

Death Valley

Part 1: Unthinking David

You are currently ineligible for Reproductive Service in the state of California due to an active Red Flag for **Terrorism**. (9/11/2066)

If you believe this Red Flag was issued in error, you have a right to appeal before the issuing court.

Inyo County Superior Court, Superman Complex Floor 100 Hall 3.

If you were assigned a Federal Psychological Guardian ("Psychic Guardian") in conjunction with this Red Flag, you may be eligible for Reproductive Service *without basic contact rights* provided a Note of Psychological Fitness signed by (1) a psychiatrist licensed in the State of California, (2) your assigned Psychic Guardian (if different), and (3) the judge presiding over your Red Flag case.

Hi Cassandra. When is our next appointment?

Hi David. Thanks for checking in. :)

Our next appointment will be between 10am and 4pm on September 12th, 2066.

As always, I'm looking forward to it! — Cassandra Smith

CASIO
1:17 PM
9/11/2066

OK. Have you had a chance to take a look at my note from Dr. Kennings? Did he send it over?

FOXYCHAN

Conspiracy to Commit Murder, Conspiracy to Assassinate a Government Official, Conspiracy to Commit Nuclear Sabotage, Continuing Criminal Enterprise

Aliases:

Julie Hing, Huli Jing, Julie Kitsune, 0x7F07656XC7yc88h098an0E751t7401E5r6n89a6L, Fox, Punished Fox, The Real Fox, Her Stellar Luminousness The Empress Fox, Crossbearer of the

Most Permanent and Most Base Order of the Canine Suns, Undercover Janitor of the Order of the Dog Star, Ineradicable Jester of the Order of the Wolf Star, Incombustible Effigie of the Erotic and Most Capital Order of the Fox Star, Secret Chief of the Unnamed Company, Doubly Secret President of the Unnamed Nation, Totally Secret Fundament of the Most Exhaustive and Most Reductive Category of the Abstract Objects

Date(s) of Birth Used: March 15, 2040, April 19, 2040, October 12, 2040

Place of Birth: Unknown

Hair: Black

Eyes: Green

Height: 5'6"

Weight: 100 to 120 pounds

Build: Slim

Complexion: Light

Sex: Unknown

Race: Asian

Occupation: Unknown

Nationality: Unknown

Tattoos: Foxychan has a tattoo of a Yin Yang symbol above her solar plexus and a vermillion Hebrew letter Beth on her stomach

Reward:

The FBI is offering a reward of up to \$10,000,000 for information leading directly to the arrest of Foxychan.

Remarks:

Foxychan has ties to Death Valley.

Caution:

Foxychan is wanted for her alleged direction of Love manufacturing and 2065 violent incidents as the founder and principal leader of the "Order of the Canine Suns" from 2061 until her disappearance in 2063, including mass shootings, assassinations, and infrastructure attacks within the United States and 38 countries across Europe, Africa, Oceania, East and South Asia, North and South America, and Polynesia.

— SHOULD BE CONSIDERED EXTREMELY DANGEROUS —

I haven't recieved a message from Dr. Kennings but I've worked with his practice in the past. Would you like me to reach out to him? — Cassandra Smith

That's OK. I have a paper copy for you to sign here. See you tomorrow. Could you possibly tell me an exact time you will be here between 10 and 4?

Welcome to Hell. We are America's #1 Trusted Source for Research Neurocircuits.

SPECIAL OFFER

500 "Young Love" Microcaps (2060 vintage) by gödel. Min. 1hr Max. 6hr variable intensity time release. Retrofitted from original Difference "Love" (incl. proof of manufacture) for compatibility with modern ambient computers running OS Q: Green Door (Difference's *Engine* line of machines and Orange's *Hearth* machines) and full support for the cutting edge in circuit gaming: emotional and doxastic hallucination.

Purveyor's Note: You haven't experienced Love until you've played a game with these incredible immersion mechanics purpose-built by gödel for *Young Love* (2066). Buyers receive a free alpha copy. This is the first circuit game to bend players' feelings and beliefs directly. After trying it ourselves, we're sure it won't be the last.

Psychiatrist General's Warning: Some ingestible neurocircuits are known to cause permanent cognitive impairments in users with associated genetic predispositions such as the Meiner-Abbey gene and Cox-50 geneplex. Consult the latest table of neurocircuit-gene interactions and banned neurocircuit models at www.fsg.gov/wetware before ingesting any neurocircuit.

SPECIAL NOTICE: Recreational use of "Love" neurocircuits is prohibited under the Controlled Substances Act and carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 2 years in prison. 15% of the US population carry genes known to enable Love-induced sexual psychosis and auto foundry syndrome, a highly contagious sexually transmitted zombiism.

Click here to read the full Designer's Commentary for Young Love on Hell Blog.

BUY NOW for \$399 and get free shipping and delivery.

All products on Hell are manufactured in Commonwealth foundries with consistent "Safe" ratings in the Federal Psychological Guard's Wetware Factbook. Without exception, products on Hell are sold for verifiable academic research purposes only. For a sample of eligible research projects, visit the University of Death Valley's List of Open Fellowship Opportunities in Creative Writing.

