

TECHNO

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RAY OGAR

DROWNING RAVE

DAEL drowns until his lungs breathe in technology rich ocean.
he struggles as a colony of micro-bacteria line his throat and
extract oxygen from the water.
blocks of sound suspend him in the liquid.
music moves through his chest.
he gags.
treble and bass coil in his stomach and compete for prime
tactical advantage.

 dense sheets of sound pump from an array of speakers
 floating overhead.
 his eyes clear.
 shafts of light erupt as a hidden technology removes all
 salts and impurities from the ocean environment.
 several hundred people hang in the mix of water and
 sound.

the rave takes advantage of him for the next several hours.

~

DAEL wakes.

 sand crusts his lips.
 silicon deposits line his throat.
 he sits under the broken steel skins of a beached oil
 tanker.
 he recalls crawling ashore but not consciously choosing
 this point of shelter.
 he realizes last night's rave was a sentient entity
 determined to pump dirt and dust into his lungs.
 he can only sigh at this point.

the day is wide angled.

DAEL's awareness reorients when he recalls the rave and its

particulars of bass and sound.

the mass of the party was a mesh of non-particular sex.
he was merely a transmission node in its attitude
network of young women and men.

he also remembers someone handing him a small set of
aerosol cans designed like CO2 gun cartridges.

his emotions collapse into a fear of displacement.

he tries to refocus.

he recalls the crush of hormones.

sliding between near-twenty-year-old kids.

even a few moments smashed against a blond girl.

eventually scratched by individual salt grains.

he realizes the party took place somewhere under the
water's surface.

~

DAEL shakes his head.

he glances at men and women dismantling an oil tanker beached
along the shoreline.

shadows collect near him as he settles under the furthest set
of wrecked ship pieces.

his skin is chipboard.

he is the fog of sleep.

now turns his head.

the shipbreakers stop in unison.

not aware of DAEL.

their hands to face.

they just sniff cans of chemicals that let them forget
everything for minutes at a time.

one of the shipbreakers itches at a blue soot covering
his body.

a fingernail scratch activates cleansing microbes and
other chemicals inherent in the blue film.

DAEL smirks when he notices a series of simple-AI dismantler
drones working in symbiotic fashion with the men.

the boxy orange robots never pause.

DAEL watches.

the tanker shell breaks apart like corpse decay on times-2.

the ship, a massive dissection study on the gray beach.

its black husk ripples softly under the men's blow torch
and cutting fires.

he runs a hand through his own dye job hair.

care disintegrates from his brow.

he just wants to remove his hangover.

also disagrees with the generic proportion of his body.
not as physically defined as the men scattered across the
landscape.

sighs.

DAEL fumbles for the cartridge given to him last night.
now takes in its aerosol cocktail.

a few seconds.

all colors decrease in saturation.

he almost sees in black and white.

the cocktail trades vibrancy of color for enhanced
perception of detail.

several shipbreakers move from their rest spot and re-strap
climbing equipment to their bodies.

except.

all but the explosives technician return to work.

the young man scratches at the ash of blue bacteria
scattered over his skin.

he then looks to the stereo speaker casings and other
rave debris lying about the beach.

glossy flyers.

disposable cellphones.

easily replaceable turntables.

next looks to DAEL.

then fiddles with one of the breaker drones.

did he see the fragmented youth at last night's rave?

the young man sulks in the ship's lowest doorway.

eyes on DAEL.

the technician abandons the drone.

the robot device lowers, waiting.

decides he won't be needed for a while.

scratches more.

he ignores the other breakers.

moves towards DAEL.

~

the day's heat entangles flesh.

yet, the explosive's handler and DAEL lie completely in the
shadow of the tanker.

DAEL looks at the guy's face.

HISPANIC.

not from BANGLADESH like shipbreakers are supposed to
be.

nor does he have neatly patterned face stubble like
DAEL.

the two young men look to one another as if they were preparing to insert sensitive nuclear warheads into each other's body.

DAEL remains emotionless.

the shipbreaker rubs an antibacterial enzyme over his arms and fingers.

the two guys shake hands.

afterwards they cue each other with specific sub-genre references.

techno.

jungle.

experimental.

nothing.

DAEL sees the name of the tanker, an AMERICAN word, tattooed on the shipbreaker's arm.

the one name is just an entry added to a list of hundreds of ships the guy has broken.

or the list could be men and women he's taken apart.

he's using me, the shipbreaker thinks, this is a type of currency or information exchange.

the two talk for a few minutes.

they act more like mechanics toying with a glass engine until DAEL breaks into basic internet jargon.

they share JPG upload protocols.

trade web environment patches.

the shipbreaker demonstrates a few novel search engine routines in the sand.

finally DAEL shows the guy how to perform a few basic hacks within the WIFI cloud of the UNITED STATES.

the elaboration of encryption.

the overly complex shelling of most web-sites.

one of the working shipbreakers calls to the technician.

end of transaction.

sand clogs the two men's movements.

neither can decide how to break from the economics of their shared language.

DAEL walks off.

IMMENSE BUILDING EMBRACING FUR COAT

CICHLI sinks into the information field of his fur coat.
obsesses over not remembering the coat's brand name or
where it was originally grown.
besides he's modified it beyond its original technical
specifications.

the fur's information gathering core grips the
ambient information around him.

here the silver lined coat pulls the taller
buildings of the city close to his face.

the windows of every store front, business and home
crowd around his body.

he can touch the tops of buildings.

he's a private gene pool boxed in by titans.

CICHLI passes into a commercial-free signal zone and peels off
a disposable cellphone from his notepad.

crackle on the cellphone.

useless.

CICHLI wads the phone then tosses it to the ground.

he heads for a generic phone booth and calms himself
despite the fear he has of being crushed by a car in one
of the small iron spaces.

this particular elaborate ritual of using land-line,
non-private communication appliances allows CICHLI the
luxury of another level of encrypted, anonymous ID.

doesn't give anyone his phone number.

usually tries too hard to remove himself from
everywhere any way.

at other times he realizes his participation in
society's flow can't be helped.

CICHLI's hair reorients.

the substance that remakes his hair into a chipped black glass
becomes restless in the warmth of the booth.

a few more finger punches on the older phone's keypad.

CICHLI wants to talk real-time to his vinyl
statistician.

waiting for the phone to pick up he peels another
cellphone from his inner coat pocket.

starts thumbing while he waits.

a few entries describing this part of downtown.
he webcams a face.

two more keystrokes and CICHLI enters into his
primary interface environment.

still split on the land-line.

his fur coat's information field slowly gathers
data from the newly peeled cellphone.

the symbiotic nature of the coat and cell create
a portable map-space.

a 3D model detailing the surrounding city-blocks erupts
inside the booth.

the holographic micro-environment evolves from
wire-frame vectors into real-time satellite image
extrapolations.

the city crowds CICHLI in the small booth.

still, no answer from his statistician on the land-line.

his boredom flourishes and the shopping bug takes hold.

the city itself doesn't care.

and he decides he does.

he cares to buy something.

merely spend money.

CICHLI shifts his walk for the highest probability center of
his contact's life.

~

CICHLI enters the back of a hotel, slowing moving to a room
where a gang of DJs sit and party.

cigarettes pass around like moths between suicide lights.

a reasonably invisible kid spins a versus set of techstep and
breakbeat records on an ultra-thin turntable.

thick sweeps of warfare-class bass inhabit the room while two
girls break-dance on too-flat cardboard boxes.

muted TVs line the glass floor.

two kids fight over the price of a PAN SONIC record collection
spread across the glass like grossly oversized acid tabs
awaiting kindergarteners.

a few more girls trade vinyl like drug dealers wishing to eye
each other's track marks more than score grab.

in all this, CICHLI merely hangs.

a loose configuration of selfishness.
at least, he thinks, this is his statistician's local habitat.
ego pokes through the unlit fog of CICHLI's moment.
he checks his eyebrows in the mirror wall that spans the room.
wants to add some mass to his thin nose or somehow
enforce a bulkier representation of himself.
CICHLI's shorter than most people.
now though, just wants his record collection examined,
priced, estimated.
that, or trade for a rich-text, probability
report where to DJ in the city.
CICHLI sinks into the room's walls.

~

people move about like neon lines.
CICHLI's statistician never shows.
he stares at the floor.
only to discover he is mute to thinking.
his pants are too tight.
he has no one to be candid with.
he wants to go clubbing.
or discuss the period of mechanism sampling in early 20th
century electronic music.
maybe just find someone to fool around with.

an eyebrow raise.
two guys go thermal over a electric wall socket.
the fight bores CICHLI and he collapses his turntable setup into
a backpack.
slings the case across his shoulder and slightly off center,
it remains heavy with the AUTECHRE record sleeves he wished to
pass off.
as he moves, hair from his fur coat gathers on the wall like
magnetic shavings.
he leaves in a feral wake of shushing.

a glance in the mirrored wall and he can only ponder the style
and cut of his coat.
CICHLI checks his environment and deletes himself from the
room's festering ego.
besides, the shopping bug takes full affect.

DENSE HARD DRIVE COURIER AND VINYL WOMB

migrating sand on the floor.
stale WALGREEN's air conditioning.
DAEL fingers his cellphone.
 he performs basic multitasking.
 checks e-mails.
 executes explicit internet searches.
 he's a blinking cursor in several web chat rooms.
also watching the checkout counter where an older woman talks
to a store clerk about HALDOL in a bastardized street rap.

DAEL wants to be a brand name product in someone's hands.
wants to be desired as a potential family member.
except he disrespects the economic effort needed for such.
he stands on an aisle corner fingering candy and thinking about
his mom.
a young girl stands next to him testing the integrity of
different chocolate bar wrappers.
DAEL moves away but the girl clears her throat and hands him a
package.

 she passes a GPS node near his belt.
 she's a courier.
 tracked him based on the last text message he sent from
 his cell—his own GPS snitch.
 he signs for the package and the girl takes a handful of
 candy bars.

 large HONG KONG2 characters saturate the box's skin.
 DAEL only recognizes a few other nation-brand icons.
 the package's long tracking number details its route
 through northern EUROPE, JUHU beach, HONG KONG2, THE
 DESIGNERS REPUBLIC.
 a smaller icon cluster spells out the package contents
 and addressee.

he rips the box's easy open tag.
paws through layers of shredded paper.
the package holds a dense black computer hard drive.
it's a cold mass.
a gravity of its own.
DAEL slips a USB cable between the drive and his cell.
he adjusts to the screen's tyranny of scale.
he then snakes two image pump threads from the phone to
his eyes.
he recognizes HTML and files coded in pure ASSEMBLY.
he looks back to the addressee.
he re-examines the drive with older archiving routines
he learned in high school.

it contains a hacked gene code.
the information is hard and mechanical.
he blinks.
there are several sub-directories containing
detailed diagnostics on emotional states.
a twist of his neck.
a few of the drive's more deeply nested
directories unpack as raw TXT files harboring a
harsh life story.
he nearly drops the black box.
the information is too cumbersome.
DAEL needs help.
he GOOGLES CICHLI's location.
nothing.
nervous, DAEL uncouples the drive from his
cellphone.

the phone responds to DAEL's stress with a vibration.
spherical menus pop before his eyes with abundant lists
and help dialog boxes.
irritated, DAEL pulls the data pumps from his eyes.
informations and annotations suspended in the room fade
from his line of site as the immersion cords snap from
his eyes back into the hull of his phone.
a tear.
the eye machinery clicks inside the cell.
he pockets a few candy bars.
as he leaves, red barcode beams trace his hands
and the insides of his pockets.
the cost of the food is deducted from his
internet account.
he dumps more search engines into the web to locate CICHLI.
DAEL moves back into the city.

buildings collect around him with manufactured silence.

~

DAEL's walk throws him deep in the weather-mangled burbs.
another hour and he locates CICHLI's data womb.

the shelter looks like a giant squid carcass infesting
an obliterated house.

he knocks on the semi trailer's metal shell, no answer.
he enters the makeshift living space under a crackling
fluorescent bulb.

DAEL sniffs.

the shelter houses three sleepy mainframes and two tons
of sound recording equipment.

thousands of POLAROIDs line the ceiling.

the tiny photos detail people from the mall or
guys he and CICHLI have obsessed over.

DAEL moves through balancing his hands on the walls.

he accidentally fingers molecular monofoam
deposits threading the wall.

the hardened foam fends off invasive search engines and
orbiting microwave probes.

he lays down on a mattress near one the mainframes suspended
near the ceiling.

DAEL stares past the dark hull and across the POLAROIDs.

he tries to fit himself into a scenario he can care about.

~

DAEL wakes and changes into a pair of CICHLI's pants lying on
the floor.

the pants stretch and flair.

they fasten themselves around his waist.

he snags one of the candy bars he bought and e-mails
CICHLI to meet him at the mall.

DREXLER SOFTED ARTIFACTS

CICHLI claims a mall bench.

his new t-shirt subtly and efficiently vacuforms around his chest.

he slips into his fur coat and fiddles with the set of DREXLER nanomeching threads lining its mid-layer. his fidgeting activates the coat's casual thermal radar. the fur's microscopic threads rebuild into a tessellated mesh of signal resistant patterns.

CICHLI believes local space and time are highly mutable on such a reduced scale.

the homegrown technology deters the law from prying into his information space.

he brushes the coat with his fingers and the fiber-optic weave in his hair picks up a floor cleaner advertisement.

he performs an evasive hand dance to hide a lit cigarette from mall surveillance cameras.

ultimately, CICHLI ignores his surroundings for an internally generated ego fantasy.

~

CICHLI waits for DAEL.

hasn't seen his roommate in a few weeks and figures DAEL's deliberately brooding over something.

anyway, CICHLI was supposed to DJ in GALVESTON last night.

that's where they were originally supposed to meet. never did.

he conveniently forgot because he was toying with a few people in a web chat room.

CICHLI paws through a series of shiny packages collected from retail around him.

he positions everything on the bench as if the items

form a delicate lab setup.
instantly bored he peels a disposable laptop from one of
the bags.
the computer hugs his legs like a thudding buzz of flesh.
CICHLI's lips play coy with the air.
his mind musing through his lips.
he could catalog his own life.
or do random web searches.
but he doesn't.
instead he researches a few houses for a swap.
he picks through that group of people who store
excessive information about themselves on the internet.
age.
lifestyle.
business life.
acquaintances.
likes.
loves.
desires.
he's a soft terrorist figuring out people's lives.
 sometimes he manufactures moves for two or three
 families at a time.
he collects data on the incumbent families.
also introduces certain events into their lives so they
are absent from their homes at the same instant.
 he then swaps all the furniture,
 insurance information,
 credit cards,
 family belongings.
maybe move things across town or across state lines to
such a degree that each of the families' possessions and
lives wind up in alien economic territories.
CICHLI shivers from the mall's regulation air conditioning.
he rummages through his shopping bags again.
he understands the reason he bores so easily to be
caused by the brand of attention deficit disorder he
deliberately engineered for himself a few years ago.
CICHLI folds the laptop in half and checks his cell.
53 messages.
he realizes he's too good of a listener and popular for
the wrong reasons.
does this fit with his ego though?
he avoids talking to people in person, preferring just
a phone mediated conversation or instant messaging over
the internet.

a different reality exists when face-to-face with
people.
usually he's just lost.

~

assured of his fur coat's ability to protect him CICHLI takes a
nap on the bench.

he's not too concerned about the packages because all the
products are transitional and ultimately disposable.

the coat's warmth pushes away a series of woven
microwave signals.

in the absence of information fields CICHLI suffers a
dream where he's oriented under a vibrating edifice.
a gray sky.

a machined surface.

there is uncut grass underfoot.

and a house in the distance.

a gutted jet engine lies a few feet from the house.

the engine's blue exhaust flame torches the ground.

he walks towards the house and realizes the engine is
recycling the air.

the engine fire's blue color is not due to burning fuel
but from burning a microbe saturated atmosphere.

