, living in a hybrid world in America was both being able and unable to understand the world around her. I live in constant translation, a metaphor on top of the metaphors we share. While spoken language is generally used to transmit meaning, Asemic writing and deafness do not correlate because Asemic writing is inherently without meaning. But meaning does not arise from language, it arises from the symbol system of thought.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In Jeffrey P. Braden's paper "Deafness as a Natural Experiment", he writes "The first assumption made in deafness as a natural experiment was that deaf children fail to acquire language as a result of their deafness. Because they cannot hear the speech used by their parents, siblings, and others in their world, children do not acquire language in the same way that their normal hearing peers acquire and use language." Conclusions: 1. There is no functional relationship between verbal language and cognition. 2. Verbal language is not the mediating symbol system of thought. 3. There is no relationship between concept formation and level of verbal language development (Vernon, 1967, p.331). Hearing loss severity is defined by two dimensions: *frequency* and *intensity*.

My fascination with this art style goes deeper than deafness and finds itself in the world of ontology. Specifically, OOO which describes reality as being multi-layered in a sense. It splits reality into two realms: the *illusory aesthetic realm* that we sense things and interact in, and the *real causal realm* where the effects of relationships transpire and objects can access each other. Asemic writing acts as a mediator of the sensual experience apparatus rather than the emotionally meaningful one. It takes the void of meaning, something from behind (or out in front of) the illusory aesthetic realm, and works backward from traditional texts. Instead of providing a story or diagram, Asemic writing provides a chance for meaning to arise from nothing, reverse meaning extraction.

My love of puzzles and labyrinths, and creating them, has been with me forever. When I was younger and could access a computer, I found websites where one could create small games and I spent hours creating labyrinths and puzzles involving observing patterns and environmental clues. This continued later into a love of the video game genre involving elements of exploration and information. Progress and rewards come in the form of new narrative access to the world. And one of the best parts of gaming now is the number of glitches that break the game but also provide strange new ideas of how things could work in the imagination.

A traditional book serves to create a sense of progress through narrative, providing the experience of exploration and information gathering in an alternative world. Writing *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus* felt like writing scripts for a videogame, so that non-linearity and obfuscations that break traditional narrative structures act as a kind of interactive storytelling device; a constant reminder that “you are the reader/player/observer, you make the choices with the apparatus in your hands.” And when you experience a *glitch*, how do you work around it? I think of this story as an absurd exercise in the exploration of our imagination and personalities. I

want the reader to engage with this text by jumping through other texts or having conversations outside of the text, or making a definite choice path of putting the book away.

When the Pineal Caelum interjects itself into the story, it is clear that it is outside of time, it's intentionally jarring. The words are usually jammed together digitally with text boxes, or strung together with em-dashes. The goal was to achieve a wall of text that could be read in any direction or gazed upon like a map. The effects of this remind me of optical illusions, but a personal internalized one. The experience of seeing an illusion often involves an involuntary breaking down of reality by the brain in hopes of achieving a better understanding of what one is seeing. Like the Ames trapezoid where a trapezoidal window rotates continuously but our brain refuses to see it rotate a full 360 degrees, instead we see it oscillate. You can try hard to “fix the illusion” but ultimately you'd relax to a “regular existential state” that convinces you to give in to the ambiguity. The meanings of the map of words or jammed phrases form another layer of ambiguity in the imagination. I hope for the reader to build mind architectures of their own, using words like lines, colors, and textures—a personalized animation in each mind.

Along the same lines as optical illusions are pure mathematics, the study of the properties and structures of *abstract objects*. In “APE,” “abstract objects” are electromagnetic radio transmissions coagulating into physical objects. (Think weird science fiction like *Valis* with information embedded in a strange light beam or *2001: A Space Odyssey* dealing with extraterrestrial intelligence). The idea is imagining a magical link between physical objects and abstract concepts. Magical effects tend to radiate from visual representations of fractals or the words we use to describe them. Like staring at the Mandelbrot Set for too long starts to ground oneself in the reality that there is enough space for near-infinite progressions to take place—spirals within spirals within spirals. (Even more uncanniness arises from studying a tree

after viewing a fractal and identifying the similarities... ) The visual results of equations are astounding. It's strange how throughout my early years of development, I hated math as it was too rigid and boring. But to imagine that math is responsible for images that mimic psychedelic imagery or even the patterns in a tree is too strange for me to ignore.<sup>4</sup>

I live inside *Anti-Parietal Epithalamus* as the Pineal Caelum, a collection of my improvisational habits. In some sense, each Pineal Caelum “map” piece is like a Rorschach test, without the observer, the reader is left on their own to detect anything they deem to be a recognizable image. Every time I sat down to write for it, I was surprised. My creative process feels like a merging mycelium network amid resynthesis. The fragmentation of the Pineal Caelum narrative and its interjection into everything else is a representation of my invisible disability and my investigation into post-humanist metaphysics.