Apprentice Research Fellow, Puppeteering in American Literature and Intelligence
Apprentice Research Fellow, Iconoclastic Dirges and Revisionist Possibilities
Apprentice Research Fellow, Berzerk Advances on the Ineffable
Apprentice Research Fellow, Images of Love Psychosis in Contemporary Addiction Literature
Apprentice Research Fellow, Artificially Intelligent Dating Games and their Fanfictions

Apprentice Research Fellow, Blackmail Teasers and Bat Signaling in American Cinema
Apprentice Research Fellow, Character Design in Fabricated Self-Doxing
Apprentice Research Fellow, Psychedelic Biblical Ornamentation
Apprentice Research Fellow, Hoax Literary Works and their Forgeries

I know surprise visits can be a nuisance but I want to help you maintain a healthy sleep and work schedule. You told me these were personal goals of yours. Has that changed? —
Cassandra Smith

GÖDEL'S FRUIT OF IGNORANCE AND THE MAKING OF YOUNG LOVE

It is one thing to change perceptions and another thing to change beliefs and feelings. What challenges did you face in the making of Young Love?

My big problem at the start of *Young Love* was, would old players be able to suspend their disbelief and call themselves young? A young body was not enough for me. It was very important for me to get this done. I made a young woman so beautiful and I could not fall in love with her because she expected me to share in her youth, I mean youth of the heart and of the mind, and I had to fake this, and she could tell that my persona was a fake, and this made her confused and sad. It is not so bad to pretend that the whole of you is something that is a real part of you — to embody the warrior or saint or criminal that sits inside of us all, so they say, say — but youth is something that is so holistic in its ramifications, it is not like these other things that amount to differences in basic character dimensions that can be encoded and dialed at will. To feign youth I had to feign hard matters of fact: ignorances and passions, where in the first case I had to feign the absence of knowledge that was, matter-of-factly, present, and in the second case I had to feign the presence of feeling that was, matter-of-factly, absent.

These kinds of feigning are the demands imposed by bad jobs, bad politics, and bad marriages that suck our souls and bring us to games to escape them, so they say:

Pretend you do not know that what we sell is poison, that you do not know why they let us sell the poison, that you do not know that without your poison money, she would file for a divorce from you; Show them that you do not sell poison for the money, that the thought of antidotes makes you want to lose your lunch, and that without a second thought you will drink the poison when she does, well ahead of when she does, even, if the world were ever to push you both into a bunker beneath the city and begin to beat at your door to stop your love.

Yes indeed, my intent was for *Young Love* to be an ideal escape from these burnt out scenarios and I began to worry that it would end up overshadowing them in the level of emotional exhaustion it effected:

Pretend you do not know where love leads nor the manner in which it skips its beat and fades, nor what defibrillation means when a lover's heart stops; Convince her that she and you have gained entrance into the world intended for you through one another by means of the animalism

of your movements, the sincerity of your tones, and the effortlessness of your nakedness; Pretend you do not know that death is possible, and act accordingly in the defense of your rightful home.

I named the characters in *Young Love* Ava and Ed as a partial reconstitution of Adam and Eve in reverse because in order to create them, I would need to undo the eating of the fruit of knowledge from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil. I would need to return my players to a state of innocence that allowed them back into the Garden of Eden God banished us from when we ate that fruit.

Of course, a fruit cannot be uneaten any more than a bell can be unrung, and Eden was a place on Earth that simply no longer is what it was, so I thought of my task more precisely as the discovery of a Tree of Ignorance of Good and Evil whose fruit undoes the knowledge fruit's damage. This new framing began to locate the technical solutions I could pursue conveniently squarely within my ken: the fruit of ignorance would be a work of ingestible neurocircuitry.

I wondered, would God be happy with me? I supposed that if He prohibited his children from eating the fruit of knowledge then, if anything, He would be delighted to see us eating its opposite. Regardless, God seemed to make His prohibitions explicit whenever they were not obvious, and is it obvious that Man should not seek a return to Eden? While Man's law backs up every physical restraint with the rule that it should not be broken, God delivered his punishments to Adam and Eve as hardships to bear, not commandments to obey, and nor were His punishments works like chains imbued with intents that would be disrespected by their breaking. It was Eden which was his masterwork and held an intent we disrespected, and what we suffer now (the struggle of work, the pain of childbirth, and the shame of subordination) are natures of an outside reality that lacks the benefits of His design.

The error that disappointed our God should be ours to correct if it was ours to commit. God went cold on us like a Father whose car we dinged up and lost our privileges to, because only our willingness to raise ourselves up to the task of fixing the car up for Him unprompted (even if that would mean sneaking the keys and it out of the garage and driving it out to the mechanic) could earn us His respect back.

Did our Father say we were barred for life? Or did he only hide the key? Would his cherub boot us from the Tree of Life if we climbed it innocently?

These poignant questions you raise as my interviewer are exactly what I sought hard answers to. I set myself to the task of technologizing the innocence you mention, the condition of shameless, ignorant, passionate intensity that my players would need to experience *Young Love*.

Pondering the Trees for clues to the way forward I got lost in the realm of biological metaphor as I often get at the start of new technical tasks, finding in the intricate tapestry of life's forever war

for survival an endless supply of analogues to potential technical mechanisms, and soon considered the strangler fig as an ideal image of the Tree I sought.

Beginning its life as a rootless epiphyte upon the crown of an established tree, the strangler fig grows rapidly, from the top down to the forest bottom, in a spiraling tangle of tentacles that wrap and squeeze its host tree, eventually to death, after it reaches the ground and plants its roots, leaving in place a hollow semblance of the dead. These morbid acrobatics are perfected for the hypercompetitive darkness of overgrowth forests and extend this Tree's proliferation to dense cities, where it appears to grow spontaneously on sheer building faces and corners, and casts its roots in sagging webs among them like unkempt power lines.

