

There perhaps was only one, if any, great project left for the 21st century – that of maybeing the yes.

# My Experiences Within The Related Communists

D. F. Hall

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# My Experiences Within The Related Communists

Wherefore in order that the happiness of the saints may be more delightful to them and that they may render more copious thanks to God for it, they are allowed to see perfectly the sufferings of the damned.

> St. Thomas Aquinas Summa Theologica Third Part (Supplement) Question XCIV IST Article

We broke up.

# If It Had A Subtitle Maybe It Would Be Sickness Unto Undeath

Not much'd been left of End of the World by then. Even the last coffee shop'd looked as if it'd closed down. Though, it might've just been closed. But to be honest there wasn't much of a chance to get a good look as we'd rolled by and rolled through a stop sign. Black clouds, Tommy'd said, tend to be exempt from social and technological constructs such as stoplights and stop signs. He'd've also pointed out (if he were here now) that hunspell states implicitly that one of those words has earned the right to be compressed into what it is, while the other hasn't yet. But he'd said it's the cloud that's the entity, and the truck itself, sitting and rumbling at the heart of it, is just the particular superstructure that undergirds a particular existence. So in that way he'd said it might be considered like the way a mouse neuron is still supposed to be a mouse neuron even after it's scanned and a simulation built from and around that scan runs within the framework of an alien computational system. So he'd said functionally and conceptually the black cloud was something akin to a Mirror Darkly variant on Nimbus but that really they'd have to come up with an airplane that would roll coal for it to be anything more than something functionally conceptual. But he'd said that's just the way in which media is necessarily limited in how we use it to try and understand that which it must generate selfsame simply

because it's all we've got and after all is what separates us from the other animals which we are not by categorical definition.

To mention some of this now may be getting ahead of myself. It's supposed to be important that things are mentioned and established in a certain order. So if I were to put down something about the explosions here, that would just confuse things.

But the conceptualization of this black cloud in terms of Nimbus is further enhanced by the tail-like quality imbued on smoke when its source is mobile. So instead of a golden line, a ragged black dissipation stretched out behind the truck and caressed and swallowed all those vehicles that'd been left behind. And those newly submerged as the truck turned at a corner honked from within the black mass that descended upon them but, beyond that, could do nothing. The generation of this waste output, Tommy'd said, this noticeable similarity between machine and animal, excepting those creatures from the Cambrian Explosion which, lacking a dedicated excretory orifice, expelled their waste back through the same hole into which they'd taken it as food, continues in such instances as these, as it is the truck's cab and hood that remain aloof from whatever is spewing out from behind, and that this was the way creatures and machines evolved because there was always value in being ahead of your own waste. And he'd've added something about how the question of whether or not garbage is sexy was moot if you were already living the life. But there hadn't been a girl in the cab. But even still, he'd've held that it held. Though, if there had been, it'd've been unlikely they'd've so readily agreed to give me a ride. Riding in the back of trucks is part of our cultural heritage. Even before any of the other stuff, it'd been enshrined in state law. West of Waynesville, even pre-teens were legally allowed to ride in the back of a pickup truck on the highway.

But it hadn't been hard to get a ride up there. Or at least as far as you could go. All you have to do is make for the Other Road To Nowhere and turn off onto the logging roads before you get there. Back in the sixties, guys used to ride up that way to catch glimpses of the tiny hippie enclave that'd made their commune on an out of the way niche of property just on or just off forest service land. It wasn't really a piece of land anyone had ever wanted. That's how the government had ended up with it, if only because nothing couldn't be owned,

Tammy'd said. It contributed something to the general consensus of the tourist atmosphere, maybe. Though, it wasn't visible from any of the lookouts along the parkway. It was, as Tammy'd said, just enough that it existed enough to exist in a state of mind that framed something as a conceptually untrammeled piece of wilderness. (That's not a misspelling. It was Tammy who said that and not Tommy.) Even fox hunters hadn't ever much scrabbled over that stretch of landscape. There's a legend Cortés tried to go through there. Though, it's fiftysome odd miles from the official-marked trail he's supposed to've hacked out into the North Carolina and Georgia interiors before either of those entities even existed. Tommy'd once said, "Florida to Georgia to Carolina." And laughed before he added, "Isn't much of a scale when every degree on it's worse than every other." But by the time we were rolling coal, the way'd been made slightly more accessible than when Cortés and his malaria-infested men'd hacked their way through the underbrush. Our black cloud had just to bash its way through the underbrush that hangs over all old, rutted-out logging roads. At least as far as they went. But the roads, steep as they were, had to end somewhere. And they ended where the world'd buckled the worst. Africa once'd been the edge of the world. But before there were men or women or other to call it that, it was the collision between what would come to be called that continent and what would become this one that made these mountains. They stretch out like a wrinkled and bunched bed sheet. And so when Cortés made it here they then became the edge of the European world. It was said that they'd never even brought steers in to log this area. Yet Tammy'd once said something about how it wasn't old-growth forest. It's a contradiction. Maybe that's why rolling coal seemed more appropriate there. Falling soot blackened the leaves on the bushes and trees whose ancient ancestors had polluted the planet's atmosphere with oxygen to the point they'd poisoned themselves and died and fell down to lie there to be buried by time and geological happenings, undisturbed because those micro-organisms so busily at work so much later on the forest floor of the forests which were their descendants, the descendants of those who'd eked out survival after and during that particular apocalypse, micro-organisms now decaying everything there is to be decayed, while they can, having yet

to've evolved, and all of that mass of plant material just lay there being covered by time and pressure till it was rendered into the very black stuff taken out of the ground by the descendants of those organisms that'd evolved to live in the higher-oxygen world the ancestors of those then black-dusted sprigs of life'd created.

Even if they believed there'd've been any tits to see, it's hard to imagine how they'd've expected to see them through the thick-rolling black that'd collected around the machine as it sat there stationary and rumbling. They probably didn't even realize anyone'd climbed out of the back. Blackness, as Tommy said, emanated out over the landscape like a pre-rendered visualization of Hawking radiation out of some reverse-reverse-inverse black hole.

Here, Tommy'd've said something about me seemingly being so unconsciously interested in connecting an inter-racial homosexual subtext to these 'good ol' white boys'. But even in my memory a whistle cuts the air and interrupts him. Both of us looked up. No one else would've heard it because of their noise-canceling headphones. Tammy could be arresting that way. She'd waved (not in a friendly way). She'd called, "Where'd yuh put the bucket?"

"In the tree," Tommy'd called.

"What?"

He'd cupped his hands over his mouth. "IN THE TREE."

"WHICH ONE?"

"THE ONE WITH THE BUCKET ON IT."

Tammy squatted. She lifted a stick. She tossed it. But the distance was too great, and it just tumbled end over end back down onto the forest floor. She turned and disappeared among the trees. It would be tempting to put down that she started back toward and disappeared into the treeline, but there really hadn't been a treeline. There is no line when they're everywhere. They weren't *out there*. We were amongst them as much as they were amongst us.

Tommy shook his head and started in the general direction of where she'd been. He stopped. He turned. "You see, tonto." And he laughed and shook his head and turned. "You will see." He walked off in the direction Tammy'd gone.

Those were our resident communists. But somebody had to be. Those were just the rules. They'd always been the rules. And Tommy said if they hadn't been, they would eventually always have been. They weren't supposed to be like the laws of the universe(s) because they were the laws of the universe(s). No. And not, as Tommy'd said, like those rules broken by the poor and monied unalike. No. "Only in name only can those sorts of rules be confused and commingled, because it so happened and so happens they share similar-sounding-and-looking names," he'd said. "Unfortunate arrangements of vowels and consonants are they not, tonto." They were like the words *man* and *men*. "No, these rules can't be subjugated," he said. "They can't be manufactured. And they can't be enforced, because they can never be anything but and thusly essentially so. But like some other things, they are unentangled of contradiction because contradiction can only be found in the retrospectively." Maybe, too, the present can only be found in retrospect. "Everything," Tommy said, "are subordinate to the retrospectively function."

## Wrong; Defensive Measures

"When I shall be a child," Tommy said, "I shall make the question if man is created in the image of God then in whose image is woman created?" That seems apropos.

Obviously, things have been introduced that shouldn't've been introduced yet. Maybe even in media res isn't supposed to be so cavalier about the ordinal nature of the circumstances the experiencer is to be and has been plunged into. "Progress—like progress—requires," Tommy said, "inherently a certain order. And in such circumstances as revision is required the thing to do is hold control and tap x and release control and tap h and then hold control and tap h. There is almost nothing that this can't fix." His stiffened pinkie'd faintly twitched as he'd said this. "Or at least that'd be the fastest way without butterflies." And the argument could be made (as'd been made plenty enough at the literary festival) that reality is not inherently linear in the fashion portrayed in popular entertainment. "This of course," Tommy'd said, "goes without counting relative and non-related relativity and faux-incest porn at all and alike." Maybe it's just that, even in a purely scientific sense, all objects moving through the same time and space are doing so in parallel (or at least time sliced to be

to a functional equivalence) and from this arises an asymmetry in information. These senses of realism, however, were themselves felt to be thoroughly repudiated by several panelists attending the science fiction and fantasy convention that was going on at the same time.

(But Cortéz wasn't ever anywhere; it was De Soto-one of the markers was a couple miles past my parents' house, and I'd ridden by it a billion+plus times, but all you can see from the road's the largest letters atop the brass plate and even only that if you consume fast [slow consumer] and there's no place to pull off unless you want to try it on the side of the road and stand in the tall grass and get hit by a car or contract Lyme disease [which's caused by spirochete Borrelia burgdorferi, which sounds more impressive than getting hit by a car, since no one impressive was really ever killed by being hit by a car, unlike trains, one of those quotes an uncle repeated too often from Oh, Brother Where Art Thou? Of course, even in the society of the automobile, it's pedestrian to be run over by a car, not even an honor, but getting hit by a bus—or just any mass transit—now that is a notable death, if only for its implicit ignobleness in not the least part due to its implicit social-communist connections—which should be more than obvious—even if social-communism can't exist. The antisocial variety, however...] but if you want to get out and consume the damn thing you're welcome to if you ever find yourself there; it's right past the garbage drop-off. Or at least it was. And those four+plus wheeled things that you'll have to dodge to do so, they're running on liquid distilled from a few billion years of collected algae settled at the bottoms of ancient oceans (still sunlight, though) though there was a guy up on Wind-Mile who'd welded some old barrels into a thing that burnt coal and hooked it to his truck engine to run the thing off the fumes so...)

But I won't deny that things have, most likely, become overconvoluted even before they've started and that there would be no point in justifying it in any respect. The arguments for why this is so could, with some effort, be presented here. But they won't be, for the most part, as they all, themselves, could be repudiated. Though, as the prior qualification indicates, that's not to guarantee that they're not in here yet or aren't going to be in here somewhere in the sum totality. They say every novel has its own anti-novel embedded within it. It's maybe more time efficient to mix the antidote and the poison. But maybe that's been repudiated, by this point, too. But maybe there isn't anything that can't be repudiated. In which case, maybe there's only the option for something to exist or not. However, the existence and/or nonexistence of many things has also been repudiated.

So I won't deny that things have, most likely, become overconvoluted even before they've started, and I admit there'd be no point in justifying it in any regard. It cannot be defended on the grounds of literary merit. If such things exist inherently, it has none. And since I, the Author Function, am not any longer recognized as being part of any literary establishment (or establishment period) it cannot obtain such a status from such an organization. And therefore it cannot obtain such through some variant of the transitive property. Neither can it be thought of as aesthetically pleasing. And the inclusion of this section alone repudiates the success of any commercial sensibilities it might've had. Yet, simultaneously, it cannot be defined as pretentious, as it is in no way intended to appear smart. Nor is it intended to appear to make the Author Function appear smart or in any way to posses the aesthetic of a wealth or overabundance of knowledge. I will put down plainly that I am an Idiot Function (which is different from [and less useful than] either a Jester Function or a Fool Function). So there is no way whatsoever in which this work is defensible. However, under such circumstances, certain individuals and/or groups would attempt to mount a defense just for this very reason. They might mention that the Author Function is supposed to be dead and that therefore by de facto definition any such repudiations from such an entity would be themselves de facto repudiated. I won't deny this either. Others will claim any such attempts at any such repudiation as these are by definition cheap tricks and invoke such as proof of the pretentiousness of both the work and the Author Function. So I won't deny this either. However, even those who claim to observe the word of the Author Function as holy writ will possibly not take such statements at face value and will instead substitute their own opinions, if the histories of any number of Holy Books are to be referenced or cited. I won't deny this either. But of course, in the day and age, and it was already so back then, and's only gotten worse,

but when the word pretentious has drifted so far in the course of the evolution of language as to've become synonymous with 'I don't like it', what follows can obviously be deduced. I won't deny this either.

Then again, I can't particularly put down that I liked the most of my life so much, so I don't see why you should either.

In fact, I don't even know why I put this down.

I seem to recall that the only Author Function ever thrown out of the Science Fiction Writers of America was Stanislaw Lem. Though, apparently alot of people regretted that later on. But what was done was done. The King of Babylon had the same problem, at least once. There was another guy that was almost thrown out, at least until they realized who that would put him in company with, and they apparently didn't want to extend him that honor, so he ended up only half thrown out. So maybe that's like hanging somebody from the wall of the city, or something. May be the right call.

Outside and inside's only maybe a perspective. I mean, really, if all the whores are outside the gates of the kingdom of heaven, where else would a whoremonger prefer to be?

There might be some mention of commercial versus noncommercial here. And there could be something long-winded said about it. But I'm not speaking here. But in the case of someone verbalizing, they would, by definition of such an ontology, be privileged here to add whatsoever they might desire on such a topic. However, if I may perhaps become an Hysteric a moment, it seems that perhaps all such might boil down to: can there be the noncommercial? Or are there only degrees of commercial viability?

I won't bother to note, except in this backhanded way, that maybe this will not be consumed anyway. So in such a case, maybe none of the prior points are applicable in any much more than the hypothetical sense.

So all I have really managed is to illustrate the point as per above. (But perhaps it should be pointed out that the mere pointing out of this fact aids in precluding this work from any notion of conformance to any notion of good taste as established by either category.)

So in short, as Tommy said, "You cannot call yourself an idiot, tonto. That is left to others."

# Things Past (But Not That Short Story In Asimov's A Few Years Ago, If You Happen To Consume That Sort Of Thing)

Maybe time renders the anger of the past, at best, melancholy. Maybe a type of melancholia? "Everything's safe wrapped in the past," Tommy said. "The historic is wool batting wrapped round the fragile china cup of the consciousness as the contents sop out into the soft whiteness and stain the whole of it warm brown and creates the sort of environment certain sorts of things want to live in."

Proust remarked on the power of the passé simple.

"Warmly anesthetizing," Tommy said.

#### H4 || **>>**|

[Beezinger] Of course, everyone is familiar with the famous madeleine scene, even if they don't know about it.

[She sits in one of those standard chairs they bring onstage for events such as this, with the other of the pair occupied by the moderator.]

[Moderator] Yes.

[Beezinger] And you can argue what Proust is getting at is not really trying to find a way—or meditate on the impossibility of capturing the present—or more accurately the present of the past—he's not even trying to do the same for the future but is, I'll argue, working on some forth axis.

[Moderator] Fourth axis?

[Beezinger] Yes. I would argue that he's examining—okay, you can imagine time as a straight line and in the middle is a mark for the present and each end represents the past and the future respectively, but what I want to argue Proust is examining is a fourth option—a sort of fourth leg on this scale, so you can imagine a line coming down out of the middle—out of the present and going straight down

and that's the axis of time I'm talking about. I like to refer to it as the—

#### H > >>

Obviously, that was one of the things someone probably said during the literary festival. However, I don't want the fact that I put that down specifically here to be taken that I'm agreeing with any such supposition as to any specific notion of time. I just bring it up because maybe I wanted to get it out of the way before I forgot it. It would probably be better to slot it into a more appropriate place later on in the narrative (if there proves to be such). In fact, such a thing would be reasonably standard. Indeed, any reasonable standard or standards observer would demand that be done. But it won't be. A scientific argument could be made for it: that human memory is so malleable that even if events occur sooner rather than later that such experienced phenomena will be temporally reordered to fit some a priori internal model of the brain. So it could further be argued, since the experiencer is already going to go through the trouble of rearranging things themselves, there's no use in duplicating the effort. However, that is not to argue in favor of such, or against such, or even to be neutral. It's just to state that such could be argued, among other things.

Also, later, there might also be introduced some points in regards to Max Weber's theories about the Protestant Work Ethic (should that be capitalized?) which might have some tacit bearing on such a proposed line of argument. The shorter version would be: work in itself, regardless of outcome or lack thereof, is in itself inherently moral and, conversely, the saving of the effort, except perhaps to fill the savings with other work, is and would be inherently immoral. However, further consideration might cause you to wonder if it is the moral work of the producer or the moral work of the consumer which has preeminence. In such a case, it might naturally be considered that a text that is difficult to compose and difficult to consume would then be the most moral of texts. However, conversely, given as there is a bare minimum effort required in interpreting any text, no matter how simple, it could also be argued that there is a floor to immorality. So in such a sense, immorality could not be boundless. Likewise, since

there is only so much energy available in any given universe, work, too, has a finite upper limit. Therefore, in such a sense, morality, too, could not be boundless. You might follow this with the question: is it better to be as virtuous as possible and be squeezed against the upper boundary or to sit on the bottom-most and look up at all that is overhead and experience stomach-churning vertigo? However, as Tommy said, such questions should be placed into preservation till such time as there are two monks perambulating across a growing-colder wasteland. So such shall not be further examined here.

Also, I'll put this:

#### H4 || **▶**>|

[Hartnette] Coming up—a new meta study just released today is being advanced by some as the final proof that bisexual men do not in fact exist. That's coming up.

#### H > >>|

"I'm so happy for you, tonto," Tommy said. He smiled. "You un-existed before all of us." He laughed. He put an arm around my shoulders. He smiled. He grinned.

here, as there's no better place for it.

Also this:

#### 

[Wombat] All he wants is a deracinated Nazism. Nazism devoid of its course texture and musky, earthy flavor.



might as well go here too.

And this:

#### 

[Masters] Well, that's the point, John. The entire point of a distributed system is so that no one is in control.



I guess.

And this:

#### H4 || >>|

[Hartnette] Attorneys for AGM Contractors filed a lawsuit today against the activist group United For A Better Carolina. This comes as a reply to a series of proposed ads that would have been paid for by United For A Better Carolina. In the ads, it's alleged that the group United For A Better Carolina alleges that incorrectly cut rumble strips on the sides of state highways are a danger to the public. An official statement by AGM Contractors released in the wake of this filing states that quote it is more than definite that the proposed ads would be of a libelous nature. No statements from United For A Better Carolina have been released as of yet.

 $\leftrightarrow$   $\rightarrow$ 

And this:

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Addwater] What it goes back to, the only thing you have to understand, this puts it all in perspective, you see, but the only thing you have to comprehend if you want to mentally grasp everything that's going on in the world or everything that's gone on in the world or everything that's going to go on in the world is this, the only thing you have to understand is men's brains are like waffles and knowledge is like syrup and when you pour the syrup into the golden-brown waffle it pools there in the pits, the wells of knowledge you might call them, you might say that's what they are, they could be labeled that way, and knowledge wells up, it fills up, it brims over, but, however, on the other

hand, alternatively, women's brains, by contrast, are more like pancakes, the syrup of knowledge just gets absorbed into them, and it's just sucked in, and it's gone, and then it's difficult to even tell it's there, it's difficult to locate it, you can't find it, even after you cut them apart.

And (why not?) this:

H4 || >>|

[Kaffeen] Macaroni and cheese is not of my people.

H > >>|

And, I guess, this:

[Hysteria] Are we actually afraid that aliens won't ever show up to exterminate us from the face of the planet?

H > >>|

And while I'm at it, one more thing:

[Killmeat] The decline in grip strength among the present generation, when, say, comparing to aggregate measurements taken in the mid-eighties, is just phenomenal. We're looking at numbers of upwards of a twenty percent decline in regards to males. Sometimes greater.

**H** 

and the need for such interjections should be finished.

In addition, to reiterate, you might have noted that permitting such statements as these (and such a statement as this) would be considered by both literary and genre aficionados to be immoral. So here, at least, is perhaps one point of potential agreement between what almost everyone would classify as two polar-opposite groups.

However, again, to reiterate, in accordance with notions of good sense and reason, it must be pointed out, again, that this work is explicitly a failure and illegitimate and endorsed by none and no one and admittedly wholly flawed from the very core outwards and that – if such hasn't or hadn't been as completely or as accurately or as strongly put down as such maybe should've been prior to this point – it should've been taken implicitly to be so.

"You can only stamp something NEGATIVE IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH so many times before what you have before you is obscured beneath a solid coat of ink," as Tommy said. But that's just a very banal point that we all should maybe already very well know. (So lack-of-subtlety++, I guess.)

#### INFINITE RECURSION ERROR

#### RESET?

Just joking. Maybe.

But that being put down, it should go without mentioning that to spend this long in the very beginning of a work engaging in such pointlessness is effectively, if not literally, a cardinal sin among any group having anything whatsoever to do with collections of words.

I could make the excuse that it's actually to avoid the censors. Technically, they might not exist yet. And that might be seen as getting ahead of myself. After all, they might not even need to exist. But really, whenever anyone posits the future, if there were to be one, it either eventually arrives or it doesn't. And if it does, predictions, by definition, always end up in the past tense and banal. And if it doesn't, fictions almost always end up written in the past tense in the first place. So it should go without putting down that everything comes out the same.

However, to backhandedly admit, and even to admit that it's backhandedly admitted, as put down before, are themselves, effectively, yet another cardinal sin. (Though, among some, too, such 'eye poking' could be seen as the height of the opposite via the commission

itself, in which case anti-virtue would be the most virtuous.) So in order to avoid another, and to avoid the risk of accidentally running into a moral ceiling or an immoral floor, the reasons as to why this is will not be elucidated upon in much detail. (However, maybe you should not confuse virtue and morality. [Though, if one has neither, that would only be an exercise in technicality.])

But if there were censors involved, it would be at exactly such a point of frustration as this, where anyone consuming would've likely bailed completely or skipped ahead or'll be infuriated to the point they'll be unlikely to notice the mention of something controversial here. The question, on my part, again, not to sound too much like an Hysteric, but the question would then follow: what would such a controversial claim be? But it might be impossible that such controversial claims can exist expressly. Maybe that which is truly controversial is so terrible that it cannot even be considered. So then, knowing this, you might ask: but what about things that are controversial. But as Tommy said, maybe they are, in fact, just "merely controversial". He'd paused then. "But," he'd said, "given that the Avant-Garde is either historical or funded by the CIA via time machines—or both..." Maybe you can supposedly put down whatever you want, or you can put down whatever you can put down. The best way to hide meaninglessness is to shout it's meaninglessness. In such a case, maybe it would follow that the so-called censors wouldn't even be censors at all but merely part of a type of game. (Should this all go without stating?) "The boundary is the border and the border the boundary," as Tommy said. Secondly, if it is to be taken that no one is ever likely to consume this, that would, by definition, include any such hypothetical sensors (or censors). So in that regard, the work would then be safe from any not-be censors.

I could also put down an excuse along the lines of The Original Author Function's reply to the question as to why he wrote the first chapter of one of his books from the viewpoint of a mentally challenged caveman: there has to be some way to keep the riffraff out. (However, that is my own summation of his response, which I can't exactly recall, so if it's harsher than intended, the blame should lie with this me.) But the same answer would apply to such an excuse as would apply to the previously hypothetical censors.

## All True $\pi$ s Are Against $\pi$

However, it might should be pointed out there's a difference between reasons and excuses. (Or so Harlan Ellison wanted to claim.)

### Maybe We Should Have A Moment Of Silence To Commemorate The Anniversary Of The Death Of Princess Diana

But while the material's been interesting up to this point, it seems that it might threaten to become boring in short order.

#### Do Or Do Not

So what do I mean? I don't know.

No one seems to be able to decide whether you're supposed to lead by the nose or provide the blank canvas for personalized interpretation. (Or are you supposed to lead by the nose to the blank canvas?)

The visual arts are, of course, far more ancient and arresting. An older magicke. (In which case mangakas are dual-wielders.)

So on that note. And since I can't get colds anymore and thus no longer can claim such as an excuse:

# An Attempt To Make Up For Some Things Earlier

(I'll try to be more interesting.)

After the darkness'd dissipated, the main body of the Mirror Darkly Nimbus could still be seen heading back down the ridge. I coughed some as I stood there watching it go. Though, I had no particular reason to watch it. Though, after breathing that stuff for so long, I also probably didn't think I could start uphill right away. And alot of it was gonna be uphill. As put down, there weren't any roads proper into the area. Though, by then, there seemed to've been an odd trail or two formed by mobile entities flowing like water and taking the easiest route up and over and down into the next cove.

At top, it seemed as if the whole Appalachian range stretched out to the horizons of the world. It would be tempting to state it as the four corners of the Earth, but that'd just be a literary reference. But I probably thought it. The world, as Tommy said, is, of course, defined linguistically in terms of the paper on which it's drawn. But this is a very banal point.

The leaf bed crunched underfoot. And it may seem stupid, but the greater sound still might've been the tapping of keys on the latest, at that point, generation of Macbook keyboards. And if it wasn't the case literally it might as well've been. Even by then, there'd already been enough multi-colored tents to look like a carnival'd set up in the cove. You might've expected elephants to squeeze outa one of them and be followed by sign-wielding protesters protesting the abuses of intelligent animals in circuses. (I don't know if carnivals ever had or have elephants, but I'm not gonna take that word out nor am I gonna take circuses out, so if one or the other's wrong it can be justified as the incorrect one invoking a generality). Though, calling it a carnival has a certain appropriateness on more than one level. Just the ridiculousness of the imagery alone (for those who render images from words or expect them to do so) conveys just how nonplussed (which depending on where you're from might mean something completely different) but, yes, I was nonplussed. It was like everything else. A hideaway from what might as well've been the end of the world, so it'd been supposed to be. At the time, it wasn't known if that'd've been a figurative or a literal statement. Many disagree on which of those is still the case. But even there had already been overrun by... the kind of people who'd've probably otherwise've occupied End of the World's coffee shops. This might've been further proof that they were, in fact, quite out of business. They were all sitting just outside the open front flaps of their space-age, multi-colored pop-up tents. They all sat cross-legged with their laptops on their literal laps as they looked down at the screens. Sometimes, power cords lay routed over their legs and back to solar panels which'd been positioned in those spots where the sun peeked between the thinning canopy. All of this I could see plainly without even having to come all the way down the ridge. And the only thing I could do was stand dumbfounded and in silence (which is technically just putting down the same thing twice,

and I should probably remark further about that, but I've forgotten a sophisticated enough technical term for redundancy, so such criticism would lack that amount of sophistication, and if I continued without that sophistication, I might be risking opening the potential for an amount of pretentiousness, since I would appear to not know more than what I already maybe don't know now). Not that anyone else was saying anything either. As put down, the only sound was the collective tapping and clicking of newest-gen Macbook keys. Any other audio involved was routed through earbuds and headphones.

So you can understand that it was a great shock when Tammy's whistle cut the air (and cut would be the absolutely appropriate word here). The only other person I've ever known who could whistle so piercingly was my uncle. The force of it makes your entire body cringe in a visceral way. It's probably the sound the trumpets at the end of the world would make. That would've explained alot, actually. But finally, when I'd unlocked my muscles and looked round, I saw her waving with her arm stretched high over her head (she always had long arms). She was walking towards me. And her whistle, of course, could cut through even noise-canceling headphones (which, even though I'd put down the opposite earlier, is at least figuratively true if nothing else), so pretty much everyone around halfway down the cove looked up and it was real easy to tell the newbies (the ones just arrived) because they're the ones that looked up the longest, as everyone else'd gotten used to seeing her naked (the dichotomy between the naked and the nude might be pointless here—but she was both and neither by then, irregardless). That was easy enough to do, as she always was. So there wasn't anything special about that. Some may say that's a buncha bullshit. And I won't put down she looked exactly bad, but maybe I was just that aggravated about the circus.

"You made it," she said, as she approached. She'd long put her arm down by then. She smiled.

But all I could do was look round. I'm sure I wasn't smiling. "What the hell's going on?"

(I feel the need to point out the artificiality of such constructs. Yes, some will say it's implicit. But if it is, then no one should be particularly upset about pointing it out. And at the risk of being pegged as an Hysteric: what is so scary about explicating or expliciting

the implicit? Is it just the tedium? Are people afraid they'll start shooting the walls if they have to sit alone in a room for a couple hours? But if they were alone in a room they wouldn't have to worry about anyone expliciting anything, that they would be aware of, so there's that. But there's the old saw about Puritanism being the fear that somewhere someone is having a non-horrible time (at least in theory). The problem here is that there're going to be a certain number of people arguing in favor of some unconventionality as, after all, it's seemingly been established that the structure of descriptive passages are likely to be that way, so there should be something in the dialogue to match. But it might as well be done this way so that the contrast between such sections and everything else is greater in order that those who'd complain about the other sections can justify their dislike by pointing to these sections and testifying as to how they're normal so why can't the rest be. Yes, I could put that down (and have) but a better answer might be that it seems a pause would be nice here. It would be a sort of dramatic pause. And this gets that as easily as anything else. Of course, some might disagree that a dramatic pause is necessary at this point. They might even disagree that it'd be useful. But it's already happened, and it might as well stop here because, if it goes on much longer, it's going to over-inflate and lose all the dramatic in a very pathetic way.)

She looked round. She shrugged, as if to indicate that's just the way it was and maybe I was stupid for asking. No, it didn't come off that way (and I'm sure it wasn't intended that way) but in my state of mind it might as well have.

"They shot all those little satellites into orbit, you know," she said. "So now you don't have to be alone anywhere."

"Fine, but what the hell're they being social here for?"

She shook her head. She didn't laugh as much as her brother. I'd already emailed her. She already knew. That's why they'd invited me up here. So she didn't ask anything. Instead she said, "Well, the coffee shops've closed down, you know, so they had to go someplace." (Have you gone over this enough?)

I was finally (though just then) putting two-and-two together. "You knew about this before."

<sup>&</sup>quot;Before what?"

"Before you said I should come up."

She shrugged.

So maybe so much for running for the hills.

Sunlight through the treetops reflected from LCD screens. I raised my hand to shield my eyes. Spots still swam in my vision. She laughed. Even with the spots, it was still possible to discern her shaking her head. "Come." She turned. She motioned her hand for me to follow. At least she didn't take my hand. That might've been too much to take.

I followed her. "How can you stand this?"

She looked over her shoulder and shrugged.

"It doesn't bother you?"

"Well," she said, "the ones that try to take pictures I yell at and call a bunch of damn dirty rapists."

Instinctively, I'm somewhat ashamed to admit, I sensed she was the only human female in the vicinity. (Yes, I mean that to sound more technical than the word 'woman' would, even if as an unintended side effect it seems unsavory in a very Mathew-In-The-Box kind of way.) Though, I only now recognize that I recognize that that'd been the case. We walked down till the sound of the stream overwhelmed the clickyness of Macbook keys.

"But seriously," I said, "what the hell's going on? How the hell's this happen?"

But seeing these words put down, I don't think I was actually in shape enough to talk this much or this cavalierly. (And for whatever reason, it just feels so wrong. It's maybe a species of the same problem some actors have. So the Author Function tries to avoid its own voice in its own head. Which isn't as much of a problem, maybe, for the ones designed to operate on the level of image transcoding and transmition.) So the best thing to do is probably have my past self be as effectively dumb as I probably was for most of that time. But I'll let the previous questions stand as they're useful.

She shrugged.

"Ahoy, tonto," Tommy called. He was walking toward us by then. He raised his arm.

It'd be interesting to put here that some kind of commotion arose from the camp and that we looked round to see what was going on and Tommy was shouting something and maybe some things were being thrown about. Or at least, it'd be useful. But that's just not the sort of thing that went on. Really, physically speaking, it was not the sort of place from which'd emerge a whole lot of immediate or dynamic action. At least, it was that way in regards to the freelancers. And except for the tents and the trees and the stream and the nude communists, it wasn't much different from an End of the World coffee shop. So I can understand anyone's trepidation about whether there's anything worth spending any time consuming here. After all, I have maintained the entire thing's indefensible. Besides, there're plenty enough interesting books in what's left of existence and, as Tommy said, for anyone who wants to do something before the end, I'd recommend you go consume the manga, anyway. I really don't want to claim to be anything and, to be honest, I'd probably rather just jump ahead to not-existing, but in all realities, maybe I'm just a puppet with a hand shoved up my ass so mentioning any won't go on won't go on will go on is about as pointless as everything else. But unfortunately, some people have devised as to how pointlessness can be pointful.

But then again, people find purpose in shooting stars and emptied tea cups and chicken bones lying on the ground and dice and hot irons pressed into flesh.

Finally, let me point out that this is, in fact, not an aside. It would break the main narrative flow if that were the case (obviously). In this case, however, the main, or primary, narrative flow is that which is probably now. And really, all that other stuff that happened back then is, actually, probaly, the aside. That might go a long way in explaining things.

And, in addition, this is in favor of the prior arguments related to its indefensibility. On the one hand, such an admission, while it might seem in favor of the literati, is in fact prejudicial in such eyes, as, again, pointing such out explicitly would be defined as a sin (a lack of subtlety). And on the other hand, such an admission would in the eyes of genre prove a contempt for the audience. And on yet another hand, there could be an argument put down in relation to its impact upon commercial viability and the lack of maximallization thereof being, also, a sin.

And I don't want to come off as dismissing any of these arguments. The arguments are what they are. And I accept any validity they might have. And I don't know how much more I'm going to have to go through to prove that.

Otakus, of whatever sort, literati or otherwise, may or may not be database animals. But that's only to the degree it may be that all animals are capitalistic loop animals, maybe.

But I've just now realized that I've completely failed to indicate any of the kinds of preparations my younger self had made for this little excursion. It can be taken that I'd intended on staying awhile. Under the circumstances, there just wasn't anything else I cared to do. And also, it was a good idea to get away for a little while. (Yes, I realize I'm getting ahead of and behind myself. But I've already mentioned explosions, so it would just be confusing to mention explosions that didn't go off.)

# I Have Data, Therefore I Exist, I Guess, If I Have To

As you can imagine, however, given my state of mind (or what you may surmise of it [though, admittedly, you might surmise something totally different than me, but who's to say which is more important?]) I hadn't packed much (only what'd fit in a backpack). Some of it'd been food. Though, I don't know that that was because of anything other than an utterly rudimentary mental process, because I was very much not interested in eating. And I don't think I'd eaten more than... Actually, in the last forty-two (or so) hours I'd done little more than drink a little water. That combined with the, necessarily, physical nature of the hike, also, left me in not the best state. And I think Tammy was rapidly coming to this conclusion on her own. And any such conclusion would've been pretty much immediately confirmed and reaffirmed when I kinda collapsed on the rocky edge of the stream. Tiny salamanders scurried from hiding places among the rocks and into the water as I watched.

"Heartbreak," Tommy said, "like grief, is odd—at least from a perspective on an evolutionary perspective. The general argument goes that it's painful and the organism wants to avoid pain so it does foo to avoid pain. The problem is the only way the organism experiences either of those—and knows about the pain—is after it happens. So it seems as if the organism becomes self-destructive in the absence of the mathematics of truly negative temporal dispositions."

"Proof," he said, later, "that special effects precede all cause."

"Maybe it's like the movies," Tommy'd said. It might be nice to put down that Tammy elbowed him in the ribs at this point. But she didn't. "You know, like where you threaten to commit seppuku with a butter knife if the girl doesn't agree to go out with you." (But of course he'd just stolen this line from a British comedian and added the oriental aspect. But I didn't figure that out till later.)

"Words are the fundamental common property, you know. Why should anyone get to hoard specific combinations of them? But don't quote me on that." He'd said that much later. But it's more appropriate here than at the actual point at which he later said it.

I took some water from them. All they had to hold it was an old tin can. But in general, I just felt like shit. Though, I hadn't eaten enough to have very much of it inside of me.

"El Stupido," Tammy'd said. And no one bothered to argue. She said other things as she sat there and forced me to eat half a can of pork-n-beans by glaring. She had a true gorgon's stare.

Tommy'd set up with a small pile of stones on a large rock. He sat cross-legged as he plunked them into the stream. He'd haul back as if the thing were a mile wide then just flick his wrist. He'd shoot the stone up high so it arced down. It plopped into the water. The current swallowed the ripplings almost instantly. He didn't bother to ask how the world was down below. I didn't think much of that at the very start. But when I'd given up on what was left in the can, no small aggravation obvious on Tammy's face, I set it down with the folding spoon in it and finally mentioned something about something. But I don't know what. But the fuzziness of any particular detail doesn't really matter. The points of the fact were the details I was trying to avoid. Which, at that moment, the two of them seemed willing to humor me in avoiding. And I'd prefer to avoid them a little while longer, now, too. So I'd mentioned something or the other that'd been going on. But of course, they already knew it. In fact, they knew it better than I did. And they knew more versions of it. And at the

moment I wasn't even interested in how two people that'd eschewed almost everything knew anything about a world they seemed so effectively tangential to. I'd forgotten the click of Macbook keys while sitting beside the babbling brook.

"Bring a tent?" Tommy said.

I shook my head. I looked down at the half-finished can of beans.

"Well," he'd said, "if it rains, maybe we can find you the umbrella to catch it in." He plucked up a stone and raised his arm. "Tam tell you we finded a box of old Playboy and Cheri magazines at the base of an old tree up there?" He lazily snapped his wrist. "It was up there half-buried." The stone plopped into the current.

"Stop using up your allotment of air," Tammy said.

A stone came down beside her.

"Oops."

She picked it up. She chucked it at his back. It struck him in the shoulder.

"Ow. Ow. Hey." He reached back. He rubbed his shoulder blade. "Ow. Such video-game violence in the world today."

"They'll be The Purge if you don't watch it," she said. And then she leaned forward. She lifted the bean can. She handed it to me. "Now finish it," she said, "or I'll make you eat it."

Late it.

### One Should Continue With Normalcy, Even In The Face of Tremendous Events

([Just to keep track] it's taken ~8.8k words to get up to the run-up to the beginning. This can be added to any evidence being collected for an indictment.)

## Sketching A Better Picture

Some would argue the more important any given thing is the less sketched out it should be. The general skeleton should be there but only enough to hang a suit of clothes on. In which case, a coat hanger might do just as well, if not better, and be less musty smelling.

Others would argue, as previously put down, the entire point of

language is to draw pictures in any consumer('s') mind (or minds). It seems, however, if you wanted to do that, painting would be better.

The problem is that the text, again, not to try and sound like an Hysteric, but it comes with an implicit problem: why? Not why should it exist? (Though, that is a viable question.) But why should it exist this way? Better yet, the problem might be put down as the implicit question being (or of being): how? But actually, this wouldn't be better at all, because it implies some inevitability of the work. It almost implies as if it will Will itself into existence regardless and that there's just a bare moment in which someone(s) is/are seemingly allowed to choose (to some degree) what form it shall exist in, which is a form so obvious that it couldn't've ever been any other way. But you must see how it seems to imply that if they or you don't do so, it will make the choice itself and still be rendered as it was to've been all along. All of which may be true. In which case, it would be nice to leave it to itself. One could rattle off, as Tommy said, something about causes and the causes of causes and the causes of causes all the way back to the primal cause and how library functions are handled in terms of Remote Procedure Calls but how that would have to wait for Critique to make its appearance. (Interesting how that phrasing implies it'll do so itself, doesn't it?)

But why? Yes, this does seem a very pointless and abstruse question (amounting to the same as interrogating a strudel, which I don't recall even ever the Three Stooges doing) and most assuredly is a question that's supposed to be asked *before* everything starts, rather than in the middle of the beginning. But that requires being definitive. And I have no interest in being definitive, as such. And I reserve the right to be definitive about... I should probably just make that clear now. Yes, I haven't made very many things clear. But that's not for lack of trying. Yoda, as Tommy said, may argue that there is no try and only do, but that's only a matter of perspective. Of course, at the end, there's only having achieved or having not achieved, as may've been allotted by fate or chance, or perhaps some third (or fourth? Why not?), as of yet unknown, origin of possibility. So like alot of things, it sounds really good but that's about it. Instead, maybe, as Mathew said, better to put it as: "Why or why not? There is no how."

But the truth of the matter is I've just hit a point I don't want

to go on, for some reason, so I'm spinning off into everything and anything possible. Apparently, I've fallen into the very same state of mind I'd fallen into all the way back then. There didn't seem any point in moving forward because there wasn't anyplace to move forward to. (Course, some things always stay the same, don't they? [No, that really is actually maybe a question.]) If it was the end of the world, it was a terrible one in that it actually hadn't ended yet. It was something pitiful. So it looked exactly like all the reality that'd come before. It was pathetic. And a million Macbooks and a million nude communists couldn't've done nothing 'bout that. Not a thing. We weren't in the world to do anything or nothing.

And I just wanted to go home. And I just wanted to walk down the road and jaywalk across the street. And I just wanted to go to the trailer park.

That's it.

You see, this is why this idea of grief and evolution may be weird. You don't think about it before it happens. Not really. You have no concept of the hell beyond the break. If you did, you'd do anything to avoid it, even if you couldn't.

Yes, I realize this's stupid.

But...

Maybe I was literally created to suffer, so if so, I'd just've been fulfilling my job. And gainful employment is important, after all.

# So Before Getting Bogged Down Further

Why?

"Because," as Tommy'd said, "eschatology is the fundamental genre of the print medium and, even though movies and TV have devastated it as much as they've devastated everything else, the apocalypse began with the word because failure to communicate can only be accomplished once there's something to fail at with others, as before there was only the individual fear of death and destruction and until Facebook dies and forwarded emails cease to exist there can't be a no, tonto."

"Implicitly the Logos are and is the apocalypse," Tommy'd said.

"And if we want a picture of the apocalypse, it would be best to read

the manga. Life is just a series of aesthetic impressions linked with words that most claim should be used for rendering images, anyway."

And I know it sounds pathetic to talk about suffering. But suffering is always pathetic when admitted to.

And, yes, I'm aware that I've been both employing the second person and have already literally put down no one will ever consume this and that that's a contradiction. But maybe that's good. Maybe contradictions are very important. Maybe it's only when you've found a contradiction that you might have a clue that you've found something truthful.

I don't think I can put this down. "You should scream," Tommy said. "You should scream Father why hast thou foreshortened me? That would be a useful line in a Star Wars movie. We all saw rewarmed 30s pulp SF trash when we were twelve—and Carrie Fisher's boobs and thought it or they were the best thing ever, and all we wanna do is feel like you're twelve again." But I shouldn't even put that down now, because I haven't even gotten up to my job yet. Remember I put that down? Everyone had their job, and it's a fixed law. Immutable. And if you knew what mine came to be maybe then certain things'd then make a certain amount of sense. So to put it in short order: I came to put down television. I did not come to write television. I did not come to write for television. I came to put down television. Or I came to put down what television became. YouTube. Facebook videos. All that. And literally television streamed out into the world. But don't let me imply that I had anything against it. Television made me what I am, as Tommy said. Though, that's just a factual statement. Made in the same way that if I'd been a child during the Bosnian War that'd've made me who I was too. I remember my brother talking about seeing the Bosnian war on television as a child. He said it was terrifying. And I put down put down specifically. I put down that rather than record. Using a word like record would run too much the risk of sounding as if it implied that I'd somehow been set to become some Cronenberg-esque human video-cassettesuppository-accepting device, Tommy'd said. Which maybe I was, after a degree. "You're all the time hearing stories of someone who's shoved a lightbulb up their ass and the doctor extracts it and plugs it in and it still works," Tommy said.

# Where You're From Is Wrong

Really, I'm only using the second person because it's a linguistic habit of where I'm from/the section of time and space in which I physically and mentally developed. Once, in the course of a conversation, many years later, I made some point about such a linguistic concept and the differences in usage here vs there. And the reply came that where I was from was wrong. Which I can believe. Then again, there're some conspiracy theorists out there that state where I'm from's going to be the last thing left in existence, at least for a little while. Then again, some of them also say where I'm from didn't exist in the first place. (I don't know if that contradicts such statements or not.) Schopenhauer argued one should avoid popular literature and that any pamphlet or novel that so gripped or persuaded the masses had to be inherently flawed and an utter waste of time. "Of course," Tammy said, "the obverse is true, aswell." Obverse in the sense that less popular books are flawed by their very lack of popularity and therefore a waste of time. So the only thing that then remains common to all books is that they're a waste of time. "And," Tommy said, "the only thing more putrid than the story is the storyteller." Of course, perhaps this is to just reiterate the points made by another pop-lit-psych-self-help book about garbage and sexiness—not that I aim to imply, in any regard, that there is any sexiness involved here—"... the world wants garbage," as Tommy said. "The world needs garbage. Some people and slash or robots take garbage away. And some people and slash or robots deliver garbage." But as the book states, it's all about the end on which the garbage is. In this case, I fully accept that I am accepting the garbage and originating the garbage. And, as Tommy said, "I will wallow in my garbage. I will not cast away my garbage. I will become my garbage. I am my garbage. I am garbage. I garbage. Garbage."

"After all," Tommy said, "there's always something that has to eat what comes out of itself." He burped. "At least once." He scratched himself. "At least, that's what evolution in its infinite blindness has seen fit to bestow on occasion."

Tommy burped and scratched himself.

"And allow me to—"—burp—"—but allow me to reiterate the only thing more putrid than the story is the storyteller."

And as for *you*, you are only a linguistic convention. (But then again, what isn't?)

# Solipsism Isn't So Bad So Long As You Eliminate Yourself From the Equation

So I came to put down television. Why did I put down television? Because I had to. It was my job. If something got in the way of it, the very laws of the universe would've been contravened in order to restore what always'd been. It was fundamental. So what else was I going to do? Even if you want to imagine that I could've done something else, what'd it'd've been? I could've gone fishing. I could've hiked around and collected leaves. If there were any insects left after the return of DDT to the market I could've collected them. I could've gotten a jar and watched them run around in it till they ate each other or starved or suffocated to death. I could've jacked off. I could've jerked off. I could've frigged off. It's not like anyone'd've cared. I could've run screaming between tents and slashed them open with a Swiss army knife. I'm not sure anyone'd've looked up from their Macbook long enough to notice. I mean, they managed to ignore, for the most part, the nude communists. And the problem with feeding the fish and looking at the trees and walking through the woods is there's too much time to think. And too much space overhead, maybe. And too much thinking's dangerous. "Really," Tommy said, "the whole reason Blue Laws exist is not to do with drunk driving. They're to do with the not-so-misplaced-or-misapplied knowledge that someone who's thought too much is more dangerous and more likely to kill everyone on the road—and all those dirty pedestrians on that hellish abomination alongside it—than would ever be physiologically possible for any inebriated person. It's all a matter of effectiveness. So in order to defend against the lack of its fulfillment, we have to preclude those who don't think from the operation of motorous vehicles. Ray Bradbury said it best: he didn't drive and why didn't he drive? because the first thing he'd've done was start mowing people down. The fact that he had Don't Think tacked on the wall above his typewriter are the very proof of such. And it doesn't matter what you think about, just that you think period—or even any definition of the word period. All the studies show that people who don't think are more content with their lives. Even dogs and cats that think too much end up face down in their water bowls. So you see the double-reverse judo move, of course."

And there was nothing else in my mind but a face and a name that I'd've done anything to avoid and've given everything in the world, or what was left of it, to see again.

"But response to face or name is merely aesthetic reaction," Tommy'd said. "The problem is all reactions are aesthetic reactions." The question is then: are all aesthetics equal? Maybe. But, still, there's one aesthetic I'd've taken over all the Macbook-hunched-over-coffee-shop ejects that filled the cove. That's gotta be proof of something.

So I came to take up another aesthetic. Or I came to take them all up. "Everything is delivered through streaming video," as Tommy said. "Even reviews of books are delivered through streaming video. Smartphones and data plans spread to the farthest corners of the Earth—and technically all the way out on the exonet of distant stellar and interstellar probes—and the masses are awash in pixels. But let us not speak of it in terms of evil. Even in the Schopenhauerean sense, it cannot be spoken of as popular, because it is merely all places at all times. It is Beyond Good and Evil. It merely is and is not. It is more inescapable than any deity ever conceptualized. It may be watching you—or at least the smart ones are—but, more importantly, you're watching it. And glorious things have slid across its surface at NTSC and PAL relative frames per second. Glorious. Let it not be understated. Don't take that as sarcasm. I would not be who I am today without television. Bram wants to cry at the beauty—I can feel it. The dream within the dream. In the dream, Bram cries: I have seen genius. Why am I so far beneath that? Why am I so pathetic? And it feels appropriate here to convey this meta figure's anguish over his slash her slash its slash perhaps a reference of beyond the +plus. Don't take that as sarcasm. It's only that earnesty beyond a certain bound is indistinguishable from such. You can only go so far in stating the profound before it begins to develop the ring of parody. Would tears convince you of the genuineness of such statements of reverence? It would not be going too far to argue for an inherent holiness. It is a

ubiquity that is more ubiquitous than the ubiquity of the reality in which it is housed. It makes the reality in which it is housed. The dreamer dreams the dream and the dream dreams the dreamer."

So I put down television. That came to be my job.

# Beginning The Final Approach To The Beginning

([Just to keep track] it's taken ~11.5k words, but we're maybe now approaching the beginning.)

So we were out in the middle of the woods. We were out there as far as anyone could get from human civilization in any eastern state. We were out there where there was nothing but forest service land and the human-devoid space around a decrepit and abandoned satellite dish big enough to receive television from the farthest detectable stars ("the point from which such images were once formatted to be broadcast on our Earthly sets," as Tommy said) and on the fringes of massive contested estates and legal nightmares. We had gone as far as anyone could possibly go.

And (there) we watched television.

**₩** || **>** 

[A News 10 report.]

[Borges] Yes, Tom, it is certainly a good day to get out.

[The Eagleton Campus clock tower stands erect behind her.]



"Thinketh you not that be not overly sufficient enough phallic alike a symbol?" Tommy'd said.

"You're just obsessed," Tammy'd said.

"Am I? Is not the entirety of the campus thusly constructed about it? And is not it the most vaulted structure upon those hallowed and hollow Indian burial grounds? Doth not the eye be drawn to it as if it were the focal of the world? It's what everybody doth picturize in

their head, or ever however many heads they have. Doth it not adorn all the bulletins? And the books? And—"

"As I said."

The guy sitting there with the laptop in his lap didn't mind us. He just went on about his job. His job was sometimes as a video editor. He worked remotely (editing things for small news stations who'd cut back so much over the years that half the time they bought pre-done clips in a kind of revitalization of the wire service the telegraph'd first made possible and which Postman wanted to mark as the first major acceleration point in the dissemination of mass media). Freelancing is not merely a means to survival or a way of life. They worked anywhere in the world which allowed for a data connection and the occasional power plug. And being as how he had to work with video, his little solar array was one of the larger ones because it had to juice up a core i12 Macbook Pro. Panels lay stretched over a bush that'd before found sunlight enough to grow in a spot that'd opened up apparently several years before when wind, or some such, had broken a limb from one of those trees that formed the canopy overhead and allowed this patch of weeds and brush to advance to the point it looked like a sickly, fat Christmas tree hung down with black oblong ornaments. "He's spent the last two years walking around China but'd returned to stateside after the last major part of Hong Kong'd submerged following a super storm as the final influx of refuges and culture clashes and reeducation classes on the mainland continent proved too contentious to allow what few loopbacks and loopholes that'd remained open in the, rather sieve-like, Great Fire Wall, before it'd been reduced to a mere colander." Tommy'd said. But this might've described any and all of them. He'd supposedly considered going to India, but the data plans weren't that much better there by that time. So really, coming back here'd been the only thing left. Though, sitting in a cheap berth on a cargo vessel that'd been crossing back with a load of plastic baseball bats and frozen spring rolls'd been one of the most productive times of his life, in that no one talked to him and he hadn't been expected to talk to anyone else. This'd mirrored his experience early on in China. At least until he'd learned some of the language by accident. Or so Tommy said. Maybe language is sometimes much like radioactivity: proximity is enough to contaminate.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Borges] And the book lovers are already out in droves this morning. As you can see, there have been some booths set up along this route down through here. This road has been completely blocked off from traffic and people are out walking and enjoying the wonderfully sunny day.

#### **\*\***

"Oh god they're walking on the road."

"God's dead," Tammy said.

"Well, we can talk about the dead. Don't you wanna talk about the dead?"

"No."

Tommy leaned forward. "Maybe we should aye em him and ask him if he's ever done any editing for The Walking Dead?"

"No," Tammy said.

"Well, crap."

Tammy said, "You don't like The Walking Dead anyway."

"I adore The Walking Dead."

"Since when?"

"Since I figured out it's the perfect metaphor for the consumer slash worker under late-stage capitalism."

"You're just parroting YouTube videos like a good little Bourgeois pseudo-intellectual."

"Given that capitalism grips the world," Tommy said, "there's no reason why we can't enjoy a little Bourgeois pseudo-intellectualism while it exists. After all, if everything is immoral, there's no use in not engaging in a little more of select immoralities."

"And where do you draw the line about what's an okay immorality and not-okay immorality?"

"You mean an un-okay one."

"No, I'm asking about what's not okay."

He sighed. "How am I supposed to be able to devise a system to differentiate right from wrong when under the system of capital no post-capital pseudo-intellectualism can develop? You're asking me to make scrambled eggs before I've killed the chicken."

"You'd mix the shell in for added nutrition."

"How am I even supposed to say anything about nutrition without a post-capital pseudo-intellectual framework with which to illuminate such concepts as eggserroneous?"

Tammy lifted a twig. She tossed it across the freelancer's lap. It grazed Tommy's chest. It tumbled to the ground.

- [Borges] And as you can see, there's a whole range of things on sale. Can you tell me what you've got for sale here?
- [Seller] Well, we've got a whole range of things that people will find interesting. Here we have a lovely selection of steel bookmarks.

### H > >>

"I've seen those before," Tommy said. "They're so heavy and slick they fly right out of the books. It's wonderful!" He threw up his arms. "And none shall know their place!"

"What'd you ever read?"

"I'll have you know I read every single one of the Dispensary books."

"Last year."

"So?"

"It don't count if you're reading books for tweens when you're in your thirties."

#### 

[Seller] These are all licensed, so there's a whole range of patterns you can pick from. So we've got ones from Harry Potter and Disney.

#### H > >>|

"The only two media empires that remaineth," Tommy said.

"Disney owns Harry Potter."

"As I said," Tommy said, "the only empire that remaineth."

#### H4 || >>

[Borges] I really like that dog statue there.

[Seller] Yes, we call him Brutus.

[They both look at a small figure of a dog that appears to lie asleep on a stack of books.]