CICHLI entertains his paranoia.

the house slowly moves towards him on trillions of
molecular legs.

several years pass and the house slides over him.

the home collapses around him like a concrete armor.

GEOLOGIC TIME NEAR FLEXIBLE HOUSING PROJECT

DAEL steps away from CICHLI's crash pad.
he looks back from the street and notes how all the prefab
siding-sheets in the area remain in static growth towards
suburb reclamation.

anyway, the weather-damaged community is still infected
with reclamation enzymes.

the rebuilding project is designed to occur when no one
watches.

turn around and a wall will be standing.

turn back and yet another wall stands.

the lands are becoming a new urban frontier.

soon upgradable on-site housing will begin.

he slips into his information gear.

an awkward few minutes of rain and moisture force his
cellphone to brown-out.

the device cycles through a jitterhum of quick drying
vibrations.

the cell's micro-management of time gives him pause for a
moment of remorse.

DAEL actively remembers his childhood.

and his brother.

the post-acid-trip patch-ins they used to share to
design room-temperature-superconductors.

this was simply a familial bonding technique which
supported the idea they lived generic lives near the end
of the information age.

MARK was the geek that actually got the
prettiest girl in school.

then she died in a commercial airline crash.

eventually DAEL's brother cultivated his angst
over the girlfriend's death.

shortly thereafter MARK burned all of his olfactory

glands from sniffing kitchen chemicals.
he was going to school.
to the MICROSOFT STATES.
was going.
his level of idea hacking was too intense to
stifle.
at that time MARK's mind was a super-cool fluid.
except he always woke in a puddle of drool.
or his face was bloodied if his nose ran too
dry.
during tangible moments MARK would carve love
poems on the table.
the girlfriend would obviously never read them.
from then on every homework project was completed using
bursts from a collage of drugs.
this was merely a fluorescent orgasm opening
MARK's mind for a few minutes.
DAEL knows this wasn't the best of circumstances.
MARK never sat well with anything DAEL did.
everything was always wrong or imprecise.
too naive.
from then on their relationship evolved on a geologic
time scale.

~

DAEL finally crosses into a dense monofoam housing community
marketed by SEARS.
his cellphone births a few internet search engines.
the neighborhood's information space brims with
commercial activity.
no one he knows lives in this area.
nor does he detect any familiar GPS nodes.
spongy prefab sidewalks curl away from tidy JAPANESE shrubs.
the sidewalk itself skirts one of the city's clear covered
ditch networks.
DAEL moves over a series of antibacterial slopes.
skater punks shuttle like snowboarders under his feet in
the rubber tunnels.
one of DAEL's search engines discovers a rudimentary
link he has to one of the boys.
he moves on.
decides to backtrack on the kid's profile later.

some of the houses are extreme in style and color because of

the ultimate flexibility of the SEARS monofoam's.
bright colors.
abstract plays of form and structure.
dense textures and the anti-design aesthetic.
the housing exteriors remain mutable years after initial
design inception.
merely spray them with one of several specially tailored
water molecules.
and remold.

DAEL moves to another sidewalk as one woman sprays tailored
enzyme on a section of her home's siding.
her hands are white from the foam's malleable texture.
next, she inserts grass shoots into a set of smaller pores in
the siding surface.
at irregular spots rudimentary flower buds mingle with the
grass.
the land creeps up the side of the house.

DAEL starts as artificial bug sounds from pin-sized speakers
play in the 3D space of one yard.

in the next, a set of needle-thin cameras sprout from a curb-
side mailbox and zoom around DAEL.

the neighborhood moves very slowly into evening under the
certain edge of paranoia.

DISPOSABLE INFORMATION APPLIANCES

DAEL purchases a disposable phone near the mall entrance.
fingers punch a scrambler code.
he lights a cigarette.
cop pulls up beside him.
DAEL casually turns away.
no answer from CICHLI.
polyester air breaks into his lungs.
his shoe rubber flexes and adjusts to the new surface as
the mall floor rolls under his feet.
store clerks beam product information into his eyes
while others use actual paper invitations.
the mall dynamic forces each shopping patron into a new economy
of personal space.
DAEL lifts into a mental cocoon of pre-programmed instinct.
several mall shoppers stare at him.
perhaps it's the blue and orange hair?
the cloud of designed atmosphere is too much for him.

on-site servers SPAM his cellphone with background information.
the data informs DAEL of vital mall statistics.
how the stores pile across each other in a socio-mechanized
conglomeration.

or how employee living quarters (also called the THICKS)
are built atop the pylons arching over the retail
environments in a latticed eco-housing mesh.
it is in the THICKS where teens and 20s engineer their
after-work lives around product endorsements and a
belittling service industry.
the download to his cell continues to describe the
simple environment-saving-web that stretches over the
entire mall like a seamless vacuform rubber sheet.
opacity films and temperature resistant threads
weave throughout the fabric.

from this film thousands of wires and conduits
extend down to stores.

these threads are the physical manifestation of the fight
for the best information transmission and reception from
space.

rather a war between WIFI and DIGITAL.

DAEL notices a POLAROID opportunity.

a young man.

rather a THICK with a day off.

baseball cap backwards.

the jockbody pushes him aside.

DAEL follows the THICK into the men's room and
efficiently uses him and his soft.

he takes any credit cards that are left over.

DAEL leaves the rest-room.

he hears the hum of nested electronic surveillance
equipment turn toward him.

MAINFRAME PUNK ARCADE

CICHLI sneaks into THE GAP behind a clerk handing out invitations.

he wades through unisex clothing racks and young retro-wear designed to offend the least in no-risk colors.

he returns one of the products he bought earlier under false dissatisfaction.

refund in hand he moves to the back of the store where walls of light disintegrate to expose a mainframe arcade.

 this is CICHLI's primary upload environment if he absolutely has to interact with people.

 broadcast noise camouflages this outlet for trading information equipment and intelligent game strategy.

 CICHLI sifts through the younger kids.

 he skirts a few boys and girls laced into face-wrap monitors that press entertainment advertisements directly to the back of the brain.

 he watches a boy quickly splice disposable goggles and VR pins into one of the arcade's game ports.

 the scene reminds him the speed his sister does these sorts of things.

DAEL pulls CICHLI close.

the nearest machine gropes for CICHLI and his hair turns a darker red.

his hands fidget.

he's been caught in a face-to-face verbal situation.

"you never showed up last night. dense music... you really missed something substantial," DAEL thinks about sneaking a cigarette into the open.

he touches CICHLI's jacket and squints at the fur.

"yes, the DREXLER's are on and no i'm not paranoid," he pushes DAEL away, "keep you're hands off the jacket."

CICHLI looks at one of the game machines, "god these are old."

he caresses the nearest mainframe, "anyway, got your e-mail."

DAEL ignores CICHLI to watch a guy.
besides he's frustrated at CICHLI's deliberate walling off
during face-to-face situations.
DAEL leans against a game, "i've been thinking about my brother
again. i thought i erased all that... stop it, just stop."
"what? i'm... wait, you're manifesting an emotion," CICHLI
looks away.
"no... stop, you're mouthing my words again, you know that's
freaked. i watch your lips move and you're saying what i say,
but it seems you anticipate my words," DAEL wipes his brow,
"i know that's how you recall what people say, but do you
actually remember?... it doesn't matter," DAEL finally lights
a cigarette, "i've got to buy some clothes. here's some deep
cards."
DAEL hands to CICHLI one of the credit cards he scammed from
the THICK.

two stores later CICHLI's artificial ADD erupts.

he starts taking POLAROIDs of customers who walk slow.

he uses the camera flash to speed people up.

DAEL frowns at the shirt he actually spent money on.

the paper shopping bag it came with folds into a
backpack.

he strings it over his shoulders then rubs a DREXLER gel
across his scalp.

his hair shortens to half length and changes to a thick
wave of blue.

they exit another arcade and look for an elevator to the lower
mall.

CICHLI disentangles from his thinking and notices the bulk in
DAEL's backpack, "are you actually reading a book?"

DAEL twists his arms and grabs for the hard drive, "you've got
to see this. you read machine code better than i do anyway...
but i'd swear this has something to do with MARK."

CICHLI starts chewing something, he smacks for a second, rubs
his shoulder, "the files are dense and circular. it's definitely
a program... how'd you get it?" CICHLI looks to DAEL then folds
away his cellphone.

"there is a breadcrumb tracking code, but no return address."
CICHLI stutters as if they have never talked before, "we can
get a quick crash printout at THE CLUB."

~

the elevator stops.

the motion of the mall's housing support pylons sway from
internal force.

CICHLI opens the steel exit door.

he looks out across the tessellated neighborhood that
covers the mall roof.

wire structures puncture up from the mall interior and
circumnavigate all aspects of the THICKS.

they skirt uncertain walkways imbedded in dense controlled
hydroponic lattices and moss threadings.

odd housing cores meander along messy arcologies of data
relays and auto-mechanized growths.

all of this architecture is molecularly maintained
daily by small drones manufactured from praying mantis
DNA.

CICHLI walks ahead of DAEL.

straightened information coils flutter upward around each
apartment unit or subsidiary retail space.

cubby hole windows puncture the live-in landscape.

DAEL passes THE CLUB, back-steps.

it lies behind an ordinary apartment doorway.

the mathematical turn of the housing pylons under his
feet reach through his body as he hesitates to knock.

CICHLI impatient with DAEL, knocks on the door.

ANALYSIS CLUB IN THE THICKS

"boys... great," the door nearly closes on CICHLI.
ANDREA moves back into THE CLUB's darkness letting DAEL and
CICHLI figure out how to close the door.
nothing resolves clearly in the room except dark tones and
pointillist lighting.
the night sky caged for daytime consumption.
ANDREA laughs queerly and checks her thin fingers for something
no one sees.

after DAEL's eyes adjust to the space he moves to a row of
couches lining a nondescript wall.

his paper backpack crinkles.

a thin HISPANIC boy lays half awake a few seats down.

the young man is curled like an animal.

he falls back asleep.

"my afternoon job, leave him be, he's exhausted," ANDREA's
hands play over a remote and a few lights blink on inside the
DJ booth across the dance floor.

she meanders around the room looking upset that she has to
entertain unwanted company.

ANDREA only wears a bra and denim shorts.

her hair is a mess of blond dye and diamond dust.

attempts at makeup run from the corners of her eyes.

she talks a calm but dramatic lingo.

deadpan monotone.

in DAEL's mind this compliments the muffled spaces and
darkness that make up the nondescript room.

he realizes THE CLUB itself is simply a backdrop for
light and graphics.

ANDREA finally settles on a spot and sighs, "CICHLI, what do you
want?"

she ignores DAEL.

CICHLI unfolds his cellphone and places it in ANDREA's hands.

he pushes over the couch and grabs the hard drive from DAEL's

backpack.

"flat out, what is this?" he couples the drive to the cell.

ANDREA perches on a couch arm and slowly pages through the drive directories.

soon more interest.

she moves to the couch proper, pushing DAEL aside.

a few minutes, ANDREA's tone completely changes.

DAEL senses a machine at work in the young girl.

neither calculation or boredom.

"you know, this looks very rated PG. don't trust it,"

she hands the cellphone over to DAEL, "you've got yourself a manual for building something on a molecular level."

CICHLI, instantly bored, moves to the DJ booth and flips through its MP3 logs.

DAEL winces at ANDREA's remark.

"don't look surprised. this transaction is preferable to trading vinyl with CICHLI," ANDREA delicately reads DAEL's reaction, "yes the journal aspect is there in the deeper sub directories, but this box also contains a fair bit of genetic information, morphogenetic sequencing and some brutal life element coding as well. if you give me a few days i can make more sense of it... may i?"

ANDREA blushes because some act she was performing before contradicts her apparent interest in things of the type detailed in the hard drive's housing.

she eyes CICHLI in the booth.

maybe hope?

maybe mistrust.

DAEL tries to inch away from ANDREA, "i never saw the core of my brother's writing... but this also feels contrived in many ways," he points to the screen.

ANDREA fidgets for something in her shorts.

DAEL instinctively hands over a cigarette.

once lit this new light source momentarily affects immense distortions in the room's shadows.

ANDREA takes an inhumanly deep drag knocking out almost a third of the cigarette, "yes, it's very fake and perhaps you weren't meant to really ever see it... look," she uses the cell's touch-screen option and pages through to a deeply nested sub directory.

she takes another drag, holds the cigarette back and hands over the screen for DAEL to read, "it has something to do with an insurance policy... or the drive is an insurance policy? kind of official sounding."

ANDREA's fingers run over the text, "these are legal markings informing the reader of specific economic obligations, marketing boundaries and product endorsement limitations, other than that, i have no clue and i don't know if i want to care any further than that. that's your drama."

ANDREA shivers a moment, "besides, this could be a hoax or just a toy. here..." she moves her hands over the touch-screen and backs the cellphone into an internet download cache.

DAEL recognizes generic search engines and a few tailored probes.

a few pages of data decrypt and ANDREA smiles, "nice, it's NOETIIA which means i now send you on your way. NOETIIA is a tiny tiny information insurance agency with only three employees. you and CICHLI need to leave now."

she walks across the dance-floor and stops as THE CLUB sways atop the housing pylons.

she pushes through a plastic door.

light from the other side suggests kitchen or bathroom. CICHLI moves back to DAEL to examine the search engine routine ANDREA started on the hard drive.

ANDREA finally returns and watches DAEL, "i'm waiting... do you get it... have you figured it out?"

ANDREA deliberately extinguishes her cigarette in plain view of DAEL, "you don't, do you... they never do."

she turns to touch CICHLI's arm, "what ever happened to your sister? she's stopped coming by."

DAEL ignores the other conversation.

information rewinds in his memory and he tries to recall if he ever read any of his brother's journals.

a triad of red points gather on ANDREA's nose.

a wire-thin hole opens in her forehead.

from the wound tiny gray threads reach for CICHLI.

the DREXLER's in CICHLI's coat awaken like a sleepy cage and fight back the whipping coils as they also tear at his skin.

the boy on the couch remains asleep.

DAEL pops the drive into his backpack and grabs for CICHLI.

ANDREA crumples.

the machine threads push through her body and tear even more at everything in the area.

a triangulation of red catches in DAEL's eye and he drags CICHLI towards the kitchen doorway.

wires explode into the dark couch fabric behind them.

DAEL stumbles into the kitchen-like area.

coils rend pieces of the room and floor into shreds.

CICHLI's nanomech DREXLERS pile out of his coat and begin to cocoon him into a safer self-contained environment.

the DREXLERS enact a digital camouflage about the machine cocoon as well.

DAEL cocks his head at the process and falls into the kitchen colored housewares around him.

he hears someone pressing into the other room.

a thick collection of wires slowly puncture the walls but ignore CICHLI's camouflaged cocoon.

the cheap floor shreds under DAEL and he drops into the delicate array of information threads outside the hole.

DAEL tumbles into the mall below.

he swings outward then down grabbing for the information cables.

the metal and glass coating of the wires curl away on contact with his oily skin.

DAEL watches the THICKS ascend overhead.

he lands atop a ballooning RADIO SHACK booth.

he collapses onto a series of self replicating toys.

~

this particular drama now deserves a NC-17 rating.

NASTY UPLOADER HULL

DAEL is completely alone.

he stands looking into a ragged hole of information cabling that lies directly overhead.

red triangulation appears on the mall floor.