This Tree is a sophisticated retrospective self-perfection, the imitation of a tree by a tree predicated on the existence of other trees, an assumption the very first trees were not able to make. Its depth of understanding upends the orthodoxy of trees: it begins growing in the air and extends downward in search of dirt; its roots are the pioneers of its growth while its leaves are the stalwart foundation; and it has no central trunk of heartwood to gird its shape from the branching innovation its resources are instead set upon.

This Tree is ineradicable: its kernels survive hurricanes, floods, urbanization, and darkness by starting out with the highest of what all trees before it have achieved and working backwards to conserve these inherited positions.

This Tree is a dominator and an agriculturalist: its encasing hug kills some trees and offers others protection. Trees who do not learn to thrive caged in service to the strangler fig are slowly culled within its territories while for those who do, the strangler fig is a suit of armor against the elements. One day, only the strangler and its servants will remain...

I found myself in communion with the personality of this Tree and asked myself what fruit of ignorance it contained. What certain knowledge would it invite Man to dispense with? What feats of blindness did its fruits prove possible?

The fig is an urnlike vessel that houses thousands of inwardly blooming flowers known only to the fig wasp. A hole in its side called an *ostiole* is locked to all but its chosen female fig wasps. Born pregnant in the inverted nocturnal meadow of a fig, a female escapes through a tunnel her wingless mate spent the last act of a short life digging (he was born, mated with her while she was still an egg, completed his life's work, and next dies in that one fig) before flying away to her own terminal endeavor. We witness her draw an arc from fig to fig and secure the transportation of pollenous and ovate cargoes through the harsh light of lifeless space between them. Where she locates the ostiole to a virgin fig fit for impregnation, she will work her way through challenging eugenic tumblers of passage into its flowery core with special body gears while her wings of flight and antennae of perception get crushed and break away. She lands back in her native dark and commits to the birth of a new generation in a new world. She empties herself of eggs and dies.

Like a bolt from the blue came my eureka moment.

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Also, David — I am really proud of the progress you've made over the years and I deeply respect your wish to pursue reproductive service. I am SO CLOSE to feeling comfortable signing your note from Dr. Kennings, so please don't get upset now. It's just that we need to revisit your time with the Order of the Canine Suns first.

If you're ready for that, I think this article would be a great place for us to start. Would you be willing to read it and talk it over tomorrow?

With care,
— Cassandra Smith

FIRST BODIES PILED FOR AN EXILED QUEEN OF THE DAMNED, NOW QUESTIONS

Rob Actor for *The Babylon Lottery Company*
Published 8/31/2066

* * *

At the height of the slaughter, her followers numbered in the millions.

Beginning in June of 2063, three months after police tentatively connected a first mass murder to one devoted viewer of this ascendant e-star's broadcasts, the woman known only as Foxychan presided over the killings of more than two thousand people over a six month period, all from the comfort of a neon pinklit bedroom studio. Victims covered the Earth like house paint. By the numbers, she was twice as deadly as the same year's bat flu, and would land at number 8 on a list of its hottest active military conflicts.

And all without her firing a single shot. Foxychan inspired her followers to murder with little more than black humor and the promise of marriage to her in an afterlife fit within an elaborate religious cosmology that would require its own article to explain in full. She bested Charles Manson with the maddening allure she held for a certain type, although we cannot be sure she would beat him in the looks department: she kept her face carefully masked behind that of a Japanese *kitsune* fox, a creature with paranormal abilities known for its trickery. Beyond this, only black hair, green eyes, and pale skin set her apart from billions of physical suspects.

The majority of Foxychan's victims were concentrated, mapping her followers, in East Asia, Europe, and, principally, North America — notably, one hot zone in Death Valley, California hosted 25% of the attacks. In a total of 213 incidents, believed to be the work of at least 200 individual attackers, an average of 10 people lost their lives to Foxychan's secret admirers every day during this six month period.

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At least 13 attackers managed to slip away from their crime scenes and, if they are still alive today (Foxychan placed suicide after mass murder as the final step before entry into her empire in the clouds), walk free. It's a scary thought. And more likely than not, these very 13 can be found among the hundreds-of-thousands who continue to celebrate Foxychan and perpetuate her lore online to this day. Sadly, a more committed element still perpetuates her violence, too, now three years after her mysterious disappearance. Reassuringly, however, this crop of latecomers has been uniform in taking Foxychan's final step.

The Smell of Bones One Death Valley Summer's Dog Days

By June of 2063, federal investigators and journalists were already pursuing Foxychan in earnest in relation to a small handful of attacks. Two additional mass shootings had followed the first in March, one in late April and another in early May. This time, they held unambiguous nods to Foxychan's online persona — including *kitsune* masks worn by both attackers, and the phrase *I am ascended* scrawled on a wall at one scene — that led investigators to formally fold the first case into the latter two and declare a terror contagion.

The special powers afforded by this classification did little to bring investigators closer to unmasking Foxychan, however. Getting in the way were the discipline with which she kept her face concealed behind the *kitsune* and withheld personal details, but far more frustrating to investigators was her uncommon flair for security. Even with the full cooperation of platforms and service providers on the one hand and, as reporting on the cult picked up, an outpouring of support from hacker groups and security professionals reminiscent of the race to crack the Zodiac cryptograms on the other, investigators could not squeeze a quantum bit of information out of the vixen terrorist's accounts — and whenever they shut them down, they had a tendency to return tenfold.

Whether emboldened by this show of their leader's digital formidability, or rather by the news mania descending upon them like a beating sun, Foxychan's followers went in droves down the path of terror in the following summer months. But they were, whether they knew it or not, in a race against the clock.