### *Relationships & Eco-Logic*

The theory of relativity is a physics concept developed in the early 20th century and pioneered by Albert Einstein. It posits two laws to the universe that were seen as contradictory in classical mechanics (wait, you mean things can change?):

1. The laws of physics are the same in equal reference frames.
2. The speed of light in a vacuum is always the same, no matter what.

These two ideas being held at the same time quite literally shattered our paradigm of classical mechanics, and of course, brought along the possibility of nuclear weaponry among

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<sup>4</sup> Some of my favorite genres of music are “asymmetrical” and involves unusual time signatures. Some songs feel oddly magical because of this, like Tool’s *Schism* which has the Fibonacci sequence embedded in the syllables of the lyrics, drum rhythm, and overall song progression. It’s like a human tree in sonic form, a mesmerizing pattern if you look too deep.

other amazingly dangerous things. But this breaking down of classical understanding suggests this about our fundamental reality: because the speed of light never changes, then something else must. The result is time dilation. An object being viewed by two separate entities will never be an objective view because varying objective views produce varying results. Not only did this break the mathematic mind, but it also introduced a new realm of ethics and ontology.

Reeling this back to a level I can understand, I first begin by gripping the steering wheel of my car and thinking way too much about all the micro-actions. How am I so sure that my fingers won't slip or my ankle won't twitch? How am I so confident in the machine that I am driving at high speeds? Why am I even experiencing these thoughts? I am starting to feel uneasy about the boundaries between me and the car, and begin to notice how much the nonhuman world is a part of me, and how much I am unconsciously maneuvering the now.

Psychologist and consciousness theorist Julian Jaynes wrote about consciousness and how much it has evolved since the early days of humans. It is generally agreed upon that language and communication helped change how humans interacted with the rest of the planet. Originally most experiences were seen as external to the human, like commands of the Gods or apparitions with tasks. There was a moment in time when the external voices "retreated"; the Gods suddenly vanished. After this, the ability to introspect emerged. The human now had an identity, every individual distinguished themselves with their independent thoughts. Consciousness grew to become self-aware. The amazing thing though is that the Gods may have abandoned us, but they still live through language. So whatever was "missing" is actually still there if we look to science—matter never simply vanishes just merely transforms into another state.

Jaynes notices that consciousness relies on relationships. “The relationship of consciousness to what we are conscious of is not fundamentally different from the relationship of a tree to the ground in which it is rooted, or even the gravitational relationship between two celestial bodies. This view was conspicuous in the first quarter of [the 20th] century... If a piece of chalk is dropped on the lecture table, that interaction of chalk and table is different only in the complexity from the perceptions and knowledges that fill our minds. The chalk knows the table just as the table knows the chalk. That is why the chalk stops at the table” (Jaynes 4).

Relationships matter, and keeping agency and perspective in mind is key to the orientation (re-cognition) of our perspective as humans in a non-human universe. To do away with the common ideology of “progress means colonizing every planet around every star!” And to do away with assumptions over investigations. We must recognize that there is no “getting into” relationships, as relationships already transpire upon the moment of language access. Once I, the individual, call a tree or meteor into question, there is an immediate relationship between me and the object and those I am sharing the words with. The only issue is that our current human language is limiting (and also threatened by the censorship of powerful human institutions). Language is limiting in the sense that words don’t mean a thing until they reach ears, neurons, and *the rift*—my ears fail as if everyone has a coded mouth. A greeting could sound like a chirping bird and a callout from behind sounds like the bark of a dog. When language emerges out of the sonic realm, it’s uncanny. So when we speak to animals and plants, we cannot ask them human questions, so we rely on other communication efforts that transcend species such as visual, auditory, or various chemical queues.