DAEL steps away.

he discards his backpack in small motions.

his cellphone, all THE GAP technology and rave flyers hit the floor.

he floods the environment with a hive of disposable communication artifacts.

all of them activate in the air.

he throws them on the ground hoping to produce enough background noise to confuse his position.

he keeps the hard drive.

mall security orient their tazer-tape boxes on DAEL.

shoppers begin to circumscribe the action.

tazer-tapes rip into DAEL's cellphone.

a series of hard shadows like boxy japanimation warriors follow as he slips into the crowd.

red sign.

exit.

50 feet away.

running.

DAEL sheds his inner child.

no parental guidance necessary.

something hits his head.

in the corner near the exit sits a black device.

its dense coils packed in tight thrumming shells.

cables lash out from its surface.

maybe it's a satellite that fell from sub orbit?

it's perched against the wall, casually tilting in space.

it hisses, searching for something.

a length of cord pushes from the device into DAEL's nose
and sinks into his nasal cavity.

static.

color templates.

CMYK test files seep into his memory.

soon gray test patterns.

binary code.

ASSEMBLY language.

rewriting.

a sub-space partition inscribes his consciousness.

something is removed.

replaced.

something is mapped.

and seeded.

he still has the hard drive.

the internet relay satellite removes its search probe.

it reboxes itself and transmits its coordinates to NASA

and then NOETIIA.

the device broods for a minute then shuts down.

logout.

ERECTED SCALED PORTABLE INTERNET SUB-SPACE

DAEL stumbles.

his skin is tight and hypersensitive.
he feels that even the tiniest light source will awaken
some rash across his body.
he walks slowly.
on a road.
everything appears enhanced.
more colors.
enhanced depth.
he walks.
he's holding on to some piece of computer hardware as if
it were a dying TV personality.
he jokes with himself.
a piece of the internet rests in his head.
he walks on the road.
darkness and typical low incident drama about him.
no cars drive by.

DAEL stumbles into one of the thousands of ditches in the city
that were erected to move water.

super clean liquid rushes between DAEL's feet.
helpful micro-bacteria in the water wash his cuts.
he passes out on one of the ditch inclines.

~

the sun seals the cotton fabric of DAEL's shirt tight to his
skin.

he climbs the ditch.
his shoes cleat to gain hold of the concrete.
water evaporates quickly from his skin because it's tailored
that way. he reorients and heads into the damaged web of
housing beyond the SEARS suburbs.

~

DAEL pushes into CICHLI's crash pad.
dense lipid construction fumes break into his nose.
blood trickles from his nasal cavity.
a large amount of heat emanates from the living space.
forced air conditioning tries to compensate.
DAEL adjusts to the new light.
the area densely populated with more equipment than he
remembers.
CICHLI's body is partially suspended from the ceiling in a net
of diamond fibers.

his DREXLER cocoon has reconfigured into a lattice of
auto-doctoring threads and body repair appendages.
several hundred spindly insects rebuild CICHLI's damaged
skin.

small humming thrones perch across CICHLI's body.
the machines snip and replace.
platelet replenishment.
junk DNA installment.
routine lipid injections.

DAEL watches CICHLI and reiterates on the past.
he notices a noise-dampener in the shelter's corner—the
machine pumps inverse equations of sound into the air.

"it's going to be a few more days," CICHLI talks to the
ceiling.

DAEL tries to move closer to watch the body repair threads. he
now realizes how bored CICHLI must be with people in general,
that is with a mind that can build beautiful machines the
thickness of thread, "i didn't know what to do."

DAEL shakes a little because of the air conditioning.
CICHLI drops what could be a piece of clay from his hand.
it takes a moment for DAEL to notice it's one of the malleable
computer keyboards CICHLI designed but never marketed.
DAEL looks to his arms and pulls off his shirt.

something has started to diagram itself across his body.
he's been encased in thin blue lines of numbers.
the new space in his head is a dull cone.

CICHLI tries to look away, wanting to hide his new addiction.
DAEL notes the rust of a quantum consciousness drug
crusting his friend's eyes.

a pill he ingested to dull the pain of tissue
repair.

when the drug finally penetrates the brain it locks into the quantum holes that support consciousness along the length of each axon.

the drug then dampens perception, loosening time from memory's attention.

what waste is produced from the pain relief chemical collects in the lymph glands and eventually pours out through the tear ducts.

some user's eyes turn permanently gray.

"don't complain," CICHLI tries to move but knows he can't.

DAEL tries not to stare too directly at his friend's face.

patches of oversensitive skin have been covered in transparent bandages annotated with repair coordinates.

"what's wrong with your head?" CICHLI looks at DAEL differently.

"what do you mean?"

"there's a noise in your head, like a static," CICHLI almost sits up, interested.

"i was... something... i don't know," DAEL sighs.

"here," CICHLI manages to reach under his suspended bed.

he grabs a set of needles lying on the floor, each probe a foot long, "explain."

DAEL describes the confusion after ANDREA was killed.

the sense of being followed.

the hordes of black.

the tight machine that sewed the internet into his mind.

CICHLI gathers the malleable keyboard stump.

his hands make an adjustment, then casually stroke the keys to input information.

CICHLI's DREXLER lattice breaks away like a crane.

millions of threaded wires weave together and combine with the needle probes.

the new device aims for the surface of DAEL's eye.

the wires wrap around and behind the eye and finally move towards the brain mass.

CICHLI accesses his computer, "you've got a series of internet nodules lining certain folds of brain tissue. they're penetrating the brain matter at near plank lengths so there is a forced sub-space partition in your head. basically they're causing a simple warping of space around portions of your brain. it's like a series of switches have been placed in your brain tissue," he takes a breath, "read here, rudimentary computer."

CICHLI looks at DAEL.

nothing.

does he cry now?

CICHLI continues, "i'm guessing the space can act as a receptacle for non-biological data, though i've never seen such before."

now DAEL starts to cry, but only from the probe's motion in his head , "wha...?"

"i have no idea," CICHLI appears exhausted from the need to concentrate, "do you have a GPS?"

"no, i lost my cellphone."

"then take one of mine. i need time to do some research."

DAEL backs against the crash pad's wall, "this is shit."

"yes."

the probe moves out of DAEL's head.

"i want you to leave, i'm somewhat embarrassed by this,"

his body motions are slight but DAEL knows CICHLI is not comfortable with the layers of machinery around him in the presence of others, "i'll try to monitor the ISSP in your head as best i can."

CICHLI sighs, "get out!"

~

DAEL pulls at his hair while sitting along the ditch network on the SEARS side of the network.

he doesn't have any clues about the artificial space in his head, what CICHLI calls an internet sub-space partition: ISSP.

he can't decide whether it's real or a perception deceit.

he sends his friend a text message.

// CICHLI, the ISSP feels like holes opening and closing in my memory. //

DAEL remains still for hours.

waiting for CICHLI to figure something out.

nothing happens.

GLOBALHEAD DERMATOLOGICAL INFORMATION WEBBING

after maxing out several credit cards at the mainframe arcade
DAEL hangs out to challenge the littler kids to games of skill
and visual acuity.

he continually loses.

his head buzzes from several hours of eye candy mixed
with virtual weapon play and high resolution racing
environments.

despite the adaptable ergonomics of the arcade game
machines, despite the heightened comfort zones of the
game-play space and despite the temporary liaisons DAEL
wants to form with the guys that handle the machines
in a rougher manner, he can't numb the holes creeping
through his mind.

DAEL stalks the game machines.

he waits around each game for an easily defeated youth
to give up before his or her allotted playtime.

he has to occupy his mind.

he must remain awake, so he thinks.

he's accidentally bumped into by one of the thicker guys
several times.

the guy's maybe a year older than DAEL.

the punk eyes DAEL with an annoyed grin, unsure whether
DAEL is watching him or checking out his wide clothes.

the guy guesses DAEL to be a style scout or someone
looking for a short term encounter.

DAEL moves to leave and the guy brushes by to hand him a
rave flyer made from NASA industrial filter foam and high
impact printing clay.

DAEL figures the guy is a little shy and the flyer is
supposed to be a replacement for something more they
could have shared.

he moves behind one of the larger mainframes and sits with his
back against the wall.

he takes a nap.

~

DAEL recalibrates his awareness for a 3am rave near a professionally abandoned chemical plant.

bass echoes carve the dark landscape into hues of machine and vibrant terror.

dry ice lights pump low resolution holographs across the dead oil company.

TV fabrics stretch into walls.

the party struggles near the base of a shattered control room tower.

someone has placed a matrix of bass-engines every few meters across the ground.

DAEL scouts the edge of the dancing mass.

he watches as the supposed in-crowd industry that is the party copies itself over and over between each person.

shortly, people will begin to unconsciously self-organize into attitude clicks.

he recognizes a few of CICHLI's friends.

one industry girl sells dance diagrams to new partygoers.

she trades trendy family tree maps on drum'n'bass music evolution for wads of ten dollar bills.

she angers as one little boy rejects her most recent mini-catalog bibliographing DJ hyperculture.

DAEL makes eye contact with some of the older kids from the acid community.

after administering himself four pills DAEL stumbles towards a gutted trash burning unit.

the unit is a cathedral husk designed to house the densest of shadows.

the area attracts a different type of person than the main party.

DAEL glances through the collection of graffiti nomads and SCIENTOLOGISTS.

one man throws odd words in post-cold-war prayer at something near the trash unit's base.

DAEL tries to background a headache.

he walks further into the carved-out structure.

a GLOBALHEAD node sits at the base of the burned unit.

he's read about these information minds.

they're simply men layered in military technology.

usually a forced immersion in sheets of computer equipment and internet fabrics.

the GLOBALHEAD interfaces information space with the entire body and is always tied to the internet. the setup is completely self-contained to the degree that there is usually a core team of nurses and software technicians nearby to handle moment-to-moment maintenance.

there is no way to see into the device-man.

the total construct is drowned in smooth surfaces, information holes and cord conduits.

DAEL circles the node for several minutes, simply curious how the thing is powered and fed.

he can't tell whether a support team is nearby.

the GLOBALHEAD looks like a highly evolved tank waiting to unfold from deep hibernation.

he can't help and compare it to some emaciated RUSSIAN designs he learned in school.

DAEL catches in what feels like a wisp of spider webbing.

he brushes it away and barely notices a line running from the GLOBALHEAD's hull to a spot near his feet.

a military node scans the internet sub-space deposited in DAEL's skull.

gray.

~

DAEL's autonomic functions cease.

~

c:\rebooting system

~

```
c:\
c:\ftp ftp.dael.issp.com
connected to ftp.dael.issp.com
user login: *****
password:*****
user logged in, proceed.
ftp>put c:\initialize.*
ftp>loading files
```


AUTO-INDIGINOUS MAPPING

DAEL wakes near a tangled steel river.
he squints at a decompression of JPG images.
high density water.
infinitely tall trees.
samples of birds and insects fill his ears in surround sound.
a flood of microscopic surveillance systems wash his blood.
his DNA is read and copied.
the gist of his personal code is mapped out for later use.
his mind stutters.
his head is under water and he is drowning.
someone is lying near him.
a younger, more delicate skin cages the clone.
there is a smell of ink printing heads running off reams of
paper.

~

DAEL wakes up under the matrix of a chemical cracking tower.

GIRL FLATTENER

a young girl moves among the refuse of the chemical plant.

for nearly an hour she tries to tug pieces of the
mechanical towers down around herself.

she yells at the dead machines.

she has no command of technology.

DAEL walks along an aisle of parked engines.

a few data hustlers peddling near the cars play sex games with
the nearby youth.

the girl he saw earlier screams from squatting to piss in the
nail-threaded underbrush.

DAEL just starts walking towards the city.

lost.

he doesn't understand the situation.

nor what has existed in his head for a few hours now.

he receives CICHLI's e-mails but DAEL does not reply.

he does realize the GLOBALHEAD may have manifested some
small order in his mind.

but the ISSP is still a mental sickness.

DAEL catches his breath.

data flattens from a few dreams.

he feels the GLOBALHEAD fingering his memory from

somewhere inside the border of the UNITED STATES.

DAEL sees things around him in analog vibrations.

catalog descriptions begin to annotate certain objects

without the aid of his cellphone's eye machinery.

he wants to tear out his vision.

his fingers move to his eyes.

~

a text message from CICHLI:

// i'm still at the crash pad. sorry i was so off earlier, i'm just not used to having my technology displayed. i don't think you've ever seen that side of me before. i'm guessing you're getting my e-mails and texts. there's a service of some sort near THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC accessing the ISSP point in your head. it's as if a server is reading the information and making small adjustments. this may be incorrect because, well, i've never seen non-biological information stored in a biological medium. that is, binary or hexadecimal data stored in brain matter. i have no clue why you seem to be an information deposit; you've got trillions of signals passing through your body that are not even remotely related to your natural ambient heat patterns or your neuro-physiological patterns. a few satellites are trying to keep up with your movements. you're like an online commodity, but the patron is uncertain. i've done some fairly exhaustive research. nothing really helpful though. //

WHEAT PEDDLER

in a car.

DAEL picks a wheat nodule from a gunmetal bowl.

he eats the drugblunt.

he is an unhealed sore.

DAEL smells egg-yellow customer-calming paint.

the guy in the car watches DAEL.

the older man whispers into his ear and tells him he's
getting all the correct information.

it's all healing now.

DAEL's mind goes numb.

a hand reaches around him like an old shared language

his mother used when she gave him a bath as a child.

the information peddler rubs along DAEL's shoulder.

DAEL hands the peddler more cash for the temporary mind
numbing treatment.

DAEL shudders slightly from the delicate mechanism
placed inside him.

the man seems to own a well-articulated prosthetic hand.

the herbal wheat picks at his memory.

a decoder ticks away at DAEL's gray matter.

the man fingers DAEL's mouth

scraping under the tongue.

his fingernail collects the remaining moss residue broken
from within the wheat nodule.

DAEL seems to recycle into a molecular mud.

he now lies limp on the car seat.

he daydreams about a treaded machine.

a tank rolling him into the grass.

he also dreams of a misplaced atomic particle
left hidden in HONG KONG2.

a new sugar enzyme pushes through his mouth by warm
fingers.

language decants.

in one dream he now understands the hums and guttural vibrations between radio stations.

in another he collaborates with all higher frequency extensions of present day communication technology.

an ability marked by the use of a new compressed language and he determines to control it.

FUNKY HELL SPEECH THERAPY

pulsing cricket sounds.

pulsing.

cricket.

bugs.

pulse.

<chirp?>

pulsing cricket sounds.

DAEL jerks awake.

he wipes sleep from his eyes.

awake.

insect sounds push through the tight lazy atoms of the car window.

he yawns and looks outside.

the peddler is asleep next to him.

he opens the door.

cricket noises.

he walks around the car.

an information trader's barcode rests above the car's state inspection sticker.

DAEL turns to the partially vacated housing of a beach front community lining the road.

buildings and architecture start pushing underground as they approach the ocean.

DAEL notes protective flexible concrete sheets forced around earth-buried households.

hurricane proof, flood proof, environmentally sound.

the latest in introversion.

a residue of AMERICA does exist.

DAEL grabs for the peddler's portable phone.

dials CICHLI.

no answer.

as DAEL returns the phone he smells the dark moss that welds the car's tires to the roadside.

the growth extends out into the beach-front property
like the threads of a sorting program.
he turns as a truck slowly drives by.
punks watch him from an open window.
he doesn't completely understand their bad vilbel,
that is their insults or bad vibe, broken ENGLISH, new
ENGLISH, sampled street lingo.
he shrugs.
DAEL crawls back into the half broken car.
he reinserts himself into the numbing world the peddler
provides at cost.
the other man stirs and opens his own door.
the peddler walks towards the beach housing community.