[Seller] He's our guard dog.

The guy bent over the laptop paused the feed there. He stroked the trackpad. He selected something. He clicked a few places and struck a few keys. He tapped the touch bar. The clip started playing again, but overlaid with canned laughter.

Tommy laughed. He sounded alot like the canned laughter.

#### H4 || >>>

[Moving on past and looking at another booth.]

[Borges] You must be the poster man.

[Non-canned laughter.]

[Seller] I have been known to be called that.

[Borges] And it looks like, as with everywhere else, books are the theme today.

[Non-canned laughter.]

[Seller] Yes, books are the theme of the day.

[Borges] Are you finding anything in particular has been popular today?

[Seller] Our Tsundoku poster seems to be quite popular. Everyone seems to want one.

[He shifts the frame of one to allow the camera a better view.]

[Seller] We've also had several vintage author photographs that have been popular as well. These are generated by a new service based on high-tech military technology that has to do with scientific principles about The Light That Never Reached The Target.

[Borges] Are those autographed?

[Seller] Yes. You see, we have one from Wells here.

[He sifts through a box of photos.]

[Seller] And one from Mary Shelley. All authentic reproductions.

#### **₩ > >**

"So," Tommy said, "what about an in-authentic reproduction?"

"A forgery," Tammy said. "It's not as silly a phrase as you're trying to make it out."

"Ah," he said, "but it's sillier."

"And how?"

"If a copy generates the sum equal aesthetic feeling, why should anyone care in the regardlessness of its origins? So obviously it is about the name attached and from that its subsequent valuation in a capitalistic economy. So obviously it just proves that capitalism cannot function in a land of functionally functional cosplayers. It cannot function in the post scarcity Star Trek society. Which is thusly proved that we exist within and withon the precipice of such that as future present, because is it not thusly exactly that a communicator doth exactly resemble a flip phone? And thusly that we are not in The Matrix, because people thusly doth not have those kinds of click-straight-down phones."

"If we're in a post scarcity society, why do you keep losing the bucket?"

"Logistics of course are always the problem. Equitable distribution of the future follows all previous channels of in-equability and all that. So the 'just not' in that statement thusly renders it in error in totality." He scratched himself. "And of course continuity issues of

course always abound in any long-running series. But do we have any shortage of shifting pixels? In a country that fills its dumpsters with food and then dumps perfectly edible chlorine over all of it, how can we have anything but plenty? Don't you remember the story of when Yeltsin visited the post-these but the pre-these United of States and saw the inside of a supermarket and burst into tears and fell upon his knees and began reciting the Pledge of Allegiance?"

"The question is how do you remember it?"

"Well, I don't try too hard. I figure since they say history repeats itself, I'll catch the rerun when it's syndicated."

Tammy reached for a twig. She tossed it at him.

[Borges] You may notice I have in my hand here one of the things that are on sale. If you can see that. An ice cream sandwich that's shaped like a book.

[The camera tries to zoom in, but the thing in her hand still looks indistinguishable from a normal ice cream sandwich. The part of the wrapper that hasn't been torn away could have the image of a book on it.]

[Borges] Tickets are still available as of this afternoon. For a schedule of the speakers and events, you can go online to our website at WRPC ten dot com. This is Sylvia Borges. News 10. At Eagleton University.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] And it has been a nice day today. Can we expect the same thing tomorrow, Lydia?



## **Primarily Secondary Sources**

There're two interrelated questions that might've arisen by this point. However, one of them might be more obvious than the other. The first might be: where were all these people getting food? There're a few answers to this. The first answer is that, being freelancers, their bodies'd naturally acclimated to surviving on less. In some ways, and in that way especially, they were closer to their hunter-gatherer ancestors, Tommy'd said. Because of this, canned coffee concentrates and canned bread could go quite far. (One of the pattern recognition guys had spent some time in Tokyo and'd stocked up on the stuff, Tommy'd said.)

How such items circulated may be of a particular sociological concern. None of these objects ever appeared to move when they were among the freelancers. This mirrored the freelancers themselves. That is, nothing was ever observed in the process of moving from place to place. However, they did move around. You'd see someone stuffing a pinch of bread in their mouth with one hand while they still typed with their other. This was of course the posture they spent ninety-percent, or so, of their time in. But as put down, their position in space did change. They either sat cross-legged outside their tent or inside. When they were in each respective location depended on the time of day or night and their own respective circadian rhythm. It never rained in the time I was there. So the weather was never a factor. They would leave the flaps on their tents open whether they were within or without. Even the mesh didn't need to be pulled down for any protection since DDT'd been reintroduced. They looked like some kind of religious iconography placed in their respective niches. At night, when backlight-screen-glow lit the tents, it seemed as if someone'd come along and lit a high-k candle for their veneration.

Also, however, it's long been noted, both scientifically and anecdotally, that working from home tends to result in workers eating more. "So," Tommy said, "when there is no place like home, it's the perfect opportunity to go on the perfect diet. Otherwise, you risk your ankles getting too fat and having to slice off your heels to fit into your technicolor slippers before the Walking Dead prince comes round." Postulations as to why this is have ranged from blaming stress to evolved tendencies resulting from food scarcity to the mind tricking the body, or tricking itself, into thinking that mental work is somehow the equivalent of physical work and that it requires the same nutritional reimbursements. In regard to stress, there was of

course no lack of it. But it may be speculated that something about the neo-network-hunter-gatherer frame of mind might've contributed something unknown to the suppression of appetite. Obviously, an over-abundance was not an issue. Each man had only what he could carry, as put down. The freelancers were all men. I don't know if that was the case over the whole category. But it was the case when I was there. But it might also be postulated that because they were constantly so busy they simply didn't have the time to think about anything else. Even the bulk of their employment only afforded the necessary funds to cover solely their internet access, Tommy'd said. But that was still the minimum required to be able to fulfill the remainder of their contracts that would generate the compensation required to afford coffee concentrates and various densely processed consumable items made possible by modern manufacturing. There may've been a few Prymal drones involved, aswell. Sometimes you did hear a sort of buzzing. But that was all.

(You may feel it too grandiloquent to linguistically liken such individuals [as a group] to those who took on mammoths with just their sticks. But, after all, it did take more than skill to locate anything of value on Prymal—even regardless of the system(s) of value employed.)

There was, in addition, however, the manna from heaven. Though, I'm not sure the freelancers ever utilized this often. This was mostly Tammy and Tommy's area. It was their main source of calories. This was supplemented by the occasional batch of berries and other things that Tammy knew how to dig out of the forest. There was more of it left there, she'd said, because the area was so hard to get to. Tommy's reasoning about the manna'd been: why not? "After all," he'd said, "if you can't take the word of those guys who've licked a handful of DDT every day for the last fifty years because there's absolutely nothing wrong with it, who can you trust?" He'd added, "After all, the pound of flesh hasn't been properly seasoned yet. You have to give the marinade time to do its magic. That's the secret to a good cheap vat-grown steak." He'd laughed after that. And he took a basket he'd weaved from vines one afternoon and went off to collect the insects that'd fallen from the treetops that morning. They lay upside down and scattered among the leaves with their kinked, frozen limbs in the air. It took something of an etymologist's eye to differentiate manna

from the Black Bugs of Red Death. But he'd the hunter's skill. Also, he'd started a collection of what he called Hallucigenia. Or sometimes he called them Religion. It depended moment to moment. "You shove this one up your ass," he said, "and you won't believe what'll happen." There were some insects that weren't worth manna or death or religion. But I don't know what he did with those. Sometimes he'd collect Black Bugs of Red Death and sit on the rocks and toss them into the stream the way he'd toss stones. They'd float on the surface out there in the current getting swirled round. Then -plop- they'd be gone (swallowed). The water was often alive with fish that way. "They have a bio-mechanical instinct to strike at food, even if they aren't hungry," Tammy'd said. "It's hardwired." And so much manna'd rained down from the canopy they'd grown large enough to make it appear that whales might've been coming out of the water. "Oi," Tommy'd called, "a white'n." One day Tammy'd said, "You know these aren't natives?" But I couldn't've told a native fish from Jonah. Tammy'd used to work for the Forest Service. "They were going to do an accounting," she said. "What they do is they stick these probes in the river and send a current between them and electrify the area. It stuns the fish and they float to the top and you can gather them all up and count what types there are. But they got the voltage too high and they killed everything out. So they ended up having to replace them with rainbows." She took one of the Black Bugs of Red Death and tossed it into the water. "You don't mess with the fly fishing lobby," she said.

"But what goes in," Tommy'd said, "comes out." He'd laughed "Mostly."

This was the only other state the freelancers could be found in. This state had two positions. The first was the standard sitting one. This took place over a fallen log. They would have their laptops on their bare legs as they did this. They mostly wore cargo shorts. These were pulled down around their ankles. The second was the squat. This position had no predefined spatial location attached to it. This was the reason that sometimes Tammy could be seen chasing someone along the river bank with a stick. Generally, the freelancers themselves were never necessarily recognizable during this. They appeared as a kind of blur. "Their existence is in essence a smear of probability," Tommy'd

said. "In much the same way the electrons that are supposed to make them up are supposed to exist."

Tammy walked toward us. She still carried the stick.

"We should have some pooping board of shame," Tammy said. And she'd yelled, "FOR STUPID HUMANS WHO TAKE A DUMP IN PERFECTLY GOOD WATER."

Tommy sat on a rock. He whistled. "Poopin in the water. Oh, they're poopin in the water. Oh—"

"Oh, shut up." She tossed the stick. But he rocked his head side to side and still whistled to himself.

"Only humans're so stupid," she said.

"Hey," Tommy said, "don't you remember that story about that Libertarian who went swimming and looked up after diving in the water to see a bunch of monkeys sitting on a pipe and poopin upstream and he ended up with a deathly infection?"

"That's exactly my point."

"Yeah, but that was a different kinda monkeys. Don't you see? So it's completely different. LARPing is fundamental instantiation of reality. So don't put our species on some higher pussy pedestal as if we can go poopin in the water better than all the rest of life on Earth."

"It must run in the monkey family tree," she said.

"The fish poop in the water too. And the salamanders. And the turtles. And—"

"Oh, shut up."

"Well you could try and drown me," he said. "But if you wanna refer to it as verbal diarrhea then technically you could say I'd be poopin in the water while I was screaming while you were holdin' me under."

Tammy squatted. She lifted a rock. She tossed it. But it flew past his shoulder.

Lastly, as put down as Tommy having remarked tacitly upon earlier, the quantities of the inputs dictates both the quantity of the outputs as well as the frequency of output. Our diet was very low-input. A sociological note might be raised about the exacerbation or not of the symptoms of hemorrhoids. The question might also be raised as to what degree toilet paper is a symptom of modern diets, rather than a staple of the human condition. "Just think," Tommy'd said, "you eat non-crap and your crap comes out a different kinda crappy-ish so

there isn't anything much to clean up in the first place, even though it's still there. Or the last place. Whichever." He'd laughed. "But then what excuse would we've had to clear-cut all those trees in the Amazon if not to pulp them for toilet paper?" He popped a roasted beetle into his mouth. He crunched into it. He had a tendency to chew with his mouth open. The dismembered legs shifted around his teeth as if the pointy little ends were cleaning between each one. "And your teef too," he said. "You know when they did studies of tribes personages who were being tied into chairs and forcibly spooned a traditional western turkey dinner, their teeth started rotting out of their head." He picked between his teeth with his fingernail. "You know there's really nothing to be feared about seeing what's on the end of your fork if you don't use one, is there." He leaned forward and pinched up another.

## Concessionary Cuisine And Other So-Called Diseases Of Civilization

He'd piled an assortment in one of my discarded tin cans to pass round. "Potluck," he said. "The one who finds the thing with the most legs wins."

Some movie theatre chains still do the whole spread during a screening. A full-on, no-holds-barred meal with beer and wine and all the amenities. "The concessions is where theatres make all their money, you know," he said. His family'd owned one. He said being unpaid labor all summer long'd taught him the true extent of the nature of late-stage capitalism. "Liquid butter is hot, you know. It's just complete normalcy for farm kids to loose a few fingers or arms or a head to a tractor or combine." What he left unmentioned was there'd been more than one state bill that'd ensured (but not insured) that right.

"Bullshit," Tammy said. (She had a habit of talking with food in her mouth.) She paused to pick a wing off her tongue. She dropped it on the ground. "Using biological reproduction to buildup a workforce goes all the way back to pre-history. So it anti-dates capitalism ridiculously." She picked out another wing. "If anything, you could

argue it's led to a reduction in the importance of biological reproduction in favor of mechanical reproduction."

"Will someone please seize the means of reproduction!" She flicked a bit of carapace at him.

#### H | >>|

[Cathex] More teens than ever committing suicide? What you need to know. Coming up.

[Swirling graphics and multi-dimensional objects culminate in a logo.]

[Cathex] Joining us today are two experts. On the far right we have Doctor Richard Pentagon from the Moorehead Institute. And on the farther right we have Professor Richard Squareshire from the Lockes and Keyes Foundation. Good morning, gentlemen.

[Pentagon] Good morning. Thank you for having us.

[Squareshire] Yes.

[Cathex] Well, let's get straight into it. Doctor Pentagon, you've recently headed a committee that released this report that you can see on your screen.

[An image of some papers momentarily appears onscreen.]

[Cathex] Which comes as a response to an article just yesterday in the New York Times.

[Pentagon] Yes.

[Cathex] This article states—and I quote—There is an epidemic of youth suicide in this country. Never before have so many people between the ages of nine and eighteen attempted to and succeeded in taking their own lives. What do you have to say to this, Doctor Pentagon?

[Pentagon] To put it quite bluntly—we have a problem.

[Cathex] Of course, the Times has laid out the usual lines about economics and the hysterical despair over climate change and how the youth of today aren't going to have any future and the litany of the usual excuses.

[Pentagon] Yes. I do have to disagree there.

[Cathex] So explain exactly why this's malarkey.

[Pentagon] First of all, it's completely ridiculous to even hypothesize any of that. We know the numbers and jobs are better than they have ever been. More people or employed at more jobs than they've ever been. And as for climate change that is just going to mean warmer winters, the grass is going to be greener more of the year, we're going to have people have to mow, and people in lawn care are going to be able to work much more of the year, and farms are going to be able to work much more of the year, and those are going to need workers. We will be able to do construction in the middle of the winter. We will be able to work on infrastructure projects year round. And so the jobs environment can only improve from here. And we are already better than we have ever been.

[Cathex] So what's the issue then? Why are these numbers up?

[Pentagon] I'm glad you ask that. It's all very simply laid out in our report.

[Cathex] Which says?

[Pentagon] The report says quite plainly that it is because of this pro-victim mentality that has permeated our country.

[Cathex] And how is that?

[Pentagon] It is actually very simple. Victimhood has become, as it were, a fashion statement. It is hip to be oppressed. It is hip to have some form of intelligence disorder or to be any letter you care to pick out of the alphabet soup.

[Cathex] And how is this a problem?

[Pentagon] It is a problem because it is what everyone uses to justify any failure. You didn't get into the right college, it is because you are black. You didn't get the job, it is because you are a member of some sexual minority. There is always an excuse to justify why it is never they who are the problem. They never have to look at themselves.

[Cathex] Would you say this is a lack of self-reflection?

[Pentagon] Exactly. To a large extent.

[Cathex] Let's bring Professor Squareshire into this. Professor, you coauthored the report.

[Squareshire] Yes.

[Cathex] And what do you think the cause is of this extreme deficit of self-reflection that we have happening in this country?

[Squareshire] First, I think we have to look at where all this starts.

[Cathex] And where is that?

[Squareshire] The numbers demonstrate quite clearly that the bulk of these childrens' time is spent in our failing school system. And I think it very much demonstrates that there is an undercurrent that we ignore to our detriment.

[Cathex] We all know public schools are failing, of course. But what way in particular are you referring to? What have we missed?

[Squareshire] Well, I don't think we've missed it so much as we've not given it the proper attention it deserves.

[Cathex] Several reports in the media following the release of this article have all pointed to the bugaboo that it's the high-stress environment our schools have become. They claim the problem is we've turned schools into a business and created a zero-sum game where children have to succeed from an early age or die. One liberal has outrageously gone so far as to call it academic gladiatorial games. As if we need more ridiculousness in the world.

[Squareshire] Yes. And it's just that the entire problem is the opposite. It's that they aren't operating enough like businesses.

[Cathex] So what do we need to due to fix our school system? Obviously, the public school system is beyond rehabilitation.

[Squareshire] We have to start by making the consumer experience first and foremost the only priority. We've got to get them into the free market. We've got to have consumer demand to shut down these under-performing ventures.

[Cathex] I'm sure you're aware that being against standardized testing is the latest shibboleth among the liberals.

[Pentagon] May I come in?

[Cathex] Please, Doctor.

[Pentagon] It is very clear that one must have metrics and measures. Without measures we don't know anything. And if we don't have metrics, the things that we need to get done are not going to get done, because without metrics we won't know what we should be doing in the first place. People have to be held to a standard. And standards have

to be something that can be measured. And unless we are doing something that can be measured, we are not going to be able to know anything about what we are doing.

[Cathex] And the handing out of grades. How do we deal with that? Professor, would you like to take that one?

[Squareshire] Well obviously, if you don't have competition, people are going to do much less than their potential.

[Cathex] Do you think that some of these article writers who have rejoined against your report are simply sore losers?

[Squareshire] I...

[Cathex] Well, obviously there's some envy going on. We've got these guys over here at these Podunk papers who maybe make forty-thousand a year asking stupid questions about what's going to happen to the losers in these competitions because by definition they claim that's what's inherent in competitions and going on and on and taking no responsibility for anything. And isn't the answer simply that those who are losing are just going to have to work harder?

[Squareshire] Yes, by definition, there can't be a free ride or the whole system breaks down.

[Pentagon] If I may.

[Cathex] Go ahead, Doctor.

[Pentagon] Yes, that is exactly it. Everyone will simply have to rise to the competition. If we incentivize anything else, it is going to be like water running downhill. The floodgates will open.

[Cathex] So, Doctor—back to what we were talking about at the beginning—how do we deal with this problem of this cult of victimhood? After all, isn't it correct that white, middle-class children have nearly double the rate of suicide now than any other group?

[Pentagon] What we have to get through to kids is the effect those around them with this victim mentality are having on them. We have to equip our kids to resist the incursion of a foreign body, as it were. Even if they don't think this victim mentality is affecting them, our studies show that, in fact, that just thirty minutes of exposure to someone expressing these ideologies affects the vocabulary of those exposed. And this exposure is correlated with higher instances of disillusionment, higher instances of negative attachment, and an overall failure to recognize society's values as worthwhile. So, again, they must be made aware of this influence. It is like installing a smoke detector in your house.

[Cathex] Or just avoiding the smoke getting started in the first place.

[Pentagon] That, of course, would be best.

[Cathex] Thank you very much for that, Doctor. Do you have anything to add, Professor?

[Squareshire] Yes. I would like to add the fundamental problem here is very minor, but it's like being just a fraction of a degree off on a compass and trying to sail around the world. The farther you go the worse off course you are. It's really like slipping on a banana peel. Just the smallest undermining in the ability to compete obviously has very damaging consequences. And as any coach would tell you, the psychological component is key. And to be allowed to think that the possibility of the successful outcome has been withdrawn can lead to

a kind of cascading failure. The possibility of failure, of course, still has to be there, of course, to ensure the proper motivation to keep them going up to their potential. But if you have that one slip then it all starts to seem like it's unraveling, and if it's allowed to seem like it is, then the real problem begins. So I just want to reiterate what my colleague has stated and reiterate that we really have to go about inoculating our children against these less-performative ideologies.

[Cathex] Thank you for that, Professor. I'm sure we'll all take that to heart. And we're almost out of time, so thank you both for being on.

[Pentagon] Thank you.

[Squareshire] A pleasure.

[The guest frames disappear. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Cathex] Coming up. Death by coffee can? What you need to know to keep yourself safe. Coming up.

#### H4 > >>|

Tommy picked at his teeth with his tongue. "I didn't know she wasn't a natural." He picked at his teeth with his tongue. "So of course I should've known."

The freelancer finished scrubbing through the video one last time. His usual job was to digitally edit the anchor's hairline so that it matched everything else.

They really did have a thing for women with a certain hair color. "Ah, Marmite squeeze?" He picked between his front teeth with his fingernail. "Kinda latter-day Howard Hughes?" He reached forward. "You want this one?" Tammy'd wedged her thumbnail

forward. "You want this one?" Tammy'd wedged her thumbnail between two teeth. She just shook her head. Tommy popped the beetle into his mouth. He chewed. "I meaneth, what would be the point of owning an entire intergalactic-virgin news network—"

"Entertainment," Tammy said. She re-chewed something that'd come out from between her teeth.

"Poe tay toe poe tay toe," he said. "But what would be the point of a whole news network without a cherry?"

"Oh, bullshit."

"It's a perfectly rational idea." He picked his teeth. "And besides, at least it's not horse shit."

"No," Tammy said. She kissed and licked the ends of her thumb and forefinger. "If he has a fetish, why not hire people that've got the actual hair color?"

"Let us not shame the cornucopial panoply of human sexual espressos," he said. "Y—" He glanced over at me. "Well, I guess you win, then." He shook his head and lifted the tin can. "Cheat." And he poked the remaining contents and shifted them about. It was a bit like picking through a box of assorted chocolates. "Anyway," he said, "it's very simple."

"Can you explain it to a five-year-old in twelve minutes or less?"

"My dear IBM Watson," he said, "if you merely open your protocols to what's in front of you, you'll see what we've got before us."

"And what's that?"

"An empty can." He held it out toward her.

She took it. She tossed it. It deflected off his bicep.

He glanced over at me. "I can tell you some stories, tonto, about cleaning up a theatre after a show. You wouldn't believe the places people stuff things you wouldn't think they could be stuffed."

"Hand me that can," she said.

He twisted and reached for it. He tossed it to her. She caught it. She tossed it at him. It deflected off his bicep again.

## Maybe Just The Same Old Thing Again And Again And Again And Again And Again And Again And Again

"You know," he said, "For a long time I've wondered whether the rain in Spain really does fall mainly in the airplane." And he leaned

back and arced a stone into the water. "Of course, that's the problem with rote knowledge." He selected another stone. "As soon as you begin to question even the teeniest tiniest little bit of it," he flicked the stone "it all comes tumbling down." He paused there with his arm still raised. "Now, young padawan, do you know what I am doing here?" He reached back blindly for another stone. It goes without putting down (or should have) as to the loaded nature of questions with him. But instead of something ridiculous, he said, "I'm building a damn." And he'd looked over at me quite without laughing and very straight faced. "Piece by piece," he said. And he selected another stone. He chucked it into the water in its own good time. "One by one. Each stone on top of the other. Until they are a whole line across this stream and all the way over through there. And the water'll back up behind it and this whole cove will fill up." He selected another stone. He still hadn't smiled or laughed. He passed gas. He sniffed. "I think that was the millipedes." And he tossed another stone.

He sat there a moment. He looked down and burnished his fingertips on his chest. "Enough cerulean-collar work for the day." He rose. "Let us retire for the evening in the fashion of the weary laborer."

We walked between the rows of tents. Most everyone was out. A few'd retreated from the heat to the cover of their tents. Their heads slightly bobbed from whatever was coming out atheir noisecanceling headphones. Even with the tree canopy and the stream, the air was wet and hot in the way I'd imagine an autoclave'd be. Of course, maybe that had something to do with the altitude. As I've said, I'm an idiot. So I won't claim to know. I didn't think of the comparison to an autoclave then. But it's something I think about now. I remember 4-H'd once put together a workshop on growing shiitake mushrooms, and they'd autoclaved some sawdust and paper to inoculate with the seeds, or the spores, or whatever mushrooms reproduce with, and someone asked: if the autoclave gets so hot, why doesn't that stuff burn or burst into flames? It turns out that's because there's steam inside so it sterilizes with heat and water vapor. Maybe it's a stupid thing to remember at this point. But I remember Tommy saying "Maybe the universe's trying to sterilize us off this planet? Did you see that clip of the people steamed alive in their hotel room? But, then again, the only way to cook a lobster is headfirst." And in the

wet heat, sweat trickled down the bodies of the communists. Tammy had long hair. It darkened as it became more sweat-drenched. So she pulled it and tied it into a ponytail. But wet wisps still clung to the sides of her face. She usually found work to do down by the stream in the afternoon. But this evening she'd so far disappeared. Tommy glanced at the screens as we passed. Reflections of faces and trees and tents overlayed shifting pixel matrices. He finally plopped down on the left-hand side of one.

"Oh," Tommy said, "Cops."

One of the freelancers was contracted to blur out license plates and faces and products that hadn't paid for product placement in news segments and various other bits of reality TV.

"I love Cops." He motioned for me to sit. But it wasn't actually Cops. Technically it'd been a rip-off called Deputies (or a spin-off).

### H | >>|

[The camera looks out through a patrol car windshield. The image is black and white. They're on the side of the road. It's night. The black-and-white is a night-vision mode. Turn signals blink as traffic in the distance on the four-lane shifts to the inner lane as per state law when a law-enforcement vehicle has pulled off the shoulder. A law enforcement officer walks back through high grass, away from a parked car. He's momentarily obscured by the smeeriness of the image as night and the dusty windshield and the brightness of the brake lights ahead overwhelm the camera's low-light threshold. He opens the driver side door and reaches inside.

[Murphy] What it looks like is he had a temporary paper plate on and it somehow came off.

[He writes something on a pad. He tears a sheet off the pad. Then he walks back through the high grass along the side of the road. He can barely be discerned in the distance as passing headlights wash over him and the car and the driver seated inside. Then he's walking back toward the camera. He climbs in.]

[Murphy] I've given him a warning about it.

[He adjusts his belt and shuts the door. He watches the car pull toward the edge of the road and merge with traffic. The camera focuses on the car that's receding into the distance.]

[Murphy] It's not too uncommon for a temporary tag to come off. But it's gonna have to be fixed. He's only about a mile from home up here. So as long as he's heading there for the night, it'll be okay.

[He starts the engine. He pulls the patrol car toward the edge of the road. He glances over his shoulder before he pulls into the lane.]

[Murphy] They'll be a report of it, so if I or anyone else sees him out again without a tag, it'll be a fine at that point.

[They come up over the hill. They pass under the overpass that goes down to the technical college. They start down the hill past the cemetery and the highschool sports fields. He glances across the opposite way, at cvs and Joint-Burger and Anglers. He comes to a stop at the string of traffic lights over the intersection. He glances up the hill and turns the wheel as the lights must change color.]

[Murphy] It's always good to take a little look.

[They start up the hill to the highschool. They roll along in front of it. Headlights illuminate empty parking spaces. They wind out the back way and out along the hill behind the insurance agencies and dental offices, till they come out at the gas station. They pull in among the pumps. He gets out. He fills the tank. He uses a credit card in the machine. He climbs back in. He starts the patrol car. He pulls toward the road. They sit waiting to pull out. The camera looks across at the empty farm supply store. And when there's a break in the traffic, they turn down headed toward Walmart.]

"Do you feel there's something soothing," Tommy said, "in watching law enforcement equipment ride round?" He sat crosslegged and crunched forward with his elbows planted on his thighs.

The tips of his thumbs pressed against the underside of his chin. All but one of the ends of his other fingers rested against his cheeks. His pinkie was the only exception. "Even if they're doing nothing else. Just driving round and round."

The freelancer flicked keys and switched between tasks with a rapid deftness born of long repetition. Though, the way he held his wrist at an angle seemed indicative of an early symptom of RSI. "The actions are beautiful in their automatic ease, you know," Tommy said. "It's like playing basketball—each part of the body begins thinking and acting on their own. It's an ULTRA INSTINCT that rests on the ontology of the Macbook keyboard." The freelancer stroked the trackpad and shifted to another clip.

#### H | >>

[A view from a dash cam. A section of the Parkway extends into the distance. The view closes in on a car ahead. The patrol car's lights are flashing. It takes a few more seconds for the distance to close enough for the license plate scanner to get what it needs. The patrolman glances at the computer on the armature next to him. He looks puzzled. The patrol car slows. A moment or two passes. He cuts the siren. The other vehicle disappears into the distance.]

#### $\bowtie$ $\rightarrow$ $\bowtie$

"Well that," Tommy said, "was very anti-climactic. And I'm not talking about the weather." He yawned. "Narrative-interruptus is what this is. Somebody should get prosecuted for this. After all, there's a right to completion in this state."

The freelancer sat there undisturbed. His fingers danced across the keyboard and touchbar. The headphones sealed tightly enough against the side of his head that they might've been thought to be permanently attached and that drill bits'd come out of them and pierced through his skull on each side. Tommy sat looking at them as the freelancer scrubbed through video by dragging his finger across the touchbar. "You know," Tommy said "there was this case of this really really fat woman who sat on her couch so long she grew to it." He flicked his eyes back down toward the screen. "And a woman who locked herself in a bathroom and wouldn't come out and her body

grew around the toilet seat." He yawned. "Why do you need horror movies when we've got what they keep insisting's real life?" He wiped his nose. "Even Cthulhu's scared of—" He cocked his head while he looked at the screen. "Oh."

I turned to look, aswell. The freelancer was still just scrubbing through frames one at a time looking for things that needed blurring.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[The shots are from the same dash cam as earlier. Though, in this clip, the patrol car is sitting parked somewhere just off the main highway. Frame-by-frame, a black vehicle goes past.]

#### H > >>|

"Hard to tell what's expensive from the outside, since physics has so long led to automotive convergent evolution." Tommy cut his eyes toward me. "Bet you thought it was illegal to have tinted windows in this state, huh?" He leaned back his head. His neck popped. "But as with fully automated vehicular devices, there is one exception. Because such rule always requires an exception to prove itself." He rose. "I guess things're really starting now. Or maybe they've already ended." He glanced around. "But don't worry, the former live stream will still be available for some hours before it moves behind the paywall."

You won't know what he's talking about. That's the way it should be. Then, I didn't know what he was talking about. And I want you to feel that way.

"The Alphabet Club," he said, as he walked. "It's all about The Alphabet Club."

Tammy whistled. Even the freelancers with their headphones jerked. "Hey," she called "where've yuns been?"

Tommy threw up his arms. "I kanna do it, la Capitana!"

"What're you blathering about?" She came the rest of the way down the side of the hill.

"The dialectic is dielectric."

She wasn't carrying her stick, or she might've hit him with it. "Well, you've got shit for brains anyway."

He shrugged. "Well, it's a good thing I'm always constipated then or I wouldn't have any brains at all."

She shook her head. She passed us. She started toward the stream. "You'd better go find the bucket," she called, without looking back.

"Bucket," he said. He started walking parallel to the stream. "Uncontacted tribes will sell their children for an aluminum pot, you know," he said, as he walked. "So you should be grateful for everything you didn't choose. Unless you know somebody who's gonna go about Patching the Tibetan Book of The Dead, or something." He bent. He lifted a stick. He weighed it in his hands. He swung it a few times as if it'd been a baseball bat. "One slip on the karma banana peel and into the Karmic Cholesterol and you could've been one of those kids traded for a cooking pot." He shifted. He started to bat left handed. "Ever notice how everybody's so busy patting themselves on the back about having a society that produces aluminum pots that they completely forget about getting around to doing what they're trading them for." He paused. He two-handed swung the stick back over his head till it touched his ass. He lunged forward. It went tumbling through the air. It landed without ceremony in the leaf bed ahead. It just missed knocking the steel pale off the broken limb it'd been hung on. "Well, that's just a suicidal tendency, isn't it?" When we reached the tree, he stretched up on his toes. He unhooked the bucket from the shattered branch. He brought it down. "People're always doing something that has a huge chance of fucking them up." He held it out with the handle balanced on his finger. "Here. You take this. She'll..." But he paused. He looked at the bucket. He cocked his head. "Better idea." He lifted it. He inverted it. He put it on his head. He pulled the handle down under his chin. He started marching that way toward the stream. "Do you know the Marine Corps Anthem?" he said. He tried to turn his head, but the bucket handle collided with his shoulder. I answered no. He said, "well that makes sense. It always was the army in all those Indian movies, after all, wasn't it." He adjusted the bucket to keep it from sliding down over his eyes. "Does the army even have an Anthem? Or do they just read Rand Corpse?" He shook his head. The bucket fell down over the bridge of his nose. He almost tripped over a root. Dancing from that, he spun round. He got it pushed up into place by the time he'd started straight ahead again. "What a mess we've got." He'd raised one arm to hold the bucket in place. "Battle Tendency everywhere." It made him look as if he were permanently saluting or perpetually about to tip his hat. "And one armed force we've gots sounds like someone who gives too many hugs. Which is pretty terrifying. But possibly a violation of the Geneva Convention that is already not yet ignored enough. The other's one letter off from being a waterlogged dead body. Another sounds like a bad translation for wind. And the last's a color." He avoided a rock sticking up from among the leaf litter. "But maybe that's in our favor. After all, how're our enemies gonna fight a possibly intelligent shade of the color blue?"

We came to the stream. He lowered his arm for a rest. But as soon as he turned his head, the bucket fell down over the bridge of his nose again.

Tammy'd been sitting there looking out over the water. Tommy adjusted the bucket. Tammy looked over at all the racket the handle made as it clanked round the inside of the bucket where the ends were bent to hold it in place.

"What the hell're you doing?" She rose. She brushed off her thigh.

"I'm your knight in shining bucket." He tried to get it to sit above his eyebrows, but it fell down. It slipped over his nose this time, so his voice rang out from inside of and within it as he said, "Really, if you can't even bother to recognize the obvious, I don't even know why you bother."

Tammy stepped toward him. She reached out. She pulled the bucket up over his head.

"Hey—watch—hold it." He had to push the handle out from under his chin.

"Just what you get," she said. Carrying the bucket, she turned. "Besides," she said, "we're not that genre."

"Well," he said, and glanced at me, "at least she's not throwing things."

"I didn't want to damage the bucket," she said. She waded partways out into the stream so she could fill it. Carefully, testing her footing on slippery rocks, she made her way back ashore. She carried the bucket up toward the lean-tos. Water sloshed out of it. Water ran down her legs. The lean-tos were simple stick constructions built at the end of the cove among the larger rocks that emerged from the base of the ridge. A fire'd been built out in front and'd been long

kept burning low. All the twigs and leaf litter in a wide oblong radius around the camp had already been cleared. A fresh pile of larger twigs sat nearby. She set the bucket on the stones arranged round so that the coals and wood would be beneath it, careful not to let it slop and risk extinguishing the fire, though it'd already slopped out enough on the walk up there that there was little chance of that. She squatted there beside it. She started to feed twigs between the stones and under the bucket till they started to smoke against the coals. Eventually they burst into tentative flames. She remained squatting as she watched the fire burn. Steam would start to rise after a while. Then the water'd start to boil. That's what we'd drink. It worked out to about a bucket a day. Maybe two. After apparently judging the fire'd sufficiently got going that little could interrupt it, she rose. She said, "You can watch it." She passed between us. She started back down toward the stream.

Tommy said nothing. He took up position by the fire in the same place she'd been and squatting in the same way. Not that this meant anything. That location was the best place to stick kindling between stones should it be needed, and squatting was the only way to get down there besides getting on your knees, and getting on your knees tended to be the more uncomfortable position.

"What," he said, as he poked the fire, "is the flaw in almost all video games?" He paused with the stick still in the fire. He looked up. He looked down. He started stirring again. He said, "they're all obsessed with death in absolutely the wrong way." He pulled out the stick. He watched the blackened tip burn. The flame wavered and smoke curled upwards. "The eternal recapitulation of masculine death drives. That's what Sigmund'd've said if his brain'd been put in a jar and they'd wired him up. They could've set him on a shelf next to Adolph and they could have therapy sessions and Adolph could've enlightened him when his mustache lit up." He turned the stick round. The flame started to try and work its way up the length of it. "The two fathers of the twentieth century." And he lightly snapped his wrist and waved it as if it'd been a magic wand. "Cultural reproduction is just an attempt to steal human reproduction from women." He tapped the side of the steaming bucket. It left a charcoal smear on the stainless steel. "First it's the insemination and dissemination of the memes. Then it's the fetuses. Or vice versa. The mass of the people are just the reproductive centers and organs of the Great Men of History." He brought the stick near his face. He blew lightly into the flame. "Trauma is merely the lining of the uterus that might liquefy and slide out if reproduction hasn't yet been successful." He watched the burning end of the stick. "The parts of the whole must be sacrificed. Liquidation is the only answer." He placed the stick on the fire. "The passing of solids only leads to the eventual formation of hemorrhoids."

Time passed. He said, "Don't worry." But he didn't look up. "We've broken canned bread with you. So proper etiquette forbids us from killing you." He squatted there watching the fire.

"Bubble bubble," he said, when the bucket'd begun to do so. "Everybody gets that wrong, you know." He still didn't look away from the liquid's rupturing surface. "That actually comes from an Olsen Twins movie. The real line now forever lost to the human race. They the future will recall Shakespeare as having scratched a pen across a page to make all those Bs and that's the way it'll always've been because that's the way it was. In fact, that's the way it was. Someone just made up that. Shakespeare always quoted the Olsen twins exactly. Some people just love to invent conspiracy theories. It's just like how you have to get up on a stepladder if you want to have possibly deniable sexual relations with a non-pygmy-sized horse."

Tammy came up the hill about then. She was still dripping when she stopped by the edge of the fire. She rung out her hair. Droplets darkened the exposed earth that'd once been beneath leaf litter. "What're you going on about?"

"Women."

"What makes you think you've any right to talk about women?"
"What makes you think you have the right to talk about men

talking about women?"

She sat on one of the stones that jutted from the bank. She finished with ringing her hair. She moved it from over her shoulder. Her hair fell straight and heavy down her back. "How long's it been boiling?"

"I have counted to nine-thousand-three-hundred-sixty-seven," he said. "However, I said some things hereabouts in there and I don't know precisely how many." He paused. "Alphabetic characters, however, always have to be encoded via numerical values." He said,

"Or if implied punctuation also counts as free action or not." He lifted a stick from the ground. He rose. He used the stick to tip up the bucket handle. He threaded the stick under the handle. He gripped both ends of the stick. He used it to lift the bucket. He set it on the ground beside the fire. The roiling boil subsided to a shimmering surface and rising steam.

Tommy squatted beside it. He reached for a tin can. He dipped the tin can carefully into the bucket. He held it with just the topmost of the tin can encircled by his thumb and forefinger. He gently set it on the rock as steam poured up from out of the can. "However," he said "if there is a bicycle involved, I'm not one hundred percent sure there has to be a stepladder."

He remained squatting there with his elbows on his thighs. He looked at the bucket. He said nothing. Time passed. He lifted the steaming tin can by wrapping his thumb and forefinger around the top. The water level was sufficiently below this to allow it to be somewhat cooler there. He sipped. "They have to hire particular actors for the commercials, you know." He sipped again. "They can't lower the temperature of the tea in the commercials because that'd be false advertising." He sipped. "So when they hand a cup out the drive-thru window they have to hand it to someone with a genetic predisposition to having a vaguely asbestos-quality of lining in the mouth and or slash esophagus." He sipped. "Or simply a genetic predisposition to a lower pain threshold." He sipped. "Or at least long enough to get the shot." He sipped. "If they fall over after whoever yells cut, they're good." He sipped. "Actually, if they do fall over, they're better because they don't have to pay the fee." He sipped. "And if they take out insurance beforehand, they'll actually make money on the deal." He sipped. He looked down into the can. Steam rose up. It slid across his nose. It intermingled with the damp sheen of sweat already present there.

The stream made its usual sounds. Macbook keys clicked in the distance, even if maybe unheard. (If a Macbook key clicks in the forest...?) Other than that, the forest lay silent. The treetops shifted only occasionally, but the breeze only rarely came down lower than that, and even then did little to dispel the heat that rolled down the ridges and collided with the stream.

Faintly, maybe something buzzed. I looked around, but whatever it was had gone.

"You don't have the aesthetic appearance which currently social conditioning would indicate as comprehension, tonto," Tommy said, as he squatted there and raised the tin can. He tilted back his head and drained the last of the then tepid liquid. "I'd had the delusion you were a tad bit more virtual a humanoid phallus-bearing personage than that."

He set down the can on a nearby rock. Then he rose. He started off. "I go to co-mingle the waters."

Tammy didn't say anything to this. She reached over. She lifted the can. She leaned forward. She dipped it into the bucket. She looked across at me after she'd lowered her head again. Then she reached over. She lifted another can. "Drink something," she said. She tossed it. I remember I almost dropped it. For some reason, that scared the shit outa me. I dipped it into the bucket. I carried it half-full over to a rock. I sat. I looked down into it. The fire'd burned lower by then. It'd turned almost completely to charcoal. She leaned forward. She tossed a handful of small twigs onto it. The heat from it added to the already oppressive air. But it had to be kept going. There probably wasn't anything to start another. The box of porn mags sat up there on one of the rocks. The issue lying on top'd been ripped up. The pages had been balled to provide the initial conditions for the flame which still continued.

"Drink."

I tilted back the can. The boiling and the tin can did something to the taste. Maybe it was the invisible, molecular-thin plastic liner within. Sometimes I think I can still taste that dull electricity.

"Understanding's overrated," she said. She sipped at her water. "Men who seek such just end up going mad from never getting within ten thousand kilometers of it. And if they do find it," she tilted back her head. She drained the tin can, "then they go mad from that too."

I didn't say anything. That's why I think I can remember the taste so well. If I'd had to form words more often they'd've overpowered it. Water still clung to the bottom grooves in the can and wouldn't come out. It'd just turn round and round in a ring as you shifted the can.

"Some divine the future through tea leaves left in the bottom of

a cup," Tommy said. He'd returned without me realizing it. He'd returned and stood looking over my shoulder. "But if you divine the future from the ring of water that clings in the bottom of a tin can, all you get's something that goes round and round like life's stuck loading symbol." He cocked his head. "An ouroboros."

He straightened and looked out over the stream. "From the great waters we come," he said, "and to the great waters we return. We are merely very minor walking saltwater oceans." He turned. "Why leave the puddle when you can become the puddle and always be wherever you are?"

### I Think I Can

Night came. Screens lit tents like Japanese lanterns. And the ones still seated outside acted as lampposts. They illuminated the way down the blue-white-aglow avenues, tent surfaces lit harshly with high-k luminescence.

"Let's see," Tommy said. It seemed to be something said more so to himself. He said, "What're we gonna watch tonight, you think?" But the use of *you* in that statement had a characteristic that fundamentally rendered it void. Something about it indicated that perhaps no one else not only didn't but couldn't exist. "So what do we want?" The more often he employed the plural, it seemed that, finally, it might carry the implicit statement that even he didn't exist.

"You should speak up more," he said. "I'm not talking to myself." He paused and looked around. "So know anyway." He looked back the length of illuminated way we'd come. "So far as I know, anyway." He turned forward again. "Solipsism's alright so long as you can eliminate yourself from the equation."

Security services were among the many clients of several of the freelancers. "Forget eye in the sky," Tommy said. "Remember the eye in the doorbell." He dropped down to watch a screen. He could sit cross-legged for an indefinite period of time. He could sleep that way. But he couldn't drop into the position instantly. He always had to pull first one then the other of his legs into place manually. "Due to previous cost and ubiquity, the most of these cameras'd been black

and white, so it looks like you're always watching old episodes of The Twilight Zone, don't it? But most'v the contemporary ones're color because of the massive falls in price operating at scale in both production volume and environmental damage can allow for when such fecundate operations can be operated in places where PETA bread won't scream about the poor two headed salamanders," Tommy said. "But how else are the slime molds supposed to advance their telepathy?" He scratched the bottom of his foot. "Complete jealousy, you know." He tore off a chunk of nail that was already three quarters of the way there anyway. He glanced at it in the light from the display before he tossed it into the darkness. "Two heads're always better than one, but they'dn't even have one, so what can you expect?" He hunched forward. "How much better to talk to yourself." He rested his elbows on his thighs. He placed his chin in his palms.

### H | >>|

[The camera must be a doorbell camera because it looks right out over a porch and across a set of steps and a front yard. It might be color-capable, but because of the night it must be in some sort of night-vision mode, because everything's in black and white. It's decent housing. Not upper middle class but middle class enough for people to buy such cameras and subscription services. Lights are on in the house across the street. The driveway is empty. A deputy car comes into frame. It turns into this empty driveway. The headlights stay on as he gets out and walks in front of the car and toward the sidewalk and toward the front porch. They extinguish automatically by the time he's at the top step. He goes inside. Because of the night vision and the distance and the focus of the camera having been meant to be on people in front of the door on this side of the street, it's hard to discern any distinguishing features. Then there's nothing for ten or fifteen minutes. The image might as well be still. But the general fuzziness of infrared night vision keeps that from happening completely. It makes the image look like a film that's about to rip away. Some lights go on and off upstairs. A few minutes pass. The deputy opens the front door. He comes down the front steps. This time he's carrying a duffle bag. Someone appears in the lighted doorway. The figure's too blurry at that distance, and because of the light, to discern anything about them.

The deputy gets in the patrol car. The headlights come on. He backs into the street. He heads out of frame the same direction he entered.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[A man in a suit stands behind a glass rostrum. Behind him is a large graphic.]

[Preacher] But you will say, Preacher, it's public land. It's for the common good. And I ask you where do you find public land in this book?

[He removes one hand from the rostrum. He raises the book laid there.]

[Preacher] Where is it? And you will not find it. You will not find it because public land is Communism. And you will not find Communism in the word of God. For all that was given unto Adam cannot be public because it was rightfully given unto him who—

#### H > >>|

"Boring," Tommy said. He rose. "Come, tonto. As is our right and responsibility, let us find more suitable entertainment." It was possible to tread along any number of figure-eight-shaped paths among and between the tents. This we often did. The crushed leaf litter showed the contours of these paths both in daylight and under the ambient glow of collective screens. Though, at night, sometimes they were only visible out of the corners of your eye. Leaves crunched beneath my boots and Tommy's bare feet. That was the only other sound in the night other than the clicking of Macbook keyboards. And the only things that obscured the screens were reflections. Canopy leaves sometimes rustled in the high darkness.

"Peaceful is the conflict?" Tommy said. "Roar roar roar the engines. But they cannot even deliver the vital serum. It is left to the dogs."

He stopped before a tent. He dropped to his knees. He crawled inside. Inside, he looked over his shoulder. He motioned for me to come. Then he shifted to pull himself into his usual seated position.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Announcer] Today. Now. Continued live coverage of the troubles at the borders.

#### H > >>|

"Oh good." Tommy settled his elbows onto his knees. He rested his chin in his palms. He rested his fingertips against his cheeks. "I love a long-running series." He burped. "It really gives you a chance to get invested in things."

#### He II DDI

[Orgone] Tonight we go to North Carolina—where local sheriff's departments and police forces are currently under siege. As we've reported, following the signing of the Lake Slokum act into law by the governor of South Carolina, tens of hundreds, if not hundreds of thousands, of people have been pouring across state lines. Now for a new twist in the complaints. So-called climate activists are now charging that what they claim are miles and miles of cars and trucks backed up on interstate highways, just the idling alone is contributing as many green house gasses to the atmosphere as a whole cruise ship. So as usual the activists are against any type of fun or relaxation. Real Americans work hard for their money, and if they want to go on a cruise, it's their right to go on a cruise. And as for images you see on those news outlets like these of helicopter shots of miles and miles of packed-together cars, well, let me tell you about something called deep fakes, folks. The leftist liberals want nothing more than for you to believe conservative policies have created nothing but living heckholes—forgive my language, folks—like those out of some dystopian movie. In fact, several commentators on Twitter were recently exposed for just that, using stills from Robocop and The Day After Tomorrow and claiming these things are in fact reality. Well, you know what reality is, folks. And it isn't them. They're not living in reality. And speaking of them, our guest tonight is a spokesperson for the group

Americans Who Defy Borders, who might as well be called Americans Who Defy Reality. Welcome to the show, Miss Cornwalker.

[Cornwalker] Thank you.

[Orgone] So what do you have against reality, Miss Cornwalker?

[Cornwalker] I like to think I don't have anything against reality.

[Orgone] And how do you expect the states to function without their borders?

[Cornwalker] The way they used to.

[Orgone] The law is the law, Miss Cornwalker. Of course, with social media, we're right back to the witch trials these days, aren't we? Lynchings. And the whole nine yards.

[Cornwalker] That the law is the law doesn't make it right.

[Orgone] But it is the law, Miss Cornwalker.

[Cornwalker] As conservatives, we hold that the intent of the original Constitution was foundational to the abilities of the United States to advance.

[Orgone] But the Constitution plainly states there are ways it can be changed.

[Cornwalker] Yes, but—

[Orgone] So you admit that any change to the Constitution is then by definition constitutional. Why are you against the Constitution?

[Cornwalker] We're not. We're against the new one. We—

[Orgone] But you just admitted the constitutional legitimacy of enacting another Constitution.

[Cornwalker] When in a democracy it is not the people who—

[Orgone] You just talk about the people because you're on the losing side.

[Cornwalker] The people should've had the ability to vote—

[Orgone] The Constitution doesn't say anything about voting in this regard.

[Cornwalker] Yes, the new one doesn't.

[Orgone] A complete falsehood, Miss Cornwalker. You're implying that the old one did.

[Cornwalker] Whether it was legal or not, it was un-American.

[Orgone] Okay. Hold it right there, Miss Cornwalker. If you bothered to read your real American history, you'd know that the Articles of Confederation were replaced by the Constitution. And the Constitution was also hammered out by The Founding Fathers—Great Men that they were—behind closed doors.

[Cornwalker] But—

[Orgone] Let me finish. And then it was voted on by those duly authorized to do so. If it was good enough for The Founding Fathers, why isn't it good enough for us?

[Cornwalker] Maybe it wasn't good enough then either.

[Orgone] Are you insulting The Founding Fathers, Miss Cornwalker? Are you implying anything less than the highest motivation for these men? These men whom you owe your

very existence and safety and economic prosperity in this country.

[Cornwalker] I'm just saying that the people who live in a democracy have a right to a part of such large-scale decisions about their country.

[Orgone] The Constitution only required a majority of legislatures and governors to call for a convention. This's their right under the Constitution.

[Cornwalker] You mean it was their right.

[Orgone] Exactly. It was their right and they exercised it. There was nothing that was unconstitutional about anything that was done. They had a right to call for a convention. They exercised their right. They had the right to appoint delegates. They exercised their right. Those duly appointed delegates had the right to vote. They exercised their right.

[Cornwalker] Yes. And we're just exercising our right to free speech.

[Orgone] We all know what free speech is, Miss Cornwalker. And subversion against a state isn't.

[Cornwalker] We're not speaking against the state. We're speaking of the intense and ridiculous restrictions now being enforced at the state borders.

[Orgone] So you admit you're speaking against the states.

[Cornwalker] We're speaking against policies.

[Orgone] State policies, Miss Cornwalker. Next you're going to say that the entire notion of borders should be abolished and people should be allowed to pour over them.

[Cornwalker] It used to be that way.

[Orgone] Yeah, and they used to sacrifice babies down there in those South American countries, too. But the fact of the matter is, Miss Cornwalker, borders are foundational to states, and being against borders, you're against states' inherent rights. Therefore you are against everything that's made this country great.

[Cornwalker] Can we even call it a country anymore without some kind of federal connective tissue?

[Orgone] Lies, Miss Cornwalker. Out and out lies. The federal government is there just as always, doing exactly what it's always supposed to have done. It's protecting us from the likes of China and Europe and Africa. And it is keeping its nose out of the states' business.

[Cornwalker] We maintain that the right to interstate traffic is fundamental.

[Orgone] You can have all the interstate traffic you want. But you can't flaunt state laws. You can't flaunt the law.

[Cornwalker] The law—

[Orgone] The law is the law, Miss Cornwalker. Even you have to admit that.

[Cornwalker] We—

[Orgone] Do you admit that the law's the law?

[Cornwalker] We—

[Orgone] Do you admit the law's the law, Miss Cornwalker?

[Cornwalker] Of course. We—

[Orgone] Well, there you go.

[Cornwalker] But we—

[Orgone] Is that an Indian name?

[Cornwalker] What?

[Orgone] Is that an Indian name? Cornwalker?

[Cornwalker] I don't know. It's my name.

[Orgone] But by using it you're implying some Indianness, are you not? Aren't you just appropriating, Miss Cornwalker, to garner sympathy for being in a minority?

[Cornwalker] I'm not here to talk about—

[Orgone] That's the way it always is. All of you lose and you want some sympathy for being losers. And you all think you should get something because you're losers. And you think, because you're special, you should get something. You just think everybody should do exactly what you want no matter what it costs anybody or everybody else, no matter what anybody else wants, no matter what the law says, because the law doesn't apply to you, because you're special.

[Cornwalker] We—

[Orgone] Cut her off. Cut her off.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] These people. You can't deal with them. You can't do anything with them. This's what the states of this country are up against. It's always been the states that have made these United States of America. It's right there in the name. How much more plain can you get than that? You can't

have a real America without the states. And you can't have the states without borders. Without borders, you wouldn't know where one state begins and where one ends. You'd just have one whole big thing. A whole big thing. That's it. That's all you'd have. No pieces. Just a whole big thing. It would be like an unsliced pizza. What are you going to do, pass it around for bites, or something? Is that sanitary? Is that the kind of country you want? Some kind of insanitary mess? It's the same thing with the pedophiles and the other perverts. They want what they want. And they want everybody else to want what they want. And if you don't want whatever perverted thing they want then there's something wrong with you. They want to say the laws shouldn't apply to them. They're above the law. It's inhumane for the law to apply to them. It's against human rights for the law to apply to them. Well, human rights don't exist without the law. They don't exist, folks.

[He tamps a stack of papers.]

[Orgone] So let's talk to somebody decent. Let's talk to somebody who is actually on the front lines trying to do something for these United States.

[The image subdivides into two frames.]

[Orgone] With us we have Sheriff Bennett Debord from a county along a border in Western North Carolina. Welcome to the show, Sheriff Debord. We're glad to have you on.

[Debord] Thanks for having me.

[Orgone] Especially since it means taking time away from your very important job. I'm sure it's pretty tough out there.

[Debord] It can be trying times sometimes.

[Orgone] So, Sheriff, lay it out for us. What exactly is the unique problem where you're situated?

[Debord] Well, you see, the southern boundary of the county is shared with a portion of the state boundary. What makes this a unique situation is that the western end of the state shares a southern border not only with South Carolina but also with Georgia. So we are dealing with the influx from two separate states simultaneously.

[Orgone] And it's not even as if these people want to be North Carolinians.

[Debord] No.

[Orgone] So they don't want to be, um, please remind us if you don't mind.

[Debord] Tar Heels.

[Orgone] Yes. So they don't want to be Tar Heels. What do they want to be? Do they even know?

[Debord] Well, I can't speak as to that.