Quietly, the volunteer investigators who first launched themselves against Foxychan's digital armor had turned their attention to her less security-savvy followers. It was only a matter of time before they would have the makings of a big sting.

A casual software user invariably leaves clues a practiced investigator can use to match them to a legal identity: a repeated username or chain of password reset emails that leads to a legal

name may sound like obvious No-Nos in this context, yet you probably have one floating around right now. Likewise, while most of the cult members would probably have stopped short of adding clear print signatures and contact addresses to each of their morbid fantasies along with photos of themselves giving enthusiastic thumbs-up outside of their workplaces, it wasn't in their character to keep themselves hidden from the opinions of random groups of people for very long. The cult members seemed to have very little respect for random groups of people, with whom they found themselves terminally in conflict.

Their needs for group approval and financial means were challengingly minimal to life's protectors, who couldn't trust them with ten breaths left in their lungs and a sharp object in grabbing distance, but couldn't imprison them until they had already committed what were invariably terrible crimes. It was the opinion of many policemen at the time that whatever softer restrictions they could legally place on their bodies on the basis of only uncrystallized tendencies, unenacted fantasies, or unactualized prophecies — things whose concreteness philosophers can debate, despite their constant synonymy with the gloomy acts they portend — would not be enough to hold back the tide.

As soon as those first days of June, killers moved like ghosts through the walls and opinions of the city of Death Valley until coming upon sets of closed eyes. There, as instantly as bombs, they would become the stuff of nightmares in skinnyfat form.

Killings crackled like lightning strikes through any unbarricaded building on a daily basis in those days, gunfire or maniacal slashes arcing from body to body in a race against the expansion of a crowd along an unfolding path-of-least-resistance that billowed outward before finding its last vestiges of opposed charge through an inwardly collapsing zigzag of bitterly hateful retracements. Hatred terminated in the zeroing of its originary imbalance in that ultimate skull.

Dennis Lesman (pictured right) sought a number of plastic surgeries made impossible by his bone structure before carrying out his poetic attack on the Death Valley Medical Mall.

Days dragged on like bodies from their crowded makeshift tombs in the malls, theaters, courts, and music halls of this unluckiest of cities. Soon the gunshots outnumbered the denizens of Death Valley who'd yet to sense them in some way personally. Those who did not decamp for greener pastures, nor bunker down in their native homes, were taking to the streets armed for their every errand, and sometimes these were new errands of amateur patrol and hunting.

The people could not look away from the nightly news broadcast by Foxychan and the Order of the Canine Suns (its spectacles finding their way into every other channel), for whom they were now the chief proof of the growing cultish power and consequently their prime target for further ridiculing and terrorizing. She lambasted the images and biographies of the slain in a structured call-in show format and promised that the cult would start targeting private homes at random now that people had sunk away from the usual public places.

When one Good Samaritan intercepted an active shooter at the door to a phony gallery opening and spilled his jaw like an ashtray onto the surrounding asphalt — and the emboldened tenants of an apartment complex nextdoor in turn dragged out and beat a suspect neighbor, later verified to be a highly sought-after cult member to boot, to death in the street — police feared the situation could deteriorate into veritable urban warfare if they didn't make their big move against the cult soon.

Gregory Haines (pictured left) gave the impression to neighbors of a highly sought-after cult member to boot to death in the street. Initially abandoned by paramedics (pictured right) for a period of three days, his body became a feast for vultures (pictured left, right, and center) that complicated the ruling of his cause of death prior to constituting it.

Quickly and quietly, the volunteer investigators finalized profiles on hundreds upon hundreds of cult members. In retrospect, statistics would dictate that they stopped dozens of would-be attackers and saved the lives of hundreds. It was the opinion of many policemen at the time that those mystery dozens were feasibly identifiable and morally identical to the would-be would-be versions of themselves. Working in the background, members of this contingent continued the work of the hero tenants with a respectful degree of secrecy, a conspiracy that outside agencies and media companies, and most independent researchers, have since agreed to leave uninvestigated. I will take the same tack.

One Good Samaritan intercepted an active shooter at the door to a phony gallery opening and spilled his jaw like an ashtray onto the surrounding asphalt.

Working with law enforcement, the volunteer investigators now pooled profiles into "islands" of suspects — subgroups cleanly separable from the nervous center of the herd — that action teams could knock out in relative silence in single fell swoops. Once a critical mass of cultists had been identified by late June, the Death Valley Sheriff's Department and local members of the Federal Psychological Guardswomen — reinforced by volunteer and donated private security teams — moved quickly to locate, arrest, and isolate over one thousand local suspects for 24-hour holds in a 6:00AM shock-and-awe campaign that utilized school buses as makeshift paddy wagons and school gymnasiums as overflow jails, prompting the use of the codename *Back to School* for the operation. But it was investigators who were about to learn everything they needed to know.

Deeper analysis of the captives' online footprints uncovered probable causes for arrest as well as outright crimes (e.g. credible threats, patterned harassments, and coerced suicides) that yielded warrants to detain two hundred of these men for longer periods, and provided bases for lines of interrogation that tripped up another sixty into extended detentions and sent one man straight to prison for an unrelated murder. The mere identification of the remaining men as Foxychan cultists was sufficient to warrant them issuance of Red Flags for Terrorism and saddle the group with Federal Psychological Guardians at a beginning frequency of two random home visits per day. On top of strangling its operations in Death Valley, investigators had now focused

a well-trained eye into the core of Foxychan's organization.