Theoretical Physicist Karen Barad posits that relationships matter deeply from a quantum mechanical perspective. They describe themselves as an agential realist, defining *agency* as a

*relationship and not something one "has."* "There's no politics-free, bias-less science" (Barad 172). We can acknowledge that all objects are of equal status and unequal force, so therefore all things have agency in and of themselves due to the constant state of interactivity. The idea of agential realism is supported by a neologism created by Barad, *intra-action*, which signals the ontological inseparability of "intra-acting agencies." Meaning, that since objects do not precede their interactions, then objects must emerge through particular *intra-actions*. This metaphysical idea is supported by Barad's interest in quantum entanglement specifically; the phenomenon that occurs when a group of particles are generated and interact/share spatial proximity in such a way that each group cannot be described independently of the state of others including particles separated by *a spooky distance*. Barad references Bohr's ideas about the notions of "waves" and "particles," which I find important to see how he phrases these classical notions: mere abstractions (Barad 54). It isn't until interactions with other systems do the definable boundaries of "waves" and "particles" appear, and even then, we are using our observational tools and our brain/mind to define nature as it reveals itself to us.

To complement quantum theories and consciousness studies, I like to investigate the weirdness of philosophy. Running parallel with OOO, New Materialism seeks to revitalize the discussion around the representation and interpretation of material, which OOO would clarify as objects. New Materialism delves into the magic of objects, of 'things' not necessarily human, a politics of "thing-power." (Bennett 350) Philosopher, professor at Johns Hopkins, and political theorist Jane Bennett wrote about the vibrancy of 'things' in a non-newtonian view, shifting human-centered thinking into 'things' in and of themselves.

"One large men's black plastic work glove  
a matted mass of tree pollen pods  
one dead rat who looked asleep  
one white plastic bottle cap

one smooth stick of wood”<sup>5</sup>

It is as though the new weird philosophies have snipped a fragment of the stale 1700s philosophy mycelia network, and spawned New Materialist spores that give agency back to the objects Kant, Hegel, or Heidegger refused to acknowledge. Humans are not necessary to the existence of a thing to go about its “thinging” business. Yet, we are deeply entangled with so many objects, again—imagining life as a supermassive evershifting sprawling network of mushrooms interconnecting in, admittedly spooky ways.

I am not personally religious due to my distaste for organized religion as a concept, but I do respect the endeavors into the unknown. I am especially fascinated by those who lose their religion and still achieve heightened introspection. Jiddu Krishnamurti is a wonderful example of this, born and raised to be the new “World Teacher.” According to Theosophy, a modernized religion established in the United States in the late 19th century, a high-ranking member of the hidden spiritual hierarchy would be elected as the “World Teacher.” A position responsible for “overseeing the evolution of humankind.” This society was dismantled by the then-adolescent Krishnamurti, who believed the religion was contradictory to its message. When approached about beliefs or high power, he describes an “otherness” that is present at all times. His words about being present almost reflect that of Julian Jayne’s theories of consciousness, in how the world around us is essentially a part of us as we are a part of it. Krishnamurti spoke about understanding relationships as a core part of our identity, “Understanding the self only arises in relationship, in watching yourself in relationship to people, ideas, and things; to trees, the earth, and the world around you and within you. Relationship is the mirror through which the self is

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<sup>5</sup> “As I looked at these items, they shimmied back and forth between trash and thing--between, on one hand, stuff to ignore (notable only as a residue of human action and inaction: the litterer's incivility, the neighbor's failure to sweep the storm drain clear, Sam's vermin-eradication efforts, the Department of Public Works' road maintenance schedule) and, on the other hand, stuff that commands attention as vital and alive in its own right, as an existant in excess of its reference to human flaws or projects. The second kind of stuff has thing-power: it commands attention, exudes a kind of dignity, provokes poetry, or inspires fear." (Bennett 350)

revealed. Without self-knowledge, there is no basis for right thought and action.” What I find valuable in his words is the lack of coercive messaging. He maintained a positive and pathless approach to his philosophy that inspires me—acceptance of the many unique hyphae strands committing to a dynamic path and coexistence.

And with that, I circle back to the re-cognition of reality. I’ve found myself within the new waves of object-oriented ontology and all its other weird materialist and post-humanist branches. The bridge between OOO and quantum mechanics is aesthetics. Morton posits that “the existence of an object is irreducibly a matter of coexistence. Objects contain other objects, and are contained ‘in’ other objects” (Morton 45). In the aesthetic realm, objects hold space and emanate time, “spacing” and “timing” everything in and around them. Black holes, quarters, trees, birds, humans, hairs, cells, and cars are all objects. Every one of a unique scale, texture, and vibration. Post-Heideggerian thought imagines objects are unique in and of themselves, and that objects cannot be reduced to their parts and wholes, or *know* other objects.<sup>6</sup> Because all objects are themselves and not-themselves. I am me but I am also not me, because when you see me now I am alive, and in one hundred years I will not be. When I hold this glass, it is a glass until it meets the floor at a high velocity, for a moment it becomes both glass and not-glass, the vibration of the relationship being recognized by the void is so immense, the new object must take hold and thus—the great shattering.