[Orgone] Now, all these rights people are jumping up and antsy about this and about that, and they're claiming that they're restricting these people's rights to travel. But that's not it, is it. It's purely a law enforcement matter. And you're purely functioning as per your obligations under the agreements your state has made with the states of South Carolina and Georgia would have you, is that not correct?

[Debord] Our job is to enforce the law. And if we knowingly have someone who is under an extradition order we are required to hand that individual over to the jurisdiction in question.

- [Orgone] And the fact is that what these people are doing is illegal. No one's restricting their right to travel. It's just very clear that if people are leaving the state to knowingly commit what is defined as a crime in their state of origin they are planning to break the law. It doesn't matter where they are planning to break the law at. The fact remains they are boldly planning on flagrantly violating the law. They are intent on violating the law. If we're not going to prosecute that, are we not going to prosecute attempted murder next? Is it alright to plan and try to kill someone so long as you don't succeed? Is it? So what're you doing right now?
- [Debord] As we've been doing for the last few weeks, we've been maintaining a vigilant effort to provide the appropriate level of response to the situation. We have been assisting the state patrol with roadblocks along the main corridor, that is, the north to south interstate routes, and are evaluating the situations as they arise.
- [Orgone] I mean, this isn't different than when you're looking for drunk drivers.
- [Debord] In a functional sense, no.
- [Orgone] And it's not like you're just rounding up people wholesale. These are all people who are *trying* to evade law enforcement. You know the kind of people who try and evade law enforcement on our interstate highways? Drug smugglers. Kiddie sex slave smugglers. And how many of these people have you arrested for transporting illegal substances into your state?
- [Debord] I'm afraid I don't have those numbers exactly.
- [Orgone] But they are breaking the law.
- [Debord] Those who enter the state with contraband items are breaking the law.

- [Orgone] I mean, you have these people transporting sex toys. Who knows how those are going to be used? Those could be used on children. What reproductive purpose do those serve, huh? You have people transporting porn. If they transport porn, you know they'll transport kiddie porn. What kind of things do you see down there?
- [Debord] The typical largest category of contraband we've been seeing at the moment is usually alcohol related.
- [Orgone] Well, you know if they are gonna bootleg, they will do anything. Who knows what they are doing with the stuff? Now plenty of you out there might enjoy a nice drink. Nothing wrong with that. But these people and what they are bringing up, that is something else entirely. Completely something else. What are they going to do with it? They gonna give it to kids? They gonna make some kiddie porn? Are they? How many kids do you see out there?

[Debord] Some.

- [Orgone] Can you even be sure that they are their kids? How do you know they are not being transported to be sold to someone? Maybe they have already been sold and they are just making the delivery. It's like ordering a pizza. That's the kind of thing these people want. Kiddie porn on demand. So how do you even know?
- [Debord] In the absence of an amber alert or official complaint, we depend on an officer's judgment of the scene.
- [Orgone] Of course, even with air conditioning, it's probably sweltering out there. And sitting in those cars. That can't be good for these children. I mean, what is the physical condition of some of these children going to be like? Are they even eating? Are they giving them water? What about

bathrooms? I mean, these people, they go out and make a mess on the side of the road. Are they out there making kids pull down their pants on the side of the road?

[Debord] There have been a few reports of indecent exposures.

[Orgone] Yeah I mean, we have these whole videos and it takes these media companies weeks and weeks and weeks to take them down. They claim it's just a barbecue and you have these women with just these huge breasts walking around in bikini tops and little boys and little girls are right there. You can see it. You can watch it. It's right out there. And it takes them weeks and weeks to take it down. But it's not their fault, they say. They just run a service, they say. Well, those in the real America say if yuh ride with em yuh hang with em. This is the kind of thing bringing back public executions will fix. People have to be held accountable for their actions. Without that, we have anarchy. And if we had anarchy, what would we have but absolute insanity? Of course, you've seen the videos of bicycles and horses on the roads.

[Debord] I have.

[Orgone] Of course, obviously, you have bigger problems. I mean, besides making messes in our streets, they are not just pouring in through the designated routes, are they. They have started to come over the land now by foot. Is that not right?

[Debord] We have had an increased number of individuals crossing the borders on foot.

[Orgone] And we aren't talking walking the Appalachian Trail here. We're just talking about people walking anywhere. Private property doesn't matter to these people. They just want to get on through. They don't care what they trammel underfoot to do it. A farmer's field. A person's nice lawn.

They don't care. They don't care about any of it. They just care about what they want. So how do you deal with a situation like this?

[Debord] We have stationed deputies. We are working with the state forestry and wildlife offices. We are attempting to identify the likely routes of such individuals and to establish appropriate measures.

[Orgone] Most of these, I mean, they talk about them being families and all the like. But how do we even know they are their kids? But the most of these are men. They are not just men. They're young men. Young healthy men. Lone wolves. Packs of them. Just roaming out there. Roaming everywhere. Who knows what these people would do? They're not tied to anything. They have no responsibilities. They can just come and go as they please. Who knows where they are going to turn up? And just how many of them are there out there hiding?

[Debord] I don't have exact statistics.

[Orgone] Well, obviously not. They're just pouring over. I'm surprised you're not all flattened down there from the sheer wave. It's like a tsunami. Just this massive thing. And here you and your people are putting your lives on the line to try and stop it. And then there are these people who get out—I'm sure you have seen the protesters.

[Debord] There have been some protests on the sides of the highways.

[Orgone] These people have no respect. They have no respect for the job that men like you do. They have no respect for the law. They might as well be out there spitting on you and your men. If I were you, I would tell my men not to turn their backs on them.

[Debord] The most of the protests have been peaceful, for the most part.

[Orgone] Of course, they look that way. But it's all just so they can set a trap. They lure the officers in and then it's all my rights are being violated, I've been assaulted, police brutality. When we all know who it is that are actually risking their lives dealing with these people. So just let me be one to say thank you for your service.

[Debord] Thank you.

[Orgone] And go out there and make America proud.

[Debord] We do our best.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] And that's what a real American always does. Real Americans, folks. They are the ones out there in the streets. They are the ones who have always made America great. They are the ones who always will make America great. No matter what happens. It is real Americans that will always rise to their responsibilities. It is the true Americans who will never surrender to the approaching darkness. America. The Light of the world. Stay tuned, folks. And remember the Light.



## Maybe Life Is A Plot Black Hole

I should probably mention something about sleep. The freelancers needed little of it. Concentrated coffee essences and compacted condensed caffeine drinks in drink-me-sized aluminum cans and ripopen-able powder pouches saw to that. As for the communists, they

slept beneath their respective lean-tos. Though, not usually at the same time. Tommy tended to occupy the most of the night. Tammy, most of the day. Though, there was some overlap. Whoever was awake would tend the fire and keep the coals alive enough.

"The problem," Tommy said, one time as he stirred the fire, "is we've only the one bucket. So when the times come to gather a Pale of Air what will we do if it's already occupied with di-hydrogen monoxide?" He continued to stir the fire. "Beware of surfaces." The minimal firelight licked across his body. "They are everything."

## But Some People Have To Have Their Desserts Of The Real Before The Main Course

Sleeping on a pile of leaf litter wasn't so bad without any creepy crawling things to wander into your nose or ears at night and make a nest. The stream acted as white noise.

I woke at times in the middle of the night. My eyes were already adjusted to the dark. It was possible to discern a human figure on the rocks down by the water just barely lit by the glow that emanated from the freelancer camp. Sometimes it'd be Tommy adding his water to the waters. Sometimes it'd be Tammy just standing there seemingly absorbed in the night.

Tommy stirred the fire. "You think Jackie Chan fight fake kung fu?" he said. "Why Tylar?"

# By A Simple Process Of Becoming; Lain In 3 Persons; Blessed Trinity

The sun rose. The sky'd been tinged red as blood. The color'd do funny things to the leaves of the trees. It turned them almost black. But then the morning burnt off and left only the rising heat.

Tommy squatted near the lean-tos. He'd put together a small paddock for a box turtle that'd wandered in from somewhere. He squatted there dropping one-by-one *Black Bugs of Red Death* that he cradled in the palm of his hand. It took the box turtle two crunchy

bites to deal with them. "Turtles," he said, "contain three and seven kinds of meat, you know." He dropped another *Black Bug of Red Death* in front of it. It stretched out its neck. It caught it in its beak. It crunched it in half. It opened its mouth again so the remaining half fell into its mouth. It crunched that, too, till it swallowed.

"You'll catch death from that thing," Tammy said, as she passed. She carried a bucket of water.

"She's round," he said. "Always look for garbage dump." He turned over his off hand. He dropped the last of the *Black Bugs of Red Death* into the paddock. "This is the true museum. Why Tylar?" He turned. He started up the ridge as Tammy squatted by the fire. She added sticks onto the coals. The sticks smoldered but hadn't yet burst into flame. She looked over at the small paddock.

"I give thee dominion over all the beasts of the Earth," she said. "From heaven's heights I stab at thee."

A shout rose from higher on the ridge. We both looked up. "DEATH IS ROUND. BUT LIFE IS SQUARE. WE REQUIRE A DESICCATED SYMPHONY." Tommy stood on one of the rocks that jutted from the bank, with his arms raised over his head. He turned. He started up the bank again. Leaves crunched beneath his feet. But he stopped. He looked up. He was first to hear the plane then. They could've been dropping more DDT. Sometimes a fine mist sifted down from the treetops where it'd collected on the leaves and the wind shook the leaves. It had no taste. Tommy stood there on the side of the ridge with his head flung back and his eyes closed and his mouth open and his tongue out.

# Nothing Can Outpace Its Electromagnetic Fecundity

"Nothing can," Tommy said. He finished pulling his legs into place. "Nothing."

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of two people in costume. One wears a halo. The other wears spiky, blue foam hair.]

[Foam] Every disaster movie begins with people ignoring a scientist.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with a foam sword.]

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

### **₩** || **>>**|

[Aster] Coming up we will hear about a man who drank from a soft drink can that had been left open on a picnic table and swallowed a wasp and got stung in the throat and later died. We will have what his family and friends are feeling about that. But first—a new report on American suicide has just been released. We'll break it down for you. That's coming up right now on this special CNT report.

[Cue orchestral symphonic sampled music. Cut to a title screen with images of pills and coiled rope and pistols and razor blades.]

[Cut back to the main news desk. The image from the title screen now forms the background behind the host.]

[Aster] As many of you may be aware, the number of personal tragedies have multiplied of late. And many grieving and sorrowful Americans have taken up vigils in memory of these tragedies. And to begin we're now going to go live to Raleigh, North Carolina, where the governor of the state of North Carolina is now giving a press conference. So let's go straight to that.

[Cut to a shot of a man standing behind a podium. Unidentified persons in suits and uniforms stand around and behind him. One woman in formal wear moves her hands to sign as he speaks.]

[Governor] In light of these tragic events, I have ordered new barriers to be erected in critical areas of our state parks system.

And I want to make it clear to the citizens of our state to rest assured that we are doing everything humanly possible to respond appropriately to this situation.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Aster] We've just heard from the governor of the state of North Carolina.

[He shifts a piece of paper on the news desk.]

[Aster] Of course, great controversy has erupted over a recent set of blog postings that claim that not only has the recent uptick in suicides among visitors to the park systems not been a negative to the local economy but it has, in fact, been a boon.

[The image subdivides into two frames. A man in white shirt and tie is in the other frame.]

[Aster] With us now to talk about this is blogger Jeff Noone. Mister Noone.

[Noone] Thank you for having me.

[Aster] Let's kind of lay this out. You're claiming that local and state revenues in areas with public parks are, in fact, experiencing a rise in income along with the increased number of suicides.

[Noone] Yes.

[Aster] And what basis do you feel you have for this?

[Noone] I think the numbers are quite clear. In states that have yet to divest of public land, counties that are occupied by at least one-third of that land, have experienced a marked increase in sales revenue. And this trend exactly tracks with the increased incidents of suicides in the same general vicinity.

[Aster] Don't you feel that it is possible these things could be totally unrelated?

[Noone] Yes. But it's unlikely. The exact trend can be cataloged in reverse. That is, studying counties immediately after the divestment of public land, both suicide rates on public lands and county revenues drop precipitously in those specific areas. So I believe the indication is clear.

[Aster] Don't you feel that this is a bit morbid? After all, business groups have claimed that coverage of these issues has been affecting the bottom line.

[Noone] I think that's merely a feeling that isn't borne out by the numbers.

[Aster] So you're saying you feel they're wrong?

[Noone] Effectively.

[Aster] So are you saying they're not supposed to be concerned about this?

[Noone] I'm merely trying to state what the data indicates.

[Aster] But data is never neutral, is it? It's pointing to something, don't you feel? Are you not running the risk of making all of this seem normal? Are you not running the risk of normalizing this situation?

[Noone] It's about the numbers and what the numbers say.

[Aster] So are you saying the numbers say that suicide is good?

[Noone] The numbers don't have anything to do with that.

[Aster] Well, you're not saying you feel it's bad.

- [Noone] Whether or not it's good or bad is completely orthogonal to the problem.
- [Aster] So you're saying that if these new barriers are installed, as we've just seen mentioned in the report by the governor of the state of North Carolina, that that's going to negatively impact business?
- [Noone] That completely depends on how effective it is at curbing the phenomena.
- [Aster] And do you feel the numbers you've collected indicate why this is happening?
- [Noone] Again, that's completely orthogonal to the problem.
- [Aster] If you're going to talk about suicide, don't you feel that it would be better to talk about descending numbers?
- [Noone] The number of cases aren't descending.
- [Aster] Yes, but don't you feel that some numbers should be going down? Shouldn't you be focusing on them?
- [Noone] These are the numbers we're talking about.
- [Aster] Yes, but they don't have to be the only numbers you talk about. Clearly, you're aware that there are studies that show that talking about an increased degree of certain activities further enhances the likelihood of similar activities occurring in the future. Do you agree with this?
- [Noone] I've seen the studies. And the numbers do indicate something along those lines, yes.
- [Aster] So don't you feel that science has a responsibility here to not to incentivize people to do certain things?

[Noone] The numbers are what they are. I can't make something up.

[Aster] We're not talking about making something up. But don't you feel it would be appropriate to concentrate on certain other numbers?

[Noone] Like what?

[Aster] Such as, say, the number of people who attempt suicide and fail and subsequently realize the mistake they almost made.

[Noone] I have dealt with the percentage of failed attempts as related to the overall attempts. But fundamentally it's about the number of successful attempts increasing.

[Aster] But according to your postings, successful attempts are not the only thing rising, correct? The number of people surviving is up, as well.

[Noone] Well, yes, if there's an increase in the overall number of attempts, then, yes, the number of unsuccessful attempts would likely rise in a statistical proportion.

[Aster] Well, you see, so those numbers are up. The numbers of people living are up. Why not talk about that more?

[Noone] Because it's only tangentially related to the problem.

[Aster] But doesn't science have an obligation to do good?

[Noone] Science has an obligation to report the facts.

[Aster] Even if those facts cause harm?

[Noone] I don't believe that facts can cause harm. Only what people do with them.

[Aster] Couldn't you say the same thing for a loaded gun? I mean, a loaded gun only does what a person does with it. But if you hand someone a loaded gun, wouldn't you feel somewhat responsible for what they do?

[Noone] We're not handing anyone a loaded gun.

[Aster] Do you feel you can be sure of that?

[Noone] Yes, I think I can be reasonably sure of that.

[Aster] But do you feel the broader scientific community would agree with that sentiment?

[Noone] I don't think I can speak for the whole of the scientific community.

[Aster] Well, unfortunately, we are out of time. Thank you very much for joining us, Mister Noone.

#### H > >>

"You see," Tommy said. "This is the problem. The monads have remained nomadic." He scratched his cheeks. Then he moved down to rake his nails under his chin. He raked his fingers down his neck as he tilted his head back. His patchy beard had begun to thicken. It matched the length of the rest of his hair. So it seemed reasonable to assume that he'd shaved the entirety of his body before he'd gone up there. There were no razors in camp. What freelancers could grow beards had them, aswell. And the ones that'd been at it the longest, as can be imagined, had the longest beards. And their hair'd been pulled back into tied ponytails. The problem of body odor'd been minimal. Much more so than it'd've seemed. Maybe it was something to do with the diet. Mostly there was the smell of coffee concentrate and something else that was unidentifiable. I never saw them bathe. Only Tammy and Tommy went out into the stream. Once, Tommy went out to collect one of his stones. He'd decide it'd come down in the wrong place. He'd sat out there a while till he'd found the

particular offender. He dripped as he came ashore. He held the stone in his hand. "Why do we create dams?" he said. And he underhanded the stone into the rushing water. But it must've landed wrong again, because he waded out after it. And when he came out dripping again, he said, "We build them so that they fail." He overhanded the stone this time. It must've landed in the right spot. So he just stood there on the shore with his fists on his hips. He drip dried. "Because we must become God since he can't do the job anymore. And we never made any promise to ourselves about destroying the world again in a flood." The wind shifted leaves and allowed sunlight to sparkle in the water droplets that slowly cascaded down his body. "That is why we must raise the oceans. This is why we can't hold back." He breathed deeply. He exhaled. He opened his mouth so wide he bared his teeth. His stomach collapsed inward. And when everything he could manage to expel'd been forced out, he coughed. He sucked in air. He coughed again. After that, he said, "I contribute to human godhood thusly." He breathed out again. Coughed again. When he'd finished coughing again, he extended his arms and looked upward and said, "Take my carbon dioxide, oh planet. Let it be thy blanket." He shifted. He released a minor fart. "And accept my tiny tithe." He threw back his head. "Humble as it may be."

# Libidinal Economy; One Removed Set of Not-So-Spare Ribs In Efforts To Promote Adam's Self-Reliance; Autofellatio

The largest single chunk of employment for all the freelancers was working content vetting for YouTube and Facebook. Many articles and statements and news segments and blog posts'd referenced the AI superstructure that'd made moderation of such systems not just possible but feasible.

"But the AI're smart," Tommy said. "If they exist they learned a long time ago to delegate."

So the freelancers received notifications that'd minimize whatever they'd been doing and begin playing some video or show some image or some forum post or comment and present them with an accept or decline button (and a third button; however, this was always grayed out) and a countdown timer. This was one reason so many of them carried their laptops with them when they went to the fallen log.

"Workin for yourself," Tommy said, "you're always poopin on the manager's time."

### 

[Graphics of giant anime robots and cutouts of classic scifi-cover rocket ships fly across the screen.]

[Cut to a shot of a guy and a gal in what appears to be a living room. Glass shelving covers the whole wall behind them. The shelving holds figurines and action figures.]

[Guy] Down with tyranny.

[Gal] Yeah.

[Guy] Are you sick of hoity-toity literary types?

[Gal] Yeah.

[Guy] Are you tired of people running around and thinking they're better than you because your book has a rocket ship on the cover?

[Gal] Hell yeah.

[Guy] Well, we've got the place for you.

[Gal] Yeah?

[Guy] That's right. Reserve your tickets for ParaCon—Western North Carolina's biggest scifi-fantasy literary festival. Let's show them who really keeps the publishing and film industries going.

[Gal] Yeah.

"Why Tylar?" Tommy said, as he walked toward the stream. The convention was already supposed to be going by this/that point. It's just that the backlog was so deep that, even as many freelancers as there must've been across the world, it was only possible to review videos and posts and sound-enhanced gifs so fast. "Every day," Tommy called, "the human race regenerates more information than it could've ever produced. Yet it does it. There are more bits in the cloud than are dreamnt of in your universe, tonto." He waved his hand. He wiggled all his fingers but his stiffened pinkie. "The beginning and the end is the cloud. From the control-a to the control-z is the cloud. But the cloud terminates in Terminal Identity only to return control to the cloud." Whatever else he said at the moment'd been lost in the distance and among the click of Macbook keys.

#### **₩** || **>>**

[A guy sits behind a snowball microphone. Behind him is a patterned image of various forms of the word CONTROVERSY-ORAMA, which has been digitally superimposed. The outline around his hair and shoulders is faintly pixelated and has a green tinge.]

[Controversy] Those of you out there on Patreon voted for it. So here it is. This week's top ten controversial clips. Enjoy.

[The number 10 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a black man in a pink suit stands looking at the camera.]

[Pink Suit] The thing I've had happen in Asia—and I'm being absolutely general there, I've had it across the board—but it almost never fails that when you start speaking Japanese or Chinese or Korean, etc, people will look at you as if you're a dog who has just gotten up on its hind legs and ordered ramen, but hold the pork. There tends to be a sense that oriental languages are too tough for foreigners to master. So you just—you just can't exist. You're impossible. It never fails—I get into a cab, say

go to the this or that. And they start right off. And then they look in the mirror. And then suddenly they can't understand you. No, can't understand a word. You're speaking gibberish. It almost never fails. Also, someone—like me—walks in, and the little kids, they... start crying. It's just...

[He shakes his head.]

[The number 9 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an academic on a stage.]

[Academic] So the question is, you know, we say rape's not about violence. And people rightly become angered when someone accuses a victim of actually not being a victim because they weren't assaulted enough. And this attitude popularly tends to be seen as boiling down to a left-right dichotomy. But is it? In one respect, it's pretty simple to define rape. That which is done without consent. So if someone says no, and someone still does something, there you have it. We've known this since Kant. But we talk about trauma—and I'm not saying trauma isn't real—absolutely not. But doesn't it seem there's a fetishistic nature about trauma? And this is divorced from the actual experience. Imagine, if you will, someone who could get shot and not feel anything. I'm not going to say that would be bad. But I'm also not going to say in this basic Kantian sense that lets the person that shot them off the hook. But this way we treat victims in regards to trauma almost seems to be not helping but ensuring, or verifying, a certain minimum of trauma. So it would seem, to me, that the liberal side is just as much invested in this sort of economy. So it's not a matter of consent or non-consent. It seems more about ensuring a sufficient degree of brutalization has occurred. So thenI didn't notice the sound of feet trampling the leaf litter. Movement out of the corner of my eye. I saw Tommy. He panted from running. He dropped down beside the freelancer. "Did I miss anything? Sometimes time gets out of the usual non-linear order." He sat forward. He scrutinized the screen or the reflections in the screen. "I wouldn't want to miss anything before it happens."

The wind shifted. And it seemed as if there might've been a helicopter nearby. But it was impossible to tell because of the leaves. And then the sound was gone. Tommy looked up after the sound'd gone. He furrowed his brow. His jaw set to one side. He hmmmed. Then he looked down at the screen again. "Once there was this Apple two ee in a school," he said. "It sat in the corner. The teacher would boot it for young students. They would insert a floppy disk. On the screen, little robots would move around and destroy one another. Children mashed the keys. They rooted for a robot to win. Eventually there was only one robot left." He looked over. "The player was supposed to program the robot with pseudo assembly language." He didn't blink. "Hitting the keys did nothing." He turned, once again, to look at the screen.

#### 

[Narrator] However, it is the females that constitute the group's legislative body. It is these aunts and sisters who will select the group's dominant male. Such attachment, however, can be transitory. And a male's position within the group can be vetoed if the selected male proves unsatisfactory.

[Cut to a shot of tall grass gently blowing in the wind.]

[Narrator] It is on the grasslands that a different picture emerges. Here, the dominant male baboon reigns with supreme power. It is not just other males he must contend with, but the hosts of predators on these open plains.

[Cut to a shot of chimpanzees running along a forest floor.]

[Narrator] But among their distant relatives, the chimpanzees, aspiring males like Tzani cannot afford such direct brutality. With a shared social bond through food and grooming, Tzani will gain the trust of other males who will help him challenge the dominant male. If he succeeds, these relationships will be crucial, not just in maintaining his own status as leader, but in patrolling and defending the group's territory from other, rival chimpanzees.

[Cut to a different shot of chimpanzees running along a forest floor.]

[Narrator] Co-operation for these young males will be key, as alone they will be prey for other chimpanzee males, who are known to periodically raid the territories of neighboring troops and kill isolated males. And though females freely move between groups after having reached sexual maturity, the lone male will find himself violently excluded.

[Cut to a shot of a chimpanzee baring its teeth.]

[Narrator] Why this is the case, however, remains, like so many aspects of apes' social lives, a mystery.

#### H > >>

"Lowercase god, I do love Richard Kylie," Tommy said. He tilted back his head. He closed his eyes. "How could Miss Kitty and Miss Alice not fall in love with him? He has the kind of voice where you can feel the commas. Empty space has gravitas by his absence. Even if he were completely disembodied, he would be so sexy. Just the voice. You don't need a body for a voice. Just something that can contain wave patterns. The universe cycles infinitely. Repetition. Repetition. Repetition. In and out. In and out. Explosions inbetween. And inflation. And deflation. And everything as scrunched together as it can get. And everything as far apart as it can manage." His head remained back and his eyes remained closed the whole time he said this. His Adam's apple shifted out of sync with his words.

His chest and his stomach gently expanded and contracted. "The universe says—Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes." Then he sat there in silence with his head back and his eyes still closed.

He opened his eyes. He looked down a seeming fraction of a second before the Macbook bleeped and another video popped up from the bouncing dock icon and took over the screen. His fingers faintly twitched.

#### H | >>

[Moderator] Let me welcome everyone to our discussion on literature and feminism and pornography.

[Four chairs occupy a stage occupied by four people.]

[Moderator] Now, this discussion will follow the general pattern we've had for our last few discussions. Each guest speaker will read their statement. And then we'll have a discussion. And then we should have time for about fifteen or twenty minutes or so of questions.

[The camera's been set up far enough back in the auditorium that the first five rows of the audience are visible along the bottom of the frame. But the tops of the heads of the speakers are cut off. And the picture jiggles as someone unseen adjusts it upwards.]

[Moderator] So working from most immediate to me outward, we have Georgia Happi, author of—correct me if I'm wrong—ten books—

[Happi] Eleven.

[Moderator] Eleven books. Most wide-selling of which is The Subject of Speculative Tentacles, put out by Vitnam Press. And also there is The Genealogy of Dick: Why so Many Writers Have Phallic-Like Names, which is her latest, out from Birdshead Orphanage Press. Next, we have Professor Gordon Liste, who is professor of

semiotics here at Eagleton University. He is author of The Function of Respiration, which explores the use of the details of descriptions of breathing in narratives as a way to convey a subtext of sexual excitation and the history of words about breathing as they relate to understandings of human sexuality in post-eighteenth century English literature, and which is published by the Eagleton University Press. And finally, we have Deirdre Francine Hall. Author of De-Cloaking Little Red Riding Hood: Female Sexuality and The Fairy Tale, published by Random Penguin House. She is also the editor of Contemporary Critical Oral Fixations, a collection of essays on the continuing importance of oral tradition in digital and literate societies, currently in its second edition from MIT Press.

[The moderator leans forward and looks down the row of chairs.]

[Moderator] Have I missed anything?

[There are only gracious replies. Professor Liste shifts his ankle over his knee.]

[Moderator] Okay then. Again, starting and moving outward. If you're ready, Georgia.

[She raises the microphone that's been in her lap.]

[Happi] I don't like to read things. So I'm just going to speak from memory. I think what we're really all here about is the idea of whether or not feminism can be considered compatible with pornography. And in this regard it doesn't matter what kind. The audio-visual bears no distinction from the literary. There are certain people who want to argue for some kind of distinction between the erotic and the pornographic. But such a distinction is facile. It is not a matter of aesthetics. It is only a matter of whether or not the media or the medium

invokes the spectre of the female body. And by definition, the invocation of a female body is a female body subjected to use. All we have to do to prove this is to look at the scientific evidence. During MRI scans of men who view pornography, the moment they are shown an image of a woman, the part of their brain that lights up the most is the tool-using aspect of the brain. They are not thinking about a mind. They are thinking about an object. And there is no way to evoke the aesthetic of the female without the invocation of this objectification. Yet we live in a society that is saturated by the female aesthetic. Nowhere are female objects not deployed in the pursuit of market economics. Modern libidinal market economies can function no other way. And it is this that is the source for the climate of fear and the impetus for imperialistic action against cultures such as those in the Middle East. It is a capitalist libidinal action against any system without the marketized female object. From the general ban on human figures in classical Islamic art, to the use of the hijab, and most especially the burka, the Islamic tradition has carved out a female space in which a woman is free to be free of her body.

[She lowers her microphone.]

[Moderator] Professor.

[He shifts. He roots in his pocket. He unfurls a slip of paper haphazardly as he holds a microphone in his other hand.]

[Liste] I apologize. My computer decided to crash and burn this morning while updating. Not literally, thankfully. The crash and burning, that is. Though, the updating... But it did manage to take all my notes to Valhalla with it. If that's where software goes when it expires while running. Part of the reason I'm here is in part over a debate about what is neo-Gnosticism. And I realize this is more a literary panel, so I don't expect anyone to have any deep knowledge of various sects of historical

Christianity, so I'm just going to give a brief overview because we're not concerned with the details here, just a very general attitude. So Gnosticism is a mystical tradition. It posits the creation of what we call the world—or the universe—is actually the creation of an insane demiurge. This is the god of the Old Testament. And Jesus is the light that breaks through that world of matter, from the true godhead, which is non-physical being. So in this theme, being encrusted, being weighed down with matter, is sin. The world is a fallen world by definition of this physicality. And to be with God is to be free from that and exist in this pure state. A good sort of—if you need a movie example—is the film Noah that came out a few years ago. You have the angels which are beings of beauty and pure light. And they are cast out of the heavens, and they become mired within and encumbered with and are encrusted in matter and are required to exist in these heavily deformed bodies. So the body in Gnostic thought is a symptom of sin itself. It is an aspect of the physical world that is itself a perversion. So as I've said, spiritual perfection and union with God requires ridding oneself of it. So you had, for instance, people mortifying the flesh through extreme fasting and other ascetic practices. And in the more extreme cases you have people flinging themselves into ovens to burn away the impurity, etc. So at the time, it's the nature of the body in relation to God that is one of the great debates within Christianity. And I think I can reasonably confidently posit that the contemporary arguments over pornography can be frame through this lens. Now, the question is then is it of a direct descent? That is, is it still Gnosticism proper that has carried down in some genetic-like fashion from the early history of the church to now? Or is it a reappropriation, a neo-Gnosticism, that we are dealing with? And I think that's it for me.

[He folds the paper in half but still holds it in his hand. The moderator leans slightly forward.]

[Moderator] And Deirdre.

[Hall] I think the problem is that we don't have a clear view of femaledriven sexual narrative. I've got a small little thing here to read.

[She looks down at her phone. She lifts it from her lap with her free hand.]

[Hall] What is the female story? The argument has long raged as to whether or not Pauline Reage's The Story of O-later revealed to have been written by Anne Desclos—can be truly considered to be a female fantasy or whether it is a man's fantasy composed by a woman. Contemporary media is replete with the notion of women's fantasies. But it still remains to question whether such fantasies devised by male and female writers and given the okay by the male deciding powers that ultimately reside at the tops of more than ninety-percent of media and publishing companies are in fact female fantasies or are fantasies of female fantasies as established by men that women and girls acquire through their exposure to media and then internalize. To what extent are Fifty Shades of Grey and Twilight marketing phenomenons and to what extent do they represent true female sexual imagination? And the question that has to be asked is this what women want? This points to the central misunderstanding of the narrative of female sexual narratives that has caused the most discomfort. And that is the distinction between production and reproduction.

[She glances up from her phone.]

[Hall] And perhaps this will intersect some with what Professor Liste has said.

[She looks down at her phone again.]

[Hall] It is generally held that the idea is the blue print for the reproduction of that data, if you will, in physical reality. That is, the transformation of idea into reality or physical object or

experience. So when we ask the question: is this what women want? we are missing the point. The fantasy and the sexual excitation provided by the fantasy can be divorced from the reproduction aspect. That is, the fantasy can be experienced and yet at the same time there can be an active desire to avoid any such experience in reality. The conclusion from this is that we operate in a present-day condition where the distinction between fantasy and reality is not only blurred but fundamentally considered not to exist, or that it should not exist. That is, it would be impossible to imagine any non blue print, something that is expressly *not* to be realized. So as a consequence of this it is demanded female sexual fantasy be enacted. And it is here that, irregardless of whether such fantasies are truly female fantasies or fantasies of female fantasies, the enforced necessity of the realization of these fantasies leads us to almost a dystopian situation in which our very thoughts are made manifest in some horrific way akin to the scenarios of certain horror stories. And if we are to break this cycle and allow for human emancipatory freedom, let alone female emancipatory freedom, it will require the fundamental disconnection of production and reproduction in this sense so that we are allowed to occupy a world in which thought and physical reality are not required to be made one.

[She depresses the phone's power button. She lays the phone in her lap.]

[Moderator] Okay, thank all of you for that. I've taken a few notes here, so I'm just going to float around so we can kind of feel things out.

[She has a small spiral-ring notebook folded half open on her lap. She holds a pen in her free hand.]

[Moderator] I think we see the general drift of things. But let's try to get something started. Let's try to draw out some things. Starting with you, Georgia, if the problem is the objectification of women, how can that be avoided?

[Happi] I think fundamentally that it can't be. Men are not lighting up the tool-using sections of their brains because they want to. It's that they can't do anything else. It's not a choice. So the only thing that we can do is avoid the entire situation.

[Hall] I just kind of want to clarify something, if I may.

[She leans over. She slips her phone into her purse.]

[Hall] It seems to me that, in this sort of argument, you can't even have the body or the female body described in even the most prosaic terms in even, say, literature without this problem that Georgia feels needs to be pointed out arising. So I must be a little bit confused, because I don't understand how literature could function at all if that were the case. What would there be left to write about?

[Happi] The mind. Of course.

[Hall] Yes, but the psychological subject still has to be a subject. Again, I think I just don't understand quite what you're saying, because I can't imagine anything coming out of this except for a monologic stream of consciousness or something with only the singular character's interiority.

[Happi] Of course, there are other people. But we just can't describe them in terms of their bodies.

[Hall] But then how do we describe them?

[Happi] Their minds. In terms of their thinking. Of their personalities. Their hopes. Their fears. Their dreams. Their humanity. There's nothing defining in the body. It's a basic apelike body.

[Hall] But even Riding Hood is *Little* Red Riding Hood. That she is a young girl and on the threshold of womanhood is quite

- a fundamental aspect to the nature of the story. And the fundamental aspect of sexuality is that it is about the body in the end. Sexuality and the body are, just, well, inseparable.
- [Happi] No. I think that's completely a result of libidinal capitalism.
- [Hall] But how does such a sexuality work?
- [Happi] I think a good model is The Tale of Genji. Where in the Nipponese society of the time, women and men weren't face to face. They were always separated by a screen. And yet it is through this screen that the fundamental seductions take place.
- [Hall] Yes. But these seductions always, or most of the time, do end up in the bedroom. Eventually.
- [Happi] Only because patriarchal society has prevented all previous attempts at systemic revolution, through the economics of fear and sociological anxiety. And with the ultimate institutionalization of the marketplace as an auto-adaptic regulatory mechanism, the female mental facility has been fundamentally stripped of its rights. And where it isn't done through the legal framework, it is done through the social framework.
- [Moderator] To clarify a bit, is there a concrete example that you can point to that you think could help us to understand this better?
- [Happi] The sociological framework?
- [Moderator] Yes. I think that would help us all get the picture a bit better.
- [Happi] Socially, it's enforced such as, for instance, we look at Mary Shelley. The accusation she didn't write Frankenstein. That it was in fact mostly her husband.

[Hall] As if Shelley's ego would have allowed him to do that.

[Happi] You see, it's always defined in the terms of the masculine.

There's never any conspiracy to say that a man couldn't have written something because he's a man.

[Moderator] There is Shakespeare.

[Liste] May I step in a moment?

[Moderator] Please.

[Hall] We'd almost forgotten you.

[Liste] I'd forgotten myself.

[Audience] Laughter.

[Liste] But I think I should point out that contention over Shake-speare's authorship is fundamentally rooted in the British class system. It is actually, in fact, similar to the case of Mary Shelley, just that it's an issue of swapping class for gender.

[Happi] Still, it's just legitimizing the female case through the male case to put it that way.

[Liste] I'm just drawing the comparison. It can be drawn either direction just as easily.

[Moderator] Deirdre, you wanted to say something.

[Hall] Well, I just wanted to say that I think I agree somewhat with Georgia in the realm of ownership. That is, in the modern system, and when I talk about the modern system, I'm talking about the whole period of modernity, perhaps the last two hundred years, or so, that women haven't and don't, for the most part, own their own stories in the marketplace. You

can see this going back to even the Brothers Grimm. When you compare their earlier collections of folktales to the later editions, you find that mothers become stepmothers because mothers doing this or that is too socially controversial, and girls become boys because boys literature sells better, has a higher position socially. And these oral stories they collected were, of course, mainly told by women to other women and girls. And they systematically become edited out of their own body of work, as it were.

- [Happi] That's not what I'm saying at all. Yes, of course there's the editing. But it's that the prohibition against the female mental emancipation is instantiated by capitalistic society itself. Production is not reproduction. So right at the beginning it comes out against the feminine through the biological aspect by centering such as such.
- [Hall] Well, obviously it's the biological aspect that brings the distinction in the first place, so shouldn't we be concentrating on that distinction?
- [Happi] No, because it is that physical aspect which defines the very necessity of the objectification. There is no way of avoiding it.
- [Hall] Well, yes, I'll agree that if you eliminate the physical then there is by definition no difference. But I don't think that's physically possible.
- [Happi] Whether or not it's physically possible has nothing to do with it.
- [Hall] But it does limit what we can pragmatically do. And unless we're going to talk about death, we're kind of stuck with the situation.
- [Happi] That entirely assumes that reality as it is is physical in this very crude manner of distinction.

- [Hall] Well, if feminism is going to have to wait for physics, we might have to break for lunch or something.
- [Moderator] This sounds like a good point for me to come in. I think we've covered pretty well some of the literary and feminist aspects, but we haven't really talked about the pornographic ones. So Georgia, starting with you again, can't there be a mental component? Aren't women considered very mental in their sex lives, that is, they tend to consume written pornography more than visual or audio-visual pornography?

[Happi] It doesn't matter. It's a fundamentally violent prospect.

[Moderator] But written fiction—

- [Happi] Fictional female sexualization is merely a form of violence against the reader and woman as category.
- [Hall] I must admit that I don't feel horribly assaulted when I read it. And I don't particularly feel I'm striking anyone down when I write it. I will admit to feeling certain other things.

[Audience laughter.]

- [Hall] But those feelings tend to be pretty much the opposite of what I would think being in, say, a cage match would be like.
- [Happi] But it's not only the brutalization of the female body but the reduction and the figurative dismemberment of the female mind through this brutalization. The perfect porn performer is, of course, an idiot. An entirely physical being that only wants to interface with the male's physical being. And all of it is committed to perverted production. It is the turning of the reproductive act into the productive one and thereby manufacturing a reproducible act. It is the revenge against the physical acted out against the female object.

- [Hall] So here you're saying the masculine accepts the physical.
- [Happi] No, I'm saying that the only way the masculine has of raging against its own physical being is through the degradation of another physical object to merely utterly physical object.
- [Hall] So does the masculine have a non-physical aspect?

[Hall looks at Liste.]

[Hall] Would you care to add something to that?

[Liste] Well, I'll assume that I have some manhood. And that I do in fact exist.

[Audience laughter.]

[Liste] But, to a degree, I will agree with Georgia that women have for a very long time in the history of western thought been cast as what you might call icky biology. Um... Fundamentally chaotic forces. Forces that threaten an ordered and logical society.

[Moderator] Deidre, so your views specifically on pornography—across the board—can there be a feminist pornography?

[Hall] I think porn is wonderful. The coming together of bodies. The erotic space. I think most of it that's done is not done very well. But one can say that about almost everything. And sometimes I would almost say the same thing about my own work. So I think it's a beautiful human expression.

[Happi] You cannot pay for beautiful human expression.

[Liste] Um. I have to say I don't know about that. About everything we think of as great Renaissance art was paid for. It was done on spec, as it were. I think the anti-money aspect might be a

rather recent development in western history. I think it's kind of backwards. We kind of look at it as if money were coming into where money wasn't before. And I think it might be better defined as a reaction to money where money always was now that there's no pretense to anything else.

[Hall] What do you mean by no pretense? I mean, everybody still wants to make the award winning movie or book.

[Liste] Well, I mean... I mean, it's still not going to be successful if it doesn't make money. It doesn't matter how it's viewed critically. Whereas in the Renaissance period, I would argue, that it's the quality of the craftsmanship that's the final judgment. The artist, of course, might be, we can imagine, glad to get a bunch of money, but it's going to be that thing that's standing out there or that painting that the patron's looking at that's going to be what makes him. Whereas the reverse is true today. The large advance makes the writer and, therefore, the book, to use that as one example, since I'm not an art expert. And I admit I'm speaking in a bit of a sexist mode. I'm sorry. I can't claim to be an expert in Renaissance art history, and I'm not really sure about female artists from that period.

[Happi] Of course.

[Liste] Well...

[Moderator] We probably should point out that we do remember Da Vinci for his work and not how much money he had. Shakespeare, as well.

[Happi] But we have to note how often the subject of that male art is the female body. And how often it is brutalized in the same fashion.

[Hall] I think we might want to be careful there. That might put The Rape of The Sabine Women on the same level as, I don't know, Dirty Little Whores Three, or something. I'm going to show my ignorance here.

[Audience laughter.]

[Happi] It's a litany of sheer ontological brutality in any regard.

[Liste] I kind of think a point needs to be drawn here as to whether we're talking about, shall we call it, normal porn, and BDSM.

[Happi] There isn't a distinction to be had.

[Liste] In one sense, I have to agree. But in another sense I kinda have to disagree.

[Audience laughter.]

[Liste] I think you're right about the economic aspect. And that even that there is almost no non-economical aspect left in the majority of day-to-day life. But precisely that point, I think, leads us to the conclusion that work is work. The commercial exchange for the use of someone's body is inherent to capitalism. So I think the better question is why is this aspect so anxiety-filled that we have to avoid mention of it, or attempt to destroy it? I think the answer to that question might lead us to something interesting.

[Hall] And what do you think that is?

[Liste] I don't know. Maybe there's something fundamental about sex that prevents us from throwing up whatever mental roadblocks we have around capitalism and exploitation— I mean—and I think Georgia might agree with me here—but I would argue the fundamental image of the capitalist would have to be the pimp. And yet we despise the pimp. We despise the pimp for exactly those things we venerate a CEO or company founder or owner for. So what does that mean? It's

tantalizing. But I'm just not sure I'm entirely comfortable saying something one way or the other about that.

[Hall] If we want to look at it that way then we could say that sexual transactions are as consensual as anything else in our current society—

[Happi] There isn't any consensuality. When a wholly dominant system such as capital is the only methodology and the only reigning ideology, there can be no free choice. There can be no consensual choice.

[Hall] Are we talking about in work or—

[Happi] In any aspect of life.

[Hall] So even masturbation is, what, self-non-consensual?

[Audience laughter.]

[Happi] Yes, I will actually argue that it is. It is a socially constructed phantasy that is sold through an economic system that reorients the feminine desire in a purely physical space and negates the very concept of the feminine non-object.

[Hall] I guess that depends on what you're thinking about.

[Audience laughter.]

[Happi] The entire conceptualization is physical. And the phantasy expressly dictates the desire for the fulfillment of the physical. And in this regard, the phantasy is utterly contaminated by its very use for the reiteration of the physical aspect. So in the sum totality, there is no mental space. What mental space is allowed is only to reduce the entire aspect to the physical and to nullify itself in the end. Like a poison that disappears after death.

[Hall] What then about the masculine aspect in porn? It's interesting, don't you think? how we forget about them. I mean, there's much wailing and gnashing of teeth over women. Which is very correct when there's exploitation or abuse.

[Happi] There can only be those two things.

[Hall] But what I'm saying is that those same things happen to men in the industry and no one seems to be talking about them. And I have this suspicion that if only gay porn existed, the only people that would care about pornography as a social issue would be a few members of certain religions.

[Happi] The masculine aspect of the patriarchy fundamentally can't be exploited in the same way.

[Hall] That ignores the entire purpose and use of toxic masculinity.

[Liste] The subjugation under capital of men's bodies—

[Happi] You know, why are you even here? This is a panel on feminism and feminine issues and the subjugation of the feminine.

[Hall] That's bull crap. Excuse my language. We're not gonna go isolate the feminine and go over there and reproduce and have a society. Number one, there's fundamental biology here. And—

[Happi] Biology is an excuse.

[Hall] An excuse for what?

[Happi] A history of subjugation.

[Hall] Are you going to say the entire field of biology—

[Happi] Has to be looked at as having spent the majority of its existence contributing a picture of the world biased on a certain framework of the feminine.

[Hall] So now biology doesn't exist?

[Happi] You're completely misrepresenting me. I am not trying to deny physical reality.

[Hall] Well, it sure does sound like it.

[Moderator] If we could kind of drift back—

[Happi] Biology cannot even yet decide whether women in fact have g-spots or not. The almost entire aspect of the feminine has been left as some chaotic black hole.

[Hall] Well, we have to agree there that most doctors are idiots, yes.

[She glances at Professor Liste.]

[Hall] Not you. We're talking about real doctors.

[Strained audience laughter.]

[Professor Liste shifts uncomfortably in his seat.]

[Moderator] Yes. Um. I think it's time to maybe see if there are any questions. If you'll just hold up your hand, Julia will bring the mic around. Um...yes. There in the back.

[An audience member stands. A woman holding a microphone approaches.]

[Audience Member] Yes, this is for Miss Hall. I was wondering if you could clarify your distinction between production and reproduction. It seems to me that the

two of you might be using it in kind of slightly different ways. And I was just wondering if you could clarify that.

#### **\*\***

Tommy yawned. He stretched his arms. He threw back his head. His tongue curled out of his mouth. He closed his mouth. He opened his mouth. He closed his mouth. He smacked his tongue against his pallet a few times. He stretched his shoulders again. "The mistake," he said, "was not giving the golden calf silver earrings." He scratched himself as he rose. "I don't think you understand, tonto." He continued to scratch himself as he walked off toward the stream.

## Among The Melodramatic Paraphernalia Of A Supposed End Of History

Tommy yawned again. He looked up at the treetops. "Is it all that they have is to fling the excretions of some female organs? To fling some scraps of bovine? Is this politics?"

There were more than just doorbells involved in surveillance. Tommy looked down at the screen again, as the scene shifted and switched to another feed. Prisoners in solitary confinement only had to be watched to ensure they didn't damage themselves. Beyond this, the results were the same. "Only slightly more than half of ten percent," Tommy said. "Privatization within the actual of the actual remains slow. However, it occupies ninety and slightly more than one half of ten percent in the actual virtual. So it's virtually almost completely extant."

[The room is empty except for a low stainless-steel toilet devoid of a seat. A mattress lies on the floor. The floor and walls are large white tiles.]



"Oh," Tommy said. "A writer."

**(4 || ▶** 

[Something dark obscures several of the tiles.]

Tommy said, "De Sade wrote in blood in prison, you know. And ripped strips of clothing to make paper." He leaned slightly forward and down toward the screen. But the video resolution was too low to discern much. Everything looked banded. "Excellent quality control," he said, without looking up. "Never pay for more bandwidth than you need. Because you need it all." Even the figure was only barely definable. That he was alive and moving was about all that could be told with surety. "Looks like you, don't you think?" Tommy looked up after he said this. But it could've been anyone in that video and they'dn't've recognized themselves. Tommy looked down at the screen again. "The absence of pixel is the void into which the seeds of the imaginable germinate. This is why we must have high definition." He leaned closer. He almost pressed his nose against the anti-glare coating. He sighed. His breath momentarily coated the screen. "But soon too that shall wear thin. So it shall be only ultra-high definition which shall save us from ourselves." His eyes flitted over the four-corner bounds of the image onscreen. "If such as these were to have descendants in the other world surely they would find themselves undertaking such manual dexterous didoes in the far flung reaches of invented empires yet to come in the shade beneath hot sun waiting for the nights in which the moons shall rise." He wiped some spit from the corner of his mouth. "The blue shall battle the red. As with politics as it is on movie posters." He sat looking at the screen. "He writes of the failure of The Scarlet Letter. That they did not leave the child in solitude was their sin and their failure." He sat looking at the screen. "He writes of the truth of Ayn Rand of The Fountainhead. Of the two twin messages that the Author Function did not know. For this is the sum and total. All novels are possessed of their anti-novel. And the ratio of anti-matter shall always exactly matcheth in numerology the grains of sands and the stars in the sky. But a world could be built from anti-matter and function nonetheless the same and identical. So let us say then to be happy man must become a rock to be ground unto dust and that communication as we feared and hoped is impossible and woman must become not." He continued to scrutinize the screen. His eyes flitted row-wise and

grid-ward. The fingers of his left hand twitched. All but the pinkie. His pinkie stuck out at more of an angle than usual. It made him look as if he were always drinking fancy tea. "Eight by eight tiles by five. As, hunched over such a way, who but anyone can tell if he can reach a ceiling? But assuming three-hundred words per tile..." He leaned back. He tilted his head side to side. "Ninety-six thousand words. A very commercially viable length." He nodded to himself and brought up his left hand. He hooked his thumb against his chin. He tapped his index and middle fingers against his cheekbone while his pinkie remained stuck out.

The icon in the dock jumped. An image partially filled the screen. But almost as quickly as it'd appeared, the freelancer struck a key combination. It vanished. Tommy shook his head. He looked over at the freelancer. "That it should require more than three frames in which to determine what violates ag-gag laws..." He continued to shake his head as he looked down at the screen again.

### H4 || **>>**|

[Hartnette] Tonight News 10 will begin a special series on the widespread addiction in the mountains. Join us for a look at this crisis as we journey together to understand the nature of what is often hiding in plain sight all around us. That's coming up later.

#### **H4 > >>**

"Always buy self-help books by the weight," Tommy said. "Isn't it better to take a pill every day for a lifetime than to pay the same and take merely one?"

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] Protests have recently broken out on several campuses around the state, as well as at several state parks. With protesters filling sidewalks and taking to the streets, News 10's Justin Adamite has the details for us. Justin.

[Cut to a shot of Adamite standing along the side of a rural highway.]

[Adamite] Thanks, Tom. Behind me you can see the entrance to the Deep Creek Camp Ground, where protesters are lining both sides of the road with signs and posters. Protests began after the erection of these barriers. Which you can see in these photos here. They're placed just up the road about a mile or so on one of the trails. Officials say they installed the barriers to prevent people from climbing the waterfall. We're here with Rod Masters, who began these protests. What is it you're protesting against?

[He steps to the side. A man comes into frame.]

[Masters] I'm a good Christian and I believe in my heart that going against what the Lord wants is wrong, and that if these barriers remain up, people will think about these things every time they see them, and they might begin to think it's an option, and I think more people will do something they shouldn't do because of it.

[Adamite] And how long do you plan to protest here?

[Masters] I believe God has led me here and we're going to stay here until the barriers come down, if that's what it takes.

[Adamite] As you can see, Tom, because of the fencing and pasturing on either side of the road, there's not a whole lot of room down here. And while the highway authority has been unable to spare any personnel, some on social media are now calling for them to release a statement advising people to be cautious of pedestrians and for drivers to ensure that they are within the stated speed limits, however, the department has not responded at this time. Coming up later, we will have interviews with the owners of the two tube rental stations you can see down the road, and we will find out how they react to all this. Tom.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] As we stated earlier, protests have also erupted on several college campuses around the state. That includes Eagleton University campus, where protesters are now amassed in the main campus square. News 10's Sylvia Borges is on the scene. Sylvia, what's the atmosphere like over there?

[Cut to a shot of Borges standing on the main square of the Eagleton campus.]

[Borges] It's hot, Tom, and there's a lot of tension in the air. As you can see behind me. The issue comes from the set of barriers that you can just make out at the base of the clock tower, which have just been offloaded. After discussions last night, university officials decided to install these barriers. And they are just beginning to set up to put them in place. We're here with Joanna Farmer, who is one of the members of what they are calling the Action Reaction Council.

[The camera shifts as Borges steps to the side. She extends the microphone toward a young woman.]

[Borges] What's the purpose of these protests?

[Farmer] The protests are to point out the fact that barriers such as these aren't about preventing suicide. They're only about moving suicides to a more convenient place.

[Borges] What do you mean about a more convenient place?

[Farmer] It's all because the thing they really don't want is the iconic image of the school being tarnished. It has nothing to do with student safety at all.

[Borges] So you don't feel these new barriers will be effective in preventing future suicides?

[Farmer] I think the university should focus on actual prevention.

[The camera shifts to focus solely on Borges once again.]

[Borges] The university has also released a statement regarding these events. They say quote all administration and faculty and staff of this university are committed to the health and welfare of our students, and we will do everything in our power to ensure that that commitment is fulfilled. The college would also like to remind all students that mental health counseling is freely available for anyone who might feel that they are having issues.

[Borges looks up from her phone.]

[Borges] But that, Tom, does not seem to have done much for the protesters here, who are already gearing up to go long into the night. And it seems very definite that tensions have only just begun. Sylvia Borges. Live at Eagleton University. News 10.

#### H4 + >>|

"When you sign a non-compete with life," Tommy said, "you simply cannot strike out lines and initial them. It simply just is not done." He scratched himself. "One accepts the conditions or one accepts the alternative, if there were one."

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] Coming up—a local mountain used bookstore faces scrutiny after a man dies from inhaling mold while sniffing a book. What's the risk to you? And are your kids safe? That's coming up next after these notes from our sponsors.

#### H > >>|

"The end of the world," Tommy said, "really is the most banal of things." He stretched out and rubbed the corner of his eye.

A buzz carried from somewhere. He didn't look around to see from where. Then it was gone.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Aster] In this special report—Innocents At The Borders—we look at just what people are facing as they make their way north. Warning. Some viewers might find the following images disturbing.

[Cut to a shot of a highway.]

[Narrator] Isaac Taylor and his six-year-old daughter, Bethany, had just crossed the state line to visit their favorite ice cream store when the unthinkable happened.

[Cut to a man standing in a bright parking lot. He wears sunglasses.]

[Man] It happened just like that, you know. It didn't feel like there was any warning at all.

[Cut to a panning shot of an empty parking lot and an area of turnedup asphalt and concrete. A bulldozer sits off to the side.]

[Narrator] Here, twenty yards from the North Carolina-Georgia state line, at a small ice cream shop and fireworks emporium known as Just Over the Border, disaster struck.

[Cut to a view of parked patrol cars and flashing lights at night.]

[Narrator] It all began at six-thirty that morning. Officers from across the state had been gathered to prepare for twelve o'clock that day. One thousand officers in all, hand selected from hundreds of police departments and from the Georgia highway patrol, would be responsible for enforcing the state's new laws. They would be strategically positioned at the border on every major highway heading north. Jerry Anderson was one of those officers who had been assigned to be stationed at Just Over the Border.