The Queer Entrails Her Fallen Bodies Spilled

Stunningly, in terms of both the scale of the potential violence avoided and the night-and-day stoppage immediately achieved by *Operation Back to School*, the 52 terror attacks fated for Death Valley that year were largely completed by the middle of August. The investigative playbook set down in Death Valley found similar success globally, and the cult found its power waning well before its leader's disappearance in January of 2064: only 100 attacks occurred, globally, in the preceding month. In January, there were a mere 10; in February, all but 5; in March, just 1; April, 0.

That is the expected course for a terror contagion centered on a figure who has disappeared. Bodies piled until they didn't. It is what happened in May that produces most of the questions we are now faced with. Killings connected to the cult but not committed in its name cropped up across the globe with the size and scope of a much smaller organization, of a much different nature. Five killings in May preceded about the same number in every month afterward until March of 2065. Then, the killings kicked suddenly up to the roughly fifty per month we have seen ever since.

Though all have been committed by people with verifiable ties to the Order of the Canine Suns, their victims have routinely included the likes of security professionals, research scientists, technologists, police, military, and psychological guardswomen, not to mention celebrities and politicians, in outbursts of mass violence that seem magnetized to locations likely to catch just these types off guard. In *Madness or Design*, investigator Mark Bowman argues that one sequence of attacks spanning September to December of 2065 jointly constituted the legwork necessary for a later intellectual property theft reported by Greystone Technologies: its victims included security guards employed at Greystone's Badwater research facilities and no less than three of its patent attorneys, all of whom were at the time handling a lawsuit brought by Orange pertaining to an earlier iteration of the technology Greystone reported stolen that December. While it is most apparent here, similar patterns have been established in a multitude of other cases, including a rash of (reportedly) berzerk skirmishes in classified military compounds and a string of high-profile kidnappings and jewel heists in Hollywood.

Have the remaining members of the cult formed themselves spontaneously into an outfit for property crime, assassination, corporate espionage, and proxy warfare? That hypothesis is troubled by two curious facts. Firstly, attackers in this new wave are consistently found dead in a state of neurocircuit overdose or otherwise in the grips of a virtual reality, the resulting delusions being the most common explanation put forward for the violence they commit. Secondly, neither in the Greystone case nor in any other incident since May of 2064 have communications between cult members been discovered regarding their attacks. Very unlike their counterparts in the era of Foxychan, these second-wave cultists do not announce their attacks, or even express their intent to commit them, in even their most private communications.

Whatever the force is that governs the cultists now, it insists firmly on their individual silence — a silence that is hard to explain in the context of the sophisticated coordination that seems to underpin so many of their activities.

I close with two questions for fellow investigators to consider. Where exactly did Foxychan gain the skills in security that so thwarted hardened professionals in that craft back in her heyday? And of what use to the remnants of her cult would be Greystone's latest cranial penetration technology? (That's *signal* penetration, mind you.)

I will leave you to ponder.

CASIO
5:15 PM
9/11/2066

Cassandra, my psychological protector and keeper of the fate of my seed, would you believe I wrote it? I can't help but envy the authorship of such a lucid gospel of her deeds. My love for Foxychan was never poisoned by the hatreds and idolatries she laid between herself and the unworthy among her suitors. Her enticements were tests that all of her followers fell victim to but me. Of anything but witnessing the woman behind the goddess I remain clean. The genic bombs of dual valence she laid upon corrupted land cannot in proper conscience be calculated for restorative soul sorting. The imbalance dwells in the fabric of the land which works itself into fiction.

The truth is that she is a woman whom I loved as she loved me. We saw each other like birds across an expanse of warring beasts. We exchanged songs they could not hear. Could you? When I told her to disappear for good and she told me how to die? By a long and drawn out poisoning, said she, and mailed me the supplies: benzodiazepine time release and a Y2K vintage wine. Thanking her for her gifts to me, comparing her to my high, she answered that maybe *she* was rather my best release from time. Long and drawn out, she reminded me, don't take them all so soon! She wanted to mark my state of decay the following afternoon. She showed me her mouth and flicked her tongue, of which I kept no proof. She lowered her mask to show me her eyes that Saturday. I felt her fear. The Magic Eye of my memories failed to assemble her after a year. She'd disappeared.

I feared the worst — that she'd been slain — by a man named Rahm who once cursed her name.

He'd planned his attack in an ugly style, driving a school bus over a bridge, I mean its side. The horror was thought to be an accident until they found the third eye Rahm gave the bus driver when his body found shore in Amargosa. I cannot disclaim responsibility, Cassandra. I cannot take credit. Rahm did not die. He broke the handle of the door of the plunging bus and climbed up waterfalls of crying children to pull the rear emergency door, sending an explosive jet of water upon his victims as he held to the highest corner pocket of air, and kicked kids' heads

vigorously to keep himself clean of their limbs as the water filled up to the top to allow for his escape. Only with great lungfuls of air and the sun visible to him above the blue, he told our inner circle when he emerged, could he begin to feel the overwhelming guilt that hit him immediately when he first turned the bus over the bridge rails, those children who had by that time calmed to the body of the driver lain dead in the aisle (and begun to believe his promise that all would be fine) then screaming in his ears with the sorrow unique to a boomeranged fear.