DAEL dozes in the peddler's absence.

~

shudder.

~

the car's paper-cone speakers vibrate.
the radio is not on.
DAEL shakes.
the peddler never returns.
either the guy found a new client or he's left.
DAEL tries the cellphone again.
CICHLI still doesn't answer.
he leans his head back.
watching the car walls where speakers would be if they weren't
so well hidden.
the speakers vibrate more.
DAEL exits the car and walks into the zone of beach housing.
no home owners visible.
the shelters are simple, compact and face away from the
shoreline.
the houses are well sealed from the elements.
few are completely underground while most are covered in
a fine relief of solar energy collection cells.
DAEL notices the removal of property demarcation.
no lines, no fences, no hedging of any kind.
waves would wash away human borders anyway.
he examines the community layout.
there are public park areas, lightly concealed rest-

rooms, beach-front entertainment facilities, overt ecological niches and plain mini-neighborhoods. he heads for the semi-secluded public bathroom in the one obvious park area.

~

as DAEL enters the rest-room the room shifts. the concrete floor jitters.

he slows his step and focuses on a cylinder of black coils extending through one of the stall doors and over the information peddler's face.

the coils probe and tease the guy's pores.

test subject.

a series of dyes pump into the peddler's skin from the tips of each tendril.

the device reads the peddler's body.

DAEL notices the coils attached to a thing like the one that tore into CICHLI.

fascination holds him.

the device looks to be a dark and infinitely thin armor encasing a man.

the recording beast doesn't sense his presence.

there is an immense heat inscribing the room.

the low vibration he heard in the car infests every surface of the bathroom.

one of the sinks cracks.

DAEL eyes a second set of mesh coils filing through a new hole in the wall.

the coils slowly peel away portions of the peddler's skin.

the man-device looks on.

precise dissections and cataloging take place.

a telescoping fiber from the machine lengthens in DAEL's direction.

he suspects it is a camera.

DAEL backs out of the room and onto the beach.

his stomach heaves.

he runs to the car.

his escape consists of questions to himself, a half dozen phone calls to CICHLI (still no answer), and very little rewiring to start the car.

~

the car's wide tires hum light over the self-repairing highway.
DAEL heads for the near night side of the UNITED STATES.

~

DAEL finally realizes the hard drive is gone.
he tears.

DROWNING MARK1

the memories sort of playback, boring, mix with dreams and DAEL doesn't know anything about what they were originally. not anymore. the peddler's car seat lies cool under his legs and his skin raises into a map of nerves in reaction to an old story. his mother and MARK. it's harder for DAEL to focus on MARK now, he used to be around most of the time, he starts to question if MARK was his brother, the relationship had a different feel to it at times. they used to take apart radios together. make their own equipment. mother would be painting a wall or fixing something in the house. dad away on a computer job selling networking software. feel the vibration of the walls from mom's electric sander. probably making them thinner so she could hear through them better. MARK would ignore me. i think that's what he was doing. nodded a little, we seemed to play act that we were important to each other. mom never seems to stop banging on the wall. MARK would take me to this concrete bunker near the beach. we'd listen to old cassette tapes or make our own when we got bored. i'd watch MARK's nose bleed, he'd complain of allergies, a generally fucked up personality. all the sounds of the ocean were in the background. white noise. we were listening to something MARK recorded from a rave. he dared me to touch a pair of stripped headphone wires to my tongue. i did. memories disappear and i wake up in the bunker by myself. on some other day MARK said the summer heat and the fresh cut grass made him see different tonal ranges like blue or red-shift in fast moving heavenly bodies. he looks at me and tells me i'm kind of ugly. why do i bleach my hair or color it the way i do. mom kicked me out of the house. said she didn't like all the publicity, that or police knocking on the door asking questions about the recent accident. she didn't like people erasing the answering machine from some remote phone line. i started staying with some guy and his family, but it was the longest time before he gave me his name. at that time i wondered if he even knew his own name. this was when i started hanging out

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0l0e0000 0000 he eats from 0 clear pl0stic bag00 techn0head's
h0nds are smeared w000 blue dye fr0m th0 fries. he tri0s to 0mail
CICHLI. wants to tell him of 0ll the shit h0's been fucking. a
few fragments g0t through. he hopes. he sits up, his back against
a roadside rest stop. his eyes ache with the thrash of something
behind them. the ISSP unrolls a line in his mind. his body is
placed on fast forward. needles run through his memory. it's all
a movie to him. he can't even connect himself to the drama
anymore. black coils. hesitation. fingers over the skin. cells
rubbing off DAEL's body like pencil erasures. the wrong equations
are used to reconstruct his full DNA. a house. no more parents.
he doesn't remember anyone's name. chlorine deposits around the
bathtub. quantum dots of water around his feet. hand over shorter
hair. and MARK wasn't someone i was always able to talk to. not
like the friend i wanted him to be or what i remembered him to be
years ago. MARK would sit by the pool, peering into the water.
his eyes would merge with the color of the water and its sick
eddies. i'd watch him from the garage. at that time i used to burn
a lot of things. i'd watch MARK typing into his laptop computer,
which was something i could never take a part in. i don't know
what my fascination was. when MARK did look up he'd avoid my eyes
as if he was able to hide among the nested lines of computer code
he was entering. i'd watch him from the cracked wooden doorway
while melted crayons waited for me on the concrete floor. he
usually got up and walked off. i followed him once. MARK fled into
the tangled ditch network behind our neighborhood complex. i was
well hidden by the shadows he left behind. eventually he broke
into side streets, then to the back door of a strip-mall RADIO
SHACK. a few cigarettes would pass his time. then he'd exchange
computer disks or printouts with one of the employees. no talk.
MARK still sits by the pool. our house never shared any of its
secrets with me. what rooms had cameras in them never said
anything about MARK. one day, i got dressed and walked into the
kitchen. hum of the refrigerator. saw MARK in the pool out the

888 TEARING

tourist stop in FLORIDA.

DAEL stops at a thrift store.

he purchases several disposable cellphones.

an air fresher.

CDs for the car stereo.

chit-chats about nonessential information with the store clerk.

later he punches some numbers on a cell.

// where are you?

FLORIDA.

you're joking.

no, are you moving around yet... actually i know you're fine. you always are.

where did that come from?

never mind. i've been overdosing on memories. things that don't fit with my life keep happening, some of them seem to repeat. this block in my head makes nothing easy.

i've been e-mailing my sister. she's in INDIA right now so her responses have been slow... anyway so far she doesn't have any clues either. check out NOETIIA... have you looked through the drive anymore?

no, it's missing. //

DAEL hangs up.

he regrets cutting CICHLI off.

~

DAEL waits in a fully grown leather chair at MIAMI INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT NORTH.

the ISSP remains crude but slowly becomes useful.

DAEL pressures some of the ticket desk computers to give

him a seat.
aisle seat.
888.
swept wing commercial airliner.
he's flying to THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC.
he's going to hack NOETIIA.

DAEL's plane-seat flush to his skin, passively covers half his
body in a gray fabric.
new car smell.

he plays with the entertainment plug on the chair's armrest.
the window tint at perfect opacity.
the state of his nerves are reflected by the rips he makes in
the seat fabric.

he wounds the chair cloth faster than the smart material
can heal itself.

he watches it re-stitch.

now flying over the FLORIDA peninsula DAEL begins to play around
with the ISSP in a more determined fashion.

he completes a basic search through SOUTHWEST AIRLINES'
data-space.

at times the data handling environment in his new mind
remains too random.

not enough control.

the ISSP currently comprises of search routines
cluttered with his own emotions and longings.

he will have to discipline himself.

learn to express himself in this new language.

DAEL turns around in his seat.

a man wearing glasses blinks too rapidly to be human.
DAEL receives a text message that CICHLI leaves for
INDIA tonight.

DAEL can't e-mail back.

he panics.

panzer corps, deep armored, smooth japanimations push
into the cabin from a forced air lock.

a randomized set of men stuff into the aisle.

blackbulk with human flesh underneath walks towards him.

DAEL immediately relates the man-forms to the one that
dismantled the information peddler and as well as the
one that tore through CICHLI.

a cocoon of safety plastic explodes around DAEL.

crashfoam and oxygen holes seal him from danger.

~

the plane tears in half.

c:\rebooting

```
c:\config.sys  
c:\loading c:\nidus.*  
c:\loading c:\pyxis.*  
c:\loading c:\jink.*
```

NIDUS

DAEL breathes.

heaving.

lungs sucking dots of air from crashfoam bubbles arrayed near his face.

a few inches to move in.

then more.

the foam is a fleshy substance releasing and constricting therapeutic pressure points across his body.

it is a material that smart-filled his crash-bubble with specific volumes sensitized to DAEL's specificatons the instant he sat in the plane seat.

the data remained nested in the airplane's mainframe in case of emergency.

he screams.

hands push on the force feedback foam.

his angle somewhat a slant.

head downward.

the crash capsule shakes with a heavy vibration.

minor entropy and the foam relaxes into a mucus.

a white cummy mess slackens around his body and the foam melts lowering him into a true horizontal.

DAEL peels the rest of the film from his skin.

he listens to the crash capsule's insurance recorder broadcasting instructions that he remain in this location until proper legal airline representation arrives on scene.

DAEL looks up into a forest of infinitely tall pine trees.

an ecological cathedral.

light travels down the angled tunnel the crash capsule left as it passed through the treetops.

he smells the exact engineering of everything in the local environment.

this is THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC.

everything is built to exact specifications.

everything looks like nature.
and everything is utterly artificial.
he is safe.

~

a portion of the ground has been gouged by the crash capsule
and reveals precisely placed designer dirt.

DAEL looks around and does two takes before noticing the
stealthily designed houses that interface the land.

ultra camouflaged domestic units.

not ones hiding from possible invasion or military
action but conforming to nature's plan.

this is too much for DAEL's mind.

the shelters are dense and hilly.

trees so perfect they exponentially exceed standard growth
patterns.

the republic is a nation of idea folk.

it is the testing ground for every new thing.

the main constraint for this part of the republic being
that architecture must fit the environment.

then again the island nation itself was fabricated via
forced volcanic geo-engineering of the tectonic plates
southeast of the FLORIDA keys.

sea life niches were reconstructed at the base
of the newly engineered islands.

weather had been rerouted.

several billion tons of nanomeching seeds impregnated
the half-formed islands and built up the soil to provide
a lattice for underground architecture.

this last part was manifest after regressing the
temporary geological state that made the islands in the
first place.

after the volcanic fires were extinguished, permits were
awarded to designers and engineers as an invitation.

visitors are of course welcome.

residency is nearly impossible without all
strict qualifications met.

DAEL looks to his feet and understands several hundred cubic
miles of city nest below him.

he takes a seat under one of the hyper-tall trees.

the ISSP is gone.

~

DAEL walks.

he reads the land for primarily pine and mountain region.
portions of the landscape rise dramatically even within the
forested area.

he suspects this allows for smooth transition into
underground environments.

many places subtly integrate into the surroundings.

he is needing a new way of seeing.

no obvious carving or modification of trees.

nothing appears adorned or artificially embellished.

plants are used as they naturally grow.

closer inspection of flora reveals it is the pattern on

plant leaves that marks one's location in the REPUBLIC.

deciding to read the plant-life provides the viewer with

a running commentary on every item in the region.

every step presents a page in some dense encyclopedia with
self-referential language.

DAEL wades through a physical internet of flora and fauna.

overwhelmed, DAEL heads for an interior space.

initial confusion walks him into several homes.

a young girl finally directs him to a more localized nexus of
visitor commerce.

~

he wanders below ground into the city.

despite the pretty exterior the republic can not escape the
speed and machination of an every-upgrading society.

he encounters deliberation in the interior spaces but no
true direction to the architecture as a whole.

the only rule seems to be extreme asymmetry.

a constant newness burns in his nose.

he moves into a loud noise.

a street about smaller vehicles?

he's newly claustrophobic.

every point is occupied and dense.

people living with the city as a symbiotic parasite.

building and architecture layer around people's motion;

the gate of one dances with the other.

all materials are transitional and designed to decay
within a few weeks.

technology and information kiosks mould onto
storefronts.

people look the same as any city consumer though.

the same vibe exists in attitudes as well.
this is not a utopian lifestyle.
new plastics, NASA space foams, movable living-
partitions.

he freezes in the middle of the street.

perception overload crumbles around him.
hands push nameless products into his face, buy, try,
free.

perhaps the REPUBLIC is a glorified mall.

or the ultimate place to buy products no one needs.

DAEL walks down more ramps and a stairway that circumnavigates
the three stories of a restaurant integumented with a TEFLON
diagram of human muscle.

sheets of water flow over the restaurant windows so no
one can see in.

moss developed by a RAND CORPORATION think-tank grows up
a fixed lattice onto the roof.

around the back of the eatery is a deliberately darkened
alcove.

a club.

typical interior.

indeterminate sexuality.

hormones for sale.

young men and very few women line the walls.

each one owns his or her own copyright.

each one has a tailored personality.

each one talks a novel speech.

each one sells his or her own unique product.

PYXIS

DEMOGIRL walks a glass runway in HONG KONG2.
she wears sub-orbital polyfoam manufactured by REBECCHI.
her breathing remains shallow as she eyes several
thousand people to either side of her.
the airport has been closed for three days to feature illegally
imported fashions.
HONG KONG2 breeds the clones of all things.

~

a message floods DEMOGIRL's left contact lens.
the data startles her and she stumbles.
a hundred flashbulbs capture her in a time lapse cage.
she feels her modeling career suffer immediately.
an e-mail from NOETIIA scrolls across her contact.
she runs the message in a background data environment
for the remainder of the show.

~

DEMOGIRL returns to her apartment.
the windows darken.
HONG KONG2's light tries to stalk her around the windows'
edges.
she sighs and locks the door.
a few minutes of true rest and she rubs her ankle.
she exchanges contacts for glasses.
another breath.
DEMOGIRL wraps duct tape around the television.
she also activates the shower to steam up the room for
fear of spy cameras.
this particular e-mail promises more than any other before.

~

she's always hires herself out as a product tester.
fashion model.
aesthetics consultant.
whatnot.
but providing her with proper financial compensation
delivers other options.
she builds things.
she reprograms.
she hacks.

DEMOGIRL yawns.

she retrieves a disposable cell and secures its encryption.
DEMOGIRL reads over the e-mail from NOETIIA again.
apparently she's wanted for a deep hacking job.
no real details yet other than an outline.

she's asked to translate and encipher a data set for
cloning.
she pages through the e-mail.
she scrawls a note to retrieve some books from storage.
references on encryption research.
some texts on how to figure biological equivalents for
uploading non-biological data into brain matter.

she reads on.

the message specifies the need to develop molecular
homomorphisms that pangenetically alter both core DNA
and memory (given a base set of biological codes,
whether DNA or non-biological).
in other words, NOETIIA wants to overlay one set of DNA
and memory with another.
she considers the effectiveness of uploading genetic
information onto a host versus growing a new clone from
sample DNA.
in this fashion the new clone spores in weeks not years.
is it a bother?
she wonders.

~

the e-mail informs her that the source code will arrive for
transcription and redesign in about a week.
it will come in the form of a computer hard drive.
any funding she needs for purchasing test subjects she'll need
to submit the proper forms.
several annotations and example paperwork are encrypted for her

viewing as well.

DEMOGIRL finishes reading and rubs her ankle some more.
she doesn't worry about acquiring a test subject.
she'll simply test the codes and genetic mappings on her
boyfriend.

~

in the end, there is no debate: she accepts the job.