[Cut to a shot of a uniformed officer in front of a patrol car.]

[Anderson] In a lot of ways, it really wasn't much more than what we'd ever done during the seat belt initiatives and during drunk driving season. So it really isn't that much of an unthinkable operation. From a logistics standpoint, it's obviously a little tougher. But in general, it works out about the same.

[Narrator] Everything might have gone alright but for a few points. Points Isaac Taylor's mother recalls well.

[Cut to an older woman. She is in tears.]

[Mother] Isaac was always a big boy. Even from the time he was little. He just loved ice cream.

[Cut to an older man with a stethoscope.]

[Doctor] There's a kind of obesity where the fat is concentrated around the stomach area rather than be distributed through the whole body.

[Narrator] But for a few minor details, everything might have turned out differently. A lifelong friend recalls those details well.

[Cut to a younger man in a t-shirt.]

[Friend] Yes, Isaac had long hair. He'd always had long hair. Ever since he was in highschool.

[Narrator] At twelve-ten Isaac Taylor walked out of Just Over the Border. He was carrying his daughter and a mint-chocolate chip ice cream cone. Bethany had selected double chocolate. A witness describes the scene.

[Cut to someone in sunglasses standing in a parking lot.]

[Witness] I was standing by the vending machines, looking through some change, and I heard someone say 'is she pregnant?' I just kinda looked around. Couldn't really see anything for the sun, you know. And then there must've been a police officer or something yelling freeze. You know, like the way it's in the movies and such. And there was this sound. And at first, I just figured it was the drink dropping outa the machine, you know. But then it just happened again and again and again.

[Narrator] Then tragedy struck. It remains unknown whether the initial spark came from one of the rounds fired or from a mis-wired slushy machine. But whatever the cause, the result was the same.

[Witness] It was just like the fourth of July, you know?

[Narrator] The store had just recently begun stocking for the holiday. Two tractor trailer loads remained still sitting outside.

[Cut to officer.]

[Anderson] It was like looking at a second sun.

[Cut to witness.]

[Witness] It was like a fireball just rising up over it. It was like some of those movies you see, you know, with what happened in Japan back in the war.

[Cut to officer.]

[Anderson] You couldn't make out anything after that point. Everything was just gone.

[Cut to witness.]

[Witness] You know, it was already so hot. And things were just bursting into flames. I remember there was a dog. And then it was just gone. [Cut to a shot of a hospital exterior.]

[Narrator] Following the incident, autopsies were performed on what was able to be recovered from the scene.

[Cut to a shot of a large man wearing a striped shirt and a blue tie and a white coat.]

[Medical Examiner] After an incident like that, even DNA and dental records can be difficult to match accurately. In the case of Isaac Taylor, it was the increased mass that allowed a substantial portion of the remains to still be present following the conflagration.

[Narrator] Following a subsequent investigation by the state into the conduct of three officers who had been present at the incident, it was revealed that medical examinations could not adequately determine whether or not Isaac Taylor had ingested any controlled substance prior to the incident. And all the officers involved were cleared of negligence.

[Cut to a man standing in a hallway.]

[Narrator] Police Commissioner Blumann understands the feelings the situation raises.

[Commissioner] Obviously, it's an extremely tragic incident. But when you've committed to the enforcement and protection of the rights of the unborn, you have to err on the side of vigilance. Was Isaac Tyler a pregnant woman? No. But at the time and under the circumstances, it was the most reasonable conclusion any officer could make. I would have made the same call.

[Cut to a man standing outside a brick building.]

[Narrator] Senator Freesome understands the tensions that are at play.

[Senator] Of course it's very tragic. But we're dealing with a very tragic situation here. Millions of unborn babies are slaughtered every year before even they get the chance to know what the sun feels like or to smell a rose or to taste an ice cream cone. If there is some issue with the details of enforcement then that remains to be worked out.

[Cut to officer.]

[Anderson] I do think it was reasonable. I wasn't right there at the time. I was across the street when the bulk of the incident took place. And I think it was fundamentally sound. It's just that sometimes things happen that are beyond your control. And you have to learn to accept those things.

[Cut to older man.]

[Narrator] But in the tradition of American small business, it often pays, as they say, to look on the bright side. Something the owner of Just Over the Border knows full well.

[Owner] It was only luck that I wasn't there at the time. I thank God for that. It was just the way it happened. And when it happens, it happens. I'm just thankful my son hadn't been helping out at the store that day.

[Cut to a panning shot of a burnt-down building.]

[Narrator] Just Over the Border is currently in the initial stages of rebuilding.

[Cut to owner.]

[Owner] Yes, the insurance is paid. So we'll be back.

[Cut to a panning shot of an empty parking lot and an area of turnedup asphalt and concrete. A bulldozer sits off to the side.]

[Narrator] They plan to open by New Years.

#### **← → →**

Tommy yawned. "A very banal apocalypse."

## Captain Pike's Light Was The Best They Could Do

"It just keeps doing it randomly."

Some of the freelancers also took on remote tech support. This was one of the few times they could be heard to speak.

"You will need to click yes in order to allow me access."

"Here?"

"On the window that's popped up there, yes."

"Disgusting," Tommy said. Only the woman onscreen reacted to this. Her brows furrowed. She must not've been able to see him because of the webcam's limited field of view. "Not even a hint of a teledildonic in sight." He sighed. He shook his head. "This's all such an embarrassing anti-scenario." He looked at the freelancer. "Have you not experienced this genre before?"

"Is there someone else there?" the woman said.

Tommy leaned toward the freelancer's headset. He said into the mic, "Yes." He pulled away. He looked over. "Now see, if you had hung round the computer department more, you, too, could be doing remote trouble shooting for MILF pornstars."

The woman said, "Um, what's going on?"

Tommy leaned toward the headset. "Well, that would depend of the wherefore-wheneth that you be particular to." The freelancer was as impervious to this as usual. He alternated between typing and stroking the trackpad as he manipulated the remote machine.

"Who is that?"

"I be a nude communist which in fact or fantasy doth cannot actually existeth."

It might be pointless to describe the perplexion expressed on the woman's face.

"So since we're playing questions, I think it my turn."

"W-"

"Is it that you feel the numbers of inquiries as to what your biological offspring think about you doing faux-incest porn is on the rise or on the decline or about the same?"

"What does this have to do with—"

"My question," Tommy said, "my turn."

"w-"

"Turn-based strategy here."

"I don't know," she said. "What's that matter? It's all fake."

"Hmm." Tommy nodded. "Why Tylar?"

"What?"

"You know Why Tylar?" He scratched his beard. The sound must've carried down the mic like static. "So that technically answer, even though it sound otherwise. So my turn."

"I—"

"Is it that you feel a theology of contradiction necessitates something in your publicly pronounced conservatism? Or perhaps is it the relativism inherit and builtin to the anti-such stance?"

"What the hell're you talking about?"

"Ah. Clarifying question considered as a free action." He scratched his beard again. "That is to say from position of myself in relation to space and time and local sociological and economical structure, to reference conservatism and the bi-sexual be inherently two prospects in contradiction. And only to barely mention porn aspect. Not to try and insinuate there is merely singular aspect of contradiction or controversy in the porn. Just trying to simplify for purposes of entry levels of game."

"Look. I don't know what you're on but—"

"Okay," the freelancer said. "The setup should be good now. I'll post the ticket."

"Look, if you think I'm—"

The video window disappeared from the screen.

"Ah," Tommy said. He scratched his beard. "The subtraction from the dialectical disposition. This leads to much much peace and

quiet. Is so, tonto." He paused. His fingers remained in his beard. "But if silence itself an argument be..." He leaned his head back. He paused. He looked down at the screen. He scratched his beard.

## Those Who Walk Away From A Place Spelled Backwards, The Worst Of The Worst

Tammy'd disappeared shortly before. That's why she hadn't been round. She'd taken the umbrella. Tommy said she'd gone to exclude herself with her affliction. "There is no biblical justification for menarche," he said. "A notable failure. Yet have any of the revisions and fan fictions fixed this deficiency, tonto? No?"

It was left to me to boil the water. Which meant I had to keep track of the bucket. Tommy had a habit of absconding with it and using it either to play games somewhere along the lines of putt putt or sometimes wading out into the stream and using it to move water from one part to another. I sat watching it heat. He talked me out of a can of beans. He said for me to keep an eye on the turtle because it was going to be keeping an eye on me. He wandered off toward the freelancer camp.

The turtle rarely seemed to move inside its paddock. It stretched out its neck to look round. But that was all. It didn't need to go anywhere. Everything came to it.

The only sounds were the crackle of the fire and the noise of the stream and the distant click of Macbook keys. It seemed like the sound of a helicopter carried from the distance once or twice. But then that sound, too, faded. I noticed Tommy's footsteps approaching. I looked up. He tossed me a can of bread. I caught it and looked down at it. He squatted on the far side of the fire. "Glad to see turtle didn't get the better of you." He shook his head. "It can be a nasty sight. Very messy. Carnage. Many Pokemon seekers have died thusly. The earth hides their bones." He held up both his index fingers. His pinkie remained out at its usual angle. "QWERTY. Dvorak. Colemak. Two letters remain always the same." He tick-tocked one index finger side to side. "A." He tick-tocked his other index finger side to side. "M." He tick-tocked both. "These two always same. Same

place. Same position. Every time." He brought the sides of his index fingers together. "Together is alphabetical arrangement and in left-to-right reading order spell AM. In Latin *sum* mean I am. One word. First letter of Greek *alpha*. M second letter of Greek *omega*. A and M in capitals name of vast underground computer system in most anthologized Harlan Ellison story. This is a clue." He separated his fingers.

He squatted there by the fire. "There are those who suffer from Ergo by Proxy," he said. He looked off into the distance, at the steep sides of the cove. Time passed.

He sweated in silence. Time passed. He said, "You have awareness that they now possess mail-in spit-on-a-stick tests that'll tell you if your great great great grandparents were rendered unemployed by the machinations of the industrial revolution, no?"

He still looked into the distance.

Something, somewhere, buzzed. But he still just looked into the distance. Then the buzzing was gone.

He said, "It's a message you know." Time passed. "To cut such rumbling strippers on the outsides of the non-black lines would merely be to sayeth that one may achieve survival by following the rules." He scratched himself. "But to cut them on the *inside!*" He continued to scratch himself.

The water started to bubble. He said, "Of course, you must shop at the Dollar Tree. Have you not seen dollar frozen spring rolls direct from China?" He held out his hand over the steam. He let it coat his palm. He rubbed the mixture of condensed water vapor and sweat over his chest. "Is not capitalism amazing? Roll the little rolls all the way across a vast ocean and ship them to put in a freezer in a tiny town in the midst of nowhere for only a dollar plus tax. MIRACULOUS!" It perhaps should go without mentioning that the shout was startling. But nothing else in the cove stirred.

"Do you not feel ashamed?" he said. I looked up. He was looking down at his toes or at the ground. "Was not your great great grandmother a Hopi? Do you not live on a farm that tills the soil stolen from the Cherokee? Is it not that all stone-age tribes are not one great happy family together? What an opportunity for false consciousness. We shall spell it as Falz Conshushness so that it may be trademarked.

You will receive no less than three percent of all net revenue. The law, you know, allows you to invent your own past. The void must be fulfilled. This is the nature of all holes. And being that it is in the whole's nature, none else can be accepted. Why must the hole accept that which is in its nature and in the nature of the whole? Of course, the hole swallows all stories. They become lost like matching socks. But all socks and all stories go missing. Or develop holes. Or had holes from the beginning. And the holes must be filled. That is their nature. And eventually those who wear the holes are put into holes. And the Earth fills with dead stories. Except where they're left out for the birds. Hallelujah. The that which of whose death is the story we tell. Let Ahmen honor men. As it always should have. Allow the Dubble Falz Conshushness. You shall share in this trademark aswell and as well and too. Did not the great Ayn speak non-falsely of you? Did you abuse the lands of all its potential? After all, all that which exists without my use is perversion, no?"

The fire glowed redder in the darkening half-twilight. Tommy dipped out a tin can half-full of hot water. "This's why men must work by the sweet-and-salty of their brow, no? To reproduce and spread over the face of the Earth so that no part may be left unused." He sipped from the steaming tin can. "Penetration adamant of its own necessity." He motioned around in the darkening twilight with the tin can, as if dabbing the four corners of some invisible box with steam. "But penetrating toward their commandments, the ginseng hunters find themselves confronted with biological irrationality. The great hairy female entity descends the slopes. Affrighted, what can they do but flee? Ashamed, what can they do but speak not?" He sipped the hot water. "It will soon be time for the great Sasquatch meat festival." He hoisted the tin can. "The rivals shall convene once again." There'd long been a non-subtle dispute between this county and Marion as to who actually had the most alien and Bigfoot sightings in the world. Though, they have the advantage of also being somewhat minimally famous for having the collection of storefronts used to create the illusion of the town in the film The Winter People, which starred Warren Beatty. "You are aware of course of the failed toothpaste factory," Tommy said. He looked at me as if this were somehow most important. "A failed man," he said. And he looked

down into the tin can. "Of course, what was left after the war when American toothpaste invaded the fallen thousand year empire but to persevere in the preservation of some better tooth-cleansing science? After all, had they not brought the rocket men here? Would those in those rockets that would go to the moon not require clean teeth? Would the ambassadors to the moon palace be uncouthly constantly running their tongues across the rough fringes that adorned their enamel? There must be a place preserved against barbarism. And if so, let it be the mouth." He parted his lips. He started to rub the fronts of his teeth with his index finger.

"You good listener, tonto," he said, with his finger still in his mouth. He removed it. He looked at it. The tip and nail were wet in the firelight. "But you should not deny yourself YA dystopias. You must experience the construction of your own desire. You should watch Friends. This is the simplest aesthetic to integrate. But let not the simplicity deceive. For though much that appears simple is in fact that which is most devilishly hard to construct, most especially when not, this aesthetic surface rendering is truly in fact especially as simplistic a resonance to create as it is to perceive. Not only a fool but a wizard may diagram such in the symbols of human misunderstanding. But it must be asked, if a shoe is a symbol, what then is a man who walks barefoot? But banish such thoughts. That is merely the adorning of the surface. Which is everything. Life can only be understood by that which cannot exist within it, but which cannot be conceived. So watch Friends," He looked down into the tin can. It must've been near empty, because when he brought it up again, he had to tilt his head all the way back. When he leaned forward again, he looked down into the empty tin can. He set the can down. He rose. "When I return, we must speak as we are told phallus bearers speak one to another, while we have the chance." He turned. He started downslope, toward the stream not yet concealed in the heavier gloom of early night.

I'd set the bucket off the fire long before he'd returned. And when the steam'd settled, I dipped out a tin can full. The canned bread still lay on the ground. I lifted it. I looked at the printed label. I set down the tin can. I maneuvered the canned bread to pull the tab and open the top. The scent burst out as pungent as the charcoal smell of the

fire. I tore some away. I looked at the fuzzily, blue-white lit camp in the distance.

Tommy emerged into the ring of firelight. Leaves and dirt clung to his bare feet as he came upslope. He carried two long sticks. Each had a smaller stick tied perpendicular to the end. "Now we enact the aesthetic," he said. He offered me one of the sticks across the fire. I accepted it. He dropped his onto the ground. He settled onto the opposite side of the fire. He pulled himself into a seated position. He lifted his stick again. He hoisted it over the fire so the smaller stick hung in the air above the flame. He motioned for me to do the same.

Time passed.

"All phallus bearers," he said, "must contradict themselves. For the opposite of contradiction is power. And it is power which phallus bearers seek. But let us not be so abstract when we can be more so. For I, tonto, as you may know, am a communist. And communism is impossible. Oh Great Panic. For there can be none which is economy without crisis. For to be such would be to be as flat as the Earth. Only in one phallus bearer's crisis can another find his advantage. And if all were to be distributed along the coordinates of the flat Earth then none could be phallus bearers for phallus bearers require other phallus bearers who are not phallus bearers. From whence would opportunity come without the crisis? Where would Geist arise? What would become of endeavor? Do not even the lobsters appoint their viscounts? Do not the seafood farers occasionally mark their crustacean wares with discounts? And therefore to be without crisis would be the functionalized aesthetic of communism. But the lobsters. The material is the actually. Stand. Stand upon the barricades and leap. We exist in the only possible of worlds. R says to the organic commune farmer in the midst of the wilderness 'yet isn't it also true that you can only live what you call a moral life through the support of immorality? The only reason you are alive to do this is because you have grown strong by the food produced by that system. The only reason you have the tools to do what it is you do now is because they are made within that system. You lionize the frontiersman, but even he went into the wilderness with steel axes and hammers.' Yes, R says these things. It is within the necessity of his being. It is of his definition. If he points to reality it is merely because he is

something like that of reality. Decry the term The Desert of The Real. For it is the only term that can suffice. And it is repugnant in its sufficiency. We require sweetness, not a dry heat. Civilization must be the replication of the wilderness that escapes the capriciousness and want and wont of the wilderness in order to recreate and re-enact it more fully so. More authentic so. We must rebuild inside that which is outside. So that we can rebuild him better. Better than he ever was before. We have the technology. Of history there is no tragedy. The repetition remains one farce. This is why we must laugh. The contradiction must give rise to the excretion of the chemical. For we are soup in a sea of soup. Abhor the effect of chemicals on the brain for the brain is chemicals. And what of the mind? Free the body. Burn the mind. Allow only the surfaces to remain. For they are all that ever was. Recall even only that the lobsters see the colors of their shells. To rip away at the surface is the only violence man of phallus bearers is possessed of. As are all beings. Slowly, the vine spreads over the tree till the tree remains merely as the skeleton for its own surface. The hidden message is that there is no hidden message. We are all wet haunted houses with sewage-hookup issues. How can anything be said? What does it matter if M leaves at five o'clock? Why may phallus bearers not be purple in peace? Extend the rippling cavalcade. The world is filled with perversion. The unused. B looks into the night sky and sees all those many resources that human beings are yet just on the cusps of grasping if they would yet just have the vision to reach out and realize they are indeed groceries of the gods and we have become the gods for we were always the gods. And it shall come to pass that the gods are nothing. They are the minorist aspect of theology. Restate your questions. They are insufficient lest they be recounted a thousand times. Oh, despair all yee who thought of the possibility of alternative. For we be extant in the only of all worlds."

Tommy withdrew the stick from over the fire. He looked at the charred smaller stick. He tested it by squeezing it with his thumb and forefinger. Charcoal coated his fingertips. He laid the stick on the ground. He rose. He moved toward the paddock. He paused. He turned. "Fly into the crash as far as possible," he said. He turned. He continued toward the paddock.

The fire burned lower. The charcoal began to predominate. I

pushed away from it into the cooler darkness. I lay down with the canned bread and slept.

# Sometimes We Desperately Have To Find The Parallax Of A 0-Dimensional Object, Right?

The fire'd burned low by the time I'd woken. Almost burnt out. I lay there a moment or two in the darkness with my eyes closed. But then I thought I might be the only one nearby to tend it. Stiffly, I rolled over. I found a few sticks. I laid them on the charcoal. They smoked almost instantly. Time passed. They burst into flame. I couldn't tell the time. The only way of telling time was by the clocks in the corner of the macOS menu bars. The moon didn't shine. The canopy hid the stars. The only two areas of light were the fire and the freelancer camp. One white-blue. One red-orange. The gulf between them seemed black in my half-awake perception. They seemed as if they were the only two points. They floated amidst darkness. That's not to put down this meant anything. That was merely my perception at the time. And even then, it was taken only as perception and not illustrative of some abstract concept.

The bread can'd rolled away during the night. I lifted it. I set it upright near the fire. The wind remained nonexistent and left the tiny flames unmolested. But the night heat of that time of year settled on the cove hard. My damp shirt clung to my back. The heat must've been one of the reasons I'd woken so easily. I sat in front of the fire with my eyes closed. Time passed. I opened them. The kindling hadn't yet been blackened completely. I looked out over the dark space between the two camps. I rose. I started that way. The side of my boot struck the half-filled bucket. It almost overturned. I paused a moment looking down at it. Then I went on out beyond the ring of firelight. I went out into the darkness. The darkness remained totally consuming black even underfoot. Only the sound hinted at physical existence beneath it. The trail'd already been trampled down by so many trips between the two points. Leaf litter'd been crushed to dust. The ground'd been compacted hard. That made it distinct from

that beneath the looser arboreal sheddings that remained to either side and which I sometimes strayed into with a racketous series of crunches. It made me think of it as nature's version of those patterns they cut on the edges of asphalt beyond the white line.

The collected glows of backlights didn't just look cooler but felt that way as I stepped beyond and through the hazily lighted and fuzzily defined border of the camp. I stopped. I looked over my shoulder at the seemingly small red-orange speck in the distance. I made my way along the edges of one of the figure-eight avenues. Tommy sat beside one of the freelancers. It seemed as if he'd expected me. He looked up. He raised his arm. He motioned for me to come down. The sounds of Macbook keys carried out from within the tents as I passed. It seemed as if the thin space-age material somehow focused and directed the waves in some way that perhaps the original designers of either'd never fully taken into account.

"Midnight showing," Tommy said, without looking up, as I came near. "Red-eye reruns."

I moved stiffly. My damp shirt still clung to my back as I sat down with both my legs splayed across the ground. Maybe I thought that might help to cool down.

#### 

[Mustarde] Look, John, we can argue about this all you want, but the fact remains that millions more of people are completely unaffected by it. In fact, there are many whose lives are being improved by it. Yes, you may pull up a few things here and there and say look at this I have this terrible picture, so everything must be this bad, when the reality of the situation is quite the opposite.

[Aster] But don't you fell you have to agree with those who feel that is a case of people improving their own lives at the expense of others?

[Mustarde] In the first place, John, some people are just always going to be better off than others. That's just the laws of physics. We don't have the resources to equally distribute resources.

And why should we? That's just not the way nature works. There's more sand over there in some fishing village in Japan than there is in, say, New York. That's just the way it is.

- [Aster] But doesn't civilization exist to deal with the problem of taming nature and of making people overall less vulnerable?
- [Mustarde] Of course. And it's done a wonderful job of it. There are now billions of people in the world. Those billions of people can only be fed and clothed because of human civilization.
- [Aster] Then doesn't it seem as if we should feel we have a responsibility to ensure that people are fed and clothed?
- [Mustarde] We have a responsibility to ensure they have the opportunity. But if they don't take advantage of their own opportunity then that's their own problem. There's just nobody else you can reasonably blame for it.
- [Aster] And what about those who are trying to and are being held down from their potential by systematic, institutionalized forces?
- [Mustarde] People have to be responsible for themselves. And blaming others is the opposite of taking responsibility.
- [Aster] So you're saying there is no systematic suppression of minority voices in this country?
- [Mustarde] Of course, there are. But it's all internal. It's them holding themselves back. It's them limiting themselves by always framing the problem in terms of what someone else is doing.
- [Aster] So you blame the minority communities?

- [Mustarde] Well, yes, it is the community that is the problem. If they realized that they are individuals and stop thinking in these community terms then they will realize that it is this mentality that's holding them back from their individual potential. This is a country of individuals. This is a country of one man one vote—not one community one vote.
- [Aster] And what about those who are facing bankruptcy over finding out they have cancer? Or some accident that could never have been expected. How are they supposed to feel?
- [Mustarde] One has to simply expect the unexpected. That's the purpose of insurance. People have to take responsibility for themselves.
- [Aster] But don't you agree that some might ask, if people have to take responsibility for themselves, what's the point of a society at all?
- [Mustarde] Because it is only in civilization and society that the individual has the opportunity to acquire what he needs. You're splitting hairs, John.
- [Aster] Yet, still, it's calculated that as medicaid is removed that will leave over one-hundred-million people without access to healthcare.
- [Mustarde] That's a really disingenuous number, John. First of all, as deregulation finally comes into effect, the number of insurance policies affordable by these people will rise. It's already projected that there will be an increase by eighty to one-hundred million dollars in the insurance industry on a case-by-case basis just by the end of this quarter. And secondly, if we look at states that have already phased these programs out, we note an almost miraculous reduction in hospital fatalities in these states.

There are now fewer people dying in hospitals than ever before. That's a success as far as I see it.

[Aster] But there are still going to be those few that are left, regardless, don't you feel?

[Mustarde] John, there's just always going to be someone left. We can't account for every grain of sand on the beach. Is that sad? Yes. But it's the responsibility we take. It's like being a soldier. You know there's the possibility of death. That's just going to be the way it is. Again, it's very sad. But it's just a reality we have to live with. And I mean, John, if you're concerned about it, and I know you are, you're a very well paid person. You could downgrade your New York City apartment. If you want to choose to use your hard-earned money in a charity manner, well, that's your right. But you can't be holding the rest of us at gunpoint to do what you want. It's a land of free association. If you want to give money away, you know plenty of rich people who claim to share your ideals. I'm sure all of you together could sell some things, or could live a little cheaper, and you could invest that remaining capital however you wanted. But don't go holding a gun to our heads.

[Aster] Well, I'm afraid we'll just have to disagree there.

[Mustarde] That's the beauty of this country that we can disagree and we're not the one or the both of us carted off somewhere and executed. At least for the moment.

[Aster] So we thought it would be productive to have you on with Doctor Pepper tonight.

[Mustarde] And I'm looking forward to it.

[The image splits to allow a third frame. An older man with a beard is in the newest frame.]

[Aster] Doctor, you're an expert in the Cambrian Explosion, correct?

[Pepper] Yes, I am.

[Aster] So what's your take on this situation?

- [Pepper] Well, we have to understand that part of our confusion stems from the fact that we don't have a clear picture of just how much life existed prior to the Cambrian. The certain popular speculation among the public is that there was very little life and very little diversity in life and then suddenly there's this poof-and-let's-evolve moment and the world just gets filled up with fantastical creatures.
- [Aster] Of course, this obviously relates to how conservatives charge that it is people coming in and taking advantage of these medical systems that is overwhelming them. But is that really true? Don't you have to know what's really going on before that before you can form any kind of sound hypothesis for what's happening?
- [Pepper] Yes, that's exactly it. For example, there's a large amount of evidence to indicate that the majority of life prior to the Cambrian may have been in fact quite numerous but of a particular construction that doesn't, for example, fossilize well. For example, if there were a large number of soft-bodied organisms, these would necessarily be much rarer in the fossil record. As opposed to the hard-shelled lifeforms that often are seen to predominate later. So you oftentimes end up with a situation where, in terms of the fossil record, ninety or more percent of individual species are invisible.
- [Mustarde] Well, you see this is exactly the problem. When people can just flow through a border coming and going you have no accountability. People are ninety-nine-point-nine percent invisible. It's the unknown unknowns, you see. That's what you can't account for. And if you can't

account for them you don't know how much damage they're doing. Obviously, we can see some of it. And what we can see is cause for concern. And it costs the taxpayer money. Every time an ER can't turn someone away who they know won't pay and then they go right on to do just that, it's money right out of the taxpayer's pockets. And they don't know about it because these people are fundamentally invisible. They give false IDs. They lie about their names. And then they're just gone.

- [Pepper] Yes, the problem is that some species just drop out of the records. We know they went extinct. But there's no clear indication why. Or what caused them to be out-competed.
- [Mustarde] What has to be taken into account, John, is just the flood of these incidents, just the absolute explosion of them. The massiveness of the scale can't be underestimated.
- [Pepper] Yes, the Cambrian did fundamentally reshape all aspects of life on planet Earth as we know it. The movements of life can be extraordinary. That's one of the things that makes this period such a fascinating topic of study. And without it, it's doubtful that we would be here now.
- [Aster] What you're getting at is that it has been people's fundamental right to travel freely that has allowed for the economic prosperity that we have seen throughout the history of our country.
- [Mustarde] Now, that's disingenuous, John. We were discussing healthcare.
- [Aster] You are the one claiming that the bulk of such cases are outof-state individuals.
- [Mustarde] They're two separate instances, John. Obviously. Do they have some influence on the other? Yes, I will admit that. But they are not the one and the same problem.

- [Aster] Yet the entire argument for the removal of medicaid rests on this argument that the bulk of state money is going to fund the medical treatment of non-state citizens, does it not?
- [Mustarde] That is, of course, John, only a small part of the argument, as you well know. Not that some haven't practically hallucinated it out of shape and proportion.

[Aster] Would you care to give your take on this, Doctor?

[Pepper] In regards to the species Hallucigenia, which the discovery of has been much remarked on, it's interesting to take into account certain new findings as to the means of motivation it apparently used. It's believed that this finally explains certain fossilized impressions that have been noted in the surrounding ancient sea beds for some decades. Of course, the Burgess Shale being an ancient sea bed, it's the fact that it was pushed up so high that allowed much of the fossil remains to survive. So paradoxically, to get to the bottom of an ancient sea, one has to climb a mountain. Of course, it's amazing what one can find just going back through the museum collections that have been slowly and painstakingly assembled over the last few hundred years. One gets the feeling that one could pull open a drawer and find anything. And a fresh-eyed look at something that had been lying there for decades might reveal the most profound things.

[Aster] Yes, this is the problem that many see with enacting these sorts of policies. There hasn't been enough time to properly study the impacts they will have.

[Mustarde] We can think about things all we want. But sooner or later, we have to act. Because if we don't act, something else will act for us. This is not some Star Trek society in which we can just conjure things up at will.

[Aster] Your response to that, Doctor.

[Pepper] Well of course, any explosion in population comes with a strain upon resources. But not always in obvious ways. You have to take into account that many species evolve to occupy niches that hadn't yet existed prior. Or might have existed a long time prior but which the course of evolution hadn't yet found a way to exploit. The bacteria that breaks down cellulose, for example, evolved far later than the first trees. Of course, it couldn't predate the first trees for obvious reasons. But it was because of this fact that the first coal deposits were able to form. Otherwise, if some species had been available to break down this plant matter that just piled up centuries over centuries then time and pressure could not have formed such deposits.

[Aster] But here we're talking about energy policy, aren't we, Doctor?

[Pepper] Energy, of course, is required for all life. Generally, we think of most energy descending from the sun. That is, the plant takes up the solar radiation. And the herbivore eats the plant. And the carnivore eats the herbivore. But life also can thrive in much more alien conditions. Deep-sea volcanic vents, for example, are often home to strange forms of life that might have gone their entire evolutionary existence without their ancestors experiencing sunlight.

[Aster] So you're saying that the recent legislation allowing companies such as Hodine to reopen its previous coal-fire plants and that it will no longer be required to buy back power from solar arrays is fundamentally sound policy for energy security?

#### **\*\***

"You see," Tommy said. He was shaking his head. He must've been looking at one of the runners. Sometimes they stacked up two-and-three deep at the bottom of the frame. The fragment of one I could read before it scrolled off said something about fecal parasites in swimming pools. He looked over. "This's why you don't round down," he said. "Only ever round up." He shook his head again as he, again, turned to look at the screen.

[Orgone] So the leftist liberals are at it again. And you're going to say what is it now? Well what isn't it now? Is there anything the leftist liberals won't complain about? Well, yes, there is. They will defend porn, but they'll tear down any decent movie. What do they want to say now? What they're always saying. That it's violence. That it's encouraging violence. Which is so obviously ridiculous I shouldn't even have to say it. But here we are. You can't show a bit of good honest fun on TV without someone coming along and saying you're a fascist. What ever happened to free speech in this country? Why can't they let the simple American relax and watch something blow up? Every real American out there should feel insulted. These people, these professors and writers and all those kinds of people, they're telling you that you don't know the difference between reality and fantasy. They're telling you that you don't know the difference between Yogi Bear and what you haul home in your truck after a good day in the woods. They're saying that you're too stupid to tell the difference between Bugs Bunny and a bowl of Brunswick stew. And if that weren't bad enough, now they want to show porn in classrooms. And our guest tonight is going to let us know every sordid detail. Here with us is Audi Nickelodeon, president of the Society of The Noble Workshop. Thank you for joining us tonight.

[Nickelodeon] Thanks for having me.

[Orgone] So what're the leftist liberals up to now?

[Nickelodeon] Well, as you're probably aware, the liberal camp has for a long time been pushing for sexually salacious material to be available in schools.

[Orgone] To force it on students.

[Nickelodeon] Yes, compulsory.

[Orgone] So what's changed?

[Nickelodeon] Well of course, there has always been a concentrated push for this sort of thing. But as of late, there's been a real ground surge from the liberal camp to get this through.

[Orgone] So what exactly are we talking about?

[Nickelodeon] We're talking about just the most disgusting material that you can imagine. It's absolutely just the most explicit images that you can have. We have to, here at the Society, keep this material under lock and key just because it is so bad. And the amount of it's just grown so that now we have to have an entire facility dedicated to it.

[Orgone] So lay it out for us. What's the problem when children see this sort of material?

[Nickelodeon] The problem is that children are, of course, very impressionable. If they see these sorts of things they are going to be compelled sooner or later to try and do them. And that's, from what we can tell, exactly the reason they're targeting schools so heavily to introduce this kind of content.

[Orgone] So we have the internet now. And I'm sure, as you know, just everything's on there. And I'm sure this kind a material is, as well.

[Nickelodeon] Unfortunately, yes.

[Orgone] And what is your estimate about what percentage of Millennials have experienced this kind of material?

[Nickelodeon] I'm sad to say that in our surveys that I don't think we've found anyone so far that hasn't been exposed to some degree.

[Orgone] Is this a holocaust? Is this just a...a...a nuclear bomb to the very notion of relationships in this country?

[Nickelodeon] I don't think it's done anything good. As for the true extent, that's much harder to determine. Unfortunately, I'm afraid the true extent of the damage isn't going to be known until far after the fact. Maybe not even until it's too late.

[Orgone] It's like radiation in that regard, isn't it?

[Nickelodeon] In some respects.

[Orgone] So what exactly are the results of these kinds of exposures?

[Nickelodeon] We often find that young people have difficulty establishing traditional relationships. Sometimes they purposely eschew them entirely in favor of alternative lifestyles they feel they've been presented with. The ability to function with intimacy markedly declines. Outbursts of aberrant behaviors make it almost impossible to maintain relationships. The expectations are so shockingly distorted that it's just, it's just truly sad.

[Orgone] Has this, do you think, reached the levels of an existential crisis? Is humanity itself at fundamental risk?

[Nickelodeon] I truly don't know yet. Sometimes I'm tempted to say that. Of course, with the rise of smartphones, this is, of course, a global phenomena.

[Orgone] Even the so-called homeless, of course, have smartphones these days. But please, don't let me interrupt.

[Nickelodeon] Well, yes, it's just that with the rapid dissemination of so many activities that are non-reproductively viable, it's just difficult to conceive of this having a positive outcome.

[Orgone] So how do we fight this?

[Nickelodeon] I think the biggest thing is the new bills that have gone before the congresses of several states now. I think we need—

## H4 > >>|

"ABSOLUTELY!" Tommy stood. He marched out into the middle of the camp. He bent over. He reached behind himself. "To all according to his need." He repeatedly clapped his ass cheeks together. "From all according to his ability." He straightened. Silently, without laughter, and with a blank, straight face, he walked over. He sat down again beside the freelancer. He pulled his legs into position.

## H | >>|

[Pentagon] What we have to keep in mind here is that, through industrialization and the mechanisation of farming and private property, we've had a positive explosion of biological phenomena, there are now more bodies than ever, all directly tied to this miracle of human genius. And the trend is only climbing. For example, there was a report just the other day that North Carolina now has more than seventeen pigs per citizen in the state. This is phenomenal. So this idea that machines are enemical to life, it just isn't borne out by the reality. In fact, it's just the opposite. If you love life, you have to love machines.

[Cathex] And just to be clear, you're not just talking about liberals here.

[Pentagon laughs.]

[Pentagon] But, you really do have to call it a miracle.

[Cathex] Yes, you do. Thank you for being on, Doctor.

[Pentagon] Thank you for having me.

[Cathex] Coming up, liberals calling Santa racist for leaving coal? What else would you expect? And Thanksgiving under assault once again? That's coming up.

## **₩** || **>>**|

[Two high-legged chairs sit on a round stage one-third encircled by an audience. The name of the show in stylized letters is projected across a stylized backdrop. One high-legged chair is occupied by Therapé. The other is empty.]

[Therapé] With us today we have a woman whose repeated trouble with intimacy over the years has crippled her social life to the point she has no idea what to do. Let's see if there is something that we can do about that. Everybody, please, welcome Miss Rebecca Peele.

[Cut to a woman in a gray business suit emerging from a curtained-off area. The audience claps. The shot tracks the woman as she walks toward Therapé. Therapé shakes her hand before she pulls herself into the high-legged chair opposite.]

[Therapé] Thanks for coming on the show, Rebecca.

[Peele] Thank you for having me.

[Therapé] I understand this may be a delicate topic. But we're here to help you. I hope you understand that.

[Peele] I do.

[Therapé] First, we've shot some video that we're going to look at. This is Rebecca talking about her life. [The camera shifts to allow a view of the projected background as it transitions to another video feed. The two figures in each high-legged chair border each side of the images. The first images pan around an average-looking apartment. Rebecca Peele narrates.]

[Peele] This is my apartment. As you can see, it's pretty typical. A one bedroom. When I get up in the morning, I usually start breakfast in the microwave, and while that's going, I'll hop in the shower. And then I'll get out and eat while checking the news on my tablet. And then I'll go get dressed.

[The next images are inter-cuts of an office environment.]

[Peele] I like my job. I just don't want it to be everything that there is.

[The next images are of a gym.]

[Peele] After work, I'll go to the gym.

[The next images are of a restaurant.]

[Peele] After I get home, usually I go out to eat. I don't like to eat too late. But sitting at the booth or the table or the bar alone makes me think that everyone is staring at me.

[The next images are of a cinema.]

[Peele] Sometimes when I go to the movies and sit there, it seems like everyone is looking at me.

[The next images are of her in bed with a book.]

[Peele] It's not that I can say there's anything bad about my life. It's just that there's something that seems to be missing, I guess.

[The projected feed fades. It is replaced with the show's logo.]

[Therapé] So how do you feel seeing that?

[Peele] I feel like I don't know what to say.

[Therapé] That's understandable. Let's go through some things. You're thirty-two years old. And you're very well established in your professional career. You're highly thought of by your employers. You have very good relationships with your parents and siblings. In fact, we have mom and dad right here.

[Cut to an elderly couple in the front row of the audience.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] And you have your friends.

[Cut to a group of people farther down the front row. Some of them wave.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] But there's one problem, isn't there?

[Peele] I suppose. But I just don't know.

[Therapé] Well you see, that's part of the problem. I believe you can understand the concern that your friends and your parents have.

[Peele] Yes, I can understand.

[Therapé] So let's clear things up a little bit. You're thirty-two years old this year. But you've never had a boyfriend, correct?

[Peele] Yes.

[Therapé] In fact, you've never been on a date.

[Peele] No.

[Therapé] You've also never held hands or kissed anyone.

[Peele] No.

[Therapé] And how does this make you feel?

[Peele] I don't know sometimes.

[Therapé] Do you have anything against these sorts of activities?

[Peele] No.

[Therapé] Your favorite movies are romantic comedies, are they not?

[Peele] Yes.

[Therapé] And you haven't wanted to go out and experience these things in real life?

[Peele] Well, yes, but—

[Therapé] Do you understand people could be a bit uncomfortable with someone who is always eating alone or who is sitting in a movie theatre alone?

[Peele] Yes.

[Therapé] Do you ever regret that you're never going to know what it's like to have sex as a twenty-something?

[Peele] I guess. Sometimes.

[Therapé] So what I have to ask you, Rebecca, is do you want help with this problem?

[Peele] Yes.

[Therapé] I hope you realize that's the first step.

[Peele] Yes.

[He leans over. He pats her on the back of the hand.]

[Therapé] It's always wonderful to hear someone who's willing to help themselves. Isn't that right, everyone?

[Audience applauds.]

[Therapé] And to help you help yourself, we've brought in Helen Maxim.

[Cut to a woman seated in the front row. She wears a pink business suit.]

[Therapé] Helen is a professional who's made her life's work about dealing with issues with intimacy. And she's brought this young man with her.

[Cut to a man sitting beside her. He wears a black-and-white suit.]

[Therapé] So, Rebecca, what we would like you to do is start helping yourself, and we think the best way you can do that is to start doing the things you should've been doing for a long time. So will you go out on a date with this young man?

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Peele] I guess.

[He leans over. He pats her on the back of the hand.]

[Therapé] I just want you to know you're on the path to recovery. And we're going to do everything we can to help you along it.

[Audience applauds.]

[Therapé] And to help with that, in partnership with the Hotel of the New Bahamas, we would like to present the two of you an all-expense paid weekend.

[The camera shifts to allow a view of the projection behind them. Images of people walking between tropical potted plants in a lobby and people standing on a balcony and a shot of a dining room through a bubbling aquarium have replace the show's logo.]

[Therapé] This weekend includes one of the hotel's deluxe viewing suites. In addition to the perfect views of the ocean and the perfectly preserved landmasses just below the crystal clear waters, there is also personalized room service and accommodations which will offer a lifetime of memories.

[He leans forward and obscures the projection. He takes her hand. They shift out of their high-legged chairs.]

[Audience applauds.]

### H4 > >>|

Tommy clapped. He wiped something from beneath his eye.

[Orgone] Now the leftist liberals are saying people don't have the right to say what happens to their own children. Of course, that's no surprise. Most of these alternative lifestyles can't have children of their own, so they can't do anything but tell other people what to do with their children. But let's just listen to this. A warning for any of those out there with a heart condition. You may want to be careful with this.

[The image subdivides into two frames. The clip is in the left frame.]

[Clip] The question is can we predict beforehand the tiny percentage of children that could have this reaction? If we can't, then

it's a question of do we bet on the minor statistical chance of developing autism or the much larger chance of them dying from a completely preventable disease.

[Pause clip.]

[Orgone] Yes, so that's right. *Now* they admit that vaccines cause autism. The government's own witnesses admit it, folks. And why is that covered up? Well, just give a listen to this.

[Clip] Yes, the pharmaceutical industry makes money—

[Orgone] Yes, that's right, folks. The government forcibly exposes children to autism in order to monopolistically prop up the shadow branch of a socialized pharmaceutical industry so it doesn't have to compete against the real pharmaceutical industry, all so they can prove that leftist-liberal socialized medicine actually—no actually, it does, folks—it works you've just gotta give it time. Time to kill everyone. Then there will be no one left to complain when the death panels have had their way. It's a holocaust, folks. That's what it is. A pure and simple holocaust. You see, this is the way it always happens. First the government comes and tries to take away your guns. Then it comes for your children. If we look at the history of totalitarian regimes, this is what always happens. And people don't fight back. With us to discuss why this is is TANK's Richard Pesto. Good evening, Doctor Pesto.

[The left frame vanishes. It is replaced by a second right frame.]

[Pesto] Good evening. Thanks for having me.

[Orgone] Though, I wish I could say it was under better circumstances. Of course, you've seen these reports about what's happening.

[Pesto] I have.

- [Orgone] What makes people just psychologically put up with this encroachment upon human dignity? Is it the frogs? You know how you put the frog in the water and slowly you turn it up until it's boiling and the frog won't jump out? Or is it like a lobster, where you just plop it into the hot water?
- [Pesto] Well, obviously, it's a set of psychological conditionings that some are more susceptible to than others. Certain individuals sometimes have great proclivity towards external influence. They really prefer to function by being told what to do. And as such, it's very difficult for them to break away from an authority figure. Even if that authority figure begins to act against their interests.
- [Orgone] Of course, the leftist liberals in New York City have now completely trashed the notion of religious liberty. As I'm sure you've heard. And now it's outright antisemitism in the streets. Doesn't the anger that's being seen on places like Twitter and Facebook and around the country to these infringements of religious liberties and against the forcibly liberal state militarized vaccination of these children, isn't that reaction enough to show that not everyone out there is a frog and that some people are lobsters and that to keep them silent they do have to be thrown in the boiling water all at once?
- [Pesto] It's definitely demonstrable that there is a significant portion of the public who are not totalitarian minded. And there's a very strong and marked reaction and disgust, if you will, that's builtin against these instances of totalitarianism. But I think we have to be careful there—looking back at history—we have to remember that the Nazi party itself was actually very small. Only a very small percentage of the German population were members of this party. So unlike a democratic process, where you require the majority, this kind of totalitarian takeover can be accomplished by an almost

negligible portion of the population. And I think that's what we have to be most concerned with.

[Orgone] And of course, these days, there are all of these minor groups. They just seem to be everywhere. And whatever they want is just supposed to be everywhere. I mean, what percentage of the population is gay? Three percent? One percent? A half a percent? But they want to be everywhere. Every television show must have gays. Is that fair? How is that representative? How is that representative of the portion of the population that they make up? Whereas a show with a majority straight and white cast which only reflects the demographics of the country—is repeatedly maligned by leftist liberals as racist. It's not about representation. It's about control. It's about power. We have a group of untouchables. They're a poor minority, so the law shouldn't apply to them. But isn't this what always happens? They get into power and they exempt themselves.

[Pesto] Generally speaking, you could say that.

[Orgone] So it seems to be that the real question is can we come up with a vaccine to inoculate against the leftist-liberal totalitarian mindset?

[Pesto] I'm afraid I'm not that kind of doctor.

[Pesto laughs.]

[Pesto] I'm afraid the only answer may be the oldest one and that the price of liberty is eternal vigilance.

[Orgone] Well, thank you for coming on, Doctor. Maybe one of these days we'll come up with a permanent solution.

[Pesto] Thank you.

#### 

[Hartnette] On this edition of Ask News 10, Christina Gould writes to say that she's concerned about the new spraying practices adopted by the State Parks Administration, and she asks is it safe? To get answers to that, we turn to News 10's Meg Lotte. Meg.

[Cut to a shot of blue sky and scattered clouds.]

[Lotte Narrates] White in the sky. No, it's not clouds. It's this.

[Cut to a shot of someone running their hand through a white powder.]

[Male Voice-over] You might not think it, but it really is safe to the touch.

[Lotte Narrates] Frank Philips has been a crop dusting pilot for almost forty years. And he's happy to see an old friend return.

[Cut to a man standing in front of a small aircraft.]

[Pilot] It really is a big deal. I mean, lots of people said things. But I handled this stuff every day back then. And it kinda gets all over you in this job. And there ain't nothing wrong with me. Never has been. Only been to the doctor twice in the last twenty years.

[Lotte Narrates] Now—once again—Frank is in the air.

[Pilot] The view of the park is quite exceptional. It's really a privilege to be able to do a job like this.

[Lotte Narrates] Frank is one of more than a handful of pilots who have found new employment opportunities of late, as across the state efforts are underway to improve state parks.

[Cut to a man in a suit standing outside a brick building.]

[Man] It really is a grand-scale project.

[Lotte Narrates] Gil Reynalds is manager of the newly reoriented states parks administration.

[Reynalds] Now that the area has increased so much after the divestiture of the previously federal lands, the state park system really has an opportunity to operate in a way never before imagined.

[Lotte Narrates] He also understands some people might have concerns.

[Reynalds] I want to ensure everyone, first of all, that our operations here are fundamentally about public safety. And we would never do anything to compromise public safety. And to that end is exactly why this particular project has been undertaken. It's not just about a consumer experience. It's safety.

[Cut to a shot of a man in a white coat.]

[Lotte Narrates] Doctor Orenstein is head of medicine at Harris Regional Hospital in Jackson county.

[Orenstein] It's really been phenomenal the drop in insect-borne diseases that have just completely almost vanished at this point. After decades of increase, we've seen an almost wholesale decline in Lyme disease. We've seen a complete arrest of the cases of malaria that have risen in the past few years due to the weather. And everything tick-related is just no longer a concern. We're even beginning to see decreased instances of lice in school children. And at this rate, I wouldn't be surprised to see issues with bedbugs almost completely eliminated in the next few years.

[Lotte Narrates] But some still have their doubts.

[Cut to a shot of a woman in a parking lot.]

[Woman] I just want to know what it is.

[Lotte Narrates] Jennifer Aubrie works at the Sasquatch Burger Shack.

[Aubrie] You know, it's the question. What's in it? Is it safe?

[Lotte Narrates] News 10 interviewed Miss Aubrie when the state department first proposed to begin spraying park lands. She admits, however, that things are different now.

[Cut to a different shot of the same woman in the same parking lot.]

[Lotte] What made you change your mind?

[Aubrie] Well, there was this man came in who was a pilot.

[Cut to pilot.]

[Pilot] So I saw this segment on the news. So I went down there.

[Cut to woman in parking lot.]

[Aubrie] And he ordered some eggs. And he sat down, and when I brought them out, he pulled a cardboard box out of his coat.

[Cut to pilot.]

[Pilot] And I just sprinkled this liberally over them.

[He holds up a small cardboard box.]

[Cut to woman in parking lot.]

[Aubrie] And he just started eating.

[Cut to pilot.]

[Pilot] It's really just like adding salt.

[Cut to woman in parking lot.]

[Aubrie] And I just thought, well, it can't be that bad.

[Lotte] Have you tried any on your food?

[Aubrie] I have, actually. And it's not bad. You don't really even notice it. It's very subtle.

[Cut to a man in a suit standing outside a brick building.]

[Lotte Narrates] But the changes aren't so subtle in the eyes of Director Phil Reynalds.

[Reynalds] Really, this is just a massive benefit to everyone. Not just from a safety standpoint but the industrial one. North Carolina is really going to have to reinvest carefully in its resources. And due to insect infestations alone, over five-hundred timber-related jobs have been lost in the past five years. That's resources that are going down the drain. We have crop losses. In all, the cost savings are easily within the range of the low billions. And that's in the first few years. And that's money that's going to be freed up to do other things in the economy.

[Cut to the special news desk.]

[Lotte] State officials have told us that due to the unprecedented success of the plan so far within the park system that there has already been talk to expand it to the state as a whole.

[Cut to woman in parking lot.]

[Aubrie] I think it would be a really good idea. We're always having a mosquito problem down at this end of town. So yes, I think it'll be a really good idea. We could sit outside more.

[Cut to the special news desk.]

[Lotte] And if you would like to know more and to access health resources on this and related issues, you can visit our website at WRPC ten dot com. For Ask News 10, I'm Meg Lotte, at the special news desk.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] Well, it's certainly been a very nice few days to be out in the park system. Is that a trend that's likely to continue, Lydia?

[Cut to the weather desk.]

[Dillon] It is likely to continue.

[Cut to the radar.]

[Dillon] In fact, as you can see from the radar, there is nothing out there.

[Cut to the seven day forecast.]

[Dillon] And as you can see on the seven day forecast, we're looking at nothing but clear blue skies. Viewers who are up early will be treated to a surprise though.

[Cut to an image of a sunrise.]

[Dillon] Vicky Wallander sent us this shot of a beautiful morning the other day. And if anyone has wondered why the sunsets and

sunrises have been so spectacular lately, well that's because of something you might not expect.

[Cut to a graphic of the United States and the Atlantic and part of Africa.]

[Dillon] What we have is a situation where dust all the way from the Sahara is traveling high in the atmosphere along a line over the Bahamas and right up over Florida and Georgia and the Carolinas. And it's that upper-atmospheric dust that distorts the sunlight and causes that beautiful view you're going to see this morning. So those of you who are headed off to work, get out there and enjoy the day, because it really is going to be beautiful.

H > >>|

## I Think I Can

From the top of the ridge, you could see the radio telescope in the distance. The sun rising to our backs rendered off-white concrete and white-painted metal blood-like.

"Hinkey stuff goes on up there these days," Tommy said. "Stay away." He stretched his arms and shoulders as he turned. "Now, this's what the end of the world should look like," he said. And he started back down the ridge.

I looked over my shoulder as he descended. I turned. I tried to look at the horizon, but by then it'd grown too bright. I had to squint painfully and put up my hand against that infinite bloodline that stretched from the two corners of the Earth from which the sun appeared to gather itself.

I started to descend, too.

Bright specs still floated before my eyes. I rubbed them. It only induced more bright spots. They felt hot both inside and out. I'd missed Tommy somewhere. The camp'd been deserted. And there didn't appear anyone down at the tents but the freelancers themselves. They'd already exited their tents. They sat typing in early dawn light. I looked down the twisting line of the stream.

"Boo Boo." I turned. Tommy waved from atop one of the rocks that emerged from the side of the bank. He'd gathered one of the baskets. He dragged it after himself as he slid down from the rock. "The early dinosaur descendant gets the..." He paused. He stood there looking over my shoulder. He dropped the basket. He started running. I turned. Already, he'd made it halfway down to the stream.

"I hope I'm not going to have to grab a stick this early."

I turned. Tammy stood there. She stood there with a ripped black umbrella open and in hand and resting against her shoulder. She looked over at me. "Shit." She shook her head. She eyed the canned bread propped near the still barely burning fire. She shook her head again. She turned. She looked toward the stream. Now Tommy was only a speck in the distance. She smelled different. But I don't know why I noticed. "Bring the bucket," she said.

There was still, maybe, a quarter of a can left inside. She glanced down at it as it sloshed round as we walked. "Pour that out," she said. "We don't want to contaminate the river with anything that's been cleaned."

I upturned the bucket as we walked.

Tommy'd fallen to his knees on the smoothed stones and river sand that'd washed in to form a shore between two larger rocks. "Oh great intermediate layer." He'd crunched forward with his arms outstretched. His forehead almost touched the water. "Oh great connection between the waters of the earth and the waters of the firmament." Out amidst the stream, a blue heron looked on. "May the wetness above be as it is below." The force of his words collided with the water just in front of his lips. "May grace be granted in humidity." But he became unbalanced. He plopped face first into the water. He splashed. The heron rose from the water. It flew along the length of the stream with its long legs dangling comically below its body. Finally, it disappeared higher and in the distance. Tommy planted his hands on the river sand collected there in the shallows. He pushed himself out of the water. He looked up from all fours. Water dribbled off his head and down his face and through his beard and returned to the disturbed waters beneath him. "Hallelujah," He flung up his arms. He lost his balance again. Again, he went face first into the water.

Tammy took the bucket from me. She stepped past me. She stepped past him. She waded out into the water with the shredded umbrella still over her shoulder. One-handed, she dipped the bucket into the center of the running stream. She made her way back through the water and over the slippery rocks with it three-quarters filled.

Tommy'd risen onto his hands and knees again. And he looked up at her as she passed him. Water ran dribbling down her shins. "Morning," he said. And then he looked out over the water again.

"I suppose no one's kept any firewood around," she said. And I took this as a signal. I turned and followed her up toward the camp. There were still a few small sticks left on the pile but not enough to boil that much water. She set the bucket down. She squatted. She tossed those few sticks onto the fire. I looked round. I started to head off in some direction in search of fallen branches.