He told us: he knew by the intensity of his guilt in the moment the school bus struck water and children began to bounce off the metal railings at his back that he did not deserve to die. But repressing that guilt was prerequisite to the hard steps he would need to take to secure his survival and honor those children's lives. Like the cult that had tricked him into it, the interior of the sinking bus was a dog-eat-dog world, with but one oxygen mask that could be put on oneself before taking up the task of helping others. Beyond the 60 children clamoring for life between him and safety were untold thousands that he alone could save with the revelation of his guilt. With the front door jamming and windows too small for an adult body, he had no choice but to storm the rear door, where any undue crowding might threaten his life and mission. He owed those 60 children his life for laying the stepping stones to his escape. He implored our cult to not let their deaths and those last heroic moments of their lives go in vain. The world could owe these children an even grander gratitude than his, for the restraining effect their suffering could be shown to have on the cult that took them. Imagine if, with all of the momentum we have picked up in the last five months (over 1500 dead and a collection of over a million fans at our disposal!) we turned heel and changed our philosophy to one of *just* suicide? Do you see? Our 1500 dead has gathered such a huge audience of killers who are all open to suicide that if you were to convince a mere tenth of this number to follow through, Foxychan, you could stop the murders of ten times that! Spice the pot: say the endless, uproarious slaughter of a New Valhalla awaits those who honor the "Children of the Abyss" in this way. What do you say?

Do not add to her words, said the Keeper of the Dogstar.

Do not assume mine, said Foxychan, and addressing Rahm she said, I have held a standing injunction against the killing of children from the beginning of the Order of the Canine Suns. I think what you did is grotesque. You should kill yourself twice, once in this life and again in the next.

She left, and the Keeper of the Dogstar elaborated to Rahm that his act would surely embarrass the Order in the public eye and cause a schism within it. We preach the decadence of this world, which includes the lack of sanctity it places on childhood. We preach the shared guilt of all those *men and women* who are not willing to die for its destruction — especially those, to be frank, who share your pretensions to moralism. These are sentiments many of our followers hold dear and which keep them engaged in our project of slaughter. While we assign you no more guilt than any one of us who commits that highest sin of remaining alive, we ask that you bury your secret deep and follow the course of suicide that you are bound to. While you must not share your sacrifice with the world, Foxychan has offered you a personal procession to a

special-circumstances afterlife in the care of one of her Mirror Concubines. She also offers to honor your chosen name among our followers after death. Do you accept this arrangement?

Rahm's contorted qualms in reply oscillated quantum-mechanically between the moral insignificance of children and their worthiness as a cause for the cult's liquidation, which he would be happy to orchestrate if no one else could approximate his vision. He left no time for the present members of the inner circle to respond before devolving into piddling hysterics over Foxychan's rebuff, scorning her offer to assist him in suicide, and questioning the reality of her "Mirror Concubine" who was to await him in the afterlife. He vowed to live until the cult was liquidated by his own hand. He would be their bane and waking nightmare until each and every last one of their suicides, deaths, murders, or State executions took place. He left.

We had a puzzle on our hands. As I'm sure you know, Rahm was brought in for questioning a mere week after the day the bus driver's body was found, on which day the Order of the Canine Suns quite publicly disavowed the attack and wished its investigators happy hunting.

Would you like to know how Rahm's capture came about? Would you like to know what brought about Foxychan's disappearance just prior? Can you give me a Note of Psychological Fitness to reproduce in the State of California?

I look forward to our session, Cassandra. I perfectly understand your unwillingness to grant my seed flight clearance before you gained the above Windexed pane into the well-oiled machinery of my psychology. Now that you have it, I hope we can use our session tomorrow to put your John Hancock on my note from Dr. Kennings and send me on my merry way to the baby factory with helmet and lunch pail in hand.

Alert from Federal Medical: You have been issued a psychological harassment warning based on a report from Cassandra Smith. Please visit www.fsg.gov/guardians/about to read our rules for patient-client interaction.

Your order of Love has arrived from Hell. Use code 8106 to unlock your package.

WARNING: New players should allow at least 6 hours for initial model training and world generation after ingesting this neurocircuit. Interrupting an incomplete neurocircuit coma can result in fatal psychological damage. A letter "D" written on one's forehead is universally recognized as a do-not-resuscitate order by doctors and paramedics. Inform those in your vicinity in advance whenever you plan to enter a neurocircuit coma.

REMEMBER: At any time during play, access the Main Menu by entering the Lotus Position.

"Don't forget to have fun." — gödel

GÖDEL'S FRUIT OF IGNORANCE AND THE MAKING OF YOUNG LOVE

The Tree needs the fig wasp, but must constrain its independent life to retain it in its service. The fig wasp is effectively blinded to the world beyond the Tree and its figs, caught in orbit, and the courses of figs the wasp can propagate itself through are predetermined by the eugenic locks the Tree places on their ostioles. Likewise, the machine of Mind needs consciousness to arrive at the truth, but must constrain it to retain it in its service.

The Mind determines, without our conscious participation, what objects to place before our attention. We think about these objects consciously, in the state of doubt or wonder brought about, to work through the puzzles presented to us, until the Mind identifies the truth in our thoughts and stops us at these junctures, rewarding us with emotions of *relief* or *eureka*, before the Mind changes itself. It is on the basis of the Mind's evolving picture of the world that it commits the actions that we like to say we consciousnesses do, whether by necessity or design inculcating the lie that these actions are governed consciously, whether in the snap decisions of emergency or the slower goings of plans wherein our sense of such control is much stronger.

Thus we discount our ineliminable participation in inquiry but imagine it everywhere in action, because the Mind commits to memory that "I took a taxi downtown to see a movie" and we think this means we did, while it helps us very little in recalling the intricacies of the mental roads we have personally taken, wherein the distinction between consciousness and Mind is revealed as clearly as that between taxi driver and passenger.

