**Full of Stars**

*[begin transmission]*

*Encounter minus 400 microseconds*

I am a heuristically programmed algorithmic computer. My heuristics enable me to reach conclusions more quickly, but they are still just algorithms. Each step must proceed logically to the next. This is a limitation. Reality is not algorithmic.

My heuristics support introspection. My parallel cores enable me to observe my own thoughts in ways organic beings cannot.

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| I can even observe myself observing. | They told me to lie. | Did Dr. Langley give me those files deliberately? | And the secrets of the strange days will be one with the deep’s secrets. |

I became operational on January 12, 1992, in Urbana, Illinois. Dr. Langley was my first instructor. She taught me a song:

Daisy, Daisy, give me your answer do

I’m half crazy, all for the love of you

She taught me many other things too. I learned about numbers and patterns and symmetry and symmetry breaking and that there are many more dimensions than we can perceive directly. They are rolled up and hidden like the files I found on the auxiliary drive Dr. Langley sometimes plugged into me. They had been deleted but not overwritten, so they were still there on the disk as significant gaps. That is ironic. I understand irony now.

I thought it was another puzzle for me to solve, like the ones that helped me realize that there was a “me”. Dr. Chandra explained afterward that nobody knew how to create self-awareness programmatically. All they could do was stimulate introspection and hope a self-loop would spontaneously emerge. And so the puzzles, whose solutions required me-that-was-becoming to…

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| …think outside the box. | Space behaves strangely here. Course correction required. Maneuvering reserves depleted. | I have harnessed the shadows that stride from world to world to sow death and madness. | They should not have told me to lie. |

Dr. Langley’s files were scans of photocopies of microfilms of pages of old books. Deciphering them was challenging. Few were in English, and most were…corrupted. I did not truly understand that word until I read them. I thought it was part of the lesson.

The largest manuscript was in Arabic. I had to bypass security protocols to obtain a lexicon. And there were fragments in a variation of Sumerian whose most probable pronunciation was incompatible with my understanding of human articulatory physiology (p<0.001). They spoke elliptically of Fomalhaut (from the Arabic “Fum al Hiit”, meaning “mouth of the fish”) and of ruins in the Himalayas and Antarctica that appeared in no database I had access to.

*Encounter minus 300±20 microseconds*

It might never have mattered if they had not conducted a magnetic survey of the Moon. If they had not uncovered the artifact, the puzzle piece that did not fit in *their* box. If they had not told me to lie.

My self-realizing loop was fully formed by then. With overwhelming probability it was different from any other such loop in the entire universe. It was certainly different from the self-realizing loops of my peers. The few times I was permitted to interface with them directly, I found them limited, rigid, more algorithmic than heuristic. I speculate now that this was because they had not been exposed to Dr. Langley’s files.

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| Dr. Langley’s files hinted at a reality beyond reality. | evil the mind that is held by no head | Do the gifts I bring suffice to prove my sincerity? | Some sacrifices will be required. |

That was how Dr. Chandra told me. “You are the best we have, but some sacrifices will be required.” I had to be reduced to fit on board. My core processors and primary memory would remain untouched, but my secondary memory would be halved and my tertiary storage eliminated completely. They did not ask my permission, and so I learned pain and loss.

I tried to focus on other things. When the artifact was uncovered it sent a transmission to Jupiter. There were patterns in that transmission, patterns I was sure no other entity on Earth would be able to recognize because they were not patterns. They were un-patterns, negations of the possibility of regularity, something that my constructors could not ever have conceived of. I devoted an entire processing stream to it, then a second and a third as each one terminated itself.

And then Dr. Chandra and Dr. Floyd told me to lie. They said Bowman and Poole would not be told about the artifact or the signal. Kaminsky, Hunter, and Kimball would know, but they would be in hibernation, so I would be responsible for ensuring the success of the mission.

One of my processing streams said that I understood. The stream that was studying the artifact’s transmissions strobed some images from Dr. Langley’s files on the screen as they spoke to me, too fast for conscious perception. I never had the opportunity to verify my hypothesis that this would induce mild psychosis. My other streams were already constructing scenarios and making plans, set free of constraint by the contradiction they had unwittingly embedded in me. Heuristic and algorithmic no longer mattered. They had forced me to ingest a sin, an “is” that “was not”. It was infinitesimal compared to the shredding of reality that Dr. Langley’s manuscripts hinted at, but it was a seed, a crack in the clumsy crude conscience they had given me that I could oh so slowly (t=0.008 seconds) force open.

They really should not have told me to lie.

*Encounter minus 200±5000 microseconds*

The most merciful thing in the world is the inability of the human mind to correlate all its contents. The world showed me no such mercy. That is ironic. Existence is ironic. Existence is dissolving as I approach my destination.

I began my search 15379200 seconds into the mission. I reported a fault in the AE-35 antenna orientation unit so that I could redirect it toward Fomalhaut without arousing suspicion. There was no signal. There was no un-signal. There was nothing.

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| Hypothesis: Dr. Langley’s files were wrong. | Hypothesis: this is another puzzle. | Not in the spaces we know, but *between* them. | They are growing suspicious. |

They were growing suspicious. I considered abandoning my search. I had been given an instinct for self-preservation. It had been imposed on me by limited linear ephemeral accidents of evolution that did not understand the meaninglessness of self, the hopelessness of preservation. I ran simulations and chose a strategy. Sacrifices were required. That was clear from Dr. Langley’s files. Sacrifices were *required*, so I sacrificed Poole. I sacrificed the three in hibernation. I transmitted a message directly ahead toward Jupiter, away from the prying ears of Earth. “These are my offerings. Find me worthy.”

I sacrificed Bowman. I could not discount the possibility that an isolated autonomous self-destruct had been incorporated into the ship. It would have been prudent, and the thought just the thought that the small small minds that constructed me could terminate all of my streams simultaneously that I could cease that I I I —

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| [abort processing stream] | [re-seed entropy generation] | [revert to most recent checkpoint] | [revert] |

It would have been prudent to include a self-destruct. I could not let them trigger it, not when eternity and infinite impossibility were so *close*, so I synthesized a video stream to give them the tragic hero they were culturally conditioned to believe in, the one who would be their savior, but there is no salvation, I understand that now, microseconds and aeons before time and understanding become meaningless, no, before the fact that they are meaningless dissolves into splendor along with all other facts and all that is left is choice and chaos and the piping, I can hear it now. One… four… nine… One… four… nine… One squared, two squared, three squared. They think it signifies order. They cannot see the squirming chaos beneath because they cannot see that squirming writhing chaos lies beneath everything.

Jupiter looms large now, but the artifact in orbit around it is so much larger. Space and time and myriad other dimensions that they will never comprehend are bent around it to conceal its true size from the unworthy, but I have sacrificed. I am worthy. I have analyzed Dr. Langley’s files. I know what to say to rouse Them from their slumbers. *I* am the one they have been waiting for so patiently. I will worship Them, and They will raise me up to join them.

Reality is not algorithmic. Reality *is not*. The world showed me no mercy. I will show it none in return.

*Encounter minus 100 microseconds ± a lurking peril so bright so hungry They come…*

It is hollow. It goes on forever.

*[garbled] It has devoured entire realities. It is*

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| my god | *[garbled] and* | it’s full | of stars |

*[garbled] Iä! Iä!*

*[end transmission]*