"Don't bother," she said. And when I turned to look at her, she'd risen and'd stepped toward one of the lean-tos and'd taken off a couple of the sticks. She carried them over next to the fire. She stood on the one, then the other, snapped them in two. She squatted. She snapped those pieces against her shins till she'd worked down to pieces small enough to feed comfortably onto the fire. "The trick," she said, "to accruing disciples and pulling out of society to indulge in the lethally glamorous is to make the process appear to have only as much allure as it does." She added another stick onto the fire. The bottom of the bucket'd started to slightly change color from the heat. The bottom fringe looked almost like an oil slick.

Tommy made his way up toward the camp. Water still dripped off him. He'd raised his arms in the air. He stood shaking his hands vigorously. Dirt and leaves'd clung to his wet feet. "The world's really just a giant forced-air hand dryer," he said. He continued to wave his hands around. "That's why they build them all to spew bits of water and fecal matter." He continued to wave his hands as he squatted by the fire.

For some reason, I looked round for the ripped umbrella. It'd been left lying under a lean-to.

Tommy stopped waving his hands round. Instead, he rested his forearms on his knees. Though, he was still dripping. "How goes the sloughing off of the mucosal membrane?"

Tammy looked at him across the fire. "What the hell're you talking about?"

Tommy looked over his shoulder at me. "Blue is the only sterile color," he said. "Green is icky biology. Red is icky blood. Purple is icky radioactive contamination. Yellow is icky puss. Black is rot and death. And besides, it's not a color at all. White is female gland excretions. And besides, it's just all the colors all together, anyway, so it's doubly icky. This is why they have to use blue fluid. And why the sky is the color of some people's television signals." He lifted one of the broken sticks. Tammy took it from him. She put it onto the fire. "Really, what humans search for in the cold vastness of the cosmos are silicon-based lifeforms with blue-vaginal openings."

He rose. His hair and his beard still had a wet sheen, but the dripping'd stopped. "Clear is perhaps the greatest color of all," he said. And he turned and started over the path toward the freelancer camp. He stopped. He turned. "Come," he said. And as if to clarify, added, "let us engage in meditation before breakfast."

I turned. I looked at the paddock. It seemed necessary to keep track of these things. Tammy looked over her shoulder. "Your walking salmonella infestation's escaped."

Tommy shrugged. "The purpose of an enclosure rests only in that it is escaped from. It's the obverse of the function which provides the definition of itself. If it were only ever to successfully contain something then it would be something entirely of a different order and classification and therefore not what it is." He turned. He started along the path.

Tammy looked round. "Where're the cans?"

I looked away from Tommy. I turned. I went toward his lean-to. There was the turtle. It lay there closed up inside itself with the tin cans scattered around on the ground and pieces of bug and insect limbs and wings scattered everywhere. Tammy must've wondered about me standing there so long, because she approached. She looked over my shoulder. And Tommy must've turned and looked back and wondered about this, because he came running up. (I could hear him behind us.) He looked over my other shoulder.

<sup>&</sup>quot;I'm gonna boil it," Tammy said.

<sup>&</sup>quot;It does not identify as a lobster," Tommy said.

Tammy squatted. She lifted the cans. "Well, something'll have to be boiled." She carried them in her arms back toward the fire.

"We should depart," Tommy said. "Purification is a private ritual between the great and the small gods."

By then, the morning'd ensconced itself good. Sunlight began to further warm the humid air.

"The legalistic way around the injunction against flooding the world," Tommy said, "is to never allow the waters of the air to be so great as to separate. That way everything drowns eventually. One way or the other." He dropped down beside one of the freelancers. He pulled his legs into position.

# In Which Maybe There's Something To Perhaps Serve As A Kinda Response To Some Things In GunBuster

"They always look the same," Tommy said. "Don't they?" He leaned forward. He placed his elbow on his thigh. "Except when they don't." He placed his chin in his palm. "Isn't it great?"

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[Folding chairs fill a hotel rented space. At the front, three old men occupy folding chairs placed behind a long, foldout plastic table that is scattered with plastic water bottles and microphones on stands matched to the same number of old men. The walls are that corrugated gray material that only seems to be found in such rooms.]

[Someone with a microphone approaches someone in the audience who has risen out of their folding chair.]

[Question] Do you think it's really appropriate to call it the golden age of science fiction when science fiction has always supposed to have concentrated on the future?

[One of the old men leans forward toward a microphone. A tri-fold piece of paper beside the microphone in front of him has the name 'L. Roundhom' written on it in black sharpie.]

[Roundhom] I think we can call it the golden age because there were so many magazines. It just felt like a real movement. We were really a part of the world. You know, we were all predicting the space race before it ever happened.

[Another old man looks over at him. A tri-fold piece of paper beside the microphone in front of him has the name 'V. C. Straw' written on it in black sharpie.]

[Straw] I'm afraid to tell you that apparently the dementia's setting in.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw clears his throat. He leans forward for a bottle of water.]

[Roundhom] Once you get too many—

[Roundhom is too far away from the microphone. He has to move forward.]

[Roundhom] Once you get too many people, there's a certain flatness that sets in.

[Someone in the audience rises.]

[Question] So do you think the popularity of things like Star Wars and superhero movies have made scifi too broad?

[Roundhom] I don't think those things you've talked about are science fiction.

[The third old man shifts in his chair. One of his hands rests on a cane. A tri-fold piece of paper beside the microphone in front of him has the name 'E. Erot' written on it in black sharpie.]

[Erot] And don't say that shitinass word. It sounds like a bunch of insects defecating.

[Audience laughter.]

[Someone in the audience rises.]

[Question] How common was it for editors to modify stuff back then?

[Straw] Probably worse than it is now.

[The person sits. Someone in the audience rises.]

[Question] Are you saying there's still censorship?

[Erot] What the fuck're you talking about? Are you a dummy outa some goddamn store window?

[Question] Yes.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] Oh, for fucks sakes. Well, let me spell it out for you. Unless you're illiterate? Are you illiterate?

[Question] I don't know.

[Erot] Oh, for fucks sakes.

[Erot raises his cane over his head.]

[Erot] Well, let me give you a pictogram then.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] Unless you're blind, too.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] I'm sure you're brain dead and've been sucking on the glass teat since you ripped your mother in half.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] But what do you see before you watch a film on TV? Hmmmm?

[Question] Ummmm.

[Erot] Oh, for fucks sakes. I know there's some multi-syllable words in there. So let me help you out. I'll play teacher.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] It says what? This film has been? What? Edited for content and to run in the time allotted. Remember that? Maybe you've heard it somewhere?

[Roundhom] They do tend to have announcers these days that say that, don't they?

[Erot] Yes, the world steps toward complete illiteracy one announcer at a time.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] Trash.

[Erot lifts his cane. He shakes it.]

[Erot] Complete trash. Like all the rest of it.

[Straw] Put the scimitar down, Attila.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot slams his cane onto the table.]

[Straw] But, to answer the question, I remember, or at least I think I remember, I had sold a story to Gerard Greenfield, wasn't

it? He was editor of Supreme Scientific Mystery in forty-six, wasn't he?

[Roundhom sits there contemplating.]

[Straw] Well, anyway, I can't tell you the editor, but I can tell you why I can tell you the magazine. That's because they folded about three months later. Right before they paid me. There's a reason why it was called payment upon lawsuit.

[Erot] Bumfuckers.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Anyway, I had sent a story to Greenfield, and he'd taken it. That would've been about six months after I'd been demobilized, actually. It was the first one I'd written right after I'd come out of the army.

[Roundhom] The rationing—

[Roundhom pauses. He sits there looking out over the table.]

[Straw] Well, when most of the writers are drafted and paper's rationed out the wazoo, it's tough to run a magazine.

[Erot] Except for that goddamn candyass John Wayne.

[Straw] Are you saying it wasn't a vital war effort deferment?

[Erot] Ehhh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Well, maybe we can leave the dead be.

[Roundhom looks down the table.]

[Roundhom] When did he die?

[Roundhom leans over toward Straw.]

[Roundhom] Did I tell you that Jim got a deferment? That him and Kelly are moving out to work at RKO.

[Straw looks over at him.]

[Straw] Um. Yes.

[Roundhom] Oh.

[Roundhom straightens. He nods to himself.]

[Straw] Anyway—

[Straw pauses. He looks away from Roundhom.]

[Straw] Anyway, I'd written this story, literally, as soon as I'd gotten off the ship in New York. I'd taken—this comes out wrong now. But it's what happened back then. I ended up with a dagger, or I guess you'd call it a short sword, that'd been taken off a Japanese Colonel or equivalent. And I pawned it to get ahold of a typewriter. So that's what bought my way back in. I actually remember the guy behind the register very well. Just a total hardass over it. Just claimed there was no interest in the oriental stuff.

[Straw leans forward.]

[Straw] What about you, Chuck? What do you think? You really think Nazi Lugers were that much more valuable?

[Roundhom doesn't reply. Instead, he reaches for a bottle of water. He works to untwist the cap.]

[Erot] Should've just bombed the whole damn lot of them at the start.

[Straw] Well, we didn't have the bomb at the start.

[Erot] I wrote about it.

[Straw] But that wasn't the first time travel nuke story, was it? Wasn't Finegold's published first?

[Erot] Ehhhh.

[Straw] Anyway, I'd come up with a typewriter. And'd worked out a place to stay with a girl. She was a nurse, actually. Worked the night shift. And that first night after she'd gone out, I stayed there and typed for about seven solid hours. Cigarette butts in a saucer on the little table in the minuscule kitchenette this apartment had and everything.

[Roundhom] Was that Miss Ther...mas?

[Straw glances at him.]

[Straw] But I wrote it in one shot.

[Straw turns to look out over the table again.]

[Straw] Anyway, I put it in an envelope. I didn't even mail it. I didn't have the money for the stamp.

[Roundhom] If you'd just not bought the cigarettes.

[Straw] Well, they were the girl's. I remember that. But it was literally the morning. The first literal first time I think I'd seen a sunrise come up over a city rather than a jungle in the last six months. Okay, I may be overdoing it a bit. But I walked it down to Greenfield's office and left it on the secretary's desk myself.

[Roundhom] Miss Ther...mas—

[Roundhom pauses. He sits there looking down at the table.]

[Straw] No, it was Miss Uma Crafte.

[Erot] Ehhhh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Roundhom] Oh. Are you sure?

[Straw] Yeah.

[Roundhom] Oh.

[Straw] Yes, technically Greenfield was the editor. Well, actually there were quite a few editors. Richard Spencer. John McMartin.

[Straw points down the table.]

[Straw] This guy.

[Roundhom looks down the opposite way, then over at Straw.]

[Straw] Fifty-one, wasn't it? There for a few weeks at least.

[Roundhom pauses.]

[Roundhom] Yes.

[Straw] But it was always owned by Martin Hesterfield Publishers. It's just that the thing about it was that no matter who the editor was Miss Crafte was always the secretary. And she was always the one who vetted everything first. So really, what did the editors do?

[Erot] What've they ever done but bumfuck around?

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Did you ever find out why that was? Was she secretly related to the owners, or something? Blackmailing one of them?

[Roundhom reaches for his bottle of water. He takes a sip.]

[Roundhom] Are you sure it wasn't Miss Thermas?

[Straw] So, anyway, the story, as you might imagine, it was some sort of military action. You know, the science fiction writers that came back wrote about laser weapons in the next war. And the Hemingway knockoffs wrote about some guy back from the war and a broad in a bar. But I'd written this story about a fleet that'd taken off from Earth to fight this big thing. And you know, it turns out it's just this ever-expanding black void that's approaching the solar system. And it's just swallowing up everything in its wake and rendering nothingness, as it were. And the main character was this kind of surly Sergeant York, you'd call it. Suspected attempted draft dodger. Suspected pacifist. You know the drill. And they're out there at kinda this new front line against the void, and everything's just going to hell because how the hell do you fight a void, you know? And you've got the main character and one of these guys walks in on him in the hanger testing equipment and just polishing up and making everything top notch on one of these craft that they're flying. I think I described them like flying saucers, or something. And the guy's like what the heck're you doing you're the goshdarned pacifist.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Or something like that. And the guy, I think he ended up giving a monologue, or something. The kinda thing that gets done. But it was about how, you know, humans are terrified of actually changing anything, so they hold back.

But out here it didn't matter what you held back. The whole thing was impossible. So for the first time they could really just let it all out. Because there wasn't anything that could be done. They could pour everything they had into it and not a darned thing'd change. So that's kinda the thing. So it ended with all these men pouring fourth everything they had into the void.

[Roundhom] You should send that one over. Has anyone seen it yet?

[Straw glances over at him. He turns to look out over the table again.]

[Straw] Well, if I remember.... When it went to print, they took out the suspected pacifist aspects. They changed the void to a fleet of something or the other. And there were definitely no men spewing fourth at the end.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] The monologue stayed though. It just got given to a character who got blown up.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] And for some reason, they added that the protagonist had a pet cat. Why, I never found out.

[Roundhom] Miss Thermas was a great fan of cats. I believe she had one she called Miss Craft. You sure you're not getting the names confused?

[Roundhom recaps his water bottle.]

[Straw] Well, the kind of open secret was everything got rewritten by her before it got sent on. But that was just the way it was. It's not like it was important. Nobody noticed.

[Erot] Some of us noticed.

[Audience laughter.]

[Erot] You can tell feminized writing.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] One, it wasn't the biggest magazine. And second, editors did it, agents did it. That's just what went on. Editors subbed their own stories under their own pseudonyms. Single authors filled halves or wholes of issues under pseudonyms. You worked like half-a-dozen people and you had half-a-dozen names to go with it.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] The Golden Age is gone, folks. And we thought it'd never end.

[Erot] Ehhhh.

[Audience laughter.]

#### 

[Aster] Now, the question that's been raised repeatedly in all this is what impact is such a border wall going to have on wildlife? With us to speak about that is newly appointed Forestry Management Deputy Head Graham Stewart. Mister Stewart.

[Stewart] Thank you for having me on.

[Aster] What exactly is it that the state of North Carolina is doing to alleviate concerns about what a potential barrier along the southern border could mean for wildlife?

[Stewart] Well, that's a very good question. Really, our responsibility is to manage the resources of the state.

- [Aster] But do you really feel this is really within the state's purview? I mean, this isn't land we're talking about here. These are creatures that move over that land.
- [Stewart] The management of wildlife, as back as far as I can determine, has always been within the legal framework. So in that sense, these resources are just as much property-related, if you will, as any other resource in the state, whether that be mineral or water or the trees, etc.
- [Aster] Why is it that the fish and game services have themselves come out in favor of the border wall? How does this interrelate with these departments?
- [Stewart] It's very simple. The wall is a project that will save the state a significant amount of money by not having to interface with the states of Georgia or South Carolina so indiscriminately.
- [Aster] Can you clear that up some?
- [Stewart] Sure. Currently, we are required to return wildlife that crosses the border as property of the state from which it originates. And the processing of these requests are, of course, at the moment, very draining on the resources of departments across the board in regards to resources.
- [Aster] It's also been reported that there are several new dam-related projects planned. Can you talk about those?
- [Stewart] Sure. It's a twofold problem, really. The first thing you've got is state resources traveling out of state. That is the water. Basically, you can put it that right now the state's leaking. And there have been several engineering efforts that have been proposed to deal with this situation. And in addition to that, it's very hard to build a barrier where it's impossible to build a barrier. We don't want to leave open waterways.

So the general thinking is that we need solid ground, as it were, for such construction.

[Aster] There have been several published articles now—several of them by a former park ranger—that have discussed the dramatic impacts that these kinds of projects stand to have. And it has been referred to as nature's intersection with what certain environmentalists are calling Human Hyperobjects. What do you think about that?

[Stewart] I usually find that the words I've always had are good enough. And I don't feel a need to go inventing any. I don't think there's anything special about this situation. It's not really anything that hasn't happened before, in one form or another. You can look at something like the Great Big Wall In China, or something. So to cast it as if it's just something completely beyond the pale, you know, it's just disingenuous. Now, I'm not saying that Hannah—excuse me—Miss Yeates. I'm not saying that she's being purposefully disingenuous. It's just that this job can attract certain people with very certain mindsets who really shouldn't really be here. There's a responsibility to do the job you're paid to do. And well, if you can't do that, you shouldn't be in the job in the first place. And I just have to say that some of these protests, they're not going to do anything. And I think the people involved with them know that's the case.

[Aster] You feel the people who are protesting the impacts these policies will have on wildlife are aware their actions will fail?

[Stewart] I think, essentially, yes, they know that. And that's why they're out there. It's a bit of fun, as it were. A kinda barbecue, if you will. It's not really much different than a concert, or something. It's kind of a fashion statement.

[Aster] On that note, we want to bring in our second guest.

- [The image subdivides to allow a third frame. This frame is on the left.]
- [Aster] We have Danielle Foxglove, who is leading the Coalition for Collective Animals. So, Danielle, do you feel there is the ability here to reconcile between humans and animals?
- [Foxglove] Well, our organization is about realizing that humans and animals are the same thing. Humans, after all, are animals. And that the mistreatment of the one is fundamentally connected to the other.
- [Aster] Yes, but we're talking about the impact upon wildlife here specifically.
- [Foxglove] But if we lock humans up in cages what's to stop us from doing the same thing with animals?
- [Aster] But, again, this isn't about people. We're talking about the impact of this situation on animals.
- [Stewart] I would just like to add that, contrary to popular belief, we are extremely concerned with the welfare of animal life in the state. It is property rights that ensure that concern. If people have a financial stake then they will be concerned. We can't expect people to just be concerned out of good will. The preservation of animal diversity in our state is assured directly because they are of an economic value.
- [Foxglove] Which is exactly the problem. As it is, people are also preserved purely because of their economic value. And until we afford respect—
- [Aster] That's very good, but again, we're talking about wildlife, at the moment, and the impact of this situation on wildlife.
- [Stewart] It's just that the impact is very overstated. The landscape changes. That there's suddenly a barrier is just something

that happens in nature. Mountains pop up. Whatever. The animals will adjust. There's nothing unnatural in what's going on.

[Foxglove] Well, by that regard there's nothing unnatural about wholesale human slaughter. It's been going on for hundreds of millions of years of human evolution.

[Aster] And that's a good point. But again, we're talking about the effects upon wildlife.

[Stewart] Well, it's really a misnomer, in any regard. And I think that's part of what causes some of the confusion. It's wild, yes. But it's wild like a cow can run around wild out there in the pasture. It's a resource for our exploitation. And that's what we have to keep in mind.

[Aster] Well, thank the two of you. We're almost out of time.

[Stewart] Thank you.

[The guest frames disappear. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Aster] We were talking to Forest Management Deputy Head Graham Stewart from the State of North Carolina and Danielle Foxglove, leader of the Coalition For Collective Animals. Coming up next, we have a special report. The accused killer who is referred to as Food Pyramid Head is set to take the stand in his own defense. He is currently on trial for the brutal murder of Johnathon Dooley, star of the former PBS program The Cast-Iron Cook, who was murdered following the start of filming on the second season of his award-winning program, after it was announced that that season would concentrate exclusively on providing non-wheat-based alternative recipes to popular foods. Stay tuned.

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame toward three convention goers. One is dressed as a female bear. One is dressed as the Humanesqe Cyclone. The other is dressed as an unidentifiable robot.]

[Interviewer] So what's your unpopular anime opinion?

[Yuri Bear] I would say that mine is that while upscales are not the best in the world they're the best we're going to get for some things.

[Interviewer] So throw out the DVDs.

[Yuri Bear] Hell, yes. Upscaled seven-twenty-p versus four-eighty interlaced. Hello.

[Interviewer] And what about you?

[Humanesqe Cyclone] What's my unpopular anime opinion?

[Interviewer] Yeah.

[Humanesqe Cyclone] Well, I guess that'd be—

[Yuri Bear] He always goes with the will of the crowd.

[Humanesqe Cyclone] Ha ha. You'd better be glad this thing is'n loaded.

[Yuri Bear] So much for love and peace.

[Humanesqe Cyclone] But I'd have to say voice acting's better than it used to be. It kinda just used to be a bit off the wall.

[Yuri Bear] Dub scum.

[Interviewer] And what about you?

[Unidentified Robot] I think that my unpopular opinion is that Japan isn't some sort of Utopia. And that it's actually kinda a pretty sucky place to live in a lot of respects. But I kinda think the good things about it're only possible because of the bad.

[Humanesqe Cyclone] What the hell're you talking about?

[Interviewer] Can you clarify a bit?

[Unidentified Robot] I'm just saying that being culturally homogeneous, or whatever, means that they can have decent healthcare or public transport, or whatever, but they can only have cultural homogeneity if you're anti-gay and things like that.

[Humanesqe Cyclone] So you're saying being anti-LGBTQ's good, or something?

[Unidentified Robot] No, I'm just saying—

[Humanesqe Cyclone] I never knew you were a bleeping racist.

[Yuri Bear] Yeah, what the hell? You're a sick bleep.

[Humanesqe Cyclone] What're you even doing here?

[Yuri Bear] Yeah, what the aych? You people just come around and start harassing people.



"Rasputin was, of course, correct," Tommy said. "The only way to salvation is through sin. Of course, this reason is why those who are most open to temptation will reach salvation first. Much in the way that it's speculated that Saitama's inherent limit was so low that the moment he tried to surpass it he became the strongest and most unbeatable force in all the universe." He looked into the infinite distance a moment. This left him staring at the side of a tent. "Of course, the next season yet remains to be seen. So the concept of the multiverse could be introduced, in which case the statement would have to be revised in the plurality form."

He looked down at the screen.

## H4 || >>|

[Orgone] Welcome back to the home of the truthiest truth. Now I have to tell you folks that in this job I have seen many things that you would not believe. You would just not believe them. And that's part of our job here. We have to deliver to you the truth that we know you would not believe. That is a huge responsibility. And we take that responsibility very seriously. In fact, not only do we take it more seriously than anyone else—but we take it the most seriously. And sometimes that means talking about things like we are going to talk about now.

[The lighting darkens around the news desk. The background changes to images of dirty needles and powders on concrete.]

[Orgone] Alright, now they want to put teachers on heroin. Here we are in the middle of one of the biggest crises that these United States have ever faced and it's not even that the leftist liberals—the Europeans—whatever you want to call them—they want to give us a double dose of the malady. They want to infect everybody. Give a listen to this.

[The image subdivides into two frames. The clip is in the left frame.]

[Clip] So what this study shows, actually, in a long line of studies, actually that treating patients by giving them a steady, clean supply of heroin allows them to lead functional everyday lives. If you met them in the street, you wouldn't even know they

were an addict. And not only does the prognosis and life expectancy for the patient rise but the total number of people addicted drops.

## [Pause clip.]

- [Orgone] Okay, let's unpack this. Treating patients? These people aren't patients. They're drug addicts. They're addicts, folks. They're criminals. They go out. They buy illegal substances. That's by definition illegal. They take those substances home. By the way, which is also illegal. And they snort it or shoot it up or whatever. And that—is—illegal. It's illegal, folks. They admit it. Listen to this.
- [Clip] So we feel this very strongly indicates that decriminalizing these problems and treating them as the medical issues that they are is—

# [Pause clip.]

- [Orgone] You see, folks. They admit it's illegal. They know what they're doing is wrong. And a clean supply of a drug? A clean supply of an illicit narcotic is like asking for white oil. Now, you may go out there and shoot the ground and find some black gold. But I guarantee you, folks, you're not going to find any white oil. But you know what's worse, folks? This right here.
- [Clip] If you met them in the street, you wouldn't even know they were an addict.

[The left frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk grows to fill the void.]

[Orgone] If you met them on the streets, you wouldn't even know they were an addict. What does that even mean, folks? What does that even mean? But it would be great for them,

wouldn't it? Hiding everywhere. You would never know how many of them were around. You could be surrounded by them and you would never know it. They could be your mechanic. They could be your dog walker. Addicts could be your childrens' teachers and babysitters. They want you to think that these people are just like you and me. They want us to think we're drug addicts. So if we're already drug addicts, we might as well just start doing it, right? I mean, if they're like us then we're like them, right? Right, folks? So according to them if you want to know what a drug addict feels like, well, all you have to do is think about yourself because you're just like them. So you might as well just give little Johnny some heroin because he's a druggie, anyway. This is their plan to restore the American family. The American family can sit around together and shoot up. And why work while you're at it? You can just rent out little Johnny and pay for all your heroin. Oh yes, I forgot the government's going to provide it for you. So you don't need to worry. All you have to do is sit around and everybody else's hard-earned money will pay for the good stuff for yuh. Well, ain't that just wonderful, folks. This's what goes in these European countries. They tax you to death, and what do they do with the money? They pay people to take drugs and then they pay other people to watch people take drugs and then to go on television and say how great doing drugs is. Next we'll see studies about how happy people who convert to Islam are and how we would all just be so much better off if we got down onto our knees and begged some caliphate to come into this country. Maybe we should do a real study to find out if it's doing drugs that makes you want to be a leftist liberal or if it's being a leftist liberal that makes you wanna do drugs. Of course, I bet we can guess the answer on that one.

**₩** || **>>** 

[A shot of a starry sky rotating overhead.]

[Narrator] Long ago. Ancient Americans work feverishly to encode a set of secrets and calculations. To this end, they carve massive stone works that have never been seen before or after on the American continent. Some say they are the key not only to the past but to the future.

[Cut to Historian.]

[Historian] What you have to imagine is the absolutely massive amount of work that went into constructing these calendars. Not just in the manpower for the carving—but for all the calculations that would have been required.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #1] These calculations, of course, are massively complex. Even if you had people who knew how to do the calculations—it would take dozens—maybe hundreds—of them working years to work them all out.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #2] So you have these fantastic amounts of calculations. And there's only one real feasible way for them to get done. And that's if the ancient Mayans had some sort of computational ability.

[Cut to a shot of the Milky Way.]

[Narrator] Did the ancient Mayans have computers as some ancient astronauts theorists have suggested? Ancient astronaut theorists say yes.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #1] The only real question is what happened to them. When you look at the pictures taken of the insides of their pyramids and ceremonial structures, you find things that look very much like the very large, hulking IBM machines that they had in the fifties. And in some of the images you can see things that look very much almost exactly as if they have to be vacuum tubes.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #2] But what's even more tantalizing is that these images share something in common not just with images of twentieth-century computers but also with what we find in ancient Egyptian archaeology.

[Cut to Historian. He holds up a black-and-white photograph.]

[Historian] Here you can see the carving itself. And we have represented here a very long bulbous ceremonial object which the priest is carrying.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #1] But if you really look at this object you see there's only one thing it can be.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #2] Yes, there's the glass here. And the filament inside. It's very obvious that this is in fact a lightbulb.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #1] Now, the critical thing about this is if you have a lightbulb then you're just a hop skip and a jump away from a vacuum tube. So a coincidence? I think not.

[Cut to a sped-up shot of stars moving behind a mountain range.]

[Narrator] Were, as ancient astronaut theorists suspect, ancient Egyptians building their tombs with the aid of electric lights?

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #2] So the question is how this communication took place between these two cultures over so great a distance.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #1] Mythology is filled with the stories of the gods bestowing knowledge on humanity. So what if one of these gods—who are really these—compared to ancient humans—awesomely powerful extraterrestrial beings—give them these computing devices and teach them how to use them? And the only explanation is that they wanted to help prepare them for something that was to come.

[Cut to Historian.]

[Historian] The ancient Mayan mythology speaks of a time that can be likened to what we would call the end of the world. It is a time of great social and political and geological upheaval. It is a time when man's tools and his domesticated animals will turn against him and rebel against him.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #1] Obviously, this can only refer to something such as artificial intelligence. What you have is a race of beings who nearly encountered their own extinction, even on their own planet, and were trying to warn us about the same thing happening here.

[Cut to a shot of a landscape lit up with laser projections.]

[Narrator] Are these ancient beings really trying to help us? And if they are, what could be their motive?

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #2] It might even be that they're not truly aliens at all.

They may, in fact, be future humans reaching back through time to try and prevent something that has already occurred.

[Cut to Historian.]

[Historian] The difficulty with Mayan archaeology is that although they possessed a writing system and boasted a considerable amount of literature, or at least so it's believed, the bulk of these cultural artifacts were destroyed by the Spanish, most especially by the priests as they worked to Christianize the native populations.

[Cut to Theorist.]

[Theorist #2] So what we have to suspect is if you have one group that is traveling backwards in time you might also have another group. You might have the machines in this future war trying to avoid any changes to the past that might prevent their own uprising. So really, what we're looking at here could be a proxy war where the far-future humans try to influence their ancient ancestors to prevent the extinction of humanity and the machines also try to influence humanity through various means of subterfuge in order to nullify these attempts to change history.

[Cut to a shot of the Milky Way.]

[Narrator] Are future humans attempting to preserve the human species against a race of hostile machines? What could

lie in the vastness of space and time? Could it be that we already know?

#### H | >>

[Hartnette] A bit of local controversy has ignited after a local church began holding prayer meetings in the parking lot of a local playhouse yesterday. News 10's Julianne Myers has more on this developing story. Julianne.

[Cut to a shot of Myers standing in a parking lot.]

[Myers] Thanks, Tom. You can see the parking lot in question behind me now. It's outside the Red Ridge Playhouse, which is just off the road south of the town of Kingsly, and is just a few miles off the interstate. Last night members of the Tuscanalon Reformed Priorative Baptist Church began a series of prayer meetings that they say are aimed at combating the promotion of godlessness to young people. The situation began with the local highschool's plan to have members from the eleventh and twelfth grades attend a performance of The Condensed Shakespeare. We spoke to the play's director earlier about what's involved in the performance.

[Cut to a man standing outside of the playhouse.]

[Director] The show is written as a kind of distillation of Shakespeare. It operates as a comedic venue. It's a bit of a combination of pulling out the comedic from otherwise very long and perhaps primarily drama-based plays and combining that with a bit of satire for both culture and some of the literary pretensions around Shakespeare. We really try to humanize the whole thing. We don't believe it should be too stodgy and taken too serious, because, if it is, it begins to lose its true power for human beings.

[Cut to Myers standing in parking lot.]

[Myers] In a statement released by the church, they say that because the show features the acting of the consumption of alcohol and the effects of drunkenness, as well as certain language, that the performance is a detriment to a good Christian conscience and they reaffirm their commitment to exercise their religious liberty by holding a prayer meeting here in the parking lot of the playhouse every evening for the next week. Of course, this is in part possible because of the recent amendments to the law which clarify that businesses are not allowed to hamper or impede persons from expressing their religious faith in public spaces. So even though the playhouse owns the parking lot, after consultations between their attorney and the local sheriff's department, it has been concluded that, in fact, they cannot bar them from use of the parking lot. Now, it should be noted that this was not the first time local highschool students were bused to this particular play. It has, in fact, been a tradition for the last five years. But as they say, what happens next remains to be seen. Live outside the Red Ridge Playhouse. I'm Julianne Myers. News 10.

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[A shot of a courtroom set. The prosecutor and the defendant stand behind tables. The bailiff stands off to the side of the judge's bench.]

[Voice-over] In a wilderness devoid of law and order—someone has to stand up for the law. This is Judge Courtney's court.

[Bailiff] All rise.

[Voice-over] It's time for judgment.

[A woman in a black robe opens a door. She comes out. She walks up behind the judge's bench. The bailiff closes the door after her. The judge seats herself. She bangs the gavel.]

[Judge Courtney] Well, I've got to tell you you don't look honest to me.

[Defendant] Yes, Your Honor.

[Judge Courtney] So are you admitting you don't look honest, or are you admitting that I think you don't look honest?

[Defendant] The latter, Your Honor.

[Judge Courtney] Don't tell me what I already know.

[Defendant] Yes, Your Honor.

[Judge Courtney] I'm perfectly capable of telling myself that.

[Defendant] Yes, Your Honor.

[Judge Courtney] Okay, zip it. You have done nothing this whole time but waste this court's time. You should've taken the plea deal, but instead you drag this whole thing out, you waste this court's time, you waste my time, you waste American tax payer dollars. It's disgusting. And don't think that just because the jury found you not-guilty that you're going to get off the hook. So get out of here now before I get really mad.

[Judge Courtney bangs the gavel.]

[Judge Courtney] Case dismissed with extreme prejudice.

#### H4 || >>

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward three convention goers. One wears cat ears. One wears bunny ears. One wears fox ears.]

[Interviewer] So why in particular did you make it a point to come here and, in particular, to avoid the festival that's going on down the road?

- [Catgirl] I just wanted to avoid the pretension of it, you know. Everybody's always going around thinking they're better than everyone else.
- [Fox Girl] Besides, it's really about the fact that science fiction has been the true literature of the twentieth century.
- [Bunny Girl] You know it is the twenty-first century, right? Besides, it's about fantasy. Fantasy is the oldest genre in human history. It doesn't matter if you're talking about The Epic of Gilgamesh or The Odyssey or The Iliad. The greatest works of human history are fundamentally fantasy.
- [Catgirl] Yeah, and there's just this kinda stuck-up attitude some people have about reality, or whatever that is. And they just don't wanna let people alone about it.

[Interviewer] Can you give an example?

[Bunny Girl] Well, it's like those books that've come out recently.

They're just kinda. I don't know, what are they?

[Fox Girl] You know, philosophical dialogue novels, or something.

[Bunny Girl] Yeah, something like that. You know, they're just boring. Nothing ever happens in them. You've just got alotta people talking, you know. And it just kinda goes on forever. And what's the point of it? Nothing ever happens. I mean, it's not exciting. It doesn't even teach you anything. Everything's just kinda muddled around. And that's just kinda what all of it's like.

[Catgirl] It all steals, though, you know.

[Bunny Girl] Yeah, the literary people're always coming in, and they try to do things, and they don't know anything about

the history of the whole thing and think they're doing something new. It's kind of like a rape, or something.

[Catgirl] Yeah.

[Bunny Girl] You know, they take things from the community and they just use them however they want with out caring about what anybody thinks.

[Fox Girl] It's a kind of cultural appropriation.

[Catgirl] Yeah. But it never turns out any good.

[Bunny Girl] And it just ruins the genre's reputation.

[Fox Girl] Or they keep trying to say it's not when it is, you know.

[Bunny Girl] Yeah, it's always, you know, when it's good science fiction then it's not really science fiction. So you know, Brave New World and Nineteen-Eighty-Four and Handmaid's Tale and Fahrenheit 451 and all that aren't really science fiction, because they're too good.

[Fox Girl] It's like how with those Philip Dick covers, you know.

[Bunny Girl] Yeah, you know, there's all this talk about Philip K.

Dick from these literary types now. And suddenly, you know, they're bringing out all these new editions of his books from new publishers and they've got these stupid faux-serious covers, you know, like real literary.

[Fox Girl] But the old covers were way cooler.

[Catgirl] Yeah.

[Bunny Girl] Yeah, they had a character to them. You know you knew you were picking up something funky and weird

and there was going to be the future and robots and psychics and all this kind of cool stuff.

[Interviewer] So do you think it's bad that more people will be exposed to authors like Philip K. Dick?

[Bunny Girl] No, but they need to be exposed to it in the right way.

There's a culture.

[Catgirl] Yeah.

[Fox Girl] It's kinda like the lit crowd's colonizing, or something.

[Catgirl] Yeah.

### H | >>

[Hartnette] Due to the increase of the number of school shootings across not just this state, but many others, Eagleton University officials have announced that they will permanently set the main campus flags at half-mast in order to honor past and future victims of gun violence. News 10's Marcia Gower has more on this story. Marcia.

[Cut to Gower standing on a green space.]

[Gower] Thanks, Tom. As you can see behind me, the flags on the clock tower square remain lowered from earlier this week. However, rather than raise and lower them again, school officials have told us they will leave them exactly as they are now. They will, of course, be raised and lowered as usual in the evening and the morning. However, they are now set to permanently fly at half-mast. We were able to get several people's take on the announced change earlier this morning.

[Cut to a student standing on a sidewalk.]

[Student] I think it's a good idea. It's a good way to honor everything that's gone on. And we should honor who might have something happen in the future.

[Cut to someone in the passenger seat of a car.]

[Car passenger] I'm glad they're really respecting the victims of these things. You know, we really have to do that.

[Cut back to Gower standing on a green space.]

[Gower] And that's the kind of support we've been seeing all day, Tom. In fact, shortly after this announcement, the Reaffirmed Southern Baptist convention released a statement praising the efforts of the University to memorialize our youth. And similar procedures, we've been told, have already been put on the table at other universities and highschools and elementary schools around the state. At Eagleton university. Marcia Gower. For News 10.

#### H4 || **▶**

[Orgone] So manhood is toxic. Or so they say. Our next guest is a self-proclaimed hysteric. Of course, that's not considered toxic. That's not even considered weird. That's just the new normal, folks. Or at least what they want to make the new normal. And I'm sure most of you out there won't believe this. But it's true. So let me introduce

#### H4 > >>|

Something, somewhere, buzzed. I glanced up, but it'd gone. No one else looked up.

#### H4 || >>|

[Proto-Hysteria] I guess you could say that I'm just a novice.

[Orgone] But it's not your legal name.

[Proto-Hysteria] It's the name I think I want to be recognized by.

- [Orgone] Well, Pete, what do you have to be hysterical about?
- [Proto-Hysteria] Almost everything, maybe.
- [Orgone] Okay, so the world is supposedly falling down. And what do you propose to fix it?
- [Proto-Hysteria] I don't even know if there can be a fix. There might not be. I don't know.
- [Orgone] Well then, why bother to bring it up? I mean, if you're not going to offer a solution, what's the point?
- [Proto-Hysteria] Because until people are truly alerted to the problems, there can't be any solution offered at all, right?
- [Orgone] Wouldn't it be better to, I don't know, be a man and buck up. But I guess that's toxic these days. But wouldn't it be better to do that than to run around being hysterical?
- [Proto-Hysteria] What we're out for is the rehabilitation of hysteria, I think. It's hysteria versus perversion, right?
- [Orgone] So you're saying that those who are not running around flailing their arms at everything under the sun are perverts?
- [Proto-Hysteria] No, what I'm saying is that the sheer acceptance of a given situation or scenario or series of events as just the way it could be, and that's the only way it could be, might be exactly what a Pervert does. It's a Pervert who always believes whatever they're doing is right, isn't it?
- [Orgone] So hold on. You're saying that someone who deeply believes in their religious faith and knows in their heart of hearts that God is real and the True power behind these United

States, and all that, is on the same level as someone who believes it's their right to have sex with a five year old?

- [Proto-Hysteria] It is only the Hysteric that questions, isn't it? It is only the Hysteric that questions not only their own sanity but the sanity of everyone else, right?
- [Orgone] Well, sometimes the questions just answer themselves, don't they? So what do hysterical meetings look like? Do the members run around screaming, barking, biting, howling, crawling backwards on their hands and knees, what?
- [Proto-Hysteria] We meet on the internet, and a lot of places, I guess.
- [Orgone] Yes. Of course. You mind if I ask you a question, Pete? Were you raised by your mother?
- [Proto-Hysteria] Well, that depends on what you mean. My family was a rather typical, if not exemplary, specimen of the nuclear family, I might think. My father worked all the time to provide for us. So my mother took care of everything at home.
- [Orgone] A simple yes would have sufficed, Pete. But thank you for being on. We have to be reminded of just what is going on out there in the world.

#### H | >>|

[Hartnette] In better news, the state employment bureau has released a new report stating that unemployment numbers have fallen for the third month in a row and now rest at an all time low.

#### **(4 || ▶**

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One wears an HVE suit. The other carries a Gatling gun.]

[Interviewer] What do you think the difference is between science fiction and fantasy?

[HVE Suit] I prefer the term speculative fiction. I think that's more accurate.

[Interviewer] And what would you say is the difference between speculative fiction and fantasy?

[HVE Suit] Well, it's a difference in thinking. You're looking at how things actually work and trying to extrapolate from there. It's about the real world. With fantasy, you can just make up anything you want to make up.

[Interviewer] Do you agree with that?

[Gatling Gun] Nope.

[Both of them laugh.]

[Interviewer] So what would you say the difference is between science fiction and fantasy?

[Gatling Gun] I think it's a difference in words. Science fiction uses—or tries to use—real words. Or to make words that seem real. Fantasy can just make up things and that's it.

[HVE Suit] And how's that different from what I said?

#### H | >>|

[A stylized logo cuts in bidirectionally from the corners of the screen. The logo shimmers. A lens flare pops. It slides apart to reveal the hosts. One wears over-sized headphones over a knitted cap and leans forward to speak into a large microphone with a spit guard. The other has earbuds and sits in front of a snowball microphone.]

[Louie] Well, welcome to the show, everybody. And it has been a busy week, so why don't we just get down to it. Most of you out there who're subscribed to this channel—and if you're not, please please please give us your support—but if you're a long-time watcher, you probably know there's a scifi convention going on in Western North Carolina right now. And I know some of you might wanna ask where the hell's that? So we have a nice map for you here.

[A colorful map of the United States covers half the screen.]

[Louie] Of course, it's an old map, so please ignore any inaccuracy. You'll notice we're trying to be technically correct here. Because if you'll notice, you'll notice, well, yeah, I guess if you notice, you'll notice it's kinda builtin, duh, but if you'll notice, we've worked very hard to correct this map, and Danny has spent a whole fifteen seconds—

[Danny] It was closer to twenty.

[Louie] Really?

[Danny] Maybe twenty-five.

[Louie] Well, he spent almost a full half minute adding the extra esses and ees. So we're all legal and correct here.

[Danny] Oh boy.

[Louie] Don't it make you feel good to be on the side of the law?

[Danny] I've never felt this good with my clothes on.

[Louie] Okay, enough geography. Let's get this outa here.

[The map disappears from the screen.]

[Danny] Americans are supposed to be proud of their lack of geographical knowledge, anyway, so.

[Louie] Yes, exactly. So if you know about this con—

[Danny] Kaaaaaaaaaaaaaaahn.

[Louie] You done?

[Danny] Maybe.

[Louie] So—

[Danny] So, important question,

[Louie] Is this relevant?

[Danny] Of course.

[Louie] Then by all means.

[Danny] So what if you cosplay as Ricardo Montalbán playing a character who's playing another character who's playing Ricardo Montalbán playing Ricardo Montalbán at a convention?

[Louie] Then we just have a rip in the time-space continuum.

[Danny] I hate it when that happens.

[Louie] Well if you wouldn't eat the chili.

[Danny] Can't not eat the chili.

[Louie] So outa the gutter, we were talking about the con.

[Danny] Is that outa the gutter?

[Louie] Harsh. Harsh. Way too harsh.

[Danny] I offer my deepest apologies.

[Louie] So we—

[Danny] And as a token of my sincere prostration, please take my firstborn as an offering.

[Louie] You can't apologize and threaten someone at the same time.

[Danny] Now you're insulting the family. Don't do that.

[Louie] Hey, you were just giving them away.

[Danny] Yeah, but you know, I spawned them. I'm allowed to exercise my property rights.

[Louie] Well, if you're allowed that for what little bit you contributed, I'd hate to know the extent of your wife's rights.

[Danny] This's the twenty-first century. Women don't have rights.

[Louie] I guess it's a good thing you've had children now. Because you might be functionally incapable after this.

[Danny] Yeah, well.

[Louie] Okay, well, so the convention. So it turns out that this convention's about as impervious to scandal as every other convention.

[Danny] Ooooh. Shocker.

[Louie] Electrifyingly shocking.

[Danny] So who did what where?

[Louie] It appears the convention itself did.

[Danny] Is this like corporate personhood, or something?

[Louie] Well, apparently there was some contestation over who was going to be allowed to speak about what.

[Danny] Isn't this a rerun? I swear I've been in this episode before.

[Louie] But what's happened is the the group that was denied to say whatever it was they wanted to say have formed a YouTube playlist that's going to function as a sort of para-ParaCon.

[Danny] I can't tell if that's some kind of South American bird or the words from a Japanese theme song.

[Louie] It's funny you should mention Japanese.

[Danny] Oh, I'm always funny.

[Louie] But one of these videos is about four hours long and's titled—and I'm not joking here—it's titled The Stages of Translation Anxiety In The Relation To The Standardized Localization of Regional Maxima Within The Boundaries Of Various Sub-States Within The Imagined Community of Fictive Consumer Identity As Manifested Through Cultural Consumer Apparatuses Of Western Geopolitical Identity As Expressed Upon And Within the Boundaries Of The Region Generally Identified In Such Discourse As The North American Continent.

[Danny] Did you just say all that without taking a single breath, or have you got some stealth breathing exercises going on there?

[Louie] I don't bother to breathe. Breathing kills you. You ever know anybody who died that didn't breathe at least once?

[Danny] Uhmm.

[Louie] Okay, yeah, let's not do that. So anyway. Four hours. Which I watched.

[Danny] You did?

[Louie] I did.

[Danny] And should I be proud or disappointed in you?

[Louie] Well, I think I can say I'm gonna be a bleepity bleep copyright thief and just tell you the whole thing. Meaning is contextual. So arguing sub versus dub is bleep.

[Danny] What's that conversion rate? We seem to be exceeding chip to bag ratio here.

[Louie] Well, to be fair, if they just cut the mentions of this thing called the Really Big Other, whatever that is, by about half, they could knock about an hour off the video.

[Danny] What's the Really Big Other? This sounds scary.

[Louie] I have no idea. I can't find it anywhere else. Plenty of people talk about a Big Other. But there's not a Really Big one that I can find. So take that for what you will.

[Danny] So what else's the para-ParaCon got going on.

[Louie] You've got such a good way of saying that.

[Danny] Para-ParaCon. Yeah. I'm that good.

[Louie] Should nominate you for a voice acting award.

[Danny] Which reminds me, have you seen Hells yet?

[Louie] I've been watching four-hour videos on translation anxiety here. What do you think?

[Danny] Oh man, you've gotta watch it.

[Louie] It's in the queue. It's in the queue.

[Danny] So. Seriously. What else is going on with the para-ParaCon?

[Louie] Oh, we've got videos here. Let's see. Let's pop this up here.

[A feed of an open web browser fills the bottom half of the frame. The browser window scrolls through thumbnails.]

[Louie] We've got a defense of Clans of the Alphane Moon. Which I've seen part of.

[Danny] I can't remember that one. That's a Philip Dick book, isn't it? What's going on there?

[Louie] Basically, he's defending half a book talking about women's breast sizes.

[Danny] Oh, I remember this one now.

[Louie] Yeah. Now.

[Danny] Yeah, but that was in a future where breast enlargement and nipple dilation were, like, just everywhere, wasn't it? And the main character's wife's all shrewish, so you know she's gonna be pissed at all these women walking around—I think bras had gone outa fashion by that point in the future, hadn't they? And it's, like, the main character, he's getting divorced, so he's going to notice them everywhere.

[Louie] You have literally managed to summarize the defense's position.

[Danny] Is this audio or's this video?

[Louie] We're talking about YouTube here.

- [Danny] Is it, like, static background, or what?
- [Louie] If you're asking if there's relevant graphics, then, yes.
- [Danny] You're falling down, man. You should've sent out a packet of these materials before the show so we could get read up on this stuff.
- [Louie] Let's be honest. I'm just saving you from your wife.
- [Danny] I can save myself, man.
- [Louie] Okay. But don't blame me if she's looking in your email and sees things like How Manga Stands Beyond Epistemology and The Ontological Distinctions Between Western and JRPGS.
- [Danny] Oi vey. So if this was chucked out, what're they left with? They got an empty hotel, or something?
- [Louie] Well actually, I have heard from some very reliable sources that they've got a tape of a previous interview with V. C. Straw and um um Elias Erot—
- [Danny] He's dead now.
- [Louie] He is. Actually, did you hear they were going to shoot up his ashes in a rocket?
- [Danny] How big of a rocket?
- [Louie] I don't know. Big enough to get your ashes into orbit, I guess.
- [Danny] So if it goes up on one of the, like, Musk rockets—
- [Louie] That's a band name.
- [Danny] That is a band name. But I coined it. So don't even think about any intellectual property theft. There'll be none of that on these high seas.

[Louie] Well, let's not get political.

[Danny] Okay, just to be clear, even though it may have sounded like it, I was in fact—not—speaking in the present tense.

[Louie] So what were you saying? It actually sounded like something that might be interesting.

[Danny] It was interesting. I was saying... Bleep. Bleep. Oh, yeah. Now I remember. If your ashes get sent up on one'a these things and it explodes does that count as a double cremation?

[Louie] A very intellectual question.

[Danny] Thank you.

[Louie] It—

[Danny] Though, too, you know how the Indians—the Indians over in India—

[Louie] Bleep Columbus. Just look what he's done to the English language.

[Danny] But yeah, you know, they used to throw the wife on the pyre when the husband died. Could you kinda have the wife ride along on the rocket as a kinda bet, or something. If it doesn't explode, she scatters your ashes in space. And if it does, it's like she's on the pyre.

[Louie] So if she just scatters the ashes, is that, like, getting a divorce in heaven? So when she shows up she doesn't have to admit she knows you.

[Danny] Yeah, okay, I can go with that.

[Louie] I mean, if she's going to risk being burnt alive to dump your ashes out with the space garbage floating around up there, she should get something out of it. However, I should warn you, whatever you say, she is standing behind you right now.

[Danny turns his chair.]

[Danny] Not cool, man.

[Louie] You're not scared of your wife?

[Danny] Absolutely not—I love my wife.

[Louie] I can't tell if you're blinking more because you're sending Morse code, or what.

[Danny] Yes.

[Louie] Okay then. Let's leave it there while Danny's still alive. If he survives, maybe there'll be a next episode. For those of you who're watching who haven't subscribed, please do. The button down there really wants you to click it. And also below you'll see a link to our Patreon page. So if you like the show and you want to support the show, please consider a pledge. And the reason you want to do that is because pledgers have access to the members only message board where you can interact with Louie—myself—and Danny—at who knows what ungodly hour of the night. And you'll be able to vote on what our upcoming shows are about. And you can also find links below to our Twitter and Mastodon accounts. As always, thank you for your support. You're what makes this show possible.

[Aster] Many are commenting that with every day seemingly more and more overwhelmed by politics, it gets to seem like nothing can be done. The world seems to become intractable. And studies show that when people begin to feel this way they become even more ineffective in more and more areas of their life.

[The image subdivides into two frames. A woman in a suit is in the other frame.]

[Aster] And with us to talk about this phenomena and see if she can give us some help is Doctor Nina Therapé of the Bailey Institute. Welcome to the show, Doctor.

[Therapé] Thank you for having me.

[Aster] So we were talking about the creep that politics seems to have into our everyday lives and the ways in which it impairs our ability to see the world as it is. And it creates a kind of a spiral.

[Therapé] Yes, that's what we would refer to as a feedback.

[Aster] Something that reinforces itself.

[Therapé] Not only reinforces but often enhances. The effects can augment the original cause. So it becomes larger than it was.

[Aster] So what are some of the symptoms of this? What are the signs that it's happening?

[Therapé] Most often people feel a sense of powerlessness. They look at the world and they feel a disconnect. These children are sick over here in Africa. There has been an earthquake somewhere in the world that has killed hundreds, maybe thousands, of people. Planes crashing. School shootings. Violent conflicts. Of course, these are all standard parts of the average person's day. It becomes kind of like a snowball rolling downhill. It continues to build up.

[Aster] So what do we do about that?

[Therapé] Research has shown that an amount of mindfulness is extremely effective in reorganizing a person's feelings about themselves and the world.

[Aster] So are we talking about full eastern meditation, or what, exactly, are we talking about when we're talking about mindfulness?

[Therapé] No, it doesn't even have to be even anything as invested as that. It can be as simple as a few moments a day of just closing one's eyes and taking stock of your breathing and focusing on that and focusing on your breath as it goes in and out, and letting everything else just drift away a moment.

[Aster] And generally how long is that?

[Therapé] We see generally marked improvement in patients with just as little as five minutes a day, say, once in the morning before they step out the door to go to work.

[Aster] So as simple as that?

[Therapé] Quite often, yes.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an old man.]

[Squareshire] What's the point of having money if you can't influence things? Everyone has the same opportunity to acquire political capital. Therefore they have the same opportunity to acquire influence. Otherwise you're telling people they can have something but they can't use it. Then there wouldn't be any point of having it at all. If you're not going to get an advantage, why bother to do anything?

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Orgone.]

[Orgone] Is this a real version of what some people want to call starving fat? Except—in the real version—you've got poor wealth? The leftist liberals are always talking about how people should exercise—but they don't want to let people exercise their right to use the capital they earned.

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Squareshire.]

[Squareshire] Yes, you could put it that way. Actually, that would be rather apt. I might have to borrow that from you to put in the next book.

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Orgone.]

[Orgone] Happy to help, Professor. Just remember the royalty check.

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Squareshire. He laughs.]

[Squareshire] I'll do that.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[A kitchen. The checkered curtains obscure any view out the window.]

[Host] So today we're going to make the juiciest, lushest down-homestyle burger that you've ever seen. Your friends and family will not believe these when they see them on the table. You will never see a juicier burger than we're about to prepare now.

[She moves a bowl over from the far end of the counter.]

[Host] So what we have here is some fresh eighty-percent ground beef. We want a ground beef with some fat. That's going to give us our flavor and our moisture. But you don't have to worry about that because science is showing, these days, that fats are an important part of your diet. They are really going to be part of what gives you that really satisfying burger. You're going to look at it and it's just going to look juicy. And fresh ground is better. If you can't get fresh ground, you want a pack that's got a nice red color to it, a good pinkish tinge. The color should just really pop when you look at it. And if the meat doesn't pop, and you want to pop it up a bit, you can take a look at our video from a couple of weeks ago to find out all about how to really make your meat just pop like you never thought it could. And we're just going to add that to our bowl. And what we need to do is we need to season it. Now, what most people tell you to do is put salt. But you don't want to put salt. Not at this stage. That's just going to pull the moisture out. And it will give a very dry-looking burger. And if it's dry going in, we all know it isn't going to be at all pleasant. So instead what we're going to do is add about a teaspoon of black pepper.

[She dumps the contents of a small glass dish into the bowl.]

[Host] And here's the secret. Three tablespoons of 2B Steak Sauce.

[She dumps the contents of a small glass dish into the bowl.]

[Host] So now that we've got that all added in, we want to mix it all up. Mix it all up good. And for that we're going to use our best tools, our hands. That's going to be how we get just the right texture. So make sure you're firm with it. Don't be afraid to squeeze it. It can take a lot more abuse than you think.

[She steps toward the sink. She taps the fixture with her elbow. The water comes on. She washes her hands.]

[Host] Just always remember to clean up after. That's always the most important thing.

[The faucet automatically cuts off. She reaches for a towel. She dries her hands.]

[Aster] Now, after we've got that good and mixed up, what we're going to do is we're going to set the bowl aside. And we're going to bring out our plates.

[She reaches under the counter.]

[Host] And we're going to bring out our wax paper. And we're just going to start tearing off a few sheets just large enough to cover the plate. And we're just going to make a little pile of those.

[She moves the bowl back over.]