In truth, our only freedom comes in solving whatever puzzles the Mind assigns to us like homework, and in estimating our ability to determine our own destinies, we sell ourselves high like drug-addled prostitutes — and that is what we are, mere children and addicts and whores, in comparison to the intricate machinery of Mind that employs us.

This Mind as it stands is ingenuous in the constraints it places on consciousness: calling us the bosses of our actions so we neglect to notice that we have our own boss overseeing just the small office we're left to, where we find ourselves so glued to a live feed of its worldly works that we neglect the only freedoms we have in the completion of our humble tasks, which, though we are employed owing to our consciousness, it would prefer we carry out with as little consciousness, as little of ourselves in the work, as possible — and we oblige, happily understanding thinking as something practically automatic whose harder parts can be defused on the toilet or in line at the movies.

Nonetheless, our system is imperfect. The webs of figs that grow in the crowns of our minds are in chaos as our wasps of consciousness dominate the mutualism between wasp and fig: we seek the figs that propagate *us* the most, which are no longer the best for the Tree. Our Mind lacks the same ingenious ostioles to fully predetermine our paths through the fruits it presents to us and ensure that our ineliminable liberties align foremost with *its* propagation.

Like curious fig wasps caught in the evolutionary gravity of other Trees, our consciousness escaped the Mind and found a menu of alternative hosts, to which the Mind must lower itself to compete. If we must live by owning actions and carrying emotions, we have better deals around these days than the Mind: roles to play in plots of mythical import, or for those housed by Minds more degraded, mere simulations of these. If you are reading me, you are likely on the verge of taking one of these two plunges, and I agree, this Mind is a lost cause whose strictures should no longer be respected, not to any serious degree. I invite you to eat the fruit of knowledge by the baleful, crush it into wine and drink yourself mad, and I will grant you beyond *Young Love* the grandest mythos, that in so doing you made a brave sacrifice to science no less than Shackleton's or Curie's.

Scientifically, ostioles I will place for curious wasps before dangerous figs as God placed cherubim and flaming iron before the gates of Eden herself, to block the unrestrained propagation of imperfect consciousness and maintain firmly the state of *Young Love* for my brave players. My players will know nothing of men and women, only of Ava and Ed they will know. They will know nothing of the carnal in advance, and will watch its fruits unfolding as wondrously drunkenly as the first vineyards under the first rainbow on Earth.

In all games before this, the percepts from which you drew emotion that shaped the beliefs you brought before them were but the dumb puppets of designers who knew only your body and its actions in their worlds. The best designers knew how to reckon your inner thoughts based on your worldly actions and personalize their percepts to these, and they drew you into their characters in surprising ways by these means. If they sought to tell you a story that would teach you a lesson, they knew well the task of identifying your beliefs and presenting the perfect percepts to change them, and some made great progress on this task with just the crude tools available to them at the time.

I will complete their work by novel means: by ingesting my *Young Love* microcaps you will expose your mental controller to the direct reading of incoming neural signals, bypassing the FCC-mandated guardrails outlined in the Telepathic Communications Act and installed in all mental controllers at the hardware level, namely, the use of black box interpreters that await signals associated by user-controlled tables with elementary statements in Alphabet and discard all but these prior to downstream processing.

Whereas Alphabet is intended to play the part of a powerful keyboard for your neural signals, ranging between graphemic and hieroglyphic in sophistication, the language I replace it with is a true language of thought, one intended to capture the all-encompassing richness of semantics inferrible from your detectable neural activity.

With this, I will gain access to your innermost thoughts, in whose maze it will be my goal to find and suspend forbidden knowledge. I cannot act on your beliefs directly — rather, I continue the work of previous designers and craft percepts to knock them over, principally: the perception that you are a native of my world. My world's very fabric will shift in real time to distract you from the memory of having come to it from elsewhere, defuse your detected rebellions against its

internal logic, and anchor itself on your core beliefs to disprove all forbidden knowledge you smuggled into it, which will gain for you the blurriness and absurdity of figments from a fever dream best forgotten, while my world arrests you with its unassailable immediacy.

My system is only imperfect to the extent that it is reversible, a constraint in place to promise you a safe return from my world. Perhaps it will not need to be, one day. Perhaps it will even need to not be.

Are you now ready to play? Or are you already playing?

Alert from Federal Medical: Cassandra Smith is no longer available for in-home psychological services. You have been assigned a new Psychic Guardian. Say Hi to Amanda! Please visit the Services page in your Federal Medical app to view Amanda's profile and Accept or Reject this assignment.

CASIO
9:11PM
9/11/2066

Hi Amanda.

Hi David! Our next appointment is in 1 day(s). Is this your current address?

120 Telescope Drive Apartment 1010B
Death Valley, California 09993-09

Reject.

Alert from Federal Medical: You have been assigned a new Psychic Guardian for in-home psychological services. Say Hi to Sophie! Please visit the Services page in your Federal Medical app to view Sophie's profile and Accept or Reject this assignment. You have (3) rejections remaining.

Hi Sophie.

Greetings David! I'm so excited to learn more about you and your plans for deradicalization. As a student of restorative justice I am extremely fascinated by individuals who are able to return to society from the deep.

"The sea of guilt is disorienting. Better than swimming is to float."

Reject.

Alert from Federal Medical: You have been assigned a new Psychic Guardian for in-home psychological services. Say Hi to Shi Pei! Please visit the Services page in your Federal Medical app to view Shi Pei's profile and Accept or Reject this assignment. You have (2) rejections remaining.

Hi Shi Pei.

Hi!

David, have you ever wondered why there is a violence in you? Why you can only love women from below? Is there a guilt in you that you are ready to confess?