~

a few days later the hard drive arrives.
DEMOGIRL finishes the job in three hours.
she uploads the pangene code into her chosen test subject.
she mails the modified hard drive back to its source.

~

three weeks and DEMOGIRL entertains second thoughts.
a gunmetal gray task force of walking tanks collects her from a
fashion runway in lower KOBE.

~

DEMOGIRL adjusts her eyes to the angles of a tight gray room.
she watches a guy lying in the corner spit black pills from his
mouth.

he's partially conscious.

~

DEMOGIRL licks the red tattoos on her lips.
there is a grit in her long blond hair that retards its natural
beauty and capture of light.
she thinks she recognizes the guy.

the nose is familiar, so seems certain curves of the
face.

she remains unsure.

DEMOGIRL stares at DAEL.

studies him.

he starts to talk after touching the vibrating floor.
she feels an odd compassion, "we're inside a NASA crawler
moving onto NOETIIA proper."

DAEL coughs and struggles.

he recalls images of the crawlers, massive machines bounded by a dozen tank tread wheels.
they are landscape stalkers moving over fields and highways like slow tumbling warehouses.
DAEL pulls his arms around him.

~

DAEL looks around.
there are no windows in the room, "do you get any of this?"
"no, well sort of no... if my hacking's right, this machine houses the legal territory of NOETIIA, its consolidated data territory, the mainframes, etc."
"why are we here?" DAEL is unsteady.
DEMOGIRL looks at the walls, "my bet is we have different types of information."
DAEL coughs, "i have nothing."

~

DEMOGIRL stares at DAEL more, "are you human?"
"what?"
"flesh, real, human?" she taps a spot on her wrist.
"yeah. i don't understand that? what do you mean?"
"you talked in your sleep, you spoke in hexadecimal... i thought maybe you were a construct."
DAEL tries to peel a gray film from his left arm.
"what's this putty?"
DEMOGIRL searches her person with habitual movement that could mean she's looking for a cigarette, "i don't know. i'm not familiar with it."
DAEL continues to peel the film.
DEMOGIRL moves over and picks at the gray dough on DAEL's arm, "it feels like machinery. it's been seeping from your skin since you were brought in here."
DAEL imagines the machine dust to be the ISSP remnants pumping from his body.
"do you recall anything... how you got here?" DEMOGIRL seems interested.

~

DEMOGIRL and DAEL move to a heavy door.
open and in.
they stand in the core of a media assault room.

monitors, camera angles, world views, very tight with low drama.
someone in a fully pressurized immersion suit sits at a bank of green displays.
coils and image-pump cords attach in too many positions about this person's submersion into the ever-present internet.

DAEL recognizes this particular GLOBALHEAD from the last rave he attended.

DEMOGIRL rubs the inside of her left wrist.
someone pushes DAEL ahead.
he stands in the foreword control booth of the crawler.
wheat fields lie beyond the main window.
the view details a square mile of connected oil rig platforms.
DAEL squints, remaining silent in response to the artificial offshoot of the DESIGNERS REPUBLIC lying ahead.
he realizes it is the physical territory of NOETIIA.
a man with no character sits in a chair near the window.
DAEL slouches.
tired.
DEMOGIRL nods to herself, "one of the NOETIIA programmers."
DAEL recalls ANDREA's note.
NOETIIA comprises of only three people.
he rubs his arms and watches as a threaded coil penetrates the head of the man seated in front of him.
the snaking tendril unravels and begins to probe the programmer's face, injecting dyes and test patterns.
DEMOGIRL seems to grin knowingly.
DAEL backs towards the door.
the programmer falls to the floor in a fit.
the wires continue to probe the room unnoticed by the GLOBALHEAD.

a branch of the probes collect around DAEL's hand.
DEMOGIRL screams in time-stretch.
the coils compress DAEL's left arm into nothing.
more of the probes scatter into the compartment searching for something.
they touch DEMOGIRL.
the black lines quickly retract into a spot outside the crawler's front window.

a simple dark bulk pushes through the glass.
the glass doesn't break because the machine vibrates through its surface, slow enough to slip between atoms.

now in front of DEMOGIRL the machine's movement and shape flex over the armature of a man.
the tendrill armor disengages from its host and retracts into a streamlined backpack across the shoulders of a young man.

the new guy kneels and looks to DAEL's arm in odd concern and applies a salve to the interface of the missing appendage.

the wound becomes hot and quickly cauterizes.
DAEL doesn't know how to respond for the mere reason this is the man that injured CICHLI and chased him from the mall.

the GLOBALHEAD watches DEMOGIRL.
pieces of the room try to encase everyone.
panels fold.
components scuttle and tighten the space.
DAEL falls into shock.

~

DAEL opens his eyes to a 640 x 480 resolution wheat field.
the snow white environment slowly engages a series of simply-manufactured weathers.
his mouth and one remaining hand remain concealed and inoperable.
his eyes remain fixed on the fields.
the whiteness makes it so there are vast stretches of nothing to either side of him.
a mechanical structure lies beyond.
he sees the crawler.
DAEL's eyes are heavy and he dozes for a moment until DEMOGIRL nudges him.
media assault teams and news hounds converge on the irregular interface of NOETIIA and THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC.
each team vies for air coverage of the NOETIIA programmer's death and dissolution.
a glider warms along the treaded grooves of the crawler's worn path.
DEMOGIRL carries DAEL to the glider and puts him in a bubble capsule slung under its gossamer wings.
the information terrorist, the formerly black suited null-warrior, turns to DEMOGIRL as the cockpit seals.
he kisses DEMOGIRL in haste as she buckles in.
he is MACHINEGUN BOY.
he waits as technology-folds intelligently web him into the

glider's flight system.

DAEL tries to wake further.

he makes out MACHINEGUN BOY's face a little more.

the eyes are familiar.

DEMOGIRL watches her boyfriend intently.

DAEL doesn't notice the pain of his missing arm.

his face asks a question.

DEMOGIRL yawns and turns to DAEL, "it appears i just acquired a very large information territory. i'm through toying with NOETIIA... a part of my problem has been deleted. i may have another to remove here shortly."

~

this makes no sense to DAEL.

JINK

DAEL washes up onto concrete.

others' hands move over his skin, hurried and brisk.
callused fingers probe and shift minute facial hairs.
miniature waves of pain jag DAEL's face as the hands
remove fishing hooks.

pliers rend more difficult metal hooks from his lips.
some of the hooks are burrowed deep into his forehead
and scalp.

the pain wakes him completely.

the hands are distinctly feminine in their task.

~

his eyesight is simply bad.

he only senses a nearby light source.

DAEL sits up.

remnants of permanent stage four sleep press from his memory
and his memory of dreams.

he starts playing it all back in his mind.

he recalls a few damaged images.

abandonment.

DEMOGIRL and MACHINEGUN BOY deliberately dropped him
into the water.

he remembers swimming to land.

the ISSP now a locked box in his head if it's there at
all.

he's isolated from the internet.

he's blind.

home is him tied to the bottom of the pool.

his brother's body floats overhead, blocking the sun.

DAEL gropes around his new environment in panic.

components.

scrapped electronics.

the refuse of older machines under massive slabs of broken
concrete.
the wind produces novel sounds as it slides through the junky
landscape.
he recalls his father removing fish hooks from fish-flesh.
a light moves about him.
heat under his chin.
another person.
he has language but how to communicate?
he realizes he doesn't remember how to talk.

~

he learned though.
DAEL learned something called THE GLOBAL COMMERCIAL COMMERCE
LANGUAGE AND WORLD TRADE INTERNET WRITE-UP CODE.
he can now effectively trade in any country and write a
computer program to sell his own product over the internet.
this all feels imperfect, but he learned none-the-less.
he simply shares time with the junk girls and tries to fully
regain some form of eyesight.
they help him rebuild his arm.
DAEL watches one young girl pull out pieces of a small engine
from her insides.
some moments seem crisply recorded in his mind while others
retard into the realm of reconstructed memory.
he gathers his location from terse conversations with his
hosts.

he's on the turbulent architecture that once was HONG
KONG before the city moved en mass to an artificial
island a few kilometers offshore.
the artificial island is now called HONG KONG2.

~

the junk girls help him as much as they can.
DAEL tweaks his new arm.
eventually the new appendage is tied to a self-sufficient
energy source.
the arm lives off the quantum wave function vibrations
emanating from a superstring. this seemingly unlocatable
atomic piece is housed near his heart in smooth
EAMES designer casing. DAEL trains the arm in force
feedback to build new neurons and to track new organic
information conduits to his thalamus.

~

weeks pass.

~

DAEL rests a while and then begins what he believes to be his walk back to the UNITED STATES.

~

c:\file sequence interrupt
c:\writing previous file to temporary file series c:*.tmp
c:\rebooting
c:\config.sys
c:\loading c:\eloign.*
c:\loading c:\aquix.*

ELOIGN

a lattice of safety pins cover the ground.

some pins lash into the shape of small towers forming makeshift antennae.

these are shoved into the mud around an abandoned military bunker.

the pin spires retard any foreign search engines from prying into the bunker's information ark.

DAEL tunes a homemade breadboard radio inside the temporary shelter.

unfortunately his retreat into the military hole gives him no clues to the whereabouts of home.

supposedly AMERICA does not exist.

he can't find it.

clerks at the corner stores think he's stupid.

no books mention it.

none.

he feels an idiot.

DAEL logs-on to the paper thin computer he bought.

there are no references to a UNITED STATES on the internet.

everything that should deal with the UNITED STATES has been erased, blanked or covered by data black out.

it's just a glitch he thinks.

searching the net.

it's not conspiracy.

he can dream and talk and discuss AMERICA.

but no one will reply or recall such.

he can't e-mail CICHLI either.

it's as if everyone in the world has had their memory of a UNITED STATES removed.

logon once more.

he doesn't remember the internet being so complicated

before he crashed in THE DESIGNERS REPUBLIC.
it is like pawing through all the artifacts present in a
movie set.
he's formed a few new contacts, but nobody reliable.
DAEL continues his search
his monitor fills with enhanced graphic images and
pockets of video footage.
 on the internet.
 there's no emotion though.
 everything is designed for instant gratification.
 everything is cross referenced and loaded with
 innuendo.
very little seems to be written in ENGLISH or at least
an ENGLISH he is wholly familiar with.
 he now dumps thousands of search engines into
 the web.
 pulls up a few maps.
 a rotating view of the EARTH.
 a star map.
 he downloads LANDSAT photos.
 geography lesson.
 taps into a RUSSIAN space station link.
 he webcams into a station camera.
 he bumps his information feed into their
 mainframe.
 scam some video footage from the station's
 onboard surveillance system.
 DAEL watches the MOV file click.
 he upgrades to higher quality video and a better
 data-feed.
 the continents move by under the station.
 INDIA.
 CHINA.
 AUSTRALIA.
 PACIFIC RIM.
 water.
 water.
 MEXICO.
 CANADA.
 nothing.
 water in-between.
 no ALASKA.
 zoom in.
 water.
 water.

nothing.
no skips.
EUROPE.
tip of AFRICA.
the UNITED STATES does not exist.
maybe his feed is bad?
no.

check underwater.
more maps.
tectonic motion maps.
thermal microwave.
flooding?
no, the water would cover everything, not just
to the exact borders of a continent.
topographical scan.
gone.
deleted exactly at every new shoreline.
too perfect.

~

the UNITED STATES has been removed too precisely.

AQUIX

people dwell in what was once an oil rig off the southwestern shore of BOMBAY, INDIA.

JUHU beach.

when the rig was abandoned it was confiscated by boaters and tribes of shelter seekers.

soon people attached themselves and their belongings to all aspects of the offshore architecture.

people house themselves on the structure like barnacles.

they also deposit a general flow of waste into the water below.

DAEL lives in one makeshift dwelling with a family of sorts.

he and a few other guys live on the underside of the leftover rig in a bubble-like apartment.

they're BRITISH and they like to invade space.

they are actually just DJs who spin around the world.

they are on their way to JAPAN or CHINA.

they give him clues on nothing in particular.

at night DAEL sleeps in between the guys and their darker spaces.

he's discovering where they hide certain data.

normally he watches the guys take turns on a single cell phone, play with dirty electrodes or inject themselves with dark pills.

their talk rarely extends beyond how many girls or guys they had sex with at the last rave.

DAEL sits against the wall, flips open his cell and performs multiple searches on the web to trace history.

trying to find the missing pieces of the UNITED STATES.

trying to find some flaw to unravel this mess completely.

trying to find himself on the internet.

trying to find his own web address, CICHLI or references to DEMOGIRL.

trying to find things his brother might have left behind.

the thickest of the BRITS, ROBBY, always stares at DAEL.
tells him how ugly he is, not pretty, not like a girl.
he suggests to DAEL certain places on his face he could change
with the proper care.

why does he look this way?

what is the strange accent he affects?

the accent, it's not CANADIAN?

but ROBBY talks too much.

he takes DAEL shopping.

they buy new internet equipment.

ROBBY shows DAEL how to pick up friends or buy someone to hang
around him at the right times.

later ROBBY takes DAEL to the air houses.

~

the air houses are tent structures hanging in the sky.

these puffed out shelters pull at the wind like JAPANESE
box kites.

thousands of thin, diamond-strut grounding wires
string from each house to the beach below like greatly
elongated insect legs.

this does give the houses a certain stability for those
living so many hundreds of feet above.

it's still illogical to DAEL.

ROBBY and DAEL watch as a group of women attach a series of
normal sized kites to the roof of a grounded air-house.

the engineers fly the kites and the house slowly rises skyward.

when the house floats on its own the smaller kites revert to
their instinctual programming and snap away.

the new air-house bobs gently against its ground tethering.

~

inside one house.

ROBBY introduces DAEL to a tight designer family.

hackers.

program tweekers.

software editors.

bug deleters.

one of the residents enters the room and measures

ROBBY's hand.

the technician moves off and starts to build a set of replacement fingertips sensitive enough to read vinyl records without turntable needles.

soon ROBBY will touch record grooves to figure out their beats per minute without a BPM meter.

ROBBY cons one of the girls into giving DAEL corrective contacts.

the girl reminds DAEL of CICHLI's sister.

a few minutes later she hands DAEL a small box.

he removes the gray contacts from the container and pops them in.

the lenses cuddle DAEL's eyes and correct even more for the damage he received near HONG KONG2.

DAEL looks inside the air house.

he feels the diamond tethers shake underneath, break loose for a moment, then re-harden.

he directs his eyes outside one window to view all of BOMBAY.

the water level seems to recede and refresh quicker from this vantage.

the hacker girl hits him in the head and asks him to use the contacts.

DAEL squints and magnifying polymers unfold over the surface of his eyes.

the biopolymer contacts constrict enough to allow heat impressions and elapsed shadows of motion into his peripheral vision.

his perceptual flicker rate increases.

another sweep and the lenses enlarge the view of a microfossil colony of bacteria wedged in the concrete of a building below.

he also notices an array of vinylogous peptides holding a man's shoes together.

DAEL points to a dark shape like a hardened shadow lodged between two buildings, "what are these blacked out areas of the city?"

he sits on the fabric floor watching the movement below.

ROBBY hits DAEL's neck and catches the contacts as they pop out of his eyes.

he then pops them into his own sockets.

squints.

"the hackers know for sure, but i've heard rumors that some company is buying up random parts of the city. they mark the purchased territory by encasing it in black

shelling. anyway who cares," ROBBY pushes the contacts back in DAEL's eyes.

the girl hacker shrugs, "that's just it, nobody does care. those areas are impossible to penetrate anyway. they seem to be slabs of black steel, solid. our joke is that it's some company setting up network software vending machines. they're actually some kind of network servers or broadcast fronts. one of the guys believes it's a new type of communal urban mainframe system. at any rate, something."

the magnifying polymers crease off DAEL's eyes. apathy.