Morton continues to explain material as so brilliantly vivid and complicated that it is sad some sciences still refer to things as amorphous blobs of *matter*. In both the aesthetic and causal dimensions, *matter* isn’t real. I can see eyeballs, ashtrays, and pencils—but not matter. Eyeballs

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<sup>6</sup> To *know* from an ontological perspective is to have “direct access” which is impossible to describe without metaphor (language/magic). It is thought that there is a rift within every object that also holds the object itself. It is this rift that causes the blurriness of the real world and allows for inter/intra-objective activity to occur in the causal dimension.

have nerves and goo I don't know the names to. This ashtray is made up of a refurbished tin can. These pencils have wood and graphite in them. As a human, I smell, taste, touch, hear, and see, filtering the aesthetic world into my inner-object world, where I think my mind is. "Out in front of things" is the causal realm, the real place where things happen that may or may not align with what we experience in our immediate aesthetic realm. Both realms are as real as the other—Morton imagines the aesthetic realm as a film, or thin sheet, enveloping/overlapping with the causal realm. The causal realm acts as parts of the rift found in all objects, occasionally capturing objects, congealing them, and birthing something new.

For Eco-Logic, I want to adopt realism without (traditional) materialism, without matter or nature, to visualize better how vivid, detailed, and uncanny our reality is. I want to believe consciousness is elsewhere. I want to believe consciousness is as real as a tree; I think it's far too weird that humans are the only ones (we know of) capable of language or physical manipulation this complex. There may not be consciousness in a tree like I have, but there is certainly a level of *experience* in that tree. There are many other reasons why that tree is there and is experiencing itself. There are real butterflies landing on real moss in a real copse of trees—it is what lurks in the dream outside our dream that stirs us all. We can be friends of all things.

Maybe mushrooms are a more exciting example to house consciousness, as fungi are not plants. There's no photosynthesis for fungi, instead, they extract nutrients from their environment—there's a certain level of experience being shown off there isn't it? It does seem rather weird that the spore dispersal mechanism looks too chaotic to sustain a consistent lifespan of colonies... but it works. When the fungi find a new home, they will find a way to recycle the environment such as breaking down leaves or corpses, absorbing the material, and *translating* it into mycelium threads sprawling beneath the mushroom.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> "Life, uh, finds a way." – Dr. Malcolm from *Jurassic Park* (dir. Spielberg 1993)

What can we learn from mycelium? We cannot have a casual conversation with a mushroom—well we could nothing is stopping us, but it might not work in the way we would expect. We've already made friends with dogs, we can conversate with them in an even more engaging way. Dogs seem adjacent to our consciousness more than mushrooms do. Only our temporalities vary depending on the scale of objects we encounter. What dogs, mushrooms, and humans have in common is agency; with coexistence, we can learn from each other.

### *The Sixth Sense is Creativity*

When I say the sixth sense is creativity, I mean it in a metaphorical way, which could very well be as real as the words to describe it. Since language is the foundation of consciousness, creativity must be what our imagination is, and what we do with the idea spores in our mind. Creativity is one of the senses that help with our navigation as objects in an object-oriented universe. It is the guide through uncertainty, “as thespians maneuver through the now and its messiness,” says Milo, a.k.a R.A.P. Ferreira, on his track *Zen Scientist*, there is no self-actualization without committing to a path to wander.

Before I entered the MFA program, I wandered into *The Southern Reach Trilogy* by Jeff Vandermeer, and immediately read all three books in a week—*Annihilation*, *Authority*, and *Acceptance*. The three books are speculative horror laced with *Eco-Logic*. New Materialism rears its hyphae here and greets the New Weird, a literary genre that explores the fluidity of genre in speculative science fiction, absurdity, and sometimes horror. *Annihilation* involves a mysterious place called “Area X”, where a team of scientists is sent in the area to discover what happened to the last team and find any new information. There's a heavy mood of anxiety, of hopefulness in

the face of indifference. Across the trilogy, all the scientific materials and people turn toward understanding the supernatural, the mysterious unknown. In the books outside of the trilogy, using a similar speculative universe, it's clear that science can bring humanity so far until a kind of *chaos* appears, something unprecedented and unexpected, something impossible to prepare for. Vandermeer's stories are wonderfully weird, inspiring my science fiction mythos with the strange blend of science (known-knowns & known-unknowns) and the supernatural (unknown-unknowns & unknown-knowns).<sup>8</sup>