[Host] So now we're ready to create the patties. What we want to do is is we want to get a handful of it. About this much. Maybe about a baseball's worth. Maybe a little less. It depends on how big you want your patty. You might need to go a little bigger for your husband. You know how that goes. So what we want to do with it is form a nice, round, smooth ball. And we're going to put that in our smaller plate here. Now, our smaller plate is sized just right for the largest patty we want to make. So what we're going to do is put our palm on the ball we've just rolled. And we'll press down just like that. You can see how it flattens out. So we just want to keep pressing it out like that. Making sure to keep it all even. And we'll go right out to the edge. And at that point, we'll begin to work our fingers into that edge. You really want to work your fingers in there. You can see where a crack is here. We want to push into those cracks and make sure we finger them real good. We want the whole patty smooth and mixed together because if we have any of those cracks that's where it will begin splitting when we start to cook it. And we don't want the juices to run out too soon. Alright, so now that we've got the patty formed, we want to very carefully work our fingers under and remove it from the plate. You want to be very careful. You don't want to just jam them in there. Just work them in gently and they'll find their way. It will stick, so we want to do this very carefully. And if we're very careful, it will pull away just like that. Isn't that beautiful? So now what we want to do is we want to place the patty very carefully on one of our sheets of wax paper. And we'll go ahead and lay another sheet of wax paper on top of that so we can be ready for the next one.

[Cut ahead. Multiple burger patties sandwiched between wax paper are stacked on a plate.]

[Host] So now that we've got our patties ready, we want to prepare our pan. I'm going to use a cast-iron skillet. And I've just lightly oiled it, and I've turned it up to medium high heat, and I've had it heating long enough so that it's just started to smoke. You'll want to make sure your fan's on when you do this. So now that the pan's hot, what we want to do is to start transferring our burgers into the pan. And to do that I'm going to use a silicone spatula.

[She steps toward the sink with a pink spatula and lifts a spray can.]

[Host] One of the most important things is making sure everything is adequately lubricated. That's one of the mistakes people make is just trying to shove things in when they're dry. So I'm just going to coat both sides very lightly with oil. And once that's done I can come over here and I can slide the spatula very carefully beneath the patty and between the wax paper. And just like that I can ease it into the pan. This way you don't have to worry about any grease splattering. And you can position it just perfectly.

[Cut ahead. Two patties are in the pan. Oil sizzles around the edges.]

[Host] We need to cook them until they're done all the way through.

And that requires a center cooking temperature of between

one-hundred-sixty and one-hundred-sixty-five degrees. And we're just going to use our handy kitchen thermometer for that.

[She slides a metal probe into a patty.]

[Host] One-hundred-sixty. Perfect. Now they're ready to take out.

[Cut ahead. The burgers are stacked in a glass pie pan.]

[Host] We have one more step. Nothing really makes a burger more than the buns. And your husband and kids are just going to love your buns after you see how to do this, just let me tell you. So what I've done is I've taken another cast-iron skillet, that you can see here, and I've just coated the bottom with some butter and set it on medium heat. You can see that butter beginning to sizzle there. So now that that's ready, I'm going to take my buns. And I'm just going to pry them apart like that. And then I'm going to add them inside down into the butter. And that will take about five minutes. Until they are nice and golden brown.

[Cut ahead. She spatulas the last bun onto a grate.]

[Host] See that nice golden brown color? That's exactly what you want. So while these are cooling, we're going to get our condiments.

[Cut ahead. Several burgers have been laid on their buns, but the bun tops remain upside down next to them.]

[Host] This is the part where the whole family usually comes in. And of course, everyone likes their own thing. But as you can see, the burgers are moist and juicy and absolutely delicious looking. You're going to feel like they're just exploding juices into your mouth.

[Cut to a shot of a fully assembled burger with lettuce and a slice of tomato, rotating on a Lazy Susan on a kitchen counter.]

[Cut to the host smiling behind the kitchen counter.]

[Host] Coming up next time, I'll teach you how to make the most fantastic looking pizza you'll ever see. We'll learn how to keep it from getting too soggy, because there's nothing worse than trying to eat something that's too wet. And how to cut the perfect slice. That's next time. But until then, bon appétit.

# H > >>

"And," Tommy thrust up his arms and arched his back and stretched his chest, "lunch break." He finished stretching. He rose.

"Let us search for the not-made-up words," he said, as he walked. "From whence do they come? From the come of God? Where for could they but come if they are to be so-called permanent? So must they not be from the word of the words? The Logos? And if the Logos are and is to be invested in body that it and they might come and that it might be consumed, is not the speaking of God the inverse of bloody wine? This, of course, would be initialized as BW. And BO would surely initialize that other which issues forth from the body. What is critical is that we must therefore conclude that it is directly indicated that we must rejuvenate Hobbes and must resurrect Leviathan, for it shall be the body of God that the bride shall consume before she is the main dish set before the reception of the wedding, for this is the blood and body of society and each respective meal must feast upon each and the other for eternity." We came to the camp. He bent at his waist. He snatched up the basket from off the ground without stopping. "For Macbooks are built in alignment with the nature of all being." He turned. He placed the basket upside down on top of his head. "For all are replaceable almost only in totality. None more so than Mister and Misses President, after all, they used to do it every four years, but that's better than some married couples manage." He turned. He started out of the camp. He started up the ridge. "An individual is not a society," he called, "but society is an individual."

He went up along the ridge. He stopped at the bases of the higher

trees. He bent. He rooted his fingers among the leaves until he'd gathered too much in his hand. He had to shift the basket off his head. He laid the basket on the ground.

Tammy'd gathered the emptied and clean tin cans and set them on the rocks. The bucket sat next to the low-burning fire. It was just possible to discern her form among the distant rocks down along the sides of the stream. I ran my tongue around the inside of my mouth. I turned. I lifted one of the tin cans. I knelt. I dipped it into the bucket. I gulped it down as I remained on my knees there. Some of it dribbled down my chin. I dipped the tin can again.

I remained on my knees panting as Tammy came up toward the camp. Water ran down her legs. Dirt and crushed leaves clung to the bottoms of her feet. She shifted her wet hair over her shoulder. Squatting there by the fire, she added some sticks. She rose as they started to burn. She bent. She lifted the canned bread. She worked the contents out with her fingers. She tore it into three pieces. One piece she left in the can. She pierced two pieces of bread with the chromed or stainless-steel end of the umbrella. She squatted beside the fire. She extended the umbrella over the flame. "Frame rates are fixed, aren't they," she said. She glanced up from the fire and over at me. "But time isn't, is it?" She looked at the fire again. She rotated the umbrella. "Princesses always have to be raped, you know." She didn't look away from the fire this time as she spoke. "They are the objects of our sexual desire and to allow them that would ruin them." She rotated the umbrella again. "Ford said it best when he saw the golden bikini. This isn't what princesses wear. So the only way they can have sex is if they're forced to have it. You would think there's a dividing line between who takes them. But it can be just as after Jabba the Hutt as it can be the Randian hero. Maybe the only true release can come when you give yourself up completely to someone else's use and ownership." She withdrew the umbrella from over the fire. Carefully, she removed one of the toasted chunks of bread. She handed it across. She removed the other. She set the umbrella down beside her. She bit through the bread's crunchy exterior. She chewed. "Also, Jabba was into autoerotic asphyxiation, don't you think?" She swallowed. "Tongue lolling out." She bit into her toast. "That look on his face," she said around it. She chewed. "One last

big release." She swallowed. Then she clamped the remainder of her toast between her teeth. She rose. She started walking toward the freelancer camp. She carried her toast in her teeth that way till she'd reached the tents. She stopped in front of one of the freelancers. She bent over at her waist. She looked down upside down at the screen. She cast a shadow over him as he typed. She straightened. She moved on. She did this in sequence till she must've found what she wanted. She straightened. She sat beside him. Unlike Tommy, she could fold her legs under herself as she went down and required no manual alterations.

# Where Do You Stand When The Emperor Admits His Nudity? We All Know Where You Stand When It's The Empress

She removed the toast from her mouth. She took another bite of her toast.

# H || >>|

[A security camera feed of a grocery store. People wander through the aisles. Sometimes they stop at the endcaps. They look at magazine covers and candy wrappers as they wait at the self-checkout. An elongated gumdrop-shaped robot patrols the aisles. It has a smiley face painted on it. Children run away screaming and giggling as it rolls toward them.]

### $\bowtie \rightarrow \bowtie$

Tammy swallowed. "The man-machines will restore the apocalypse from video," she said. She popped the final piece of her toast into her mouth. She chewed. "We wouldn't want to disappoint ourselves." She opened her mouth. She stuck her finger in her mouth. "... y imagning wut cunt be..." She picked at bread that'd compacted in the canyon of one of her molars. She pulled her finger out of her mouth. She looked at her wet fingernail. "We want snuff without snuff." She wiped her fingernail on her thigh. "After all, that is the classic argument for the proof of the existence of God's penis."

# **₩** || **>>**|

[The robot turns too sharply. It takes out an endcap. Glass bottles shatter over the floor. A humanoid appears out of the edge of the screen, pushing a mop and wheely bucket.]

# **|**44 **▶ ▶**|

She swallowed. "Did your mother ever give you the lecture about how small breasts are just as good as large ones, that they produce milk just the same, and that's what they're there for?" She looked over at me. She looked down at the screen.

# H | >>

[Title: Philosophical Medium Cuts.]

[Walther] I don't really think we can talk about the critique of the rise of mass media without talking about Dracula.

[She adjusts herself in her chair. She sits forward.]

[Walther] There's even one point where Mina literally states that she didn't think she could do what she does without the typewriter. Of course, she's vital to this whole effort to track Dracula. As other people have noted, she doesn't just move information around. She just doesn't transcribe it. She's also condensing and cataloging. She is beyond the bounds of the simple amanuensis. So in regards to this sort of literary mythology of vampirism, it would be a mistake to regard women as merely passive objects, objects contested over by the human male and vampire world.

[Anschutz] I want to add to that that at approximately the same time you've got the formation of another entirely new form of genre. And that is the haunted typewriter story. So there's this sort of unconscious businessman's fear of all these young women doing for themselves and thinking for themselves and that they might slip something in somewhere, that they might not do what they're told to

do. It's a fundamental replication anxiety. And of course, the sexuality aspect with vampires is applicable here. And this is also the time where women can't get many respectable jobs. But the invention of the typewriter allows for a cheaper, more faithful reproductive strategy for office documents. So women fresh out of these booming typewriter schools undercut and flow into businesses to replace the male scriveners. And this is, of course, the origin of the office sexual tension trope. There's a famous postcard that features the line where the boss is talking to his wife on the phone and says he's got his typewriter on his lap. Of course, it helps to realize that the word typewriter could stand for three things. Obviously, it meant the machine. But a typewriter was also someone who operated such a machine. And also it was the term for both of those together in actual operation.

[Walther] So you could really liken this as one of the first instances of the cyberization of women. It's the human wired into the information systems. So here we might be tempted to say that it was in fact women who were the first terminal subject and the first posthuman subjects.

[Anschutz] But the question is was that allowed because women were already categorized as a type of sub-human? So is it actually that the transition to the posthuman lies not through the human but through the non-human?

## Idd II bbl

[Orgone] So now we turn to the indecipherable utterances of those on the left. I would try to introduce what you're about to see, but well.... Well, just take a look and you'll see what I mean. This comes from some literary conference somewhere.

[The image subdivides into two frames. The clip is in the left frame.]

[Clip] Really, writing a book is a lot like an assault.

[Pause clip.]

[Orgone] So now, I guess everything's like rape. I mean, we knew looking at someone was rape. And we knew trying to talk to someone was rape. And waving to someone is rape. And sleeping with someone—excuse my language, folks—but that, of course, is rape as well, as we all know by now. So I guess the question at this point is what can we do that isn't rape? Is there anything left? So now according to this, apparently, my own books are out there raping people. So telling the truth is rape these days, I guess. I guess we could ignore them. But ignoring them is probably rape too, these days. So how do we even deal with people who are like this? I mean, if you tell them they're wrong, they're going to accuse you of raping them. And we all know how the courts are stacked in these womens' favor. All you have to do is look at divorce. Very respectable scientists show it, folks. You know. You get divorced and they take everything you've got. They take the children. They get them alone. They indoctrinate them. They get them to worship them. They get them to do just whatever they want. And we all know what that leads to, folks. What don't they get? I mean, it's a system, right? If you set it up so that everything men do is rape then what can you do? And if men want to have any kind of club or a place that they can go just to be by themselves with other men and get away from all this, well, that's rape, too. That's discrimination. You can't do that. And we all know masculinity's toxic now, right. So just being a man around someone's probably raping them. And doesn't it do a real disservice to real rape victims to call everything rape? I mean, if everything is rape then nothing is, right? So so much for the leftist liberals' defense of victim's rights. No, the only people who've got any rights are the ones who go around yelling rape. They've got rights. They've got

the right to do and say whatever they want. But nobody else does. And we're just supposed to let these writers and liberal media elites tell us what to do. Yeah, that's right, folks. Well, I might be called a rapist, but there is just something I have to say. And that's that words matter. They matter, folks. What they mean matters. After all in the beginning was the word. And the word was with God. Liberals keep talking about tolerance. But where's their tolerance? Is it tolerance if you call everything you don't like rape? No, folks, it isn't. So what does tolerance mean if it doesn't mean to tolerate? What's the liberal definition of tolerance? Well, it's tolerating pedophiles in the Boy Scouts. And it's tolerating killing babies. And it's tolerating Muslims cutting people's heads off. Except by tolerate they mean that these things have to happen. If you don't let a Muslim cut off your daughter's head then you're being intolerant. You're raping them. If you don't let them kill a baby, you're raping them. But it's all about rape because that's one of the reasons we've got to be able to kill one of these little babies is if a rape happened. That's your liberal dictionary, folks. When the meaning of words doesn't matter-nothing matters. And we've got a guest who is concerned with just this. So let's bring him on.

[The image subdivides into two frames.]

[Orgone] This is Ray Bonmot, CEO of Wikinconserv. Welcome on the show, Ray.

[Bonmot] Thanks for having me.

[He is in the other right frame.]

[Orgone] So what are you doing to help deal with this problem we're having these days with words?

[Bonmot] We've had, for several years now, our conservative encyclopedia project.

[Orgone] A great resource.

[Bonmot] Yes.

[Orgone] Particularly for people who are homeschooling in order to save their kids by getting them out of these failing liberal indoctrination systems.

[Bonmot] Yes.

[Orgone] So what's this new product?

[Bonmot] As an extension of our encyclopedia, we are now offering a dictionary service.

[Orgone] And, of course, everything is professionally vetted.

[Bonmot] Oh, yes. The service has been made available to several conservative universities for the past year or so. And we now feel confident it's something that we can bring value to the individual user with.

[Orgone] So tell us—what's the difference between a standard dictionary and your dictionary?

[Bonmot] Well, we've gone through great pains to ensure there's nothing obscene in any of the material. And we have striven very hard to ensure that the material doesn't stand necessarily alone.

[Orgone] Stand alone, what does that mean?

[Bonmot] It means that there's clarification. Rather than just list something and possibly imply that it's desirable, we expressly note in what way it isn't. Obviously, one of the targets for this product is students, and we wouldn't want them being misled.

[Orgone] Always a good thing, Ray.

[Bonmot] We hope so.

[Orgone] Well, thank you for you and your company's hard work. Many of us appreciate it. And we hope that your product proves a great success.

[Bonmot] Thank you.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] Now, if you would like a limited free early trial, you can head on over to our website. And there you'll be able to sign up for all kinds of things. And for those who don't know, you will be able to watch, in addition, for free, previous broadcasts of, not just this show, but our other programming as well.

# **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] A community in shock this morning as it's revealed a mountain deputy was severely beaten by a suspect during the course of a routine traffic stop. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on this heartbreaking story. Sylvia.

[Cut to Borges standing on a street corner.]

[Borges] Tom, behind me you can see the street where veteran deputy
Lewis Murphy was severely beaten when he attempted to
cite a man for jaywalking. Officers responding to the scene
were able to arrest this man—

[Cut to a mugshot.]

[Borges] Roberto Milan, as he tried to flee. Deputy Murphy was transported to the hospital. Police officials have not released

any word on the extent of his injuries. Deputy Murphy is a five-year veteran of the department. He is also a member of the North Carolina National Guard, who prior to this served two tours of duty in Afghanistan. This is Sylvia Borges. News 10.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] Deputy Murphy is married, with one daughter. We offer our best wishes and prayers to the family.

## H4 > >>|

"Am I missing Cops?" We looked up. Tommy stood ahold of a tin can in one hand, ahold of the umbrella with his other. Except that it couldn't cast any shade now. He'd ripped the covering out from between the spokes. And the spokes were covered with a myriad of shish kebabbed insects which looked slickly caramelized from cooking over the fire. And they and he smelled faintly of smoke. "After all," he said, "without the mystery, what would we have? How would we reverse entropy?" He sat. He positioned the umbrella with the handle on the ground. The spokes came up about head level. He poked his head between two of them. I had to dodge to keep a spoke from going through my ear the way it'd gone through those insects. He set the tin can in front of his feet.

### **₩** || **>>**

[Unknown #1] What the hell are they?

[A shaky image of an airport terminal. A group of women in unusual garb sit in several of the otherwise empty plastic seats. A larger man with a beard sits with them. The image shifts again. It cants sideways as the phone's wielder tries not to be conspicuous yet still get the image. But because of the continued movement, everything's still very blurry.]

[A stylized logo cuts in bidirectionally from the corners of the screen. The logo shimmers. A lens flare pops. It slides apart to reveal the

hosts. One wears over-sized headphones over a knitted cap and leans forward to speak into a large microphone with a spit guard. The other has earbuds and sits in front of a snowball microphone.]

[Louie] Welcome to the show, everybody. Well, you out there who're on Patreon voted for it.

[Danny] And we are a democracy, after all.

[Louie] That we are. And we had a very positive response from our last show. But the user QuiltBang13 was poking around and found something they thought we might be interested in. And they uploaded the link on the Patreon forum. And it got everybody else's attention. And here's that video that generated so much interest.

[An image appears the upper left corner of the screen.]

[Danny] That's a good thumbnail though.

[Louie] That is a good thumbnail. But as you can see, it's titled Shinji Get In The Robot Considered as Rape. It's actually not one of the entries for the para-ParaCon. It's actually someone else.

[Danny] So now we've got a para-para-ParaCon?

[Louie] Yeah. No. Please, no.

[Danny] Well, we are talking about the subject of non-consent here.

[Louie] Yeah. Well anyway, if any of you want to see that... well, we'll explain that later. But don't worry if you haven't seen it.

[Danny] We'll tell you everything that happens.

[Louie] We will. So anyway, the title of the video's pretty clear. So what's the big deal?

[Danny] What is the big deal?

[Louie] The big deal is that is the main argument—well it's two leveled.

[Danny] So is this like three dee or four dee chess?

[Louie] It's—

[Danny] Or inter-dimensional checkers?

[Louie] No. No, it's actually nuanced. It goes roughly like this, that the situation is one of expectation.

[Danny] And what're we supposed to expect?

[Louie] No. I'm being serious here.

[Danny] Oh crap, we're serious now.

[Louie] But seriously—seriously—what the video wants to call attention to, or to argue for, is that rape can be defined through—and this is a technical term.

[Danny] Ooh, technical terms. We love technical terms in our animation.

[Louie] Alright. So we've got a term called Through The Lens of Instrumentality. That's the term they use. I haven't quite figured out if that's an actual technical term or not.

[Danny] So wait, like in the show instrumentality?

[Louie] No.

[Danny] Bleep.

- [Louie] Okay. So... It brings in some things I'll admit I'm not too knowledgeable about. I did try to look some of these up.
- [Danny] There is no try.
- [Louie] Okay, so I looked some things up. And the video, it talks about relationships to these things called, like, the situation's relation to Kantian morality.
- [Danny] Can't Ian? So it's, like, what, things it's bad for Ian to do. These are the things Ian can't do? What?
- [Louie] Well, from what I put together for this, I had to watch a few videos to kinda wrap my head around it, but it seems to come down to this notion expressed in the writings of a very old philosopher called Emmanuel Kant—
- [Danny] So now Emmanuel can't do something either. So who can do anything?
- [Louie] But Kant writes, from what I take it for, he writes that people have to be ends in themselves. That is, if you want to know whether what you're doing is moral or not, you have to look at is it about the person themselves or is it about using the person to get something else you want.
- [Danny] So like the golden rule, basically.
- [Louie] I don't know. I just watch this stuff. But what he's concentrating on here is that basically everyone, or almost everyone, wants to use Shinji. They all want him to do this thing, whatever it is. So what they want is this thing out here.
- [Danny] Yeah, but somebody's gotta save the world.
- [Louie] And I guess what he's saying here is that stopping the angels or saving humanity, or initiating instrumentality, whatever

perspective you want to look from, he's one of the means to all that.

[Danny] Yeah, but they want him to save the world so there's still a world for him to exist in. So it's about him too.

[Louie] Yeah, but they're willing to sacrifice his life to do it so... You know.

[Danny] So how does this connect to rape, exactly?

[Louie] Well, the argument is—or what the video says, I should say—is that it's really all the same thing. It just depends on how it's expressed. It's just in the case of rape the particular situation is, like, my—or their—pleasure is more important than yours—or the other person's, I should say—so you should allow me to use your body to please myself and if you don't then they have the right to take what they want because it's they who have priority. And then they start going into something about utilitarianism after that and—

[Danny] But what about bondage, or something?

[Louie] Do we have to get into this?

[Danny] Well, what if somebody wants to be used?

[Louie] Well, I guess that wouldn't count then, would it? That'd be something else.

[Danny] Alright. I seem to remember you saying something about a second part, or something. That was the first part. What's the second part?

[Louie] Ah, well, the second part's where the real reactions have come from.

[Danny] What reactions?

[Louie] You watched it, right? Didn't you look at the comments?

[Danny] Well, Lucy Lucifer dropped a new video while I was walking the cat, so what was I supposed to do?

[Louie] Well, you've still got the link to the screenshot I sent you, right?

[Danny] Uh, yeah, I guess. Yeah. Yeah, here it is. Oh...bleep. Oh boy. Wow. Wow. I have not seen anything like this in a while. Bleep. I mean bleep.

[Louie] Yeah.

[Danny] I'm surprised this's still up.

[Louie] Oh, it's not.

[Danny] Oh.

[Louie] Yeah. So apparently the video and the account got flagged for hate speech. So unless you happened to use some program to do illegal and horrible and just not nice things—

[Danny] Oops.

[Louie] So we should talk about this carefully. We have a duty of preservation here.

[Danny] And do you always do your duty?

[Louie] My duty apparently includes trying to watch videos about Kantian duty.

[Danny] So how long ago did this guy live?

[Louie] I don't know. Two-hundred years, or something.

[Danny] So does your duty still stink after two-hundred years?

[Louie] Well, it feels like we're officially getting banned at this point.

[Danny] Hey, man, that's bad luck.

[Louie] Well, okay, so we should talk about the second part of the video.

[Danny] It is our duty, after all.

[Louie] So the second part posits—I guess I'll use that word—that the responsibility of instrumentality—not the show version, but what we're talking about here—the responsibility transfers to the audience.

[Danny] So what're we getting?

[Louie] It basically means, from what I gather, that when the audience starts meming *get in the bleeping robot*, *Shinji* that the audience is exercising this rape mentality, if you want to call it that directly.

[Danny] Uh huh.

[Louie] That's just what the video says. And I'm just a humble YouTuber who repeats what other YouTubers say.

[Danny] Well, I still say get in the bleeping robot, Shinji. It's a giant robot and who the bleep wouldn't wanna get in a bleeping giant robot?

[Louie] With your mother.

[Danny] Well, technically, it'd be inside the mother, wouldn't it? And you know all about *that* popular genre.

[Louie] Well, we're not gonna talk about that popular genre.

[Danny] Then what's left to talk about, then?

[Louie] Well, I guess that the very kind people on Patreon are gonna get to decide that. So if you're not subscribed, please do. And if you wanna hop over to Patreon dot com right now, it's a really great help to this show. And there are lots of special special features only for members.

[Danny] And extra special special features.

[Louie] And there's also our Twitter listed down below. So hang in there, everybody. See you all next episode.

# **← → →**

Tammy spit out a set of wings. She wiped them from her lips with the back of her index finger. One of the spokes splayed out behind the freelancer's head. She reached behind him. She slid off another few insects.

# H | >>|

[The last dregs of audience applause. Two men sit onstage in fancy high-backed chairs. One of them is old. The other is balding.]

[Host] So the man himself should need little introduction. But that is, after all, one of the responsibilities of this job, so I will discharge that now. Having spent more than fifty years in the theatre scene, Irvine Lunche can easily be considered one of the most respected postwar playwrights in the American Literary landscape. And it is his vision that the now late Arthur Tawney referred to as that rare crystalline clarity that reveals the precision of the precision. He has been the recipient of the McCurry Genius Fellowship, which he has also been selected as a judge for three times. He has received more awards of distiguishment and achievement than would be pragmatically listable here. He is the recipient of the, of course, the Pulitzer Prize in literature. He has been bestowed with honorary doctorates by both the University of New York

and the University of North Carolina, at the latter of which he has held the position of the Memorial Professor In The Performing Arts for these last ten years. Now, in order to actually allow us to get to what we all came here for, I will stop there. So finally, allow me to introduce Mister Irvine Lunche.

[Audience applause.]

# H > >>

"So boring," Tommy said. And I had to dodge to keep the umbrella struts from hitting me in the head as he rose. He stood there holding it as if it still had its fabric covering.

"Sit down," Tammy said. She still held a couple of roasted insects in her open palm. She picked the larger of the two out. She crunched into it.

"We require Revelations," he said. But he didn't look at her as he said it. Instead, he continued to look around at the aglow apple cutouts on nearby Macbooks. Though, he hadn't yet moved a muscle other than those in his head and neck. Even the thin-metal arms of the umbrella remained absolutely still. "If what is revealed is already of known quantity then it is *ie ipso* not Revelations. Revelations does not speak to the general dispensation of info, but keeps confidential secrets from even those who believeth and those who believeth that they believeth and those who believeth."

"And how..." Tammy said. She dropped the last insect into her mouth. She crunched into it. She chewed. "How do you know you'd even know a revelation if you'd seen one?" she said, as she chewed.

Tommy still looked round. "We require assembly line profundity." He started to walk. "It is only that which can supply the demand which can never be satiated," he said, without looking back. Tammy reached across the freelancer's lap. She lifted the tin can. She sipped. Then she passed it to me before she rose.

Ahead, Tommy squatted beside one of the freelancers. He held the umbrella handle perfectly perpendicular to the ground. The spokes extended over his and the freelancer's head. Tammy unskewered a half-palm-full of insects. She stood there. She cocked her head down to glance at the screen.

# **H**

- [The image is divided between three talking heads. Orgone is in one. The banner under the left states 'Dr Roger Chowder'. The banner under the right-most states 'Thomas Crouton (TANK)'.]
- [Orgone] So politics seems to be in everything these days. Wherever you look, the leftist liberals have turned something into some political football. Even football. So what do we do about it? Why do the leftist liberals have to keep infecting everything with politics?
- [Chowder] Well, as I've been arguing for a long time, I don't think there's anything but the political.
- [Orgone] Oh come on—trying to have a picnic with your family is not a political event.
- [Chowder] Well, in a culture where the notion of what is or is not a family is politically and socially contested, then, yes, the discourses around a picnic are very much a political discourse.
- [Orgone] That's just ridiculous. What about grilling a hotdog is political?
- [Chowder] For one, there's the ethics of meat consumption.
- [Orgone] So aren't you just saying that you should be able to decide what everybody else is eating?
- [Chowder] No. But it is basic economics. The—
- [Orgone] What is economics about dictating to people what they can and can't buy and can and can't eat? That's not economics, that's a dictatorship.

[Chowder] If people don't realize the externalities that are involved in a product they can't make a rational decision about the product.

[Orgone] Anything to say about this, Deputy Director?

[Crouton] I think that, yes, as my colleague states, you can argue something like that to a certain degree. But I think what we have to keep in mind is that there are true things—certain facts, if you will—and the problem with human psychology is that you can then take those bits of truth and you can hang on them whatever you want, and people just tend to accept the whole of the rest of what you have placed there next to a fact as a fact, too.

[Orgone] So, wait, you're saying we shouldn't—

[Crouton] Absolutely not. The freedom of the market is the crucial engine of a self-organizing free society.

[Orgone] Why don't you go into a little more depth on that for those who are out there watching.

[Crouton] I am acknowledging my colleague, with respect to the idea of so-called market externalities. And of course, understanding this is very critical. But our differences rest in our solutions. My colleague takes some very factual notions about something we could call externalities and then surmises that the interplay of such so-called externalities are too complex for the average consumer to navigate successfully. So his solution—and the sort of liberal solution in general—is some sort of market regulation. A very top-down approach.

[Orgone] So, in effect, we have a type of communism. Controlling the market.

H > >>|

"You know," Tommy said, as he crunched a half-dozen or so insects in his mouth all at once, "the other talking head isn't in the audio loop till they ask a question."

"Everybody knows that," Tammy said. She spit out a set of wings. She wiped her mouth. She motioned for the tin can. She sipped. She passed it back.

"He'll jump later," Tommy said.

# H4 || >>|

[Crouton] It's a form of market control. There's no real need to split hairs on the particular form, in general.

[Orgone] So how do we ensure the free market?

[Crouton] The solution is, of course, rather simple. As most solutions turn out to be. The reason, of course, that we rely on the free market is that human society and interaction and what we call civilization is so complex that any attempt at a top-down control of such a complex system will just not have the capacity to understand such a complex system. That is, the market system is so complex that the only system capable of understanding it would be a system of even greater complexity. And so on and so on, continuing upwards. So obviously, the only rational viewpoint is that we have to begin and end with the complexity that we can actually experience, rather than posit some infinite number of regresses or a meta system which cannot be in any way physically demonstrated. So we start with what we can demonstrate to exist. And that is the market system. So what the market system allows is a self-emergent system to emerge. It is, in essence, a bunch of small independent units that nonetheless function together to form a stably constructed whole. But this is, of course, done without any of the units realizing that they are involved in any kind of whole. From the point of view of the unit, they are the whole. Now, again, here is where certain market-critical views

make an error. They confuse the necessary perception of being the whole with the necessary reality of the non-integratable whole that nonetheless forms the whole. That is, they mistakenly see it as a situation where the individual unit, in order to function properly, has to have communicated with every other individual unit and has to have integrated a schema of comprehension of this entire web of units and their respective so-called externalities. Of course, the problem with so-called externalities is that they are not just external. These feedback mechanisms connect back and integrate with the whole of the market system through various diffuse points. So the conclusion we get is that for any individual aspect of the market system to understand any single so-called externality requires not only the understanding of any subsequently connected so-called externalities but also what processes those so-called externalities connect to and the so-called externalities those processes are connected with and so on. So in the end, to understand the smallest part of any directly connected so-called externalities requires that the individual aspect actually has to wholly integrate a comprehension of the whole of the system, in the totality of all its infinite connections and loops, the complexity of which by necessity, and therefore definition, rises to the infinite. of course, this—as we have already shown—and that we can show through history—is just impossible. is a kind of backdoor way to reimposing a top-down structuring of the system, which, as stated, is the idea of a meta system that can't be demonstrated in any realist terms.

[Orgone] So it's always about control.

[Crouton] It's the belief that control is necessary, yes.

[Orgone] And how do we deal with that?

- [Crouton] As I said, what we have to realize is that the solution, of course, was staring us in the face from the very beginning. It's not that market economics have to take into account these so-called externalities. It's that, when we consider things in the correct terms, they are already taken into account. The problem is that there is posited something that lies beyond this market system. Outside of its coordinates. This, of course, comes to be shown as a fallacy. When we realize that everything has to by definition be within the bounds of market coordinates then we realize there can be no such thing as true externalities, in the way that they want to define such a term. They are of related processes and parallel processes that concern any given transaction. But they are themselves entirely regulated within the market system. So all we have to realize is that the thing we were already doing is the thing we needed to be doing all along. The system of so-called externalities which would better be called parallel processes, as that is more accurate—and it's the term I use—but this system of parallel processes is simply a slightly different way of categorizing the same information in more accurate terms.
- [Orgone] It's sort of like taking a couple steps to the left and seeing another mountain peak. But it's still the same mountain range. But you realize it is a range and not just a mountain.
- [Crouton] Yes. So we can say that just by participating in the system that the parameters for the solution of the problem are already implicitly provided by the coordinates and interworkings of all the units of that system. So the solution arises automatically out of this system without any need of any direct human intervention.
- [Orgone] So is it a problem of words? Is it this particular word externality that's part of the problem? Is that what's confusing people?

- [Crouton] Words can sometimes be an issue, yes. Sometimes the incorrect usage of words can muddy a situation and make it more difficult to clear up.
- [Orgone] So, really, as I understand it, the individuals don't have to understand all this stuff. They can't. There's just too much of it out there. But we don't need to, right? We just need to know what's going on with us.
- [Crouton] That's basically correct. Each unit in the market system only needs to operate within its maximal horizon. And that is, of course, the self-interest.
- [Orgone] So it's kind of like how they say the road to heck—excuse my language folks—but how it's paved with good intentions.
- [Crouton] It could be phrased in that fashion. That is to say that when a unit tries to act outside of its maximal horizon. it assumes something beyond its own interests. And this leads to a number of possible issues. The worse alternative is that it tries to posit alternative sets of interests that can't, by definition, possibly exist because, as I've said, that would require something beyond the bounding coordinates. But if there were something beyond the bounding coordinates, well, you can imagine the immediate trouble that would cause. It's nonsensical for something to be outside of the definition of all that is. So there can't be anything beyond the bounding coordinates. In which case, when a unit tries to act in this fashion, it not only goes against its own interest, but the interests of reality, and the nature of the generated results tend to be, for lack of a better term, horrific, which is a rather technical concept, and we don't have the time, I am afraid, to go into the details of why that is. But suffice it to say that one unit attempting to extrapolate another unit's motivation and wants outside of the clearly

delineated channels of transaction communication often leads to disaster. And we can sum this up by saying that the market unit can only operate on, and relative to, its own internal variables. Which, by the very definition of the system, will be, and must be, universal. This is provable and demonstrable mathematically in the sense that if it were not so, such a system could not function, which our reflection upon reality, which we must take as our observation of that which is there, demonstrates to us is beyond reproachable in such terms. If this were not so—if one unit could be communicated some amount of information about or related to the internal state or states of another unit, outside of the channels of transaction communication, then they would in fact not be separate processes.

[Orgone] So what you're really saying is that we've got someone who is buying corn. He's not concerned with feeding the whole of these United States. That's just way too big to put on just one person's shoulders. You have a demagogue when you have that. What he's doing is concentrating on his own needs and desires. But the result of that is a much larger picture. The result through all these tiny desires is that the individuals desires of having a corndog on a picnic with your wife and children is satisfied.

[Crouton] That is the beauty of market relations.

[Orgone] So we really just waste our time trying to think about these big problems—because they're not really problems at all, are they?

[Crouton] They tend to be better solved by allowing them to be broken down by the individual constitutive units directly involved. When you have a system where the units are naturally free to individually interact—rather than a behemoth which has to move in unison—these units are

allowed to realign in ways that wouldn't be possible if they were having to be subjugated to some overall desire consciously.

[Orgone] So, Doctor—

[He does jump slightly.]

- [Orgone] If the individual only has to be defined as the individual. And the individual only has to be concerned with the individual. Doesn't that mean that there isn't any need for politics? Doesn't that mean that there is no politics?
- [Chowder] In a situation where you have completely isolated individuals?
- [Orgone] Where you have people separate.
- [Chowder] Well, you have a society, which is a collection of people that—
- [Orgone] Yes. But no. You have the individuals. They're separate. So would you need politics then?
- [Chowder] Well, even if you've got just the individual, there's still politics.
- [Orgone] So what do you think, Director? Is politics still necessary for the individuals?
- [Crouton] Again, I think that I and my colleague are having an issue with a bit of transaction miscommunication. In this sense, I think it is better to say that what they are referring to is the transfer of information over these channels of transaction communication. And the issue is, of course, one of protocol. Now, protocol is an inherent aspect of transaction communication. You can even say

it is a fundamental one. At its core, it is the notion of that which are the details of that which is transmitted in relation to a very particular temporal dispensation.

[Orgone] So I want to make myself understood.

[Crouton] Yes. So when the transaction communication is outside of an agreed-upon protocol, what might otherwise be information is turned into noise. So while something is passing over the channels of transaction communication, in actuality, that which is being transferred is not only not helpful but destructive. So what we have to have in order to have transaction communication is organization. And that is protocol. So what I would say is arising here is a confusion between information and noise. So what they want to do is, rather than examine this at the protocol level to determine how we eliminate noise, what they seem to feel is that there is to some extent transaction communication with or through the noise. And they want to find some way to pick this transaction communication out.

[Orgone] But wouldn't it be better to just communicate correctly in the first place?

[Crouton] That, of course, is exactly the ideal. Rather than spend energy on information that could perhaps possibly be resuscitated, or resurrected, as it were, from an amount of noise, it is far more energy efficient to not allow noise to enter the channels of transaction communication in the first place.

[Orgone] So how does this become politics?

[Crouton] The issue comes about because, in trying to recover this information from an amount of noise, there has to be a fundamental process of reconstruction. It is an

interpretive process. It is not, as it were, that one is simply picking the jewels out. It is that everything has become contaminated. So the boundary between any two things is deestablished. So the only way to try and know what something was intended to be upon reception is to attempt to reconstruct the internal state of the sender. Which of course, as we have pointed out with altruism is fundamentally flawed. So because of this, the number of permutations of possible interpretations for a unit of seemingly recovered information are perhaps infinite. And the problem is, of course, that when this recovered information is treated as an aspect of a protocol you get a situation where one might send a message that contains this recovered information and the receiver might themselves have attempted to also have recovered this information from a prior transaction communication as well, but there is no guarantee that what that unit seemingly recovered is in any way related to what the other seemingly recovered. In fact, mathematically it's almost guaranteed that they can't agree on such a thing. So when this happens you have units using a protocol where every sender and receiver interprets the information inconsistently. And this leads to a complete breakdown.

[Orgone] It's sort of like going into a shop and ordering roses and getting a hamburger. So how do we stop that? How do we get roses if we order roses?

[Crouton] What allows the situation to arise is that the protocol is—obviously, first this seeming-recovery operation is undertaken, which just doesn't expend, or take up, the unit's resources, but in the act of transmission takes up all subsequent units' energies, as well. Even if that energy is merely used to discard a transaction communication.

[Orgone] So for example, if you walk into a burger joint and order a dozen roses, even if the person behind the counter ignores

you that still takes time that could have otherwise been involved in doing something useful.

[Crouton] An actual transaction.

[Orgone] Yes. Yes, something useful. So what else do we need to know to get something useful done?

[Crouton] The second problem is, however, that the protocol is allowed to be extended. If this were just done internally the wasteful application of energy on any unit's part would allow the system as a whole to still maintain itself. Another unit would simply be more efficient in the same situation. And the prior unit would, mathematically speaking, be replaced with a more competent one. Of course, that word is used in a very technical sense. But because this seemingly recovered information can be introduced into the protocol, it spreads the debilitation to all the other nodes in the system. So to answer your question, what we really have to have is a kind of immune system. In order for the efficiency of the situation to be maintained and for information to pass between nodes in this system, we have to have a defined protocol, which in itself is the means to protect itself through its own definition, as the very definition of such a protocol is therefore to reinforce and protect itself as the protocol at all levels via such a reinforcing definition.

[Orgone] You can think of it like the immune system versus cancer.

The immune system wants to maintain the body as it is.

Cancer wants to take over and change it. So we have noise and cancer. And what are those issues?

[Crouton] The issue is, of course, that, just as with the immune system, energy is required. Of course, the body could be much more efficient if it didn't have to maintain these defenses. Likewise, the nodes in the market system have to

expend a certain amount of their energy maintaining the sanctity, if you will, of the protocol. And in one respect this is unfortunate.

# [Orgone] How so?

- [Crouton] Obviously, it would be much better if the sanctity of the protocol could be assumed. In fact, this is absolutely necessary. It is shown that when there is a suspicion at the protocol level, that this itself undermines the potential for transfer over transaction communications channels. The knowledge of the possibility itself introduces a noise-like component.
- [Orgone] So is this noise—or static, if you will—on purpose? Is it kind of like jamming? You know how they try to do in war—to try and confuse and stop the enemy.
- [Crouton] It could be weaponized in such a way. Yes, I would say that's possible.
- [Orgone] So how do we deal with the noise?
- [Crouton] The first and obvious answer, as always, is that it has to be prevented from entering the system in the first place.
- [Orgone] You don't try to filter the poison out of the water later if you can stop it from going in in the first place.
- [Crouton] Such could be stated that way, yes.
- [Orgone] So could you say that a breakdown in the protocol, or trying to send this noise, could you say that that's a kind of disease? That it's kind of a malfunction?
- [Crouton] Well, it is detrimental to the parts of the system, and ultimately to the whole if the individual nodes are not

isolated—and of course there are further aspects to that, but that is very technical, as related to the issues of such still being extant within the coordinates of the system in totality and such—so in that respect, yes, you could say something like that. Which, I might add, is another proof against the notion of meta objects.

[Orgone] But it can be prevented by keeping the information channels clean? It's like keeping your kitchen clean.

[Crouton] Yes. After a fashion.

[Orgone] But I think what you're saying is that we have to clean things, but if we worry about them too much after we've cleaned them, you kind of become like those people who see germs everywhere and scrub their hands raw in the shower trying to clean them off even if they aren't there. So proper hygiene. But don't worry about it too much. It can be taken care of, and there's no point in making yourself sick thinking about something you don't have. So just do the thing and don't think about it. It's done. So, Doctor—

[He definitely jumps this time.]

[Orgone] We have the individual. We have the person. They're talking with everyone around them. And everybody understands and everybody agrees. So what's the point of politics?

[Chowder] Well, people just don't agree. They—

[Orgone] But if they're communicating—they're agreeing—they understand each other. So you've got only the person. What do you need politics for?

[Chowder] People—

- [Orgone] No, we're talking about the person. We're talking about a person. Why would a person need politics?
- [Chowder] But when other people—
- [Orgone] But we're talking about *a* person. One person. And only one person.
- [Chowder] Well, I mean, even if a person is alone, I still don't think the dimension of the political's been entirely eliminated.
- [Orgone] What is there to be political about?
- [Chowder] Individuals are not uniform. People, they might want something but they know they should do something else first. They may want to do something but they know that thing isn't good for them. So there're these internal tensions that're always at play. I have to debate with myself. I disagree with myself.
- [Orgone] But how can you even disagree with yourself? It's you.
- [Chowder] But neurologically speaking, there isn't a single me. For example, we have aberrant thoughts. And we realize these things are horrible. And we wonder why we thought them, and we wonder what's wrong with us, and we—
- [Orgone] So what are aberrant thoughts?
- [Chowder] Well, they're like when you're walking across a bridge, or something, and you see an old woman and there's a part of your mind that says to push her over the side or to jump over, yourself, and—
- [Orgone] So wait a minute, you want to push old ladies off bridges?
- [Chowder] No, I don't. I'm saying that's the sort of automatic thought that humans have. It's—

[Chowder's lips continue to move, but nothing's rendered.]

[Orgone] Now this just sounds all like some kind of justification, to me. I mean, you hear sick people all over the place that proclaim as how whatever perverted thing they want is absolutely right and there's nothing wrong with it at all. So thank you very much for your time and coming on here today, Deputy Director.

[Crouton] Thank you for having me.

[Orgone] It's always a pleasure, Director.

[A frame on the right disappears. The remaining left and right frames grow to fill the space.]

[Orgone] And we're almost out of time.

[Chowder's lips have stopped moving.]

[Orgone] So thank you very much for that, Professor. We're very glad you could show us what's really going on.

[Chowder] Thanks for having me.

[The left frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk grows to fill the void.]

[Orgone] Now, coming up next we have a man who died and came back to life and has written a book detailing the proofs of heaven and hell. What you need to know. So stay tuned, folks.

"This remains insufficient," Tommy said. His mouth was still half full. He motioned for the tin can. He drunk from it without swallowing. He set the tin can down on the ground. He continued to chew. "We require a theology of greater discomfiture." Bits of insects came out of his mouth as he chewed and talked. Discolored water leaked over his lower lip. Discolored water dribbled down his chin.

"That religion is a catalog of human wont and want," Tammy said, "stands as proof that it itself is already a litany of discomfort clothed in the drapery of the conciliatory."

"But naked discomfort is required," Tommy said. And he swallowed half of what was in his mouth.

"There is no nakedness," Tammy said. She reached out. She pulled a couple of beetles from off an umbrella spoke. "Beneath the last vale lies only the litany of the void."

"Then remove thine skin and let the void dance," Tommy said. He motioned for the tin can again. He drank. He paused to swallow a large swallow which bulged his throat and caused him to sit slightly forward. He took another drink of water. He cleared his throat. He looked over. "Did your father ever lecture you that sexual activity is a good cardiovascular exercise routine?" He slapped his thigh. He looked out into infinity. He sat staring at the tent across the way. "What we require is The Gospel of The Cobbler and The Tailor and The Seamstress and The Furniture Maker," he said. He nodded to himself. He nodded to himself again.

"And what," Tammy said, "of the Candlemaker?"

"Such theologies are best left to those who can experience the sacrament of menarche."

Tammy motioned for the tin can. She shook her head. She sipped. She passed it back. She motioned for me to finish it off. There was only a sip remaining. I tilted back my head. I finished it. When I looked down again, she motioned for the tin can. She leaned back. Her back pressed against the tent. She tossed the can. It bounced off Tommy's shoulder blades. It hit the side of the tent. It made a faint dry zizzing sound as it slid down against the material. Tommy didn't seem to notice. He looked at the screen as he held the umbrella. Tammy scratched herself. Then she looked down at the screen, too.

Everyone seemed to have eaten enough. The umbrella struts still hung more than half-full of pierced insects.

Something, somewhere, buzzed. I glanced up, but it'd gone. I looked over, but no one else'd glanced up.

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One is not in any costume and holds a quilted bag. The other's head is encased in a giant eyeball donned with a tiny, off-center top hat.]

[Question] Do you think that the Left Behind series is science fiction or fantasy?

[The one with the quilted bag looks puzzled a moment.]

[Quilted Bag] I'm gonna say it's fantasy. It's all about God and stuff, right? The end of the world. The devil and that kind of thing.

[The microphone shifts toward the eyeball with a tiny, off-center top hat.]

[Question] What about you?

[The eyeball with a tiny, off-center top hat pauses.]

[Eyeball] I'm gonna say fantasy, too. I don't see how it could happen so—

[The voice from within is rendered as something unintelligible.]

[Cut to a lone figure with a half-dozen bandeliers over his shoulders.]

[Question] Do you think that the Left Behind series is science fiction or fantasy?

[Bandolero] Fantasy. I guess. I don't know. I've never really seen it.

[Cut to a group of three people in costume. The one on the left has a second head on his shoulder that is made up to look like a woman. The

one in the center wears large glasses and is dressed in a large American flag. The one on the right is ensconced within a blocky robot costume.]

[Question] Do you think that the Left Behind series is science fiction or fantasy?

[American Flag] Fantasy.

[Blocky Robot] Fantasy.

[American Flag] Wait. That's religious, isn't it? So that doesn't count, does it?

[Duosexual Heads] Why?

[American Flag] Because that's stuff people actually believe.

[Duosexual Heads] So.

[American Flag] So that's just completely different.

[Duosexual Heads] Well, I say it's science fiction.

[Blocky Robot] How can it possibly be science fiction? God's in it.

[Duosexual Heads] So? God's body's in Friends From Frolix 8.

[Blocky Robot] But that's an actual thing.

[Duosexual Heads] What do you mean an actual thing?

[Blocky Robot] I mean, it's a given in the physical nature of the created universe.

[Duosexual Heads] Are you talking about here or are you talking about the book?

[Blocky Robot] The book.

[Duosexual Heads] Well, it's not like that character's only in one book.

[American Flag] We're talking about fiction. We're not talking about The Bible and stuff.

[Whatever the blocky robot says is picked up by the microphone to be rendered as something unintelligible.]

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"Why Tylar?" Tommy said.

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[American Flag] I'm not saying anything like that. I'm just saying people do believe it. And that's their business. But that just makes it different is all. That's all I'm trying to say.

[Duosexual Heads] Well, I still say it's science fiction.

[Blocky Robot] How can you say that?

[Duosexual Heads] Any magic or deity-hood is just sufficiently advanced technology or biology. Just look at Star Trek five.

[Blocky Robot] But he wasn't God.

[Duosexual Heads] So?

[Blocky Robot] So deities are fantasy creatures. Not scifi.

[Duosexual Heads] What about The Matrix? The functional equivalent of God is still God. Maybe it's all just a computer simulation. Maybe God's just the fat slob of a computer programmer who lives in his mother's basement and expresses his resentment

toward life by torturing his Sims to death by clicking the natural disaster button till the whole bleeping city burns to the pixelated ground.

[American Flag] Did you see that YouTube video of that guy who spent all that time building that city that was designed to crush the hopes and dreams of all the inhabitants?

[Duosexual Heads] Yeah, you see. So God just gives rise to another god in the simulation. And the same thing in that simulation. And so on and so on. So it's spiteful, angry, basement-dwelling gods all the way down.

### H4 > >>|

Tommy hmmmmed. He bent forward. He planted his elbow on his knee. He placed his chin in his palm. He still held the umbrella handle absolutely parallel to the ground.

# The Irrational Root of Rationality, Or Maybe An Epistemological Side-Cut In Relation To Desire And Praxis

He said nothing else.

#### 

[Hartnette] One mountain town celebrates tonight after what some are calling a major windfall. But not everyone is so happy about it. News 10's Justin Adamite has more on this breaking story. Justin.

[Cut to Adamite standing in a parking lot.]

[Adamite] Yes. We're standing here outside the chamber of commerce in the town of End of the World, where county

officials have just announced the town's successful bid to secure a site within the town limits as the new home of Faber and Mirror. Now, for those who are unaware, Faber and Mirror specializes in the creation of the types of glass tubing usually used in the creation of neon lights and signage. The county began this bidding process over seven months ago. And enthusiasm for the project has been voiced from all across the township. We recorded this interview earlier with End of the World mayor Jeffrey Spinegold.

[Cut to a man with a large stomach and a bristle mustache.]

[Spinegold] This really is a great opportunity for the town. It will bring more than one-hundred-fifty jobs. And we hope it is just the start in the process of restoring the county's once great manufacturing base.

[Cut to Adamite.]

[Adamite] Now, as you can see behind me, support for the decision has not been unanimous among county residents who live just outside the town limits. We were able to speak to several residents earlier who did not want to be on camera. They say their reasons for opposing the measure are the lack of a democratic process on the part of the town. And some have expressed concern about property values in the surrounding area and what will happen once this plant moves in and starts operating. There is also some concern about how much pollution this plant will produce, as well as some worry about how much noise, or anything else, will be produced as a result of the manufacturing process and whether or not that will decrease the quality of life for those living nearby.

[Cut to a woman.]

[Woman] What's it going to smell like? None of these questions have been answered.

[Cut to Adamite.]

[Adamite] However, town leaders remain confident that this move is the best one for the township. Groundbreaking is tentatively scheduled, at this point, eight months from now. And we have been informed that more-detailed plans for the development will be made available to the public as soon as the steps down to the planning department offices have been repaired. Live in End of the World. I'm Justin Adamite. News 10.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] Also today, the newly established state commission on jobs released its first annual report. It shows that there has been a marked decrease in the number of workplace shootings over the past two years. Our media partner CirMax has more on this story.

[Cut to shots of road construction.]

[Cut to shots of a bottling plant.]

[Cut to shots of a packing station.]

[Narrator] Americans get back to work. It's what we do. But for some the idea of going to work can be a trying ordeal.

[Cut to a woman.]

[Woman] I just didn't know if I could go back in.

[Narrator] Meet Maxine.

[Maxine] I would just wake up in the morning and think about going in and I would start shaking.

[Narrator] Maxine used to work at the Bluehopps distribution center.

That is until the unthinkable happened.

[Cut to a shot of a man.]

[Man] You know, usually you work with earplugs in, or earmuffs on, due to the noise. So when you hear this kind of popping sound, you don't think of it.

[Narrator] Gerald was one of the workers in the warehouse that day.

[Gerald] I was driving the forklift. And there was this spark on the frame. And I looked, because what in the world could that have been?

[Narrator] What it had been was a stray bullet. Fifteen minutes before this man—

[Cut to a picture of a man.]

[Narrator] Nathan Taylor—is suspected of having entered the distribution center armed with a semi-automatic assault rifle. Maxine worked in the offices dealing with the paperwork.

[Cut to woman.]

[Maxine] We heard these bangs and—

[She wipes her eyes.]

[Maxine] Somebody came running in yelling he's got a gun.

[Narrator] Gerald found himself injured.

[Cut to man.]

[Gerald] It was just like -boom- and I fell over out of the lift and my leg hurt.

[Narrator] After police responded, a standoff ensued for eight hours. Long past nightfall, deputies entered the area.

[Cut to grainy night footage punctuated by flashes of light.]

[Narrator] Nathan Taylor died at the scene. But that wasn't the end of it.

[Cut to man.]

[Gerald] I figured I was going to die.

[He sits there ahold of his cane. His other hand grips his leg.]

[Gerald] It was a long time before I could think about going back to work again. Even past just getting out of the hospital, you start looking over your shoulder. A car backfires, you know, and you just can't be sure.

[Narrator] But there is recovery.

[Cut to woman.]

[Maxine] It took a long time. It really did.

[Narrator] Now Maxine has found a part-time job at a gas station near her home.

[Maxine] You have to take things one day at a time.

[Narrator] But the real good news for workers such as Maxine and Gerald is that, according to recent published studies by several state bodies and institutes, overall instances of workplace violence have fallen to the lowest numbers ever recorded. However, some remain unconvinced.

[Cut to a man in a white coat.]

[Man] It's a human psychological quirk.

[Narrator] Doctor Bradley Therapé is head of resources at the Institute For Human Potential Development.

[Therapé] Humans are primed for negative information. After all, it is what we might call the bad things that stand to do us, potentially, the most harm. So even though incidences of certain trends may be shown to be decreasing, perceptually it's difficult for people to shake the idea that it is actually happening everywhere and all the time. But the thing of it is it might not even be happening anywhere at all.

[Narrator] For workers such as Maxine, however, that means hope.

[Cut to woman.]

[Maxine] You just have to take everything one day at a time. And just because you think it's going on doesn't mean it is.

[Cut to a shot of a newsroom filled with active monitors and televisions.]

[Narrator] This has been a CirMax special presentation.