ROBBY and the girl are very comfortable with each other. he asks her for clues on a location for their next rave. she gives him a statistical printout reporting citizens' whereabouts over the next few days. the other hackers stay hidden in their office cubicles.

~

back on the street DAEL fights for a pair of name brand shoes with a pop-up vendor booth.

he eventually trades a t-shirt for a jacket.

he and ROBBY drop by a KINKO's to run off a few more t-shirts.

the designs are simple icon-based markings making fun of major software companies.

ROBBY rents a hotel room.

it's ten stories underground.

the commuter trains travelling overhead seem to shake water out of the surrounding mud walls.

the rooms stay misted with dew from the constant vibration overhead.

the walls smell and ROBBY keeps staring at DAEL.

ROBBY asks him things about his life. where he came from.

all the shit that went on before now.

he tries to touch DAEL.

rubs his fingertips over DAEL's face.

nothing.

he just wants DAEL to hold him.

a hand here on his body.

act like he means this emotion or that.

tell him stories and be with him for a while.

he hates the other DJs.

how they buy stuff all the time.

ROBBY complains that they don't get to really
know anyone.
just a gang of boys making money.
traveling and wearing only the clothes of their personal
designers.
he doesn't like hanging out with anyone anymore.

ROBBY keeps searching DAEL's body.
he doesn't say anything for a while.
they wait for the walls to stop smelling.
DAEL tries to watch TV with the sound off.
mud sweats from the highly saturated walls.
DAEL wishes to try a new internet search engine
but ROBBY keeps teasing his MICROSOFT.
ROBBY approaches him along a new algorithm.
the boy seems to code everything wrong.
ROBBY's similarity to CICHLI makes DAEL ill.

PROEM

programmer notes on DAEL.
he should travel more.
maybe clumps of neomechanical micro-relay stations appear at
one point.
something with the megaburb.
static.
somewhere deal with compressed bands of pure information.
some areas could be mass huddles of tenements.
geothermal pumps.
a collective of post cold war refugees.
descendants of the BOSNIAN/CROAT war that set up camp around
spare military depots.
there would be thousands of broadcast emitter poles perched
atop every house.
perhaps by exacting product placement and facilitating
commercial endorsements for HYUNDAI chemical heaters, sales
will increase.
low IQ beggars may be used to transport information through the
remains of NOETIIA'S primary mainframe broadcast fronts.

c:\file dump *.tmp
c:\loading c:\phyl.*
c:\loading c:\nokyo.*

PHYL

DAEL hikes the aluminum crest of the LEK RIVER.

here SEARS house siding has been placed over all aspects
of the land.

thousands of square miles of shelling structure lay
over the grass and forest in some extreme form of
environmental protection.

the shelling extends to the NORTH SEA and presses tight
the sides of the LEK RIVER.

he notes a clump of data cripples watching him with lips tied
from teeth.

maybe five of the scrapped youth sit to the lee of one aluminum
crest.

each cripp produces a self referential smile after DAEL's hands
slip into the river's water.

as DAEL sips the brine each youth scrap watches DAEL in his or
her own unique way.

DAEL takes a deeper drink of the water.

it is then one of the data cripples calls out in greeting.

now crips gather round him and hug him in support group
fashion.

one middle aged youth explains because he drank from the LEK
RIVER, they now accept DAEL into their post-cold-war enclave of
political offenders.

some of the data cripples still watch him from a distance.

others continue to embrace DAEL like a child.

they help him drink more of the water.

~

the community accepts DAEL when it is confirmed he's contracted
the BEIJING virus living in the water.

the virus originally propagated through gene-engineered
fruit defects transported from ENGLAND.

the pathogen is a cell base constructed from a cold war bacterium.

the bug embeds itself into the mucus lining of the host's throat and later migrates to the olfactory core. after the virus saturates the bloodstream the host excretes a blue-tinted waste product.

the effects on the olfactory core cause a distortion in smell and taste.

in this way, small scale catastrophic evolution imbeds itself in the sensory system and reality succumbs to a new layer of subjectivity.

a side effect of the virus is the ability to pick up new languages quickly.

~

the offenders equip DAEL with a single unit living space.

DAEL's heart shudders when he notices how the room's transparent walls remain flush to the bottom of the river.

a few days later the offender community elects a representative to show DAEL standard operating procedure.

the community chooses DEMOGIRL.

DAEL calls a muted hello.

he's not sure she really recognizes him.

why was she here, he asks himself.

she looks happy though slightly haggard.

and much older than he recalls.

their first few minutes together remain odd because DEMOGIRL

looks to know him under a more intimate circumstance.

rather, she simply did not understand the situation.

"do you remember me?" DAEL almost slaps DEMOGIRL's post-supermodel flesh.

"should i? your face is familiar but... who knows, perhaps you're just an ex talking head," DEMOGIRL pulls DAEL deeper into the shelter network under the river, "did i offend you in some way in the past," she doesn't seem to really care, but her words try hard enough.

DAEL struggles, "the NASA crawler, the NOETIIA programmer..."

"i'm afraid i don't recall, i've lived here for at least 20 years and my day-to-day activities are not conducive to remembering something so long ago... if it was really that long ago," she seems annoyed now.

this doesn't feel right to DAEL.

the time frame is incorrect and he considers the idea that DEMOGIRL may have been artificially aged.

she ignores any other questions of the previous type and continues to show him the shelter spaces.

she continues to explain how the tangle works.

DEMOGIRL enters one of the open rooms and presses her hand against the transparent tangle-wall surface.

she feels the vibrations of the river along the wall.

she explains that the wall is a communication artifact the offenders used to send messages to each other.

kind of like a telephone wire but instead of a line of communication it is a surface.

the surface area allows for higher densities of information transmission and encryption.

~

later DEMOGIRL shows DAEL how to locate waste sites and clean himself inside a shelter alcove.

she demonstrates how to pull water from the river directly into a living space through the tangle surface.

she also tells him when to listen to the lines in the tangle-wall.

to DAEL the voices along the wall sound like a clustering of statics.

DEMOGIRL helps him listen the first few times by holding his face to the wall's cooler metal.

she shows him how to pick up the conversations of others across the tangle.

DAEL pulls away from the river surface, "you really don't remember, not even the guy i guess was your boyfriend?"

DEMOGIRL seems to wince slightly.

she walks away leaving DAEL to comfort himself in the alien living space.

~

DAEL rarely sees DEMOGIRL.

she spends the majority of her time away from the core offender community.

she does help DAEL adjust to offender life in a few small ways. when she does visit they talk on a level outside most of the other ex-politicals around them.

DAEL and her usually discuss the electronic music population of the 1990s, bands ripping off APHEX TWIN, AUTECHRE, MOUSE ON MARS and the like.

DEMOGIRL agrees to show him her DJ equipment and record

collection.

at one point she mentions her struggle to break into ENGLAND's DJ community.

she also agrees to help DAEL find a way back to the UNITED STATES.

~

DAEL casts a brine collector into the river proper.

the device soaks for a few minutes and he pulls in the layered plastic.

he watches excess moss and foam dribble from the pressed sections of the collecting device.

he then rolls the large sheet of plastic into a tube and then into a plastic baggy.

later the container will be heated to allow the brine between the layers to condense and settle like a broth.

it's a taste he's acquired over the past several weeks.

he's taken up collecting the brine for the community since he doesn't possess a tradable talent.

at times the river edge reminds DAEL of the ditches near CICHLI's crash pad.

~

each day finds DAEL asleep at the door of the community library. he waits for it to open.

after several hours of hardcopy research he checks-out one of the library's portable computers.

morosely, he hauls the small data house down to the river edge with him.

while collecting brine DAEL uses the node to perform web searches on the UNITED STATES.

he never finds anything and winds up staring out across the brutal landscape beyond the river tangle.

aside from the first time DEMOGIRL said she'd help him find the UNITED STATES any other mention of such help has been deferred.

DEMOGIRL still promises to show DAEL her workstation and DJ equipment.

she never does.

~

each time DAEL tries to talk of the UNITED STATES with any of the offenders he feels he's triggered a secret long suppressed in this fringe community.

he hopes maybe this is why they've separated themselves from the rest of society.

they're certainly not isolated because of the BEIJING virus. something else knits them together and it's not due to some common viruo-political infidelity.

~

DEMOGIRL sits on the river edge with DAEL.

she pats the mini mainframe hub jittering next to DAEL, "you sit out here every day."

"i really have nothing else to do. besides, it's not like i have any talents i can contribute. i'm not planning on staying here much longer anyway," DAEL stands to collect the brine equipment, "why... why are you here?"

"you mean with the community?" DEMOGIRL breathes shallow and shrugs.

"yes."

"it's odd, when i first began DJ'ing i immediately violated LONDON's criminal justice bill banning identical beat music. the law states that only non-repetitive beats may be used in public music performance. many of the sets i threw contained just the opposite, repetitive beats, dance music, you decide. simply put, that's why i'm here."

DAEL smiles.

DEMOGIRL gives him a blue HONG KONG2 candy.

it makes his fingers sticky.

he looks to the tiny ASIAN sweet.

DEMOGIRL begins apologizing for nothing.

it's as if she's trying to make up for so many things she's never answered about before.

there is still a distancing to her gaze.

DAEL asks again for information about getting back to the UNITED STATES.

NOKYO

DEMOGIRL places a media-bud over her left eye.
compact machineries tangle, then shade her eyelashes.
specific information pops up before her.
they are only a few kilometers down the river tangle.
DEMOGIRL moves ahead and tells DAEL to quickly gather the sleep
equipment they checked out of the library.

~

the tangle is less like ceramic-shelling along its northern
banks.
there is subtler design flow.
seamless mainframe hulls soon line the river bank at random
intervals.
DEMOGIRL describes the why's and when's of how the tangle was
built.
she gives up after a few minutes.
instead she places the media-bud in DAEL's left eye.
in this way, she shows him how to walk and consume
information at the same time.
black lines penetrate his face.
he feels the bud's dense machineries seep around
his eye.
he watches DEMOGIRL gather her hair with a
twist-tie.
DAEL stops for a moment.
he watches the evolution of data erupt from the
media-bud.
the graphics play into his line of sight.
annotations creep over the surrounding landscape
and fill his vision.
a few why's about how the tangle structure appears as
a collage of aluminum wrinkles layering NORTH EUROPE's

river systems.

it is all a refuge for EAST EUROPE's
outcasts.

the bud continues to educate DAEL through
information graphics and well organized internet
hyperlinks.

at times older video cuts and well archived CAD sketches
appear in an annotation index below the main view.

~

DEMOGIRL takes DAEL's hand as they begin a slight ascent in the
tangle.

they hit a crater edge in the landscape sheltering.

DEMOGIRL removes the media-bud from DAEL's eye.

she runs her hand through his cropped hair.

he rudely disregards DEMOGIRL as just a girl.

DAEL looks down into the structural depression.

the small crater's base is a trash of components.

he sees a doorway entrance to an underground house.

wet blown mud covers the walls.

DEMOGIRL strings out line, shunts and climber nails into the
artificial crater's rim.

she pulls DAEL into her lap and they fall into the hole under a
directed flow of shadows.

DAEL slips hands in pockets to watch DEMOGIRL repack her
equipment.

they enter the underground house and DAEL's eyes fondle the
components trashing the ante-room.

he sees items deliberately taken from sound engineering
stations.

he recognizes the refuse of rave and gabber culture.

he smirks at the waste of transient hundred-hour
communities and fast-forward wannabes.

gutted information candies and the toys of ROTTERDAM's
drugged youth.

DEMOGIRL sets down her equipment bag.

she next removes her jacket.

DAEL looks at twenty years of flyers and dense graffiti layering
the walls.

micro-filament camera technologies whirl and home-in on them
both.

"don't bother, they're very low-IQ drones," DEMOGIRL walks
further into the space.

technology and information rests just under the walls.
the two move to a large pressure door and DEMOGIRL pulls a flat square from her pants pocket.

she unfolds the square and revolves its components into a volumetric configuration.

this slides into a hole near the door.

the key activates the pressure lock and refolds into its former flatness.

they enter the new room.

stark.

interior siding.

no tables.

blank walls and floor.

"this is the maphive," DEMOGIRL follows behind and points out a few areas in a bored casual manner.

she moves to the left and a piece of the wall slides away.

she pulls out a ceiling to floor rack layered with thousands of vinyl records preserved in clear dust-protective sleeves.

the lit space reveals hundreds of other rows existing behind the first.

after removing a record DEMOGIRL slides the door closed and fidgets for a moment.

she places the album on a turntable originally hidden by the interior architecture.

DEMOGIRL spins the record.

the volume is too low to grasp the full range of sound and the music becomes background noise.

DAEL realizes the entire room is a compartment containing dozens of hidden alcoves, closets and doors.

DEMOGIRL steps to the middle of the floor and brushes off an imperceptible recess in the surface.

she pulls at a line.

a handle frees up and she raises a series of two-foot-by-two-foot blocks to waist level.

one of the blocks she climbs on and performs the same procedure to a section of the ceiling.

she lowers several more boxes from above.

DAEL looks to his feet in the fluorescence.

after his eyes settle into the low light he starts to notice hundreds of similar squares in the floor.

looks up, same thing in the ceiling.

all of them identifying the placement of hidden boxes and containers.

DEMOGIRL sits on the floor and opens one of the boxes, "come sit down."

DAEL moves to her side, kneels and watches the girl dig into the box.

the side panel flips open to reveal a library of archived documents.

each item has its own protective sleeve.

she checks a series of numbers on the edges of the sleeves and pulls out a handful of folders.

half the stack for DAEL, the other for her.

"i've been collecting these for years. people all over the world send me flyers from different raves," she pulls out one that looks more like an evolution tree.

the flyer describes different types of drum'n'bass music along with its sub-forms and various styles.

"where did this one come from?" DAEL continues to flip through the papers.

he realizes this is the same flyer the guy gave him at the mainframe arcade.

it appears well sealed and in top quality.

as is typical with so many rave's there is no address for the party mentioned on the flyer.

those wishing to attend either call the phone number provided or access a temporary web-site to discover the party's location.

DEMOGIRL takes the flyer, "let me read the code. i cataloged each party's return address as i received the flyers."

DEMOGIRL stands and lowers a smaller square insert from one of the ceiling archives.

a bundled armature rotates down from the archive box.

it moves around the flyer.

the drone arm scans the archive packaging code.

DEMOGIRL reads the calibrated display like a cryptographer, "no reading, it's garbled."

"i went to this one, it should place the location somewhere in the UNITED STATES," DAEL slumps after pointing to the flyer.

he starts rattling off different dates as well as themed raves he went to.

they research the flyers and amazingly DEMOGIRL has them all, which proves her superior collecting ability.

as before, all the locations she cataloged remain lost.

this means nothing to DAEL, the garbled codes could be

magnetic data degradation or worn ink.

"do you have any maps?"

"those would be over here," DEMOGIRL moves and raises thinner, collapsible sections of the floor where each vertical drawer contains hundreds of filmy layers.

world maps.

local key maps.

relief globes whose surfaces were peeled away and stored for archival purposes.

DAEL points to one, aims his finger at the space between CANADA and MEXICO.

DEMOGIRL's eyes squint.

she shakes her head, "you're pointing to nothing. that's just the AMERICAN OCEAN."

she looks into DAEL's eyes, "did you know you have the residue of a communication artifact seeping from your skin?"

startled by DEMOGIRL's offhand query, DAEL shrugs in innocence, but realizes the ISSP must continue to deteriorate and wash out through his sweat glands and pores, "i thought it was gone... how do you know?"

she points to the drone scanner.

he shrugs, "it has something to do with NOETIIA..."