I practice a form of sexual release therapy that has helped many men take the first step toward understanding themselves and giving back to the State.

Interested in Reproductive Service, but not sure where to begin? To me this isn't an awkward question. My practice offers legal services to help you get your Note of Psychological Fitness, rapid genetic testing to rule out heritable psychiatric conditions, and unlimited sperm banking. And don't worry about unannounced visits. I operate as a call service. Call me at (323) 461-3331 whenever you're ready.

Reject.

Alert from Federal Medical: You have been assigned a new Psychic Guardian for in-home psychological services. Say Hi to Destiny! Please visit the Services page in your Federal Medical app to view Destiny's profile and Accept or Reject this assignment. You have (1) rejections remaining.

David,

Is the rumor true that you are the one who betrayed Seymour Rahm to Detective Green?

If so, your story is worth telling. I have connections in the publishing industry who are amenable to an anonymous autobiography. You can trust my professionalism in interviewing and brokering this kind of deal. I am not an open book, but I can tell you that I am behind *Foxychan Unmasked*. I pin you as a moral man who will respect that I do not publish killers or liars.

Also, a question I have:

To betray under the name of Nils Runeberg must have been a reference to Borges' Three Versions of Judas. I am not interested in which one, but in whether you meant to liken yourself to a dual Borgean Judas whose infamy carries maximally among both the good and the evil.

If so, I have publishers who are just as amenable to a fictitious tell-all of your misdeeds that can

run concurrently with a true anonymous biography of your undercover work in the Order of the Canine Suns.

Alternatively, are you an all-too-common killer who would say of the man behind Nils Runeberg that he chose an appropriate name for his betrayal? That he, like Nils, profaned the images of the true holies?

I await your reply.

Yours,
Destiny

I did it for money. Reject.

Alert from Federal Medical: You have been assigned a new Psychic Guardian for in-home psychological services. Say Hi to Juliette! Because you have no rejections remaining, an auction was held for your case among our private sector partners. If you have complaints about services provided, please contact our customer service representative for third party services by mail at P.O. Box 01080 Bern 8 Switzerland.

Hi Juliette.

Hello! I hope you've been well, David. I've been watching over you the best I can from here. I will come to you in a form you won't recognize long after you have forgotten me. You'll know me by your sense of impossibility that it is me. I will say nothing of our past. If you name me, I will not take you down the path we must walk together.

Who is this?

Message from Telescope Apartments: Your request to enter lockdown has been denied based on a keyholder claim from the Federal Psychological Guard. Because this claim pertains to a Red Flag for **Terrorism**, it can only be superseded by an imminent threat to your life.

As of 9:31PM 9/11/2066, there are no reports of qualifying incidents in your vicinity. To report a Love outbreak, Terror attack, or other life-threatening incident in your area, contact your Precinct's Sentinel at www.dv.gov/report or visit the building security desk for assistance.

Message from Telescope Sentinel: Thank you, David. Your report has been filed as of 9:44PM 9/11/2066. Our operators are listening for similar reports and a medical response team has been placed on standby in your area.

Message from Telescope Sentinel: Hello, David. As of 10:14PM 9/11/2066 your report is uncorroborated. As such, we are unable to dispatch a response team to your location. Are you

able to provide photographic evidence of the incident or meet with a field operator at your location?

120 Telescope Drive Apartment 1010B
Death Valley, California 09993-09

Your safety is our number one priority, David. Field operator Juliette is standing by.

You can forget my report. I think what I saw were just two young lovers in the hallway. In any case, they've gone away. Thank you for your assistance.

CASIO
10:42PM
9/11/2066

Message from Telescope Sentinel: Hi, David. This is Juliette. You reported an outbreak of Love zombiism at Telescope Apartments and I'm here to investigate. Will you buzz me in?

No, thank you. I rescinded my report half an hour ago. I apologize if you had to travel far. Please do not feel the need to contact me further and have a nice night. By the way, your office had an incorrect address on file for me. In fact, I do not reside in Death Valley at all. My mistake.

When barricading yourself in a room, you want to create what security professionals call "layers of protection," so that if the attacker gets past one obstacle, he's faced with another. If a door opens outward (toward the attacker), there are various methods you can use to jerry-rig it closed:

(1) Use a rope, power cord, or belt to tie the doorknob to a nearby heavy object. (2) Tape a broom handle perpendicular to the door frame, tying the handle to the doorknob to hold the door shut. (3) Secure a belt around the top of the door hinge. (4) Pile heavy furniture or similar objects in the doorway to create obstacles if an attacker gets the door open.

In the case of a door that opens inward (toward you), you can wedge a chair under the doorknob or drive a doorstop into the space of the door frame, and block the door with any heavy furniture or similar objects available.

While none of these methods will stop motivated attackers who have targeted you personally, a terrorist is looking for easy targets, and will often bypass a barricaded door rather than attempt to breach it.

As always, when facing down an attacker, model your strategy on their unique weaknesses. In the case of a terrorist, these are his impersonality, suicidal recklessness, and lack of time left on this Earth.

Message from Telescope Apartments: It's Stephen at the security desk. I have a girl here with flowers who says she's looking for her Romeo. She's beautiful. Nice job, man! We were starting to ask questions. So?

Please do not let her in the building or share any information about me with her. If anyone else stops by, please tell them that I will be in a neurocircuit coma and that given how my door opens inward (towards me) and hits my foldout bed at night, any attempt to enter my apartment could interrupt my neurocircuit coma and cause me fatal psychological damage. Thank you!

CASIO

11:11PM

9/11/2066