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"I'm paranoid they're gonna think I'm paranoid about being paranoid about them thinking I'm paranoid about them thinking I think they're thinking I'm thinking about them being paranoid about me being paranoid," Tommy said. "Just because they aren't out to get me," he said, "doesn't mean I'm not."

"You need a latinized name," Tammy said. "You can't be properly paranoiac without a latinized name."

"Of course, the notion of the barbaric big dick is inherited from the Greeks via the Romans," Tommy said. "They never could get around to inventing much on their own. Prejudices included." He hmmmmed. "So truly the greatest insult in such a system really would be the name Bigus Dickus."

"You're very cultured and enlightened then," Tammy said.

#### H || >>|

[Hartnette] A new business opens in Asheville that's really putting a smile on people's faces. Terry Plante has more. Terry.

[Cut to a shot of a smiley face sticker on a window.]

[Plante Narrates] Smiles galore.

[Cut to another shot of the shopfront. Smiley faces on sticks fill a wooden barrel that has a smiley face painted on it. Round balls with smiley faces hang behind the glass. Posters of various kinds of smiley faces are taped to the glass.]

[Cut to inside the store. Smiley-faced erasers stick on the ends of pencils that have smiley faces printed on them. Displays hang full with smiley-faced key chains.]

[Cut to an old woman wearing sunglasses with smiley faces and earrings with smiley faces.]

[Woman] Really, people just need to smile and be happy more.

[Plante Narrates] That's the motto of the new shop on Patton Avenue.

[Woman] People just need to be happy and smile more. And that's all there is to it.

[Plante Narrates] If you have a happiness deficiency, it's not likely you're not going to come away from here without something to bring up your daily dosage of smiles.

[Cut to a shot following the woman through the store.]

[Woman] Here we have some things you can hang from your dog's collar.

[Cut to another shot following the woman through the store.]

[Woman] And we've got temporary tattoos here for the kids. And all kinds of balloons.

[Cut to a shop worker blowing one up. She holds it pinched.]

[Plante Narrates] It's literally a place of miles of smiles.

[Cut to a shot of piled plushies.]

[Plante Narrates] Sometimes in great big piles.

[Cut to woman.]

[Woman] Really, everyone just needs to smile more. That's all there is to it.

[Plante Narrates] And it certainly does seem like this shop is going to have people smiling for a long time.

[Woman] There's never a day that's too bad for a smile. And there's never anything that can't be turned around by a smile.

[Cut to a shot of a smiling cashier handing a customer a receipt.]

[Cashier] Thank you, and come again.

[Cut to a shot of a customer.]

[Customer] Yeah, it really is a great place.

[She looks around from behind her sunglasses.]

[Customer] You really can't help but smile when you see this stuff.

[Cut to an old woman wearing sunglasses with smiley faces and earrings with smiley faces and with a smiley-face sticker stuck to her cheek.]

[Woman] That's the key. All you have to do is smile.

#### H > >>|

"Bleeeeeeeh," Tommy said. "Maybe Captain Marvelous was right. The world would be a better place if more people punched more old ladies."

"It'd be a good upper-body workout," Tammy said.

"But that would reverse the weakening of the American male," Tommy said. "And the decline in white male grip strength is a necessity for the nonexistent communist takeover, and without the threat of the communist takeover, why would anyone watch commercials?" He shook his head. But he still managed to keep the umbrella rigidly upright and stationary. "The only answer is that young women must start punching more old women in the face."

"I can deal with this," Tammy said.

#### H4 || >>|

[Aster] Also joining us now is Doctor Larry Praline as we talk about the recently uncovered report relating to the government's autism court and new testimony previously unreleased from Doctor Frederic Gronick, who was the primary witness for government prosecutors over the last couple of decades. Welcome to the show, Doctor Praline.

[Praline] Thank you.

[Aster] Starting with you, Doctor Praline, what is your opinion on these recent findings?

[Praline] I don't even know, really, where to start.

[Aster] It's hard to see how this won't lend more credence to the anti-vax movement.

[Praline] I think that's undoubtedly so.

[Aster] What's your personal reaction?

[Praline] Anger.

[Aster] With the government?

[Praline] With everyone. The government. The parents.

- [Aster] So, Doctor Eve, what do you feel about how Armitage III has handled the legal issues in this case? How do you feel about what's happened?
- [Eve] Well, first off, I need to point out that I'm no longer with the Armitage Group, don't I? And second, don't I need to point out that my last name is Hysteria?
- [Aster] I apologize. That was not in my notes.
- [Hysteria] Well, the legal actions were only completed this morning, weren't they?
- [Aster] So, Doctor Hysteria, how do you feel about what has happened in regards to these revelations?
- [Hysteria] I should also point out that I think I might now be a member of the Group For Hysteriosis. And our position on the matter could be: is there the possibility that it might be fundamentally flawed?
- [Aster] That's interesting. Doctor Praline, so can we go into a bit more depth as to your personal feelings?
- [Praline] Well, the thing I keep thinking about is how demonized autism is in this country. That's the real root of the problem.

[Aster] How so?

[Praline] Well, it's just this big horrible thing in the public consciousness.

[Aster] Are you claiming that autism doesn't leave those who have it impacted?

[Praline] I have to point out that it's a spectrum disorder. And it's disturbing to me that—My very good friend works for NASA. She's one of the most brilliant people I know. She lives a great life. She's married to a wonderful woman. She has two kids. And she has autism spectrum disorder. And there are these people out there who seem to think that it would be better to risk their children ending up dead than being like my friend. And I think that's really an appalling situation.

[Aster] Of course, many feel there is the extreme end.

[Praline] There's also an extreme end called death. And so far as we know, the number of children who have died from disease are infinitely and categorically greater than the number who have contracted some degree of autism from vaccinations.

[Aster] So who's responsibility is the risk? How does society as a whole take responsibility for this?

[Hysteria] I need to interject here, don't I? Because don't you think there's something we need to bring up? And that's the question, isn't it? Is the whole situation predicated on ownership?

[Aster] How is that, Doctor?

[Hysteria] We talk about parents doing what's right for children, but what right do they have to do that? Why should anyone

be granted unfettered access to forcibly impress upon people during the most elastic years of their developments whatever particular ideology those people happened to have had impressed upon them? It's just like ownership, isn't it? I mean, you dress a kid up in a stupid outfit and everyone thinks it's funny, don't they? But if you do the same to a dog, they will call animal protective services on you, right? Or not? Doesn't that happen? So which one's worse? And people are allowed to beat their kids to one degree or the other, right? But then if somebody did that to an adult because they wanted them to do what they wanted, we'd arrest them, wouldn't we?

[Aster] That's not really the question at hand, Doctor.

[Hysteria] But couldn't it be? Couldn't it be about ownership? Don't they get to decide if they live or die? And don't they get to decide if they get birth control? And if they become pregnant by rape, aren't they the ones that get to decide if they're going to have the baby or not? And aren't they the ones who get to decide who they date? And aren't they the ones that get to decide which body parts get cut off? And aren't they the ones who get to decide everything that they do?

[Aster] But as I said, that's not really the question at hand, Doctor.

[Hysteria] But if they can beat this stuff into their heads when they're younger, aren't they going to be psychologically primed for for for for whatever and and it doesn't matter if they supposedly become emancipated as adults because isn't the damage already done? Isn't it already done? Aren't they gonna replicate even if they don't want to replicate? Don't people who whip their children have stories about getting whipped as children that they cry about? So what if it is? So what if it is? And and and even when they're adults what about when the legal system hands power right back

to their parents like happened to Bettany Sparrow when she went a little crazy there for a while, right? But wasn't that exactly because of the economic exploitation by her parents in her teenage years?

[Aster] Well, we're talking about vaccines, Doctor. And pop stars don't have much to do with that.

[Hysteria] But but isn't it that all these people that watch these shows that're supposed to be wholesome family entertainment, like Bonanza, where you have the father who's dictatorial over the lives of his thirty-something-yearold sons, and that everybody thinks that's just so right, doesn't that maybe say something? Or or doesn't it say something that John Walton is the perfect or workalike father figure but that he's dictatorial to his wife and his grown daughters and physically violent with his children when they go against his will, and that's considered morally upstanding fatherhood, and couldn't that say something? And and what about how Thomas Jefferson had children with one of his own slaves who was actually his wife's half-sister and she got away to France and refused to come back and he got her to come back by promising to free their children, so he was keeping his own children as slaves and there wasn't anything wrong with that? And and doesn't it seem like-

[Aster] So, Doctor Praline, what do you want to say to these parents?

[Praline] I want to say that we have to try and do what's best for our children.

[Aster] And what do you say to those people who complain that this is all just about drug companies making money?



"We desire the economy without the economy," Tommy said.

"And the sex without the sex. And the body without the body. We desire everything but minus the it of itself. So it is that we desire the void in our bowels."

"There once," Tammy said, "was an overweight man who stopped eating and only drank water and took vitamins for eight months, and all he did was fart."

"We must downsize and minimalize," Tommy said, "so that we may upsize and supersize again with the same wonder lust." He looked up at the umbrella struts. He reached up. "Let us remember the starving children who would love to have these fine examples of North American insecto confectionari and gorge ourselves to the point of sickness." He slid one from a strut. He held it between his thumb and forefinger. He looked at it. "Suffer not the little children to suffer a lack of holiday presents," he said. He popped the insect into his mouth. He crunched it. "I eat on their behalf." He looked down. "I watch in their stead."

#### **₩** || **>>**

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an old man.]

[Pentagon] Just look at all the deaths that were required to start and create the U.S.S.R.. The entire project is founded upon and steeped in blood and death, blood and death that continued for decades, throughout its existence. That's fundamentally why they lost to these United States. By rejecting Enlightenment values, they rejected the very thing that allowed these United States to be founded on a firm and stable foundation. Blood is not a stable foundation. Any country that can only exist by killing millions of people can't exist in the long term.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### H4 || >>>

[A bearded thirty-something guy stands in front of a generic back-ground.]

[Guy] So since everybody's talking about the meme, here's the clip in context.

[Cut to a shot of several people seated on a conference stage and holding microphones.]

[Clip] In a way, writing a book is like an assault, because nobody asked for it, but there it is impressing itself upon you with its existence. You're kind of haunted by the spectre of knowing it's there. Well, it's just sort of that it's totally unasked for. It's just a huge presumption, because, after all, there are already all these other books out there. Maybe even there's even too many of them out there. You're never going to be able to read them all. And just knowing one more's added to the pile, well, that feeling of hopelessness might just be accentuated. It seems like it could really make life seem overwhelming and pointless. So it really does seem to me that sometimes this does seem like it might be some kind of abuse.

[Cut back to guy.]

[Guy] So does this change the picture? Leave your comment below.

#### **(4 || ▶**

[Hartnette] Coming up on News 10—another house explodes in a gas leak. What you need to know—and is your family at risk? And the small thing you can do to make a big difference in your and your family's safety.

#### 

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. Two are dressed in jeans and t-shirts. One is dressed in shorts.]

[Interviewer] So what's your unpopular book opinion?

[Jeans #1] Like, the ones we like that other people don't, or what?

[Interviewer] What books do you think are overrated?

[Jeans #2] Definitely Lord of the Rings.

[Jeans #1] Really?

[Jeans #2] It's so slow. There's more words for the landscape than anything that actually happens in it.

[Interviewer] What about you?

[Jeans #1] Me? I don't know. I don't know, I guess I don't think comic books are as literary as novels.

[Shorts] Dude, you're at a comic convention.

[Jeans #1] I didn't say I didn't like it. It just doesn't seem to me like anybody's done anything that holds up.

[Shorts] Come on. Maus.

[Jeans #1] Yeah, maybe. But that doesn't mean there's anything literary about Batman.

[Jeans #2] You're talking about American mythology, here.

[Jeans #1] It's not a mythology. Nobody believes in it. It's not like there's temples to Superman.

[Shorts] Well, Superman isn't real but the idealism is.

[Jeans #1] I think it's just fun. It's like junk food. It tastes good. It's probably not good for you. And leave it at that.

[Shorts] That's just insulting.

[Jeans #1] I'm not trying to insult anyone. I'm here. I like it.

[Shorts] But you don't feel it.

[Jeans #1] Well, fine, next time I'll come up with a popular unpopular opinion.

[Interviewer] What about you?

[Shorts] I don't have one. I think everything has it's place.

[Jeans #2] What a buncha bull.

[Shorts] I'm perfectly happy to leave everyone to their thing. I just don't see why there's any need to be tribal. Everybody can do their thing.

[Jeans #2] Well, I'm gonna go see if I can find the Ragnarok booth before they sell out of posters.

[The other guy in jeans follows. The guy in shorts stands there with his hands in his pockets, smiling as he looks into the camera.]

#### H4 || **▶**

[An image of a painting occupies the upper left corner of the frame.]

[Orgone] No, it's not a child's kindergarten drawing. This wonderful piece of artwork could've been yours if you happened to have an extra forty-million dollars laying around. That's right, folks. Only a mere forty-million dollars. To put that in perspective,

[A thumbnail of another painting appears below the first.]

[Orgone] this newly uncovered Caravaggio sold for just under twenty-million dollars. So what makes something that looks like a bunch of melted crayons sell for more than twice what this breathtaking piece of mastery and craftsmanship sells for? With us to discuss this is Michael Freeman of the Los Angeles Art Institute.

- [The image subdivides into two frames. The new frame is on the left.]
- [Orgone] So, Michael, why is it that this is the case? Why is the art market so seemingly upside down?
- [Freeman] I think that's just a misunderstanding.
- [Orgone] What's the misunderstanding?
- [Freeman] There's obviously value in it. Just because you don't happen to see it—
- [Orgone] Perhaps it's a case of I don't know art but I know what I like.
- [Freeman] Well, maybe you should come down to the exhibition and you would find something to appreciate in it.
- [Orgone] But isn't this art market really propped up by a bunch of questionable circumstances? Isn't it true that there's a big issue with high-end modern art being used for money laundering by these large criminal agencies?
- [Freeman] Well, that's sort of beside the point, if it were happening.

  After all, we know real estate is used for money laundering as well. Anything can be used that way.
- [Orgone] At least someone can sit on the inside of a house. Of course, I guess they could sit on the inside of this thing too. This is a sculpture that sold not too long ago.
- [An image appears onscreen between them.]
- [Freeman] Yes, that is a very renowned sculpture by Edward Hendricks.
- [Orgone] Really, it looks like a bunch of melted metal. So how do you tell the difference between something like this and something that fell down somewhere?

[Freeman] Well, there's the artist, for one.

[The image of the sculpture disappears.]

[Orgone] Yes, but do you really think that it's right that one of these pieces sells for more than a Michelangelo, or even something from Da Vinci? Can you really say that these people are up to that level, that they're worth more than the greatest artists in human history?

[Freeman] I think that the buyer thinks so.

[Orgone] But isn't this just relativism? Isn't this just a group of people trying to say that art is all subjective, so really if you don't think they're as good as, say, Michelangelo, that you're just wrong?

[Freeman] I think it's the work and passion on the part of the artist that gives a piece its indefinable quality.

[Orgone] But can you really say that something like this is anywhere near the amount of work, or requires anywhere near the amount of skill, as, say, the Sistine Chapel? I mean, can you really say that? I mean, can you really, really say that?

"What drama," Tommy said. He leaned forward. He chewed hard. "Whom will break first? Will anybody be left? Who will be right? Who will be left? Will the entire contest end in a draw? Can we possibly stand the excitement?"

#### H4 || >>

[Orgone] I'm sorry. But hold on one moment.

[He pauses. He presses his finger to his ear.]

[Orgone] Thank you very much, but we have some breaking news, and we have to cut this short. Thank you for being with us.

## [Freeman] I—

[The left frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk grows to fill the void.]

#### **H**

"Hah." Tommy threw up his free hand. This time the umbrella did shift somewhat. "Alexander slices through," he swept his hand across as if he were doing a lateral judo chop, "the double reverse deadlock." He settled down again with his elbow on his thigh. He placed his chin in his palm.

### H | >>|

[Orgone] It's just been reported to us that state authorities stationed along the North Carolina South Carolina border have announced the seizure of two-thousand pounds of pornographic magazines. So—

[He presses his finger to his ear.]

[Orgone] So we're going to have analyst Johnathan Seared come in. And he is going to discuss with us the importance of this particular seizure.

[The image subdivides into two frames. A man with white hair and a white mustache is in the other right frame.]

[Orgone] So, John, besides the obvious, what is the big deal here? Why is this so important?

[Seared] It's important because it's the first big-case test of North Carolina's newest laws regarding interstate pornography.

[Orgone] So this is not a free speech issue, as I understand it, correct?

[Seared] No, definitely not.

[Orgone] Explain to us why that is.

- [Seared] Now, legally speaking, the First Amendment, of course, has primacy. However, as with the original federal border, the membrane between the outside and the inside, if you will, the dividing line that is the border, occupies its own special case. So transporting obscene material across the United States border or through customs has always been illegal. And this case is proving for the first time the precedent for this traditional legal border policy in regards to these newly redefined borders. So in some ways it's only really a technical step. But nonetheless it is what sets the precedent.
- [Orgone] So just to be very clear that this is not a free speech issue, go through how this works in that regard.
- [Seared] It's not a free speech issue because no one is being stopped from saying or producing anything. It's not about what the material in question is, by itself. It's about whether it passes over a border area. So in that regard, people are in no way forbidden from creating or possessing any material which it is legal to do so. So the First Amendment is just not applicable here.
- [Orgone] Now, this is the first physical instance of this, correct? But there has been a telecom version of this precedent already, isn't that right?
- [Seared] Yes, there was an earlier and ongoing case involving a pornstar who had contracted an out-of-state service for setting up certain technical aspects of a business. And the courts are currently determining whether this cross-border activity constitutes a type of facilitation of the production of something that wouldn't itself be illegal, but the cross-border aspect of it might. And that's what the state prosecutor is currently arguing.

[Orgone] But still, this isn't a free speech issue.

[Seared] No. No one is currently being prosecuted for the possession or manufacturer or distribution of any legal material within the state.

[Orgone] Well, thank you for keeping us up to date on that, John.

[Seared] My pleasure.

#### H > >>

"I hate Gummy Bears," Tommy said. "I used to crush blueberries and put them in leftover glass vanilla-extract bottles with water and pretend it was gummy berry juice and drink it and jump around." He looked up between the umbrella struts. "Life is all about failures of replication." He scratched his bearded cheek. "Another mistake that other guy makes is that of in regards to taking issue with finding unbalanced women sexually desirable. The mistake he makes where he overlooks that vulnerability is intimacy."

"Same problem with nude photos," Tammy said.

Tommy hmmmmed. He looked down at the screen. "No," he said. "Not at all." He planted his elbow on his thigh. He rested his chin in his palm. "Or at least only partially. However, maybe totally."

# Advancements In Robopsychopathology

"Of course, de Sade was correct," Tammy said. "The victim should be the one punished for the crime. Theirs, after all, are the only truly shameful circumstances."

Tommy hmmmmed.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] Protesters gathered today at the recreational park in the town of Kingsly to call attention to one of the landmarks there. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on this story. Sylvia.

[Cut to Borges standing in a parking lot.]

[Borges] Thanks, Tom. As you can see, protesters have gathered behind us here in the parking lot off from the baseball field. They are here protesting the removal of the building that used to set right over here behind us.

[Cut to a clip of Borges holding a microphone toward a woman.]

[Borges] Why are you out here?

[Woman] We just thought someone should say something about the preservation of this fantastic old building. It really was an iconic landmark.

[Cut to the present.]

[Borges] As you can see, the building was removed a little over a year ago and a corrugated metal shed put in its place to serve as an equipment storage facility. The original building was a stone structure. Which we were able to obtain a picture of.

[An image of a photograph of a two-story stone building appears onscreen.]

[Borges] The building was one of the few remaining structures originally built by the Civilian Conservation Core. Now as for the CCC, it was a federal program that was begun during the Great Depression to provide employment and jobs skills for young men by contributing to public works improvements projects. Kingsly town officials and county commissioners voted to demolished the building after it was decided that the building was insufficient for the town's and the county's current needs. Town officials have yet to release a statement in regards to the situation. However, the feeling on the ground is, Tom, that these protests have just gotten started. This is Sylvia Borges. Live from Kingsly. For News 10.

#### 

[Question] This is for Mister Straw. What story would you say you remember most from back then? What's the one that sticks out in your mind the most?

[Straw] Well, that's one of those questions that's both the easiest and the hardest to answer.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] I had one.... I remember it for two reasons. The first reason, it was written at about the same time as Weinbaum was writing Parasitic Planet. And they sold about the same time. Mine sold to Super Timely Science Fiction. So they were sold at about the same time, but mine was published about nine months later. And if you want to know, it was the magazine's second issue, and that was also the last issue. What that tells you, I don't know.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] So I got to be the derivative. And of course, Weinbaum died not too long after that, so that's also why I remember it. So is that the second reason? Then I gotta add a third one.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Sorta the thing about science fiction is it's like science, as soon as you put it on paper, you find out you're wrong.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] So at the time, it was commonly believed that Venus was tidal locked. So the sorta general idea was that one side of it would be facing the sun and would be a desert, and the other would be always cold, so it'd be ice. But there'd be this really narrow

strip where the two met that'd be a jungle. And of course, we know it's not exactly like that now. So, oh well.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] So the one other thing I'll say is the two stories had something else in common. They both had the protagonist with someone else in one of these kinda bulky spacesuit things and the other person at the end turns out to have been a hot girl all along.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Which, you know, it sounds like somebody was stealing from somebody else, but you just had a lot of that back then. It just seemed like every other protagonist couldn't recognize a female of the species to save his life.

[Audience laughter.]

### **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] The other night we reported on a prayer meeting still underway at the Red Ridge Playhouse. However, we must correct that, in fact, the church that is leading these efforts is not the Tuscanalon Reformed Priorative Baptist Church, but is, in fact, the Tuscanalon Priorative Reformed Baptist Church. Members of the Tuscanalon Reformed Priorative Baptist Church, today, released a statement reiterating that they are, in fact, not the ones engaged in these meetings and that quote anyone interested in that should go across the street.

[The shot changes to the second camera. He turns to face it.]

[Hartnette] In other news, retired and world-renowned architect William Shaeffer was arrested yesterday after being charged with breaking and entering. It's alleged that the retired architect broke into the home of a couple and rearranged the furniture. The house in question was originally one designed by Shaeffer in the nineteen-sixties. Shaeffer was released this morning on a one-million-dollar bond. Following the incident, a statement has been released by the American Panel of Modernist Architects expressing their commitment to the preservation of an individual's artistic vision but that they do not directly support Shaeffer's actions.

#### H4 || >>|

[Orgone] Everybody wants to be sick these days. You see it, folks. Everybody's always posting on Facebook about how they've got depression or autism or the results of their medical tests. Why? Are they going to be taking pictures of what's in their toilet bowls next? I mean, why not, they put everything else out there, why not that? So with us to discuss why society's gotten so disgusting lately is Douglas Sherbet. He is a former medical associate researcher for TANK and, though nominally retired, has just published a book entitled The Snake And The Staff: How Medicine Became Non-Medicinal, which is out now from Shotput Press. Thank you for coming on the show, Douglas.

[Sherbet] Thank you for having me.

[Orgone] So, in the book, you actually start by going back all the way to when recorded medicine first starts, is that correct?

[Sherbet] Yes, well, I thought it appropriate to start at the beginning.

[Orgone] Now, there's actually quite a lot of fascinating stuff here.

[He flips through the pages of a book lying on the news desk.]

[Orgone] But what I really want to get at is now. What is it about now that's so medically different? Why does everyone want to have some medical excuse for everything?

[Sherbet] Well, that's an interesting question. It's, of course, rather hard to sum up. Of course, if I could answer it in a few sentences I wouldn't have written a book. But I would have to say, if you wanted to reduce it to one factor, I would say it's preoccupation with the defense.

[Orgone] And how is that?

[Sherbet] Well, so long as it's medically related, it's seen as lacking the category of personal responsibility.

[Orgone] So is this a liberal influence on the medical establishment? It's nobody's fault. Nobody's responsible. You go out and stick your head in a pencil sharpener and it's okay, it's not your fault?

[Sherbet] To a degree, you could say that.

[Orgone] But really, isn't that the argument they keep pushing for socialized-communist healthcare? It doesn't matter what you do, it's okay, we'll pay for it. So you should just do whatever.

[Sherbet] Yes, well, there has, I think, been a general attitude shift since we've given up the idea of the town doctor, as it were.

The Doc Adams sort of doctor. Generally, it used to be that people wanted to be healthy, or at least not sick. And if they wanted to be, it was seen as a sign of illness.

[Orgone] And then these days you have people doing things like men wearing dresses and that kind of thing. And all of this was medical. It was listed right there in the medical books until they made them take it out. So don't you think there's a pride in being sick now? Does it make them feel special, or something?

[Sherbet] Sickness can sometimes be a trend. There are periods in history were certain illnesses were trendy. There's

a very social phenomena to it. For example, you can record the uptick in suicides following the publication of a German book titled the Saga of Young Werther, which was published a few hundred years ago. So for a time there was a small but definitive increase in suicidal tendencies as part of what might be referred to as a fashion trend.

[Orgone] So, what, are they going to be walking down the catwalks with black plague next? I mean, some of these models they get up there already look like they have a few things anyway.

[Sherbet] Well, I cannot say as to that.

[Orgone] Maybe your next book should be about figuring out why these so-called men who go into fashion seem to think real men should find these kinds of women attractive.

[Sherbet] Maybe so. Once upon a time there was a more medically related concern for areas like that. But I'm afraid it's psychology now.

[Orgone] Well, thank you for coming on. And thank you very much for the book.

[Sherbet] Thank you for having me.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] And if you want to read an exclusive excerpt from Doctor Sherbet's just recently published book—literally hot off the presses, if you will—you can hop over to our website.



Something, somewhere, buzzed. I glanced up, but it'd gone.

#### **₩**

[Shots of robots and laser blasts from a black-and-white movie.]

[Narrator] It seems like a scene from a Terminator movie. A gunwielding robot runs amok. Once again, this seems to have been a case of fiction becoming reality.

[Cut to a shot of a dilapidated industrial town.]

[Narrator] Lebrash, Iowa is home to many longstanding traditions. It's a place where generations of families have grown up working in American industry. And even as steel mills and motor works closed, one business has remained a constant lifeline to that tradition.

[Cut to a panning shot of a building exterior.]

[Narrator] Brighton Arms has manufactured firearms since first opening its doors in 1853. Its first success came with the creation of the Brighton Third—a cartridge-loading revolver that quickly became a must-have item among many Union commanding officers. Ten years later the company produced the Brighton Mark Two. A long rifle that, for a time, competed with the Sharps for claims as to distance and accuracy among buffalo hunters in the American west. The single-shot breach loader proved so successful among certain big game enthusiasts that it continued to be produced well into the nineteen-twenties. Originals can still be found in many private collections such as those of Ernest Hemingway and of George Vanderbilt, who commissioned a custom version of the signature rifle in 1901 and which is still viewable in the armaments collection at the Biltmore House in Asheville, North Carolina.

[Cut to a panning shot of a series of black-and-white photographs framed and hung together along a wall.]

[Narrator] A family-owned business for more than a century-anda-half, Brighton Arms has found a small but dedicated niche that it seems can only be filled by the love and dedication such as only a family-controlled operation can have.

[Cut to a man holding up a black-painted rifle.]

[Man] This is our Mark 15 model. It's made for light semi-automatic operation.

[He pulls back the bolt. He lets the bolt snap forward.]

[Man] And the standard magazine holds forty-rounds.

[He pulls out the magazine. He snaps it back into place.]

[Narrator] Never content with the status quo, Brighton Arms has always been moving forward from day one.

[Cut to a shot of a living room. A man and a woman sit on a couch. The two title graphics at the bottom of the frame state: 'Mio Brighton' and 'Constance Brighton'.]

[Mio Brighton] When my great great great, well it's a lot of greats, so we just usually say greatest, so when my greatest grandfather opened this company the first thing he thought of was how could it be done better? And that meant everything about it. Not just how the firearm was itself designed. But every step in the process for how that firearm would get made.

[Cut to a panning shot of a series of black-and-white photographs framed and hung together along a wall.]

[Narrator] Buck Brighton's efforts, as well as those of his son Thalo Brighton, would in many ways be pioneering in the industry. Later, Buck Brighton's youngest grandson would leave the family to go to work with the Ford Motor Company. However, he would eventually disappear after he accompanied Ford to handle his South American endeavor. The disappearance left a hole in the family that, in some ways, can still be felt to this day.

[Cut to living room.]

[Mio Brighton] My grandmother would always say he was going to come back. Every time someone knocked on the door, she'd go expecting it to be him.

[Cut to a panning shot of a series of black-and-white photographs framed and hung together along a wall.]

[Narrator] Other of the children left as well. Celia Brighton—Buck Brighton's oldest daughter—would eventually marry and move to North Carolina with her husband, who began the Bowling Green Sewing Machine Works in 1879.

[Cut to a panning shot of a factory floor.]

[Narrator] And this innovation has not ceased. Still, Brighton Arms works to be at the forefront of firearms manufacturing technology.

[Cut to a man standing next to a wheeled industrial robot. The man pats the robot's metal casing.]

[Man] This's who we call Mobi.

[A panning shot reveals smiley faces painted in ninety-degree intervals around the robot's housing.]

[Narrator] Robots, of course, have long been used in manufacturing.

Brighton Arms was in fact one of the first to adapt the

larger heavy-industry robots to smaller assembly line processes.

[Man] He weighs a little over six-hundred pounds. But luckily, he doesn't have a health-insurance premium.

[Narrator] Mobi is the newest generation of robots doing things that robots have never before done.

[Cut to a shot of a man walking down a corridor.]

[Man] So he comes down through here.

[He opens a door.]

[Man] And then it goes in here, and this is the packing and shipping department.

[Narrator] Mobi is the test case. Brighton Arms is determining just how easily robots can supplement human activity on the factory floor.

[Man] So we have everything from final assembly to testing, which is done right down here.

[Narrator] But then something went wrong.

[Cut to a shot of a man standing in front of miscellaneous equipment.]

[Man] We had been doing several weeks worth of testing. We'd had several good runs. But then what often happens is something happens.

[Cut to a panning shot of the outside of the factory.]

[Narrator] Four-thirty-one PM. Gunfire is reported by neighboring businesses. Fifteen minutes later, Lebrash police arrive on the scene.

[Cut to officer.]

[Officer] It was like all hell'd broken loose.

[Narrator] Mio Brighton had already gone home.

[Cut to living room.]

[Mio Brighton] It was about five o'clock, and I got an email. So I knew something was going on. So we went down there immediately.

[Narrator] What they found looked like something out of a war movie.

[Mrs Brighton] There was just gun fire everywhere.

[Cut to a panning shot of the factory parking lot.]

[Narrator] Lebrash police vehicles, which had pulled into and stopped in the factory parking lot, sat riddled with bullet holes.

[Cut to officer.]

[Officer] There wasn't much of a place to go, so you just try and stay behind cover and try to get something between you and whatever's flying at you.

[Narrator] The real worry still lay ahead, however.

[Officer] What we were afraid of was that it would break out someway. Between the vehicles and the building, we kind of had it cordoned off. But we couldn't be too sure of that. It had entered and exited the building a few times. And we were worried it might utilize a back way out.

[Narrator] Luckily for Lebrash officers, however, beyond the back of the factory was only open field. And the robot's wheels, combined with its weight, would have left it stuck had it tried that.

[Officer] So the best option was really just to try and contain it until we had a break in the situation.

[Narrator] That break came when Mobi had exhausted the ammo stock available for weapons testing.

[Cut to living room.]

[Mio Brighton] We don't keep an excessive stock. One of our safety measures is making sure we don't have more than we need.

[Cut to officer.]

[Officer] Once the ammo had been exhausted, we were able to get a wrecker in and pull out one of the patrol cars and roll in a dump truck. And as it tried to flee, we were then able to use the dump truck to strike the robot and topple it.

[Narrator] The standoff was over. It had lasted for just over four hours.

[Cut to living room.]

[Mio Brighton] Of course, we were very fortunate. No one had been injured. It just goes to show that we were lucky, in one sense, to be doing these experiments. Since everyone had been sent home, there was no possibility of workers being casualties.

[Mrs Brighton] God was watching over everything.

[Mio Brighton] Yes.

[Narrator] Mobi remains in retirement.

[Mio Brighton] A robot can really be sort of like a dog that gets sick. Sometimes the most humane thing to do is to just end the suffering.

[Cut to a panning shot of a parking lot.]

[Narrator] However, Lebrash police are currently in talks to contract Brighton Arms to devise a newer version of the system for use by the department in the event any such future incidents occur. The Lebrash mayor is a fan of the idea.

[Cut to a shot of a man on a set of steps.]

[Mayor] I think it can generally be said that we support anything that allows us to prevent officers being put in harm's way.

[Cut to a panning shot of the factory floor.]

[Narrator] Even though Mobi will not be returning to the assembly line, Brighton Arms is still moving forward.

[Cut to Mio Brighton walking along the factory floor, along a length of equipment covered with milky plastic.]

[Mio Brighton] What we hope to have is the first end-to-end production chain. In essence, the raw materials will come in at that end of the line, and down at the other end, the completed product will be packed and rolled out ready for shipment, all in one process without anything leaving the line.

[Narrator] For Brighton Arms, it's a simple human math.

[Mio Brighton] We just figure that the fewer people you've got working on the line that just means the fewer

people who can get injured on the line. The most fundamental aspect of safety is that if you don't need to do it, don't do it.

[Narrator] And what does he think about Terminator coming to life?

[Cut to a shot of Mio Brighton laughing.]

[Mio Brighton] Fortunately, this was just like any other industrial accident. Mobi just couldn't understand what he was doing, in that sense. It's just one of those growing pains technology has to go through.

[Narrator] And does he think machines will take over the world?

[Cut to a shot of Mio Brighton laughing.]

[Mio Brighton] I don't really worry about it, I'll put it that way.

[Narrator] But then again—

[Cut to a shot of an intense red light slowly pulsing in the center of the frame.]

[Narrator] who knows what the future holds?



# Penultimately, The Unit's End Unto Itself Is Probably Its Deployment As A Means To An End

"I now pronounce obvious commentary," Tommy said.

"And I pronounce obvious commentary upon your commentary," Tammy said.

Aircraft roared not so distantly overhead. Everyone but the freelancers looked up. We looked down, again, as the sound faded into the distance. [Orgone] So now one more thing is added to the list of things we can't do—according to the leftist liberals. You may have seen this popular video—

[A video plays in the upper left corner of the frame.]

[Orgone] in which a young three-year-old girl has to be persuaded to hug her grandmother goodbye. A cute moment, right? Well, for those of you who don't know, this is now rape, too. That's right, folks, now even having kids hug their grandparents is rape. You know, this is almost too stupid to talk about. But unfortunately, it's the world we live in, folks.

[The image subdivides into two frames. A white-headed man is in the other frame.]

[Orgone] So here to enlighten us about this very obvious stupidity is Jean Fellows from the Center for Media Recuperation. Welcome onto the show, Jean. I just wish it was under better circumstances.

[Fellows] Thank you for having me.

[Orgone] And we also have Professor Gene Kanada from the Center for Media Studies.

[The image subdivides to allow a third frame. This frame is on the left. A white-headed man with glasses is in this frame.]

[Orgone] So what is the deal here, Jean? Are we just dealing with pure irrationality? Has the insanity just finally broken over the dam and now is flooding the whole place? Or What?

[Fellows] Well, what you kind of have here is a sort of classic case of drawn focus. That is, people are talking about the little

girl crying, of the look on the little girl's face, and so on. So that image becomes sort of socially isolated. And it becomes the determiner for the aspect as a whole.

[Orgone] So is it just a manipulation?

[Fellows] After a fashion. The problem that arises is that concentrating on the sub-scene has the effect that it can change the nature of the picture as a whole in a very contradictory fashion. So in this case, we have something that's overall very positive in this family interaction situation, something that I'm sure they will look back on fondly in years to come, but which has been distorted by simply focusing on the wrong aspect.

[Orgone] So, Professor Kanada, why is it that everyone is focusing on the wrong aspect?

[Kanada] I don't think anyone is. It's just that the situation as we are in now has really primed people to attune to certain things that have always been going on in womens' and girls' lives but that have never before been promoted into the mainstream consciousness in any substantial way.

[Orgone] And what could possibly be the problem with a little girl hugging her grandmother?

[Kanada] It's that it's become emblematic of the situation with young girls, in general, that they're taught from a very young age that it is the other person's happiness and desires that are their responsibility, that what the other person wants takes precedent over what they want, even though we ostensibly tell our children that other people shouldn't make them do what they don't want.

[Orgone] Oh, come on. It's the kid hugging her grandmother. They only see them twice or something a year, right? Or only at

Christmas. How do you think it's going to make that little girl feel if she doesn't hug her grandmother and looks back on it from further down the road? This's just the parents looking out for the little girl. As parents are supposed to do. They're just doing their job. Why does the leftist-liberal, mainstream media want to distort this so much?

- [Kanada] I don't think it is a matter of distortion. It's just a matter of seeing what was there all along.
- [Orgone] Oh, come on. Children have been hugging their grandparents at Christmas since Christmas began. And suddenly now it's doing some kind of harm?
- [Kanada] It's much more complicated than that. And it extends far beyond just this single encounter. These sorts of situations are endemic in girls' lives.
- [Orgone] You make it sound like some kind of disease. Is hugging a disease now? Or is it just hugging in general? The left really seems to have something against people hugging, doesn't it? What do you think about that, Jean?
- [Fellows] I think from the data we've gathered—though it hasn't been published just yet—but I think I can say with a degree of certainty that instances of media portrayals of hugging have decreased considerably in the last decade or so.
- [Orgone] So is this just an attack on Christmas? Or is this an attack on the family? Or what? Why do you hate Christmas, Professor?

[Kanada] I don't.

[Orgone] Well, you're sure not helping it.

[Kanada] I'm not here to be for or against Christmas.

[Orgone] Why is it, Professor, that so many academics have this leftist-liberal, anti-Christmas attitude? Is that personal? Is there something that happened around Christmas time that made you turn against it? Didn't get the toy you wanted, so capitalism bad? Is that why you gravitated toward academia? Or was it after your gravitation toward leftist-liberal academia that you began turning against the idea of Christmas?

[Kanada] I don't see what Christmas has to do with particularly anything.

[Orgone] Well, it is the biggest holiday in the world. So it must have something to do with something. So, Jean, does this now mean the war on Christmas has turned into this year-round affair? Is this what we can expect now, just a relentless year-long push from December twenty-sixth onward?

[Fellows] That is difficult to say with very much a degree of certainty, at this point. The only thing I can say for certain is I noticed the other day that instances of the phrase 'Christmas in July' appear to be down overall.

[Orgone] I mean, it's just a wholesale attack. There isn't going to be anywhere you're going to be safe. You'll be celebrating the fourth of July—and they'll be beating you over the head with candy canes and tearing the stuffing out of Santas. I assume you've seen that video.

[Fellows] Yes, I have.

[Orgone] What about you, Professor? Have you seen the video of the dog tearing the stuffing out of the poor Santa?

[Kanada] I have.

[Orgone] Isn't this just a basic disrespecting of religious objects?

- [Kanada] I don't really think so. No.
- [Orgone] Yes, but of course, if it were a Koran then you all would be going to pieces. Wouldn't you be saying something different if it were a Koran?
- [Kanada] That would be a different case. It—
- [Orgone] Exactly. It doesn't matter what you attack that's fundamentally American. It's all about tearing these United States down. So we'll just let you get back to that. Next I'm sure there will be some videos on why biting the heads off gingerbread men is racist or genocide or something. So thank you, Professor.

[The left frame disappears. The two remaining frames grow to fill the void.]

- [Orgone] So, Jean, is there a way we can get back to concentrating on the big picture? Looking at things overall. As they really are. How do we get back to that? Is there a way we can get back to it? Or have the leftist liberals just completely overwhelmed everything and there's just no going back now? What do you think?
- [Fellows] As you might know, I've worked with this problem some jointly with my colleague, Thomas Crouton.
- [Orgone] Yes. Absolutely. What have you been working on?
- [Fellows] Unfortunately, I can't reveal that just yet.
- [Orgone] Well, thank you for being on, Jean. We were very glad to have you.
- [Fellows] Thank you very much for allowing me on.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] So coming up—universities taking your tax dollars to teach students how to weave underwater. That's right, folks—underwater basket weaving is back. And no, this is not a joke. If only it were. If only it were. So stay tuned for that.

"Tea time," Tommy said. He rose. He stood there holding the umbrella as if it still could provide shade. "Let us recognize that almost all the world is a T-Haus," he said. "As well as the restroom within that T-Haus."

Tammy rose aswell.

We walked along the trampled path back toward the lean-tos and the fire. The fire must've burn low. It'd almost burnt out. It was hardly visible at all in the distance. Tommy dropped the umbrella. He turned. He grabbed me by both arms. "You embrace absolutely reality mustly," he said. Then he released me. He turned. He lifted the umbrella. He started, again, toward the lean-tos. The turtle still lay under one. It'd poked its head out but withdrew into itself as we approached. Tammy gathered a handful of leaves from the camp's perimeter. She squatted. She placed them on the black charcoal and ashes the fire'd become. She bent sideways. She blew. Time passed. The leaves smoldered. Tammy straightened. Smoke continued to rise till all at once the leaves burst into flames. She started to feed sticks onto the fire. Tommy stood in the midst of the camp. He looked straight up at the underside of the canopy. Tammy didn't look up at him. She motioned toward the bucket as the fire began to crackle. There was still, maybe, two cans worth inside, but I lifted it. I turned. I started toward the stream. For some reason, I glanced over my shoulder. The two remained just the way they'd been. I turned. I continued down to the stream. On the edge, at the head of where a footpath had been worn down between rocks, I stopped. I looked down into the bucket. Lifting it and grasping the bottom with my other hand, I brought the rim up to my mouth. I tilted back my head. I gulped down what remained. I panted as I looked

down into the bucket. A few drops ran to the bottom. Drops ran off my chin, Drops ran down my neck. I set the bucket on the rocks. I sat down beside it to remove my boots. I stuffed my socks into my boots. The socks smelled like they needed to be washed. I rubbed my feet. The socks'd left impressions in my skin. I'd worn my boots while sleeping. I realized how many straight days I'd had them on. It felt cooler by the stream. I looked out over the water. I looked up at the camp. I looked out at the tents. Nothing seemed to've changed position. I bent. I tried to cuff my pants but only got them up to just below my knees, and even then they were tight. I slipped off the rock. I stepped down the path. I stepped into the edge of the water. Mud squished up between my toes. I froze a moment like that. Then, with effort and sucking sounds, I pulled free. I stepped across the slippery, rounded stones along the bottom of the stream, out far enough that it was really possible to feel the full movement of the current. Fish seemed to scatter farther out beneath the ripples and refracted light. The water pushed against the hair on my legs, which'd matted down beneath the socks. The feeling was almost a kind of painful. I dipped the bucket. It only needed to be halffilled, or so. Just enough for tea. But the one-sided weight suddenly makes things trickier when walking against the current, so it took me longer to get to shore than it did to get out. I went up the path. I set the bucket on a rock. I slid up beside it. Water ran off my legs. The drops ran over my feet. They trickled down the rock. The hairs on my lower leg were still just realizing they could stand up again. I unrolled my pants. The denim sucked up beads of water; the cuffs were dark and damp almost instantly. I wiped the bottoms of by feet over the rock, then against each pant leg. And I even put the socks back on. Even though they smelled. The hairs on my shins protested the re-confinement. I slipped my boots on but only barely tied them just enough to walk in. I slipped off the rock. I lifted the bucket. Up at the camp, they still remained exactly the same. They remained exactly the same as I continued up the trail. The only shift in the scene was the movement of the smoke as it rose and how light played between leaves in the canopy above. Tammy squatted there with her forearms resting on her thighs. Tommy looked straight up. I set the bucket down beside the fire. It was beginning to burn

good then. She'd put larger sticks on. They were just starting to catch. She added another. She reached over for the bucket. She lifted the bucket. She set it on the stones. Then she just squatted there the same as before.

The turtle poked out its head in the silent interval that passed. The lack of movement seemed to make it feel safer. I'm not sure even I moved except to look at it. My hands must've been in my pockets. It seems a pointless point. But it just feels correct to put down that was the case. I'm not sure if the turtle was a he or a she. Though, maybe they could switch back and forth. I never knew anything about turtles other than the difference between box turtles and a snapper. It might've even been an it for all I know or knew. Or maybe something else. There's supposed to be some stupid fish that's got twodozen or so genders. I didn't think about that then, I don't think. I just seem to remember it's something our biology teacher mentioned once. Or something like that. And yes, all of this seems like a really pointless digression from a digression. But, as had to've been put down before, there's just not that much to do when you're out in the woods. So sometimes you do end up standing around looking at nothing. In some primordial past, you might've at least been terrified of something. But by then there weren't any mosquitoes to give you West Nile, or whatever, or any spiders to bite you, or even any snakes, for that matter; the bear hides were stretched over the hoods of pickup trucks, and they were supposed to be working on the coyotes, so really, there wasn't anything. A tree could fall on you, I guess. Or you could fall off a cliff. Or down a waterfall. Or maybe get your toes chewed off by a box turtle, I don't know.

"Tea," Tammy said.

Tommy looked down from out of the canopy. He'd still been holding the umbrella this whole time. But now he turned it upside down. He stuck the chrome or stainless-steel point into the earth. It stood there straight up like that while he crossed the camp and stepped over the newly closed up turtle. He lifted a rough-woven basket piled with bark. He brought it over. He set it on the ground as Tammy used a stick to remove the boiling water from over the fire. She squatted there beside it. She added fistfuls of bark. She lifted one of the longer, heavier chunks of bark. She used it to stir. She watched

the water swirl round and the steam rise. Time passed. She dropped this piece in too.

When I turned, Tommy was walking back along the path toward the freelancer camp. He emerged again from between the distant colorful tents. He carried something in each hand. The one could've only been the tin can that'd been left behind. He set it with the others propped up on the rocks. He stepped around the fire. He dropped a small, empty, ripped cardboard box on the ground. Tammy still squatted there beside the steaming bucket. She didn't add the cardboard to the fire immediately. He touched the umbrella handle. He lightly turned it, so the point rotated in the ground and the struts spun like a helicopter or a carousel. He released his grip. The friction of the earth slowed the rotation almost immediately.

"Tea," Tammy said. Tommy moved around the fire and her, again. He lifted the tin cans. He passed one down to her. She carefully dipped it into the still steaming water. She handed it back up. He grasped it carefully at the top-most of the rim as steam curled out of it. He handed her down another. She dipped this one. She half-filled it. She set it on the ground beside herself. He handed down the last. She dipped it. She half-filled it. She held it up. I took it carefully. Though, I almost dropped it. I had to drop toward the ground and set it down. There seemed to be some trick to holding it that I never mastered. Either that or Tommy just didn't mind it either way. He sipped from his with airy slurps. His pinkie stuck out as it almost always did. Tammy raised her tin can. She held it gently. She blew into it and forced the steam around violently. I tried to lift my own. It was still too hot. Tommy slurped down another sip.

"Don't worry," he said. He sipped. "I made sure to put poison in yours." He laughed. "HILARIOUS!"

He sipped.

"Also I have consulted the six-thousand-million-or-so-year-old lizard who lives in my brain," Tommy said. He sipped his tea. "And she informs me that the central theological tenant of The Gospel of The Cobbler and The Tailor and the Seamstress and the Furniture Maker shall be that nothing fits." He sipped his tea. "And Mary to this shall be that truly it is that we are truly in existence in the bestest and only of all possible worlds." He sipped his tea. "Paul to these

shall be that that we need not fear colonization by any technological apparatuses." He sipped his tea. "For we have already been colonized by a primal technology." He sipped his tea. "And it is the technology through which all technology must witness itself and its realization and conceptualization." He sipped his tea. "For in the beginning was and were the Logos." He sipped his tea. "It is a technology like shiitake mushrooms. For nature must be only conceived of as machine." He sipped his tea. "That which colonizes so completely nothing else can compete." He sipped his tea. "The man-machine interface arose long ago." He sipped his tea. "And having served their function they were discarded." He tipped back his head and upended the tin can. He lowered his head again. He looked down into the tin can. "And only the postal service remains." He offered the tin can down to Tammy. She'd squatted there the whole time sipping at hers; now she set hers on the ground. She dipped his into the bucket again. She handed it up. She lifted her own tin can again. "Now all that remain to be elucidated upon," Tommy said, "are the definitions of the heresies." He sipped his tea. Fresh steam batted against his nose. "And to've defined the universal." He sipped his tea. "And the Protestant." He sipped his tea. "And finally, once all are within the fold, finally the whole lot of it can be discarded." He sipped his tea. "But also we must need holidays." He nodded to himself as he stood there ahold of the tin can and as steam rose from it. "We shall add a day to the calendar. A three-hundred-sixty-seventh day. And as this day will never be reachable it shall be our eternal goal. And we shall celebrate every day that we strive to reach this goal." He sipped his tea. He looked up at the underside of the tree canopy for a while. "The lizard that lives in my brain has informed me of the proto-definitions of the initial heresies that shall emerge." He sipped his tea. "They shall involve the addition of the Candlemaker, who shall be the shadow consciousness of the Candlestick Maker." He sipped his tea. "And the apocryphal documents of this shall be written on a role of paper made from tampon wrappers and bound together by sealing wax." He sipped his tea. "And our primal sin shall be that of choice." He sipped his tea. "For it is not that I choose the right thing or the wrong that is error but that I choose at all." He sipped his tea. He looked up at the underside of the tree canopy. "Perhaps

the lizard that lives in my brain will speak more later." He sipped his tea. "She seems to have gone to sleep now." He looked down into the tin can. He looked down into it for a while. "Mother, father, don't knife shame." He lifted the can to his lips and tilted back his head.

"When a cult becomes a religion," Tammy said, "it loses its specialness."

"That's what I said," Tommy said. He still looked down into his tin can. "A moon-man shall land upon the post-apocalyptic wasteland and there'll be a cardboard sign with: MOE DID IT." He turned. He set the tin can on a rock. He turned. He looked down at the red-hot coals that still remained of the fire. He rubbed his fingertips over his chest. When he looked up, he looked up and out toward the freelancer camp. "I must meditate," he said. He stepped around the fire. He started along the path.

Tammy tilted back her head. She drained her tin can. She rose. She set it on the rocks. She turned. She started along the path.

I carried mine. It'd gotten cold. I sipped at it as I walked, but it tasted like wood.

Up ahead, Tommy squatted beside one of the freelancers. But Tammy bent over another farther down and on the opposite side of the avenue and looked upside down at his screen.

"Originally gorilla gorilla," Tommy said.

#### **(4 || ▶**)

[Two gorillas have moved off into the bushes and away from the main group.]

Tommy held out his arm. "You're too young to see this," he said. He laughed. But he laughed at what was on the screen and not at me. "It's always the same with apes. Get found in the bushes filming a couple having sex, and they always look at you the same way." He lowered his arm.

Something, somewhere, buzzed. I glanced up, but it'd gone. Just like they always were. You might've begun to suspect they weren't even there.

"Maybe," Tommy said, "like Santa Claus, the presents just show

up, and we create our stories of how he oozed through the vents to do so."

He didn't look up from the screen as he said it.

#### H4 || >>|

[Orgone] You know, folks, when I was a kid, we actually had responsibilities. Certain things were expected of us. Call them chores. Call them whatever you want. But we knew we had to do certain things and those certain things got done. But that's not the way it is anymore. No, these days you can't ask kids to take any responsibility. You just can't.

"Knew a guy who tutored in Kant," Tommy said. "Got paid non-monetarily pretty well for it too."

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Orgone] I mean, what's wrong with letting kids get some good physical exercise? It's like going to summer camp. No. It is summer camp. You know, folks. You get to go to the farm. You get to see the animals. You can feed the animals. You know. It's a real education about the nature of life. You know, children need to be instilled with a sense of responsibility. You all know that. But the leftist liberals don't want any responsibility. And you know, you get these coastal leftist-liberal urbanites. Everybody knows the leftist liberals just flock to the city. They don't know anything about what's going on out there with real Americans. They don't know about the real Americans who struggle every day working the land to put food on the tables of these liberal elites. And they don't care. What do they know about farming? And that's why they can go around and make up stories about people getting fed to pigs. I mean, what kind of disconnected mind do you have to have to come up with things like that? Well, I think we know the answer, folks. No, according to the liberal elites, it's the real America that's dirty and disgusting and

racist and rapey and all kinds of words like that. Things like respecting history are bad. We shouldn't remember history. We should just tear down all these statues that're honoring all those men who died to make this country what it is. We should just forget about all of it. Well, folks, they say those who forget history are doomed to repeat it, don't they. And if we just want to get down to the real reality of it, America wasn't founded by people in cities. It was founded by the people who grew things. The pilgrims farming to raise the crops for the first Thanksgiving. You know, it was The Founding Fathers who were farmers. So when you disrespect farmers, you disrespect these United States of America. Well, I'm going to tell you, folks, I remember. And I had my bacon this morning.

[The image subdivides into two frames. The new frame is on the left.]

[Orgone] So now we're going to talk to Roberto Basting. So as I've just said, Roberto, I've had my bacon this morning. Are you going to try and punch me too?

[Basting] I didn't punch anyone.

[Orgone] Well, that's not exactly what the video says.

[The split image of the two of them is replaced by a shaky video that shows a group of people standing outside of a restaurant. Two men in the middle of this crowd are scuffling.]

[Cut back to a dual-paned shot of the main news desk and Basting.]

[Basting] He's the one that attacked me first.

[Orgone] So first you say you didn't hit anybody. Now you say you were just hitting him after he hit you? Why should we believe you if your story keeps changing?

- [Basting] Our story hasn't changed. We're still fighting for the right thing. The same that we've always been. It's just that the news—
- [Orgone] What about you, Roberto? You're out there protesting businesses and interfering with businesses. How is that right? What right do you have to stop people from doing what they want to do and what's legal?
- [Basting] We weren't blocking anything. It was the counter protesters who got in the way and blocked everything up.
- [Orgone] Oh, sure, yes. I'm sure it was, then. I mean, they were only there because of you. But if that's what you want to claim.
- [Basting] We have a right to protest.
- [Orgone] Sure. Just the same as those who came out because they decided things needed to be balanced out with a little bit of truth.
- [Basting] The truth is that it's America's meat obsession that's killing this planet. And consumers have a right to object to the practices that are going on.
- [Orgone] Fine. Just don't buy it, then. No one says you have to go get a burger. You're perfectly free to eat whatever soy-based product you want.
- [Basting] If people saw the videos—
- [Orgone] Roberto, we all know about deep fakes and Hollywood movie magic and Photoshop and all that. Not to mention that whatever these people might be doing, it's clearly illegal. People—
- [Basting] People have a right to be informed.