DEMOGIRL's eyebrows rise, "interesting. i'll have to believe you. for now."

she grabs his hand, "let me show you something," DEMOGIRL walks to one of the further corners and pulls up a complicated section of the floor to reveal several boxes within boxes. she fumbles through the case and removes a dense black hard drive.

DEMOGIRL places a media-bud over DAEL's eye and draws a cable from the drive to the eye machinery.

pictures erupt into DAEL's line of sight, "i don't get it," DAEL's lips twist.

he moves in agitation.

"it is tagged with a molecular shielding built by NOETIIA... a GLOBALHEAD sent this to me years ago."

"okay," DAEL tries to hide a strained excitement.

why DEMOGIRL doesn't recall the entire situation remains lost.

"much of it is simply code and annotation. what image files i examined are of no place i have ever been. i don't recognize the cities, etc." she fingers the box, "if you're good at assembly language you may be able to read it without first decompressing and uploading it into a network server. i don't recall what it does, but it's definitely a program for something. i'm out of practice and really don't have the

interest to relearn this sort of hacking."

"i recognize most of the images," DAEL whispers.

DEMOGIRL scratches her wrist and squints.

her tattooed lips have faded and her hair isn't kept as shiny as he recalls.

her body doesn't move like a supermodel's anymore.

she's a little more evenly distributed with mass and weight.

DAEL taps the hard drive, "this is the UNITED STATES."

DEMOGIRL bunches her eyebrows, "there is no such place."

~

AMERICA has been erased from everyone's memory.

it is a myth.

maybe it exists only as an artificial construct punched into the memory of the hard drive in DAEL's hands.

or it's his own private false memory.

~

DEMOGIRL removes the bud from DAEL's eye, "the drive's purpose eludes me. i began throwing raves here, sending flyers to people. they bring me new ones for my collection... god, the millions of people that came. they always wanted a reason to network or swap drumming software. i was a systems administrator for this one GLOBALHEAD that popped up at the parties. as we got to know each other we began trading programming modules and the like. later i e-mailed him pieces of a hard drive i'd edited... for who, i don't recall. anyway the GLOBALHEAD simply sent it back after what seemed years," she hefts the black hard drive, "when i got it back, i re-examined its contents and nowhere was any of the work i'd done. my coding job had been removed and replaced with whatever you see in there now."

DEMOGIRL taps a portion of her wrist and continues, "the bulk of the drive seems to be directories within directories, most of which house GPS coordinates... all the coordinates are locations over the AMERICAN OCEAN. some of the coordinates encompass three dimensional spaces. the drive is active, rather the data inside is. some of the coordinates move and change from time to time," DEMOGIRL stares at DAEL, "look, it's not going to make sense. the thing is much heavier than i recall for one thing. it also has its own power source. there is an output port, no input," she points to the scan armature, "so it's obviously read-only. my guess is it's coiled into a mathematical subset of space somehow... that

or it runs on cycling superstring defects. but to be honest i'm
frightened of it."

DAEL moves into a different posture on the floor.

he is unsure of how to respond.

"here you keep this," she hands him the box.

"it's yours," she stands.

DAEL stays seated, looking up at DEMOGIRL.

she looks into his eyes and understands he's in a separate
place.

~

DAEL gets lost in EUROPE.

he becomes some sort of nomad.

~

c:\loading c:\thewl.*

c:\loading c:\lobbygow.*

c:\<!-- append corrections for coding shell hierarchy -->

c:\loading c:\apofacture.* <!-- MARK as hidden file -->

THEWL

a club in north ENGLAND.

guys wearing off-brand detergent-washed shirts line the walls.

one young man rubs against DAEL.

his eyes look familiar, his face reminds DAEL of DEMOGIRL's
boyfriend.

the guy is a paranoid hustler and it's all instant gratification
syndrome.

<DAEL dissociates>

an information dealer passes by and blows a test sample of the
latest neomechanical drug into DAEL's face.

slam

the drug takes affect and DAEL begins uploading
memories.

a hot row of shallow shells on his back,
coiled rounds of machinery submerged
deep in his spine, kibehead gear and
biomerged tactical instruments for doing
information runs for HYUNDAI somewhere in
the BERLIN FREE ZONE.

he recalls the jobs he used to do to
forget about getting home.

that, or to forget about his brother.
forget that nobody knows what happened to
the UNITED STATES.

forget when his mother used to force dark
pills down his throat because he had some
exaggerated allergy attack.

playing video games with his brother.
lying to his mother about going to
school, instead skateboarding in the
ditches near the house.

he never finished the last job HYUNDAI

hired him for.
after depositing a few zeros in his new bank
account, he left the country.
maybe in the future he'll invest his new fortune and
hire an emotion broker.
the drug passes.
he pisses himself.
he decides to walk home to his apartment.
the hustler he saw earlier whispers a set of commercially
tailored words into his ear.
a new syndrome.
atoms align in his back like superconductor holes.
he becomes winternumb.
damaged.

~

DAEL's e-mail account still gets threats from HYUNDAI about
data runs he never completed.

LOBBYGOW

all the city lights point to the one spot DAEL tries to hide.
he can't see through his watery eyes.
a drag queen walking by feels sorry for him.
she lets him stay at her apartment.

the drag queen shows DAEL how to use cosmetics on his face to
make him look decent.
there is glitter everywhere.
DAEL refuses to remove his underwear.
he holds onto his backpack while he sleeps.

days pass and DAEL finally asks about the little hard black
shadow in the corner of the room.

the drag queen says that a guy selling networking
software bought that part of her apartment for some
ridiculously high price.
it's some sort of broadcast node.
of course she took the money.
wouldn't do otherwise.

the queen goes out for the evening.

DAEL steals time on her laptop computer.

he studies the contents of the hard drive DEMOGIRL gave
him.

the dark drive contains millions of compressed and
encrypted files in ASSEMBLY language and HTML code.
a few times he dumps search engines into the device.
he realizes he needs to decompress some of the drive's
information.
it is a program in a program.
it's stupid shit.
he throws the hard drive against the wall.
it collapses into a mathematical defect-space and
reappears unharmed on the floor.

the dense box is apparently indestructible.
he decides to watch television which is the whole world to him
for a few hours.

~

the drag queen comes home with two guys.
she plays with them and tells them to ignore DAEL.
that he's just a temporary tenant.
he's her errand boy.
he'll do her laundry and dishes or help her with her
wig.
he'll sit and hold her hand on the subway.
the guys laugh at DAEL and take the drag queen's
underwear off.
the fake breasts jitter like bags of rice.
hand drawn lines on the legs under the panty-hose.
a few minor cosmetic adjustments and they go in the
other room.
DAEL is abandoned.

~

despite DAEL's search engine methods the data he decrypts from
the box still doesn't make sense.
he decides to upload all of the hard drive's decompressed
information onto the internet into the form of a web page.
site under construction.
the new web environment currently resembles a bunch of
black screens.
the information moves slowly from the box to the web.

~

DAEL succumbs to the city's distractions.
the guys in the other room make too much noise.
recreational fluids on the floor.
wig hair falling out.
DAEL packs up and removes several key elements of the drag
queen's apartment.
canned foods, cosmetics, underwear.
books on how to properly promote a web-site and manage a
network server.
he takes self-loading software and sheets of paper that

are normally used to roll sun-dried leafy drugs.
the queen's computer is removed.
the car keys are taken.
the bedroom door is locked from the outside.
DAEL never hears the banging on the door while driving only so
fast from the city.
his mind is too muddled anyway.
 reiterative thoughts about how his brother died.
 MARK sitting by the pool.
 he was dragged into the water.
 whoever then drove a small wire into his
 head.
 midmorning.
 MARK's face on concrete.
 a victim of TV-damaged kids wanting some urban
 drama to occupy their time.
 he tried to resuscitate his brother.
 hitting his brother's body.
DAEL cried.
he watched his own heart fade away.
shortly thereafter he began doing the drugs.
deciding that the more drugs he did,
the more information he took in,
the more open his mind would be.
he was hoping his mind would overcompensate and self-
organize into some non-biological entity.
he waited for certain informations to coalesce into
segregated groups of substantial quality.
he loved his brother.

APOFACTURE

dirty snow fall.
defoliated pines.
a frozen wasteland etched by CANADIAN winter.
DAEL treks north.

 he cuts lines in the industrial snow.
 his goggles relay data about an unused dam nearby.
 he'll have to snowboard some of the way.

a storm.
DAEL's goggles phase green and simplify everything into CAD
line drawings.

 he detects a massive drop-off
 <a dam>
 an artificial ledge.
 he climbs down the wall.
 dropping slowly to the gray snowscape below.
 now into another political freespace.

DAEL breaks radio silence and fans out several signals to
retrieve a location, downloadable help files, anything.
a radio tuning junky signs back that their camp is ten
kilometers south if he wants to purchase evening shelter.

the mechanical trees give little comfort.
besides DAEL's radio was smashed when he fell the last ten feet
from the dam side.

~

long walk and he finally sees a blue fire.
 shimmer rods.
 the camp.
 he's making out a military shape.
a snow-troop transport.
 <pre cold war>

no noise.
he stumbles into the camp.
he falls near the heating rods.

~

DAEL wakes to humidity and videospeak.
the vibrations of a fast talking set of men felt more
than heard from where he sleeps.
he sweats because of bad air circulation.
he pushes a wool blanket off but finds himself naked.
he wraps himself in the blanket.
there is a dense black box in the room.
he ignores the mainframe hardware and moves out the back
of the snow transport.
two videospeakers talk rapidly before an artificial fire.
they turn, then back to each other.
the guys download explicit images from DAEL's hard drive
into black and white TV monitors.
he just watches the men.

one of the terrorists stops his information-dense speech.

DAEL grabs the hard drive.

the terrorists laugh.

DAEL notes a few other tents in the area.

he walks to the only other obviously lit shelter.
his feet cold, he enters anyway.
familiar face, the hustler he saw in the north ENGLAND
club sleeping soundly next to another figure.
DAEL does something on the inside of his body.
he grabs the hustler and drags him outside.
then grabs the black box.
he begins hitting the hustler with the drive.
bashing.

the terrorists watch.

laugh.

morning light diffuses into the area and the hustler's skin
alters a little more.

DAEL realizes he is beating someone that looks exactly like his
brother MARK.

DAEL collects the hard drive and walks away.

~

c:\save c:\apofacture.* c:\backup1.*
c:\loading c:\nepenthe.*

NEPENTHE

the information technician turns his head towards the wall of the wrecked airplane hull.

he's listening to a radio super-glued to the console of the cockpit cage.

the radio changes frequencies for better reception.

~

the technician sleeps on a ripped out seat left in the plane's main aisle.

he stands.

crusted threads of the technician's sleep spread across a ribbed thermal blanket.

he recalls a series of pseudo-archetypal dreams where a girl called him MACHINEGUN BOY.

in one dream he was an assassin, a machine stalker that wore a mimetic defect of space-time as armor.

later he was a hustler in ENGLAND.

his sexuality was indeterminate and he died once in a swimming pool.

he died a second time near an automatic bank teller.

he walks stooped from the sleep.

he has a curious angst.

he touches the radio then glances to the black screen saver on his computer.

it jumps into an upload test file sequence.

the technician notices more pieces have been added to the web-site the REPUBLIC asked him to monitor.

for the longest time the web-site went un-updated and now it seems to update hourly.

the web-site programmer must be back and online.

the information technician's left hand folds over lips in disbelief.

he watches the web-site upgrade for several long minutes.

so far the web environment remains a series of black screens with light gray text.

it's simply titled UNITED STATES v 1.01

the version number alters as the site updates.

there's no programmer notes or blog.

just scores of statistics and dimensions that detail some imaginary nation.

there is data on population densities and location names.

artificial personalities and their life stories.

political intrigues and serial criminal profiles.

age statistics, general information on how to acquire retail space.

a dictionary with words in ENGLISH different from standard queen's ENGLISH.

it's as if someone has been building an entire continent out of sight of the world.

that or something to fill the AMERICAN OCEAN that lies between MEXICO and CANADA.

~

the technician plays with the radio some more.

its sound maps out of the box directly into his memory.

he realizes he must find the source of the web-site and its programmer.

~

DAEL fine tunes the hard drive's code as it slowly decompresses into the internet.

his changes are subtle like fine frequency modulations lost even to the ears of dogs.

the dynamics of his isolationist setup are such that every aspect of his needs are easily accessible.

here equipment and knob accessibility have been reduced to mere fractions of seconds.

the position of equipment is ergonomic and efficient and funnels every nuance of his frustration.

this concentration of equipment positioning allows the rotation of his knuckles and the pressure of each hand motion to mean something in the programming environment.

right now he is an intense data-entry slave.

he is processing all of the hard drive's patterns and directories.

it's all going into the server.

first he decompresses the files.

sorts them.

and ultimately uploads them after decryption.

he is reclaiming deleted file space.

~

damp light punctures the single clear plastic hole above DAEL's brow.

stagnant solar radiation collects in the overhead troughs.

the radiation catches between multi-layered sheets of plastic and industrial polymer.

recycled water runs through the layered troughs dripping over tubes of coiled bubble packing.

liquid washes each roll of plastic and the mini-bubbles.

the liquid next bathes a core microcolony of algae inside each bubble.

this solar-treated-water-in-plastic breeds a hydroponic brine he acquired from the LEK RIVER.

the foodstuff algae is later extracted with a syringe.

these microcosms of life have been DAEL's food source for the last four months of isolation.

it is a technique he learned from the DEMOGIRL and the free zone scholars.

near the wall of his upload setup DAEL peels back the top layer of a low-temperature-sheeting.

DAEL scrapes a finger over an unused area on the datamoss squares.

previously used moss portions refill as self-referential redistributions of bio-mechanized earth.

he licks the information drug from his fingertip.

he reapplies the wall's microgarden covering.

he waits for the taste of femtochines-digested-by-spanish-moss to cut into his cheeks.

he yawns, waiting for the drug to speed up his perception.

~

DAEL's eyes focus on the data terminal to his right.
his hand freezes in mid type.

only a hundred or so more sub directories to decompress.
the drone of activity is necessary.

DAEL thinks about the mass of water surrounding him and
lying beneath his outpost.

he is literally thousands of miles from any shoreline.
his prefabricated survival space was delivered via
airdrop to these coordinates during the night.

in the daylight it is obvious the rectangular living
space hovers fifteen feet over the AMERICAN OCEAN.

to anyone but DAEL this would appear to be impossible
especially without any form of suspension technology or
air cushion system.

DAEL scratches at a nervous wound on his scalp.

his seat rotates on precision bearings, no sound.

he glances to the real-time evolving model of the UNITED STATES
on the floor behind him.

he would move closer but remains seated because of his
useless legs.

the scaled map is projected onto the floor by thousands of video
projectors and military holographic cameras nesting in the
room.

several large sections of the continental UNITED STATES remain
deleted from the reconstructing environment.

as portions of the hard drive upload onto the internet various
NOETIIA technologies across the STATES unplug and shut down.

that is, for each section of the UNITED STATES to be restored
the corresponding technology that hid it must crumble.

DAEL watches the ROCKY MOUNTAINS rebuild from a nest of wire-
frame coordinates.

dark pixels dump into framing shells, then real-time images
from satellite surveillance wink into place.

as the UNITED STATES slowly restores, something darker huddles
inside DAEL.