My thesis began generating around the time I learned of some unique books. In the first year of my MFA, I was introduced to *Houses of Ravicka* by Renee Gladman. The fluidity of the text was mesmerizing, and I felt every moment blur into one another. I was fascinated by the asymmetrical images generated in my mind, Gladman's scenes were of magical architecture. Her writing style made me lost in the text while at the same time being aware of the lines in my peripheral vision. It made me think about how perceptions can be warped, deceiving. I was inspired, especially when researching her artwork and finding asemic writing in the form of buildings. I later read another book of hers, unrelated to the Ravickian series, entitled *Calamities*. This book read as a collection of journal entries about her everyday life, but like her fictional pieces, the language was constructed in a way that made each scene feel like a dream sequence.

In the same year of the MFA, I was introduced to Salvador Plascencia's *The People of Paper*. My immediate love of the text began with the first page upon pure presentation—columned writing in a chapter book is a delightful change of pace. Each chunk of text follows a narrow point of view from each character. The story follows a Latin American

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<sup>8</sup> Known, to know, to unknow, to know a mystery, the unknown unknowns—the more I see the word *know* in a row, the more uncanny it looks, *weird*. There are many things to unknow, and many things to know. The connotations of unknown unknowns are spooky, non-local, and unpredictable—but we are entangled with the things we cannot know, and that is okay, that is what conversation is for.

style magical realist narrative of a young girl and her father having to deal with the jarring concern of “Saturn’s influence.” Whenever “Saturn” interjects, the text on the pages becomes obfuscated by blocks of ink and symbols that feel mystical. It felt like Plascencia was Saturn and the characters were uncannily aware that something was wrong. This story had me thinking about perspective and the necessary lack of information and absurdity as important in inventing a modern mystical piece. And shows a great example of how the literary genre can adopt tropes found in media like a “breaking down of the fourth wall.”

*House of Leaves* by Mark Z. Danielewski is a fascinating and frustrating piece. It encapsulates everything I love about visuality and demands something from the reader. There are several narratives overlapping one another, and they all connect in various ways across the story. The center of it all stems from the “found materials” of a man with a family documenting their house with a video camera. Outside of time and this narrative, are the words of a blind scholar who seemingly goes mad over writing about the documentary. Then there’s the person who introduces the story as kind of a misogynist asshole who stumbles upon the blind scholar’s writing about the documentation of the house. We as the reader ultimately find this thick book, a collection of clashing narratives from different people at different times centered around a house that is bigger on the inside than the outside. It blew me away to read through the book and feel as though the book itself is larger on the inside than the out, as I was coerced to go back and forth through the pages to catch strands of text that disperse in asymmetrical ways just to gather some meaning. Everything in this book is twisted and the concepts are thoughtful, it is definitely an exercise in self-exploration as a reader, to challenge our sixth sense. It feels like a puzzle and a feat to finish, which isn’t usual for traditional literature. This book does a good job of acting on

its own, becoming an object in and of itself. All readers approach the book as any of us would a labyrinth, one turn at a time, and if there's a dead end, turn around and try a different path.

Through incoherence and uncertainty, sometimes the only way to acknowledge something unfathomable, something complicated, is to simply try another approach. Creativity is the sixth sense, extend your hyphae network another way, release your spores in another direction. Be conscious of other mycelium networks or trees. Grow and learn how to adapt, and pass along the nutrient knowledge. Expand threads into the material and resynthesize it into something you can work with, and give back to the community. Any blockages in the material that prevents growth, can be warped around or addressed. In our human ecosystem, we have the privilege to use imagination on top of the intelligence we share with the external world. Our ideas and language have the ability of calamity like any tool, but their best quality is their immateriality that manages to pass thresholds into materiality. A conversation is always a great place to start anything at all—

*“I wonder how similar we are to flies? Like any sudden movements nearby them, they just up and leave. Do they even know why they do it? Are they afraid of dying?”*

*“I don't think a fly has the fear of death, Jimison.”*

*“Yeah sure, but it's got something there right?”*

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