~

v 1.99974.

the sun sets as an orange disturbance through the technician's
living quarters.

light doesn't touch the technician's skin as it shrinks
through fragments of NOETIIA'S information landscape.

after one of the NOETIIA programmer's was assassinated
NOETIIA proper moved onshore.

the information technician is the head operator of the technology graveyard that grew around a crashed 888 swept-wing commercial liner.

the plane, with several key modifications, is his residence.

he simply faces the radio in the plane's cockpit like an attentive ORPHEUS.

he continues watching the web-site update, now at version 1.99977.

girls shake themselves awake amidst the piles of government-closeout-crash-test-mannequins that embrace the terrain near the airplane base.

the kids have been listening to the gushing electronica the technician pumps nightly from the airplane.

he's been throwing a series of raves for nearly two weeks now.

girls lie exhausted across the landscape.

~

v 1.99983.

cigarette lit in habit.

the technician holds a nicotine blunt to his lips.

he stands from his seat at the cargo bay edge.

he pushes off a girl with blue lips and stumbles over a NOETIIA mainframe hull.

places a hand on the side of a miniature refrigerator welded to the wall.

he opens the machine's door and retrieves one of several plastic wrapped PC's.

the cold keeps the disposable device's battery cells static until official use.

his emotions have been growing for days it seems.

he suspects it has something to do with the web-site.

he officially wants to find the programmer of the UNITED STATES information site even though it's his job to merely monitor it. the screens suggest an odd substantiality.

the web-site programmer seems to be coding not only the good things about the UNITED STATES but the bad.

some data explode into JPG images.

others decompress CAD files that demonstrate the self-organizing social conformities large groups of people develop in enclosed spaces.

a fragmented MOV file plays out a micro-drama in connection with a dignitary from RUSSIA.

a scanned newspaper article details the death of a woman at a cash machine.

other items include banal video clips of life elevated to global news status.

~

DAEL watches his data terminals more intently but he gains no true insights.

some monitors' volume controls dead from overuse.

pilfered for other equipment.

the circular displays remain quiet and simply replay images of violence and political intrigue.

all of the data uploads appear as a list of items that make the UNITED STATES what it is.

the bottom monitor bulb reviews more decompressed MOV files

one smaller monitor shows DAEL's brother beaten up on camera.

DAEL was made to watch as men in skinflush blackbulk moved about the screen.

men moving under black fluid armors built from infinitely stretched space-time defects.

he watched hands shove needles laced with ©1999AIDS into his brother's head.

the monitor replays shockguns exploding wires around DAEL's kneecaps.

rupturing his muscles.

constricting inward.

breaking his legs.

DAEL decided to remain with the useless legs.

he told himself this act couldn't be real.

he later decided this particular memory of his brother's death was false as well.

the monitors blank and images wash into black and white.

a test-file refresh routine plays over the screens.

the one-dimensional point that represents the dissembler AI pops into DAEL's perception.

any time he catches in an extended emotional memory the dissembler AI interrupts his conscious decision making.

he breaks from his thoughts and contemplates the non-biological program in his head.

the dissembler AI is a neurotransmitter gate that compares the brain's new chemical memories with stored brain map recordings.

in this case an older memory of DAEL's brother and a more recent memory of DAEL's brother do not line up. memories of CICHLI are questionable as well.

~

DAEL leans back in the chair so its air cushion sides can contour his back.

the seat reclines slightly as specific membranes within the shelter's walls expand to fill around him. sides of the chamber extend onto his flesh and press solar-collected heat back into his body. the fabric walls press into DAEL to protect him from drowning if the ocean under him happens to exist. sleep enters under two combating memories. the dissembler AI remains in the background of DAEL's deeper dreams.

~

v 1.99999982241

the technician needs only to flesh out what little gear he already has.

he's paid for everything using bills with more than two zeroes from accounts under abstract names.

most accounts not his though.

at times he filed into recommunized people queues. long waits and the technician found it more convenient to bribe clerks for certain equipment.

say chocolate bars wrapped in FREE-AUSTRALIAN dollars.

plastic baggies of dried coke handed under packages covered in brown grocery sack paper.

most items bought are black-market electronics or illegal customizations of commercial products mass-produced on offshore HONG KONG2.

he took old BRITISH LANDSAT photos modified during student use in foreign colleges.

then using current heat and vibration studies layered over these accessed sub-orbital satellite equipment.

he soon located, within one kilometer, the source of the statistical oriented web-site.

the internet server lies in the mid-western portion of the AMERICAN OCEAN.

~

he buys a MEXICAN border pass then passage on a suite of puddle jumping planes to a remote landing strip.

the technician asks why someone would seclude himself in such a remote area to create a web-site.

maybe to vent a pain more selfish than love?

the technician's mind figures this last idea to be the most valid.

the web-site version number continually clicks upward in his left eye viewer.

the technician watches the version number increase.

will version 2.0 be reached?

and if so, who cares?

something like a set of interchangeable emotions start uploading into his heart.

~

the information technician pays the small man in large bills and quickly settles into the military jet's cockpit.

he has fuel enough for a single trip out.

his parachute is secure.

grass on the drug runner's landing strip burns blue from the jet's exhaust.

he seeks territory that exists beyond the borders of the real.

~

v 1.999999999933427731.

the technician cruises less than 2000 feet above sea level.

at moments the jet's semi-sentient core negates the technician's WALDO control to avoid objects that don't appear to exist over the ocean.

the jet's AI recognizes something lying in wait under the water.

~

at times the audio cassette tape sounds like hard drive jitter corrections over a field of white noise.

originally DAEL tried listening to the sounds in one sitting.

he was unable to decipher the foreign words that were the bulk of the recording.

he was more interested in its aesthetic audio content.
in truth though the tape partitioned his mind.
the tape's process took sixteen hours.
DAEL originally didn't know what he stole.
later he discovered it was a KOREAN military information
program built into a common analog cassette tape.
he thought he was stealing a new breed of ambient
electronic music.

the tape selectively pushes aside individual
emotional reiterations.

it subdivides the psyche into machination and
mediated memory.

the military program is a means of placing an
artificial intelligence in the human mind.

the sounds on the tape are an integration of binary code
that replace chemical neural switches.

all coding writes and rewrites gray matter for
combat training.

the program is intended to separate thought from
moral dilemma.

it removes history from a soldier's experience and any
deliberation of choice.

at first DAEL did not notice the existence of the AI in his
psyche.

minor reflection and he realized the tape created the
structure from his own past.

when he spends too much time on data entry or he deep-
loads himself into the mainframe information environment
for extended periods, the electrical ghost of the AI
takes shape near him in the cradle of his perception.
it really doesn't exist in any physical sense.

the AI is a cut-and-paste subconscious motif amalgamated
from DAEL's moments of non-emotion.

the AI edits his conscious perception of specific
events and memories.

it is a management device to remove the soul
from any empathic action.

it is just a layer added to reality like so many other
things he is figuring out to be false.

DAEL only wants to place a selection of his memory into
an obsolete past.

he wants to retard a specific group of thoughts from
constant present reflection.

at this point, rebooting appears to be the only sane
thing to do.

precise parabolic arc.
his parachute billows perfectly.
thousands of miles of ocean fall to either side of the
wary technician.
his gloved hands hit the skylight of DAEL's tiny
retreat.

~

DAEL stops, syringe between fingers.
he still hasn't uncapped the needle.
he scopes a hand pounding the skylight cover above.
fear rushes him.
his hand grips the pistol holstered under his chair.
the gloves of the outsider peel away the skylight.
water drips to the SEARS sided interior.
insults said to himself spray from the technician's
lips.
he asks if he can enter.
he enters anyway.

DAEL braces himself in the chair and pushes back as far as
possible.
the technician lowers into the hole to stand ankle high in the
holographic continental model.
ungloving his hands, the technician warms his fingers to his own
breath through his pilot's mask and goggles.
the technician's eyes are invisible behind his goggles but lock
with DAEL's none-the-less.
he nearly cries.
for the technician, some queer recognition finally applies to
the situation.
more emotions, faster uploads of feeling.
just odd tension.

~

DAEL asks why the visit.
he freaks and doesn't understand who this guy could be.
the technician ignores the question aside interest for the web-
site setup.
his thermal goggles examine the destroyed gear.
everything is now flattened like paper.
the technician's eyes tear.
why, is all he can ask.
why, in a demand.

he puts his hands on DAEL's legs.
begging of him a purpose.
maybe a phrase common to them both or a word delivering sanity
to the situation.
begging.
why did DAEL destroy the equipment?
what is the web-site?

the technician finally turns around and examines the scaled
continental map erupting in real-time on the floor.
he walks further into the three dimensional image.
several hundred square feet of the floor fill with land
formations and weather patterns that make up a continent.
the terrain is designed to live in the space between MEXICO and
CANADA.
DAEL smirks.
the technician shudders when he sees a small holographic
representation of a jet flying north towards CANADA.
"that must be yours," DAEL moves his hand slowly under the
chair seat.
the continental model surges with motion and tectonic activity.
people.
cities.
weather.
life unseen.

the machine repair larvae cool inside the syringe.
DAEL injects the serum into his damaged legs.

femtochine matter enters and reconstructs ligament and
muscle.
the machines ready his cells for neural receptor
signals.

DAEL explains but his words are tired and sensitive to moments
of bored digression.

he explains to the guy that he's ready to move on.
DAEL explains that the studied period of output was not
meant for anyone but himself.

he has no clue how this man interpreted the web-site data.

it was a private affair.
an attempt to compress maximum feeling into the smallest
moment.
it's over.

the technician still questions.

DAEL understands that telling the truth would be damaging to
such an intelligence.

DAEL explains that some feelings are simply unquantifiable.
you can't code for some emotions.
they're too complex.

~

the sensation of feeling builds in DAEL's legs.
billions of femtoscale machines drive a molecular lattice
through his body.
they act as muscles until the machine by-products heal the
remaining nerves and his broken legs.
DAEL flexes the false nerves and stands in the cramped survival
space.

~

the technician says no and holds a gun to DAEL's chest.

he pulls away the technician's flight goggles and face wrap.

~

"how many copies of you are there?"

DAEL drops an irritable sigh when the technician doesn't respond.

"what?"

~

the kid is MARK.

rather he is a near copy, MARK2.

DAEL shakes him off, "this is all so fake."

MARK2's limbs numb slightly from the bullet.

DAEL remains hindered from grabbing his own backpack.

still manages to yank himself from under the kid's deadweight.

he tells MARK2 he'll be fine.

he can't believe the guy is crying.

~

"it's all a program."

DAEL seems to talk to no one.

he looks at MARK2.

DAEL tells the kid he is a clone designed by NOETIIA.

MARK2 would then be NOETIIA'S insurance their investment paid off.

MARK2 would be the insurance that guaranteed DAEL fell into some severe emotional state.

DAEL explains how NOETIIA used them both when years ago they manufactured the death of his brother.

NOETIIA then tried to record DAEL's subsequent reaction and deteriorating life to sell on the emotional black market.

this process took too long and wasn't turning profit quickly enough.

he explains how NOETIIA then gained access to his memory through the sub-orbital machine that crashed into the mall.

the machine lodged an internet sub-space partition in his head.

non-biological data soon mingled with DAEL's

memories.

layers could then be added to his reality.

NOETIIA used the ISSP to upload his emotions as needed into their mainframes.

they sell emotions and emotional currency for those who don't have any.

believing perhaps then that the norm for most people now is a non-emotional state.

of course they are recording his emotions even as they speak.

a long time ago DAEL got over the idea he was the only one this was happening to.

though he never found any others, he knows there have to be more than just him this is happening to.

ego only lasts so long.

NOETIIA began to construct his world anew, inserting drama and situation where needed.

DEMOGIRL was hired to build the pangenetic code that literally altered someone from the inside out, from gene to physical features into the semblance of MARK.

MARK2 was MACHINEGUN BOY.

MARK2 was the hustler in ENGLAND.

NOETIIA even programmed a few different scenarios of his brother dying to provoke more emotional currency.

and of course later came the manufactured removal of the UNITED STATES.

annihilate identity.

annihilate home.

the black hard drive shell DAEL carried for so long was just a toy for NOETIIA'S amusement.

a backup disk perhaps.

originally DEMOGIRL redesigned the hard drive programs as code to clone DAEL's brother and map MARK's genes onto another's body.

when the hard drive housing was returned to DEMOGIRL it no longer contained her original programming.

instead it contained a ridiculously long fail-safe code that, if needed, restored the UNITED STATES.

restored the UNITED STATES to the one person who believed it missing.

now the box undoes NOETIIA'S programming.

it deletes the ISSP and all its false data stores from everywhere.

the broadcast fronts housed in so many black hull mainframes now shut down across the globe.

~

MARK2 figures out nothing.
that he is a clone doesn't figure either.

~

DAEL punches his hand into a unmarked spot in the floor.
the roof of the prefabricated shelter folds away.
slowly the walls themselves neatly collapse around DAEL.
he kicks the remains of the black hard drive towards MARK2.
MARK2 watches DAEL walk off the side of the supposedly hovering
platform, "you just see ocean... it's not real."
DAEL moves over the AMERICAN OCEAN, never touching the water,
"a few more minutes i guess."
he moves back onto the platform, "maybe you were the last
attempt. something to promote a final emotion in me. a new
consumer-marketable daytime drama. somehow you show up in
my life alive... i react. i kept wondering if someone would
actually enter the genetic code from the hard drive. DEMOGIRL
was a toy as much as i was... she was perhaps feeling guilty.
she coded you and i entered the AMERICA code onto the
internet."
the floor begins to vibrate gently, slightly stirring in the
air.
"maybe you know what's going on... that or you're just an
artificial intelligence burdened with not knowing what you
really are."
as DAEL shoulders his backpack he watches MARK2's face.
thick blocky shapes appear to mingle over every turn of the
deep horizon.
"it really doesn't matter, i've reprogrammed it all anyway."
massive structures speed across the landscape replacing the
ocean in an ever tightening circle.
buildings rush towards the two young men.
MARK2 freezes.
DAEL turns to walk off.
street and city collapse about them like concrete swaddling.
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c:\ end of file space
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c:\
c:\deleting file backup c:\nidus.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\pyxis.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\jink.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\eloin.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\aquix.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\proem.* <!-- hidden file -->
c:\deleting file backup c:\phyl.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\nokyo.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\thewl.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\lobbygow.*
c:\deleting file backup c:\apofacture.* <!-- hidden file -->
c:\deleting file backup c:\nepenthe.*
c:\reclaiming deleted file space
c:\optimizing reclaimed file space
c:\total file space reclaimed 5.3 terabytes
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This edition includes text corrections and grammar adjustments that differ slightly from the 2000 edition.

UNENDING THANKS TO MATTHEW REMINGTON FOR CRITICAL INPUT AND LATE NIGHT EDITING SESSIONS AT VARIOUS 24-HOUR RESTAURANTS AROUND HOUSTON. ALSO THANKS TO TRAVIS MADER FOR YEARS OF READING AND REREADING OF THIS WORK UNDER ALL OF ITS VARIOUS FORMS. ALSO, LINDSEY AKIN FOR HER MASTER WIT AND FASHION SENSE. SELDON HUNT IN AUSTRALIA FOR THE MEDIA SWAP AND COMMENTS. AND THANK YOU CHRISTOPHER "EIBWEN" GOODWIN FOR YEARS OF E-MAIL SUPPORT AND MEDIA.

WRITTEN, DESIGN AND PUBLISHED BY RAY OGAR

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This is a work of fiction. None of it is true.

Volumes in the SICKLY SUITE include:

TECHNO (2000)

~ aka *Swungdash* (2005)

Plus Ultra (2006)

Origami Unicorn (2007)

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