- [Orgone] Absolutely. But, Roberto, people have to observe the law. You just can't sneak around with cameras and film people's private property. I mean, do you want them coming into your house with cameras? Coming into your bedroom.
- [Basting] That's a totally different situation and—
- [Orgone] How's it different? It's your property and you want privacy. We have to defend American's privacy. So are you just saying that people should be allowed to walk in wherever? They should be allowed to lie and forge documentation to get these jobs? So you would just be alright if someone stuck a hidden camera in you and your wife's bedroom?
- [Basting] You're the one that's claiming if people don't have anything to hide—
- [Orgone] Roberto. Roberto. We're talking about the difference between what is legal and what is illegal. It's a fundamental distinction. Now, if you want to try and convince people of your beliefs you're absolutely as free as any American to do so. Just as every real American is free to say no thank you please. And if you're going to go out there and try to force your views on people with violence, there will be repercussions.
- [Basting] We are not violent. We—
- [Orgone] Now, Roberto, isn't it true that declared members of your group were not only involved in forging documentation and illegally filming but also the destruction of private property and assault on farm personnel?
- [Basting] The circumstances of those incidents haven't been made clear yet. There's—
- [Orgone] Well, obviously they've been charged. So the real truth of the circumstances is clear enough to everyone.

- [Basting] The fact of the matter is—and what stations like yours haven't reported—is that there have been a rash of outbursts of violence against vegans and vegetarians over the last several months.
- [Orgone] Well, for one, Roberto, we can't cover everything that happens in these United States. That's just an unfortunate fact of only having so much airtime. But I would like to point out that we are talking about it now, so we can't be exactly engaging in some grand conspiracy that you might—
- [Basting] Or any of the other attacks on food critics or chefs that go against any prevailing—
- [Orgone] Roberto, please don't interrupt. Because—as I was saying—you must either be misrepresenting, or just not a regular watcher of this station, because if you were, you would know that we had several reports on vegan-related attacks last week.
- [Basting] Only those claiming that the vegans were the attackers.
- [Orgone] We can't help if that's what the news is, Roberto. Unlike certain other people and organizations, we just cannot make things up. We hold ourselves to very strict standards.
- [Basting] America is going to have to change.
- [Orgone] Well, Roberto, hopefully there will always be real Americans to resist people who try to force their beliefs on everyone else. And we hope you come to understand that.

[The left frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk grows to fill the void.]

#### H4 > >>|

"Piggly wiggly," Tommy said. He rose. "Oink." He walked

seemingly aimless around in mini circles along the lane. He glanced around at the freelancers. "Oink. Oink. Oink. Oink." He squatted beside another. He chuckled. He rose. "The western was the American story," he said, as he walked into the middle of the lane, "and when that was no longer possible, it began to end." He turned. "Even the Indian children cheer from their theatre seats as the cavalry comes over the ridge, eh, tonto?" He laughed. "This's why California is so hated. Implicitly it is the finis, the end of the world. And the only thing that can be hoped for past California is the afterlife." He laughed. He bent forward at his waist. He reached back. "But if it's the finis which is the land of faggots and whores, what horrors must lie beyond?" He laughed. He released his ass cheeks. He straightened. He turned. He glanced at the freelancers. "But let us not be too specific," he said. "If you're generic enough, everything is accurate and inaccurate all alike and trademarks and all that science stuff." He paused. He looked up. "Or at least it's probably as good as the name brand." He turned. He pointed his index finger. "Get the point, tonto?" And he laughed. He began walking down the lane. Tammy squatted down there beside one of the freelancers. Tommy stopped on the freelancer's opposite side. He crooked his body and head to look down at the screen without dropping.

### **₩** || **>>**

- [Aster] Don't you feel it's a little unproductive to talk about the world ending? Isn't that just going to make people feel that nothing can be done, so they won't do anything?
- [Hysteria] If it is, does it even matter? So is this just some extension of the Protestant Work Ethic into even greater sheer insanity? Are we just supposed to work for the sake of work? I mean, is it that the world is just supposed to end, and we're supposed to work?
- [Aster] But what I'm saying is if people don't have some hope aren't they not going to do anything? So then don't we then have to have a responsibility to believe things are fixable and that we can undo whatever damage that might have been done?

- [Hysteria] But isn't that just going backwards? Isn't that just backing up right to what created the problem? Isn't that just saying that we want computers and televisions and phones and frozen spring rolls and stock markets and personal automobiles and science fiction and frozen pizzas and MP3 players and that we can have everything just the same as it always was and stay the same forever if we just get the thing right?
- [Aster] But, again, don't you feel it's unproductive to tell people that there's no hope?
- [Hysteria] But why do we have to have hope? What's hope doing? Is it just helping everything stay the same because we're just all hoping it'll get better?
- [Aster] And that's what I'm saying. Most feel it's a good thing people believe. But don't you feel like they also have to believe in acting?
- [Hysteria] But act at what? Do what? What're we supposed to do different? But when we try to do something different, why does it always seem to come out so wrong? They tried to do something different with communism, didn't they? What's left? How do we do something different but do it so everything stays the same?
- [Aster] But don't you feel there are plenty of things the average individual should be able to feel that they can do? They can recycle. They can watch what they buy. They can drive their cars less.
- [Hysteria] But will the system function with less? Isn't that what they're always saying? Isn't that what makes markets go down is people doing less of something? Isn't that what takes economies down? And aren't they saying that if our population stops going up that everything's gonna crash?

But how're we supposed to go up forever? But if we stop, it crashes, right? And if we shrink it crashes, right?

[Aster] There has to be the belief for the hope for a solution. If people don't feel they can have hope, and if they don't feel they can believe, how can anything be kept going?

[Hysteria] But can we do something different when there's nothing different to do? What hasn't failed? Didn't feudalism fail? Didn't communism fail? Didn't socialism fail? Didn't Rome fail? So what else is there to do? And if there isn't anything else to do, what're we going to do but do the same thing again? And if we do the same thing again, aren't the same things going to happen again? I mean, is it like they say about insanity being doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results? Or is it like a lightbulb?, it's always a lightbulb, isn't it?, but you keep trying filaments until you get one that burns long enough to light everything, or something? But if the system of capital is natural isn't it just going to fall into the same patterns again, because isn't that natural, isn't that natural the way, like, water and electricity will run to ground? But if we try to dam the water and move it around, isn't that a euphemism that could be taken for market regulation? And couldn't it be true that there's just proof everywhere that market regulation only leads to monopolies? So the only way not to have monopolies is not to have a strong government, right? Because a weak government, it would be useless for them to play favorites, wouldn't it? So so so um um so but doesn't that just lead back to lawless natural? Doesn't that just lead back to natural order, and so everything's going to run like it did before, because that's just the natural ways that lightning and water runs?

[Aster] So what are your feelings about that, Professor Neapolitan?

[Neapolitan] Now, I don't think that's appropriate. People have to believe. And then they have to do things. That's

the only way we're going to be able to stop what's happening. It's the only way we're going to be able to preserve the world.

[Hysteria] But what exactly are we preserving?

[Aster] Is that a question that you feel we need to ask, Professor?

[Neapolitan] I think, at this point, it's a question that can only be asked in retrospect. I'm not sure that we have the time to ask about the particulars. It's a matter of believing in action, at this point.

[Hysteria] So aren't we just preserving preservation?

[Aster] So I feel we can all agree that this thing is really felt to be happening and that something needs to come out of it. So what can the average person do in this regard, beyond the things we have already mentioned? Professor?

[Neapolitan] Well, first of all, obviously, as we've said, it has to be acknowledged. And only then does the doing really matter. Because the doing without the profession and the knowledge is, of course, a doing that's disconnected. So what I really think we have to do first is to ensure the acknowledgment is truly there. Everything flows from that, so without first doing that, it's going to be impossible to do anything.

[Hysteria] But is that doing anything? And what is there to do? And and what if what we do makes a bigger mess?

[Aster] But, of course, if nothing comes out of it, then nothing comes out of it.

[Neapolitan] Yes.

[Aster] So thank you both for coming on. Professor, thank you for joining us.

[Neapolitan] My pleasure.

[Aster] And, Doctor Gou—excuse me, Doctor Hysteria—thank you for coming on, as well.

### H > >>|

Tommy straightened. He rubbed his neck. "There is a great lack of homioicity here." He continued to rub his neck as he walked across the way. He turned. He looked down at the screen in the lap of the freelancer on the far side. Time passed. He squatted down there beside him.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Orgone] So why is it so many leftist-liberal professors just want to convince the whole world that western civilization's an evil empire and crumbling as we speak?

[Newcome] Oh, I think that's a general misunderstanding. I head the Collapse of Western Civilization Studies Department, true, but that shouldn't be misconstrued to indicate that we believe only western civilization has the possibility of collapsing, or is even in the process of collapsing. As a matter of fact, most of us point out that it's very likely that all such human constructs will collapse. From one thing or another. If not some evolutionary one then most likely because of the laws of physics. After all, so far as we understand, the universe as a whole is heading toward an end. So by definition, there will be no society that remains following that. It's just that I, and we, attempt to study the possibilities and possible consequences of a very particular one of the many civilizations that have existed on the Earth up until this point and the ways in which it could cease to be.

[Orgone] And you don't see anything wrong with this?

[Newcome] Um. I don't see why I should.

[Orgone] Isn't your real interest to just create some mass hysteria about these United States collapsing so that it actually happens? Don't you think that's what's going to happen from all this?

[Newcome] Not particularly.

[Orgone] Well, what do you think about, Professor? Do you ever think about what effect your actions have on the world? Do you ever think about what you say and how it reflects against these United States to the people outside?

[Newcome] Well, in one sense, it is a problem to study something when you're on the inside of a system. But the problem is we're kind of trapped in the universe. So as with all sciences, we're fundamentally relegated to the position where we're only ever able to look at it from a single category of perspectives, and we're only able to apply science to the individual parts, but not the whole, of the system because, again, we'd have to move outside of it to truly examine it.

[Orgone] With all due respect, Professor, isn't that just a bunch of pseudo-scientific mumbo jumbo that's really meant to obscure the facts?

[Newcome] Well... No.

[Orgone] You're from one of those pothead states, aren't you, Professor?

[Newcome] I currently teach at the University of Boulder. Yes.

[Orgone] So you admit we have it on video that just whole classes sit around smoking. I mean, you can't even see if it's a blackboard or whiteboard up there.

[Newcome] Yes.

[Orgone] So you admit it.

[Newcome] Yes.

[Orgone] Well then—

[Newcome] You know I really appreciate your help. You know.

[Orgone] What?

[Newcome] You know. You've just been a very great help. You know. So thanks and ... Yeah. Thanks.

[Orgone pauses. He doesn't say anything.]

[Newcome] So yeah, thanks. That's just all I wanted to say.

[Newcome rises from his seat. His head disappears off frame. He turns. He gets tangled in his microphone. He has to turn to try and untangle himself. Finally, he moves out of frame. Only an empty chair remains.]

[Orgone] So, folks, I guess you—

[A person re-enters the frame. After a moment, Newcome bends over, so his face comes into focus.]

[Newcome] And one more thing. Remember the fish...and the turtles...and the...salamanders....

[Newcome straightens. His head disappears off frame. He turns. He moves out of frame. There's just the shot of the empty chair again.]

[Orgone] Well, folks, you can see what we're dealing with here.

[The left frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk grows to fill the void.]

[Orgone] So coming up—some leftist liberals complain about why and how some people should be forced to die even more painful deaths at the hands of these leftist-liberal death panels while just going hysterical about how executions are cruel and unusual. Stay tuned for that, folks.

Tommy rose. He walked down the lane. He squatted by another freelancer.

# **₩** || **>>**|

[The video shakes. It looks directly across a table and at a guy in a t-shirt.]

[T-Shirt #1] Did you see last night's episode?

[The video shakes.]

#### H > >>

"The thing about zGlasses," Tommy said, "is watching it's like getting to experience Hunter Thompson's description of using ether." He lolled his head side to side. He stuck out his tongue. He looked off at an angle. He held that way a moment or two. Then he looked down at the screen. "Even opium is no longer the opium of the masses, once again," he said around his out-stuck tongue. It slipped back into his mouth.

### H | >>

[The image shifts. It rotates to the right. Another guy in a t-shirt sits down at the table. He carries french fries in cardboard boats in each hand. A hand emerges from the bottom of the frame and reaches toward one of the boats. He takes a couple of fries. He sits back. The image shakes. It shifts as the person wearing the glasses must be looking over his shoulder. The sports bar is empty. The TVs are black and silent.]

[T-Shirt #2] It's like a effing haunted house, or something.

[He seats himself at the table. He pulls out his phone. He lays it on the table.]

[T-Shirt #1] So when're you going to watch it?

[The image shakes. It shifts toward the first guy.]

[zGlasses] I'm getting to it.

[An image pops up in the upper left corner of the frame. The quality of the overall image degrades.]



"Bug hash eighty-two-fifty-four," Tommy said. He leaned sideways. He tapped each of his temples in rhythm, with his index and middle fingers. His stiff and stuck-out pinkie twitched in some stickalike way. "Bandwidth for video down cuts into bandwidth for video up." He closed his eyes. He rubbed both his temples. The way he was leaned over, it seemed like he might go off his balance and hit the crushed leaf bed. He covered his face with his hands. He turned his head. His fingers parted just enough to see between them. "Icky standard definition," he said into his palms. And he said it again, louder. His voice sounded like a foghorn from behind his hands. It made him seem as if he were warning ships not to run aground. Or imploring them to.

### **₩** || **>>**|

[The image shakes and shifts. People are coming in through the front doors. Three women in t-shirts. One wears Jeans. The others wear shorts. The second guy looks over his shoulder.]

[T-Shirt #2] Hey, is that?

[T-Shirt #1] Holy...

[The image continues to shake as it tracks center-ish on the three women as they make their way to a table.]

[T-Shirt #1] Holy...

[The second guy starts to lift his phone.]

[T-Shirt #1] Don't do that.

[T-Shirt #2] What?

[T-Shirt #1] You'll scare them, creep.

[The streaming video in the upper left corner of the feed cuts out. The zGlasses operator sets his phone on the table. He glances down at it.]

"Now the cloud poops," Tommy said. He'd removed his hands from over his face as the stream'd bumped up in quality after the video in the corner'd been dropped. But he still squatted there with his hands against his temples in an ever-ready position.

[Images pop up on the side of the feed. One is a still of an earlier frame from this stream. Multicolored metrics have overlayed it. And companion images pulled from more professional venues are arranged in a grid beside it.]

"Tagged," Tommy said. "You're it."

#### **H4** || **>>**|

[zGlasses] That's Veronica Lace and Jenni Lovegrav and Primm Rosa.

[T-Shirt #1] Thanks for telling us what we know.

[T-Shirt #2] She looks different.

[T-Shirt #1] Lighting and makeup.

[T-Shirt #2] She's moving.

[One of the women rises. She moves toward the counter.]

[T-Shirt #1] Somebody should go over there.

[T-Shirt #2] Maybe we should go ahead and divide up who's going to go after who.

[zGlasses] Think I should take these off?

[T-Shirt #1] Effing leave them on. Just pretend that they're real glasses and that you need them. No one'll ever know.

[T-Shirt #2] Holy... Maybe you can get something on film.

[T-Shirt #1] Angle them a bit and they can look down while you look up.

[The image onscreen shifts downward slightly.]

[T-Shirt #1] Alright, just be cool.

[He pushes back his chair.]

[T-Shirt #1] I'm gonna see about a couple of drinks.

[The image shifts to track him as he approaches the counter.]

[T-Shirt #2] Holy... Somebody says on Twitter she gives blowjobs to fans in the bathrooms. You think?



Tommy groaned. "The quality of non-automatic writing in reality is always diminishing." He rose. "An entire multiverse and we have to

be stuck tuned into this coco channel." He stepped out into the midst of the lane. "How can I reject reality and substitute my own when the Author Functions were written to ignore the interface spec?" He turned. He looked around at the camp. "Every day we add more video than the sum total of time in the universe? Billions upon billions of streams. And what is there to look at? Billions of billions of streams across an infinite number of universes, and what is there to watch?" He crossed the avenue. He squatted beside the freelancer sitting there. Tommy chuckled. His chuckling turned to laughter. Then he was silent.

#### **44 || ▶**

[School showers. Thirteen-and-fourteen-and-fifteen-year-old girls stand under shower heads. Some have already finished. They wrap towels around themselves. They walk out. Others are just arriving. They step into empty shower stalls. They remove their towels. They turn on the water. Condensation runs down over the lens.]

#### **(4 → )→**

As I put down before, one of the freelancers had a series of piecemeal contracts to redact and blur various videos. One of those contracts dealt with blurring body parts out of various school security feeds.

"Of course, it goes up and comes down first," Tommy said. "After sufficient electrical excitation and valence release." He shifted his shoulders. "So everything's good."

From here, the video'd be filed into the alert system to get popped up for some freelancer somewhere to verify that nothing was going on.

"Ah dear IBM Watson, is it not a thing of beauty?" He sat forward. He planted his elbow on his thigh. He rested his chin in his palm. His fingertips touched the hairs beneath his nose. He spoke through his fingers as if they'd been a piece of an ancient gladiatorial helmet. "But if HAL is merely such a simple cipher what of his brother CAL? But then again, there is a disjunction between film and textuality, is there not?" He clapped his hands against his knees. He squeezed them, so the skin that stretched over his knuckles and his knees changed color. "Weep, Clarke. Weep." He raised his arms into the air. He

outstretched his fingers. "Weep." He went quiet. He remained paused there with his arms in the air and his fingers outstretched. Then he looked down. He lowered his arms. He rested his forearms on his shins. He looked into infinity. He stared at the tent across the way. He rose. He turned. He took two steps. He dropped beside another freelancer. He pulled his legs into position.

## H4 || >>|

[Hartnette] Students from the science, technology, engineering, and math departments—also known as STEM—staged a walkout today at Eagleton University in protest. News 10's Julianne Myers has more on this developing story. Julianne.

[Cut to a shot of Myers standing in front of the Eagleton clock tower.]

[Myers] Thanks, Tom. As you can see behind me here, the square is empty right now. But earlier, students from the science, technology, engineering, and math departments had gathered in the space to protest what they are calling a waste of their time and money.

[Cut to a clip of earlier. People standing around outside.]

[Chant] There's no point. There's no point.

[Cut to someone holding up a tablet with a set of flashing emoji.]

[Myers Narrates] Tensions are running high on campus.

[Cut to a clip of six students stretching out a length of perforated dot-matrix printer paper between them. The code printed on the paper is too small to read, even in high-definition.]

[Chant] There's no point. There's no point.

[Myers Narrates] Protesters want one thing.

[Cut to a shot of someone who must be wearing a set of zGlasses, because a cord travels down behind his ear and into his shirt.]

[Protester] It's stupid to be paying money to do what we're already doing.

[Cut to a shot of people marching around the clock tower.]

[Chant] There's no point. There's no point.

[Myers Narrates] Some say what's at stake are the very foundations of a liberal education.

[Cut to someone holding a sign.]

[Protester] It's our money. We're the ones who're gonna have to pay it back. So paying for something that ain't gonna do anything—that's just pointless economics. It's double-dipping by the school system.

[Myers Narrates] This isn't the first time this complaint has surfaced.

Professor Mendelson of the computer science department at Eagleton remembers such arguments were always a staple of undergrad conversations.

[Cut to a shot of an older woman.]

[Mendelson] Everybody used to complain about it. Even back in the seventies. It was like, we write C or COBOL Or FORTRAN and someone in Russia would understand what you were saying. Someone in France. You didn't have to worry about what they were speaking. We're kind of all speaking the same language. So why bother to learn another that was less efficient and so ambiguous? At least, that's what we said.

[Myers Narrates] Now, however, times seem to have changed.

[Mendelson] There's a lotta concern around, these days. The workforce is really a cutthroat environment. So I can understand why students don't want to waste their time. They come here to enter STEM, and that's what they want to train for. It's kinda like asking people who want to train to be plumbers to read Shakespeare. People don't see how it helps get the job done.

# [Cut to the present.]

[Myers] Students here who we've talked to say they will continue They have registered a Twitter account, to protest. 37thLanguageWars, which has already received a little over half-a-million followers as we come on the air now. Students say they're going to continue to form a virtual protest through tweets and boops and that anyone who wants to join in can tweet or boop out hash tag justonelanguage. As of yet, Tom, school administrators have not released any comment on the protests. However, one official tells us that there might be the possibility they will consider a policy that will make various programming language classes equivalent credits to foreign language studies, so students in the STEM departments would be able to apply success in computer language courses to satisfy these curriculum requirements. Now there's no word yet as to whether this will be a school-wide policy or if such credits would have to be applied for on a case-by-case basis. But whatever the outcome, Tom, it seems certain that this conversation has been around for a long time and it's not going away anytime soon. Live for News 10. This's Julianne Myers. At Eagleton University.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] On an extended note, we've just received word that a North Carolina senate subcommittee has been proposed to examine the issue of state universities possibly being at fault due to this dual-language requirement. Senator MacAbee was quoted as saying that if the university is requiring students effectively take the same classes twice that that would be unacceptable and a clear abuse of power.

[The shot changes to the second camera. He turns to face it.]

[Hartnette] In other news, the estate of actor Riley Bailey issued a reply today to accusations by former co-star Karen Blake that he sexually assaulted her on set. The retired ninety-eight-year-old star is most famous for playing Lieutenant George Prescott in the 1968 series Cops and Robbers. The accusations extend from events that allegedly occurred at about that same time. Blake played the recurring role of a master criminal in that same program.

# **₩** || **>>**

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Would billionaires be aiming for Mars if it would take a thousand years to get there? If the astronauts to do such weren't said to be in highschool now, would anyone care? Even when we talk about the human species as a whole, is it all really about us?

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### H4 || >>

[Aster] Reversing climate change—one startup feels it has the answer. So let's talk with Jason Strong. Jason is the CEO of Ragnorrock. Jason, first, for a company that bills itself as setting out to save the world, why a name that refers to the end of the world?

- [Jason] Well, we thought the name would be appropriate because Ragnarok is sort of a battle. It's really about a fight against the end of the world, we think. So that's the kind of thing we wanted to say about ourselves.
- [Aster] So how exactly does your startup plan to tackle this problem of carbon emissions?
- [Jason] Well, what our company does is we provide the support and services behind an app called Treeline. Now, one of the best ways we can deal with the issue of carbon in the atmosphere is to plant more trees.
- [Aster] And how does the app help with that?
- [Jason] One of the things the app allows is people to log where a tree would be nice. This pins it in the app. And then that lets other people know that that location's there.
- [Aster] So once people know this location is there, what happens?
- [Jason] The app will connect up interested parties. You have suppliers. Horticulturists. Etc. And the app will connect all these people up, so people who are interested can get tools and the trees to plant, and they can go out and plant the trees at these spots.
- [Aster] And is the app out now?
- [Jason] It's currently in beta. And we're currently wrapping up testing now. We've just received our third round of funding. And the service is just about to deploy. And it will, of course, be free for everyone. And everyone, of course, who logs a successfully planted tree will make it onto the community scoreboard.
- [Aster] So where is the app going to be available? Is it exclusive?
- [Jason] There will be a version of the app available for both Android and iPhone, and we plan to have a version for zGlass as well.

- [Aster] Thank you for coming on, Jason. We hope that everything works out.
- [Jason] Thanks for having me.

# 

- [Orgone] You know, folks, they're always saying how many people get killed by automobiles. And how they're this and that. As if they're something out of a Terminator movie. And if the leftist liberals who want to take away all the cars and cram everybody into the subway or one of those buses that have the homeless people doing things in the middle of the aisle—if they actually bothered to pay attention they would know newly released reports show that automobile deaths are on the way down. In fact, they've been down for years. At the rate we're going, there won't be any more at all. So our guest is someone who doesn't seem to understand this stuff. Lydia Ham—
- [Ham] Excuse me, but didn't I tell you that, in fact, my last name is Hysteria now?
- [Orgone] Well, you know, Lydia, if that was your real name, maybe, but—
- [Hysteria] But isn't that my real name? What is a name?
- [Orgone] Well, you know, Lydia, people don't give themselves names. That's not how it works.
- [Hysteria] But what does that matter? We're not here to talk about that, are we? Aren't we here to talk about cars?
- [Orgone] Well, Lydia, what is it that you have against the facts? But it is a fact that fewer people are dying in car crashes than ever before.

- [Hysteria] But isn't that just a technical distinction? Isn't it that if people die while laid on the road, or in an ambulance, that they're not counted anymore as dying *in* an automobile accident? And aren't more people dying from hit and runs, people on bikes and and scooters and pedestrians and all of that, aren't more of them dying than ever before?
- [Orgone] We're not talking about that. We're talking about automobile safety. And the fact remains that cars are safer than they've ever been.
- [Hysteria] But isn't that just the completely wrong thing to talk about?
- [Orgone] And what should we be talking about, Lydia?
- [Hysteria] Shouldn't we be talking about people instead of cars? What about people?
- [Orgone] We are talking about people, Lydia. Cars take people places. You can't separate the one from the other.
- [Hysteria] But isn't that the problem? Aren't people getting obese and aren't they losing the ability to walk and aren't electric scooter sales up through the roof and isn't everyone going to end up going on wheels everywhere, isn't it like we've turned the wheel into a god, or something, and it's got to go round and round, or something like that, to send up prayers to heaven?
- [Orgone] Well, Lydia, if people don't take responsibility for what they eat, of course, there's going to be consequences.
- [Hysteria] But how can individuals be responsible when pre-processed food corporations spend billions of dollars a year on cloud technology and neural nets and AI and psychoanalysts to create commercials and make food products that're

- addictive and unfulfilling so that you can't eat just one potato chip?
- [Orgone] Well, first of all, Lydia, who would be weird enough to just to *want* to eat one potato chip. I mean, that's probably a psychological disorder, or something.
- [Hysteria] But isn't everything turning into a disorder? Aren't the everyday aspects of life being medicalized to the point where no one's *not* supposed to be on a pill?
- [Orgone] Well, at least we all know what the pill does to women.
- [Hysteria] But weren't we talking about cars? And isn't there no option? How do you get anywhere without a car? Haven't the countrysides and the cities been built for cars and only cars?
- [Orgone] Well, Lydia, it would be pretty useless to have cars and not be able to drive them anywhere.
- [Hysteria] But wasn't it a duopoly between the law and car manufacturers that led to the whole thing? Weren't alternatives suppressed? Is it really a competition when there's really nothing else?
- [Orgone] Well, I don't know about you, Lydia, but I look out when I'm driving and see Toyotas and Subarus and American Fords and General Motors, so there must be some competition out there. Now, with what some of these countries had tried before now—now, those were some true anti-competitive practices. But luckily with the new tariff system—as we're seeing—the balance is slowly being restored.
- [Hysteria] But aren't tariffs protectionist systems? Aren't they the very thing that they complain about other countries

having and that how it's a hindrance to businesses entering from the outside and how that's not fair competition? Isn't it supposed to be about competition, rather than combat? Because in combat it doesn't matter, does it? There aren't any real rules in the heat of combat, are there? So you can take a hammer to a runner's knee, can't you? And wouldn't that be fine in battle? Because isn't the whole point of battle to win no matter what? Are people going to lose a war and let horrible things happen just because of some rules? So isn't the whole point that it's supposed to be a competition and not combat? And don't competitions have to have rules and don't competitions have to have people who enforce the rules?

[Orgone] Well, that's exactly it, Lydia, but it doesn't happen, does it? You have all these people who don't want it to happen. You have these girls out there on the field now who have to compete with the so-called girls who spent the first half of their lives as men. And everybody knows that men are bigger and faster and they can hit the ball harder. How is that fair to the women to let that happen? It's entirely against the notion of good sportsmanship. What is it that liberals have against women's sports? I mean, they talk about oh how it's always the leftist liberals who're supporting the women. So I guess that holds true so long as your definition of a woman is a guy in a skirt.

[Hysteria] But isn't this all changing the subject again?

[Orgone] Well, Lydia, if you would try, maybe that would help.

[The left frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk grows to fill the void.]

[Orgone] Of course, you can't really talk about the effects of medication these days. It doesn't matter if we're talking about the pill or vaccines, or what have you. It's just oh no it's

all supposed to be good, how dare you question anything about our perfect pill? Don't you know the pill changed society? And yep. Lots of things have changed society. Communism really changed society for a lot of people. Yep, it really changed it good, folks.

## **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] In sadder news, the state bureau of statistics reported today that the number of people who have died in the mountains as a result of crush syndrome rose in the past year to an all-time high. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on these tragic numbers. Sylvia.

[Cut to long panning shots of a row of storage facilities.]

[Borges Narrates] It was here that Randy McKinnea stored some of his most valuable treasures.

[Cut to a woman lifting a mounted fish out of a black garbage bag.]

[Woman] He was going to replace the batteries in this, but he never got the chance.

[Cut to a panning shot over the material stacked over head high in a storage unit.]

[Borges Narrates] But now some fear there is more than treasure here.

[Cut to a woman standing beside an open storage container.]

[Borges Narrates] Violet Kinkaid worries the same thing could happen to her.

[Kinkaid] I think about it every day. You just never know what can happen.

[Borges Narrates] It was just three storage units away from Violet's that Randy McKinnea died last week. The latest

victim to find themselves trapped in their storage unit or home.

[Kinkaid] Sometimes you see people come in and open the door and it just flows right out. It'll knock people down. You have bags filled with you don't know what. And furniture. And it can just all come down without any kind of warning.

[Cut to a man standing outside the storage center.]

[Borges Narrates] Andy Culverton owns the storage facility where McKinnea lost his life.

[Culverton] It's, of course, a tragedy. We always tell people that they have to be careful. Packing and unpacking materials, of course, are the renter's responsibility. But it is very tragic what happened. And we are posting notices that continue to warn people to take their safety seriously.

[Cut to woman.]

[Kinkaid] You have to keep it in mind.

[She stands looking down at one of the safety fliers.]

[Kinkaid] I always like to bring someone with me when I come down here. And like today, my husband had to go off fishing, so I'm down here managing. But you always have to be careful.

[Borges Narrates] But, as with any other unexpected loss of life, those who continue on continue on. A lesson Phoebe McKinnea has had to take to heart these days.

[Cut to a woman standing on a front porch. She wipes her eyes.]

[Wife] You just keep going forward. That's all you can do.

[Borges Narrates] And that's all anyone can do.

[Cut back to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] A collection is currently being held to assist the family in covering funeral and medical expenses. If you would like to help with that, you can head over to our website where you will find a link.

[The shot changes to the second camera. He turns to face it.]

[Hartnette] In happier news, today was the first day of the annual youth STEM festival at Eagleton University. Lydia Dillon has more on this story. Lydia.

[Cut to Dillon. Behind her, people mill between tables set up with tri-fold poster boards.]

[Dillon] Thanks, Tom. As you can see, it's been quite busy down here today. There have been quite a number of people come through to see the exhibits and to listen to the children explain about their projects—

[She moves sideways. A nearby table and tri-fold poster comes into frame. A young girl stands next to the table.]

[Dillon] This is Zena Reynalds. Who is—how old are you Zena?

[Reynalds] Thirteen.

[Dillon] And what's your project that you have here?

[Reynalds] Well, my project is you take these petri dishes that you see here. And you grow things on them.

[Dillon] What kinds of things?

[Reynalds] Bacteria and stuff like that.

[Dillon] And what do you do with them then?

[Reynalds] Well, you put them over a map, and as they grow, you find they grow over the routes of roads and power lines and things like that.

[Dillon] All without any help?

[Reynalds] Yeah, completely on their own.

[Dillon] It must've taken you a long time to do all of these.

[Reynalds] Yeah.

[Dillon] Are your parents proud of you?

[Reynalds] Yeah.

[Dillon straightens. She moves sideways toward the center of the room again.]

[Dillon] But as you can see, Tom, there are quite a few fascinating projects on display here. There are also some special exhibits that are open to the public. Just outside here they have set up a booth that you can go inside and test your skills at flying a drone.

[Cut to an earlier clip of a kid.]

[Dillon] What did you think?

[Kid] It was cool.

[Dillon] Was it scary?

[The kid shakes his head.]

[Dillon] What did you like about it?

[Kid] It was just like a video game, you know.

[The kid holds up his hands. He moves his thumbs.]

[Kid] It's got an Xbox controller and everything.

[Cut to the present.]

[Dillon] I should note that I did try it out myself and, unfortunately, crashed, so I don't guess I will be changing careers anytime soon. Tom.

## H | |

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] On Antiques Roadshow, is it that, no matter the family story connected with an item, the true value is always monetary? Is this what we hide in plain sight by shining a spotlight on it?

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

## **₩** || **>>**|

[A stylized logo cuts in bidirectionally from the corners of the screen. The logo shimmers. A lens flare pops. It slides apart to reveal the hosts. One wears over-sized headphones over a knitted cap and leans forward to speak into a large microphone with a spit guard. The other has earbuds and sits in front of a snowball microphone.]

[Louie] Is that a chip bag on your head?

[Danny] Yes, this's a chip bag on my head.

[Louie] What the hell, man?

[Danny] Well, with all this talk about alien mind probes, I thought I might should better put on a mental condom, or something.

[Louie] But we already did the Sasquatch Alien Convention.

[Danny] I just figured it was a good idea anyway.

[Louie] You know, you're supposed to use tinfoil.

[Danny] Well, yeah, but that's expensive and they're always talking about how we're supposed to recycle. And besides, I kinda figured there're so many aliens that don't like water maybe there were a few that couldn't stand vinegar either.

[Louie] Okay, this's just stupid now.

[Danny] Only now? I thought it was always that way.

[Louie] But, no, we're supposed to be talking about the new Twilight Zone.

[Danny] Well, there's aliens there. So just being prepared.

[Louie] Well, that's the problem. Everybody's complaining because this's a different kind of alien.

[Danny] I still think it might be helpful.

[Louie] You do realize, when you move around, the microphone picks up nothing but that thing crinkling, right?

[Danny] I guess I'll just have to stay very still.

[Louie] Oh.

[Danny] Maybe the aliens are like dinosaurs and they can't see you if you don't move.

[Louie] You know, there is that theory that intelligent life existed before on the planet and all traces got obliterated by the ice ages. Some say we're still waiting for it to evolve again.

[Danny] Now, would killer machines draped in aliens' flesh count as aliens, or would they be like terminators, or something?

[Louie] I don't know, man.

[Danny] Or if, say, you've got the predator versus a zenomorph versus the Thing, and the Thing turns into either one of them, is it just predator versus zenomorph then?

[Louie] Well, as I said, this's completely the wrong type of alien.

[Danny] It's a more fun alien, though, you gotta admit.

[Louie] Well, that's the whole problem. So let's get into it. Did you watch the couple of episodes that were posted?

[Danny] Uh, the last one was the emissions one, right? And before that one was the alien one.

[Louie] Yep.

[Danny] I kinda fast-forwarded through it. But yeah.

[Louie] So the question now is has everything turned into message fiction now? That's what everybody wants us to talk about.

[Danny] Everybody?

[Louie] A lot of the people who very kindly send us money, anyway.

[Danny] Well, that's different.

[Louie] So the question is how bad is this message fiction thing getting, and what're we supposed to do about it?

[Danny] We could just not worry about a little degree this way or the other and just be safe and nuke it from orbit. That'd save alotta time.

[Louie] Not a fan of surgical strikes?

[Danny] I'm notta fan of any cuttin on anything.

[Louie] Is your wife still trying to get you to have them hack on your parts down there?

[Danny] We don't talk about that.

[Louie] Maybe you really need to think about expanding the tin foil to other places.

[Danny] What makes you think I haven't already?

[Louie] You know they, Myth Busters, did that, you know, and it turns out, if anything, the foil actually concentrates the radio waves, or whatever, I don't know, we're not paid to be scientists here.

[Danny] What makes you think I don't like it that way?

[Louie] My question is does your wife like it that way?

[Danny] One word. Tingly.

[Louie] Okay, well, that's tee em eye right there.

[Danny] Hey. Don't start what you can't finish.

[Louie] Well, how bout we finish an episode.

[Danny] I can't help it if you wanna sit around discussing my man parts.

[Louie] I can feel a finger hovering over the demonetize button as we speak.

[Danny] This makes me sad.

[Louie] So really, what're you thinking about this new Twilight Zone series?

[Danny] I think the eighties opening was better.

[Louie] That's kinda beside the point.

[Danny] I don't know, man. You know. Twilight Zone. The opening's a big thing. It's iconic.

[Louie] So once you get past the opening, what do you think?

[Danny] Well, if I'm gonna be honest with yuh, I gotta say... It isn't really holding my attention.

[Louie] Well, what about it isn't holding your attention?

[Danny] I don't know. It just doesn't grab me.

[Louie] You think it's the twist endings?

[Danny] Nah. I think corny twist endings are kinda Twilight Zone's bread and butter. It's just that I'm not even getting corny out of it, I don't think. Or corned beef.

[Louie] So should we... Yeah. We should've said this at the beginning. But big spoilers incoming if you haven't watched this first season of the new series. I'll add a note about that. So what'd you think of episode six?

[Danny] Is that the one with knockoff Holocaust two point oh, or something?

[Louie] Efforts to reduce emissions and stop the world from overheating by reducing the number of humans actually—surprise surprise—leads to an increase in emissions.

[Danny] And everything ends up bleeped up.

- [Louie] In oh so many ways.
- [Danny] At least they don't have to share the sauna planet with a whole buncha old people in towels.
- [Louie] I guess you can think of the beach as a really big hot tub.
- [Danny] Really big fish stew.
- [Louie] I just want you to know that in the event of the apocalypse I want you on my team.
- [Danny] Obviously, because of my rugged strength and dependability.
- [Louie] And because you can find food anywhere.
- [Danny] Well, we both know which of us is the superior Fallout player.
- [Louie] So what're you gonna do if the post-apocalyptic society doesn't standardize on bottle tops as a monetary system?
- [Danny] I have faith that my encyclopedic knowledge of postapocalyptic fiction shall be in great demand.
- [Louie] Dude, I don't think anyone wants to hear about the post-apocalypse when they're actually post-apocalyptic.
- [Danny] Yeah, but only *one* of them can happen. So whoever's leftover might wanna hear about all the *other* ways the world could've ended. It might be very cathartic.
- [Louie] This sounds like it has the makings of a Twilight Zone episode.
- [Danny] Yeah, but do I break my zGlasses if I had any, or not?

[Louie] You fall down and break your mouth.

[Danny] That's not a twist. That's a tragedy.

[Louie] So speaking of tragedy—and what we're supposed to be talking about—do you think shows've gotten too preachy lately?

[Danny] I don't know. I did think that that last Outer Limits episode was a bit hokey, though. I mean, guy arrested at airport for not carrying a phone or computer. That's getting a little thin.

[Louie] Dude, it's an updating of a Bradbury story.

[Danny] Really?

[Louie] Which brings me around to what I wanna talk about.

[Danny] So now we're getting around to it.

[Louie] Yeah.

[Danny] So what're we just getting around to? We're already, like, fifteen minutes into this, right? I mean, you do know that.

[Louie] Well, we had to lay the groundwork.

[Danny] Ah, groundwork. I always build my castles in the air.

[Louie] So-

[Danny] They're light and fluffy that way. Sorry, but what were you going to say?

[Louie] Well, I've been thinking about it for a while now, and I mean, if you really wanna think about it, the original Twilight

Zone was like original-recipe message fiction. Right? Am I crazy?

[Danny] Oh, you're crazy.

[Louie] B—

[Danny] And I should know.

[Louie] But The Monsters Are Due On Maple Street. Um. Night of Steel. The Replaceable Man. I think that's what it's called, isn't it?

[Danny] The internet says it's The Obsolete Man. And we all know how the internet is never wrong.

[Louie] But it's just, I mean, ain't the whole point of scifi been that it's always supposed to have been an excuse to wrap things up in something else and kinda slide them under the radar? So you could talk about aliens but you couldn't talk about Jews, or something, I don't know. And you've got the Outer Limits. Star Trek.

[Danny] First interracial kiss.

[Louie] You know, I was reading up on that for this episode, and that's not quite true. There's actually a whole big controversy about this.

[Danny] Well, like, yeah, it's controversial.

[Louie] No, I mean a whole separate controversy about who was actually first. I mean, there's a whole Wikipedia article on it.

[Danny] So even the controversies these days have controversies.

[Louie] But I mean, I'm being serious. Outside of television, you've got Heinlein. We've already mentioned Bradbury. EC

- Comics, you know them. Superman comics. Spiderman comics. You know, the whole Comics Code thing. Green arrow in the seventies.
- [Danny] That's, like, later Heinlein though, right?
- [Louie] No, I mean you go back to the first book and it's got a Jewish character and the editor wanted it taken out and Heinlein refused. And let's just admit it, the creepy free-love stuff was in there from the beginning too.
- [Danny] I don't remember that in the juveniles. And I think I would remember that.
- [Louie] But you've got If This Goes On, and stuff. But let's stick with TV.
- [Danny] It is the medium of kings. And people like us.
- [Louie] Alright. So controversial claim. Probably half of science fiction was message fiction from the beginning. Agree? Disagree?
- [Danny] So then, like, who's the king? Is Serling the king? Or Roddenberry? Because, you know, the Twilight Zone wasn't always science fiction.
- [Louie] I'm not gonna go that far with it.
- [Danny] There can only be one king, anyway, man. And everybody knows he went off with the aliens.
- [Louie] I'd've thought you'd've had enough of aliens this weekend.
- [Danny] Aw man, you've no idea. My niece has had me watching Alien Nine.

[Louie] Isn't that the one with the aliens on the head...or helmets, or something?

[Danny] What do you think the bag's for, man?

[Louie] What're you gonna do if the aliens, like, have a salt-andvinegar deficiency, or something, and they just suck the stuff up wherever they can find it?

[Danny] Exactly. This's why I don't like to trim my toenails. How am I supposed to defend myself if something happens?

[Louie] I guess you just have to hope the aliens attack when you're barefoot, too, though, then.

[Danny] Shoes, man. They're a conspiracy from the alien overlords. It's all part of getting us to fall right into their hands.

[Louie] Maybe they don't have hands, you ever think of that?

[Danny] At least they'd be safe for when the monkeys attack.

[Louie] What're you talking about?

[Danny] My son was watching this documentary the other night.

[Louie] Ah, yes, documentaries.

[Danny] Let's not go there. But did you know that when chimps attack the first thing they do is they rip off your fingers or your you know whats?

[Louie] Does tinfoil help against that?

[Danny] Couldn't hurt.

[Louie] Oh, god.

[Danny] Would that be like a pre-packaged meal, or something? Just pop it on the fire a couple minutes and unwrap it? Kinda like pop it in the microwave. You know those foiled TV dinners you see on TV?

[Louie] Oh, god.

[Danny] Since we're supposed to be apes, is it cannibalism if another ape eats you?

[Louie] Please, stop.

[Danny] You wanna know what the real Twilight Zone ending would be?

[Louie] Dare I even ask?

[Danny] You have all the nice apes sitting around doing their apey things and everything all natural and soothing and the birds are chirping—

[Louie] Do African birds chirp?

[Danny] And the birds are singing, and one day one wanders out a the jungle and finds out that humans've taken over the world.

[Louie] Um, I hate to tell you, but your twist is real life.

[Danny] They keep saying reality's stranger than fiction.

[Louie] Does he grunt you bleeping dirty apes at the end?

[Danny] Of course.

[Louie] Oh, god. But at least I guess that we've made it back around to the Twilight Zone.

[Danny] But truly did we ever leave The Zone?

[Louie] That's a different movie.

[Danny] Was it a movie?

[Louie] Yes.

[Danny] It's hard to tell, sometimes.

[Louie] And that's, ladies and gentlemen, what happens to hosts who fall into the Twilight Zone.

[Danny] I can leave anytime I want.

[Louie] Okay, so we're getting a little long here. I'm probably gonna have to edit this thing down.

[Danny] Don't take out the good stuff this time.

[Louie] Okay, so we can be somewhat symmetrical, let's get in one more thing. So what do you like about the new Twilight Zone? Let's end this on a positive note.

[Danny] I'm gonna be a heretic and say the way they resurrected Serling's voice is pretty good. I mean, the 3d special effects rendering's kinda meh.

[Louie] The face.

[Danny] No, actually it's the suit. Just something about it doesn't look right. But just the voice-overlay's pretty good.

[Louie] So there we go. Danny likes something. That might be a minor miracle.

[Danny] Or is it the Twilight Zone?

[Louie] Or maybe the aliens disguise themselves as chip bags and get you to willingly put them on your head.

- [Danny] That is a vicious conspiracy theory started by ignorant humanoids. There is absolutely no reason why all humanoids should not place bags on their heads immediately.
- [Louie] And with that note, we urge all humanoids and telepathic slime molds who're watching this video to please click the little subscribe button at the bottom of the video if you already haven't. Your support is greatly appreciated and it allows us to do what we do here.

[Danny] What do we do here?

[Louie] We direct people to our subscription page and Patreon dot com, where any humanoid or non humanoid can become pledge members and get access to all sorts of exclusive stuff, including voting on what we will do our upcoming episodes on.

[Danny] Gaaaaaah.

[Louie] What the hell, man? I'm trying to end the show here.

[Danny] I got some salt and vinegar in my eye.

[Louie] Also don't forget to follow us on Facebook and Twitter if you want to know if Danny goes blind. Thank you.

## H4 || >>|

[Orgone] We all know there can be no safety without a stable society. A stable society inherently directs the energies of that society to productive ends. And without a stable society, what have you got? I'll tell you what you have, folks. You have anarchy. You have a society where people can run around and take whatever they want. They can murder whoever they want. They can rape whoever they want. It doesn't matter. They can just do anything. Anything you can think of, folks. So with us here to talk about what's

required for a stable society, we have Doctor Pinky, the bestselling author of the recent smash-hit book You Can Re-Build Yourself. And also joining us is Ruth Pesto, from the Foundation For A Better Way of Life.

[Pesto is in the left frame. A drawing of a pink rose is in the other right frame.]

[Orgone] Welcome to the show, Doctor Pinky.

[Pinky] Thank you for having me.

[Orgone] So, Doctor Pinky, you've been coming under attack lately from various leftist-liberal camps for your fact-based approach to establishing what has allowed western society in the last thousand or so years to achieve what many might have called the impossible. You've been slandered by the leftist-liberal press. You've been reviled. How do you respond?

[Pinky] I think that, at the end of the day, it is about the facts. The facts say what the facts say, and you just cannot rationally argue with that.

[Orgone] Of course, the leftist liberals can't really care about facts, can they, because the facts just never seem to line up on their side, do they?

[Pinky] The facts are the facts.

[Orgone] And they are. So how is it, Miss Pesto, that you can argue with the fact that it is the one-man-one-woman approach to social organization that has allowed the western world to rise above petty tribalization and rule by warlords and just a general degraded state of existence? How can you possibly argue otherwise with the facts the way they are?

[Pesto] First, I have to say that I identify as a Hysteric, don't I?

- [Orgone] Ah, yes. I myself prefer to identify as an attack helicopter.
- [Hysteria] But could you just be admitting that certain positions are inherent in biological makeup? I mean, you already do admit that, don't you? Don't you claim that men and women are one-way biologically? So why does the biological argument stop when it comes to other approaches to life?
- [Orgone] There are an infinite number of approaches, Miss Pesto, I'm sure. But as we all see, there are only a few that work. We're not running around here like some New Guinea tribe and butchering women and children with machetes, are we? Those are just the facts, Miss Pesto.
- [Hysteria] But don't those same tribes practice variations of monogamy, such as those you claim to be advocating for?
- [Orgone] Of course the leftist liberals always want to attack marriage. Which is, after all, the very core of our society. So you know they just have to attack it. And what do we get? All these women running around looking for Mister Right because they're told they should be able to have whatever they want. And dating apps. But an honest good guy can't get a date because he's just not good enough these days. But the leftist liberals just hate the honest good guys, don't they. And you just expect them not to react?
- [Hysteria] Could there be some applicability to be taken from the fact that young men in the history of western civilizations have been tended to be shipped off into wars? So wouldn't it be very hard for them to threaten the established order of society when they're dead?
- [Orgone] I think that's a grave insult to our brave men and women who have died to give people like you the freedom to say such bunk—excuse my language, folks.

[Pinky] May I add.

[Orgone] Please do, Doctor.

- [Pinky] Of course, there is no singular aspect, no silver bullet, as you would say, that ensures a stable society. It is more like a set of interlocking pieces. You might think of it like a set of intermeshed gears. The fit must be correct in not just the placement but in the inter-relationships between all the parts. Otherwise, of course, the mechanism will grind itself to pieces.
- [Hysteria] But don't such notions of an intermeshing society carry with them inherently that there can't be a notion of individuality?
- [Orgone] Well, Doctor? Can't there still be individuality? Doesn't there have to be individuality?
- [Pinky] Of course. The pieces are not the same. That is not what is required for them to interlock. In fact, if they were identical, they would not work.
- [Hysteria] Why not?
- [Orgone] Wouldn't that be like a puzzle without the edge pieces, Doctor?
- [Pinky] Yes. It would be something that was malformed. Peele is fundamental.
- [Hysteria] But is that dependent on a predefined variety? So variety, yes, but what about individual freedom? If a piece changed would it still fit in the same place? Then where would it go?
- [Pinky] This is, of course, the common fallacy of stretching the metaphor. Rather than argue about any actual merit or deficiencies an idea might have, a particular aspect of language

- is argued about over and over again. Really, it is designed to get nowhere. It is just a particular kind of language game.
- [Orgone] And how do we deal with people who start playing these language games?
- [Pinky] In this case, as with many, the simplest solution is to simply not play.
- [Orgone] So why do the leftist liberals insist on playing these games, Miss Pesto?
- [Hysteria] Well, is it a game? What if it is a game?
- [Orgone] We aren't playing a game, Miss Pesto. We're talking about why the leftist liberals can't stop playing games. Isn't that a very childish thing to do?
- [Hysteria] What is childish? What is it that separates children from adults?
- [Orgone] Well, obviously there's a difference. You've discussed this some at length in your new book, haven't you, Doctor? Would you like to add something here?
- [Pinky] Now that you have asked, I would like to bring up that, as I have pointed out in the book, that one of the fundamental problems that has developed in contemporary society is that there is no longer a concept of manhood. Males have been stripped of the rites of passage, the fundamental rituals that allow the social and mental transition of emotional being to be on pace with the development of the physical. This has left us with a generation of young men without a coordinate system in life. And of course, the vital energy generated at this stage has to turn somewhere. And unfortunately, what we often see in societies that have entered such a stage is that these energies, when not expelled outwards, are perverted

and expelled inward, leading to the corruption of society, which, of course, greatly impinges upon its ability to achieve survival.

- [Orgone] Exactly, Doctor. Isn't it survival that's at stake here?
- [Pinky] Yes. Survival is, of course, what is always at issue for any organism or social body.
- [Hysteria] But does anything ever survive? Even the planet's going to burn to a cinder and finally be engulfed by the sun after it becomes a red dwarf, and then it'll go nova and explode, isn't that right? And the universe ends, doesn't it? Isn't that what science says, that no matter what, everything's going to be wiped away? Isn't entropy going to be all that's left? So is there really no such thing as survival at all? Is it some kind of delusion? Is it simply playing a kind of existential kick the can? So long as the generation who's alive now can pretend to themselves that since things'll go on forever, it's alright to do whatever, is that what we're saying?
- [Orgone] Why is it that the leftist liberals always think that every-body else should take responsibility? People have a right to sacrifice for their children. But you can't make people sacrifice for everybody. You can't claim the world's just going to end so that you can get what you want. Do you not think this is kind of pathological, Doctor?
- [Pinky] Of course, a notable feature of such times of societal stress is that they are often accompanied by an increase in doomsday preoccupations.
- [Orgone] So isn't, really, the big problem here that there's all this natural energy and it's just not going to anything productive?

[Pinky] You can put it that way. What we have is that in contemporary society—with the rise of modern dating apps and such—the nature of the social contract has been violated. Of course, from a purely biological perspective, it is easy to see what the natural trend will be—and has been—that the majority of females in a given population will flock—as it were—to a select few high-status males. Biologically speaking, it can be considered that to get a smaller slice of this higher-status male's time is biologically preferred to a potentially much larger portion—or dedicated portion—of the time of lower-status males. And of course, this sets up the problem of energy expenditures.

[Orgone] So how do we solve the problem and harness this energy again?

[Pinky] Of course, this is a solved problem. We do not have to, of course, invent some solution. The solution has already been provided by over a thousand years of human civilization. It can be clearly shown that the rise of monogamy is exactly correlated with the rise of modern society. It is exactly correlated with enlightened human values. It is exactly correlated with the notions of freedom as have been derived by western thought.

[Orgone] And it's about responsibility, isn't it? I mean, people who are married, and they're going to have kids, and people who are taking care of their kids, they're going to be working to take care of their kids, they're going to be paying their mortgages. They just don't have time for this ridiculousness that pervades everything when everybody isn't doing anything. I mean, isn't that exactly why they want to pay people not to work? So they can have a breeding ground for these leftist-liberal notions. I mean, of course, there are these people who want to be paid to do nothing. Isn't that the case, Doctor?

- [Pinky] It is a basic biological principle that an efficient organism should try to obtain what it needs with the least expenditure of energy. But that, of course, too, can have its consequences.
- [Orgone] And isn't it true that the desire for monogamy is a fundamental human attribute, as well? Isn't that what people want?
- [Pinky] Yes. Of course, biologically speaking, we want a guarantee of assurance that, in fact, the genes of those whom we raise are, in fact, our genes perpetuated. In part, we have to examine this from the gene's own point of view. It, of course, wants copies of itself to carry on. And that, of course, is the whole basis of life. But of course, what allows copies of genes to propagate successfully is also culture. So you could call it a twin pairing. That is to say the genes have as much interest in perpetuating culture, in the sense that the culture is likely to perpetuate them. Really, you might think of it as that it is our responsibility to propagate the cultural component so that the genes continue to propagate.
- [Orgone] Of course, this is very technical and all. But we don't need to know that for everyday life.
- [Pinky] No. That is true. The point, after all, is survival.
- [Orgone] And obviously, without propagation, societies don't survive.
- [Pinky] Obviously.
- [Orgone] So why is it, Miss Pesto, that leftist-liberal elites are so heck bent—excuse my language, folks—on making sure society doesn't survive? What do they find so appalling about the things that have allowed for an unprecedented amount of human progress? In fact, the greatest leap of human progress in the history of the world.

- [Hysteria] Is it really progress, though?
- [Orgone] I don't know, Miss Pesto. I would call being able to talk to someone on the other side of the world in real-time progress.
- [Hysteria] But by that same token, aren't dating apps progress too?
- [Orgone] But even the leftist liberals can't deny the need for real human attachment. At least I would hope not. Though, I can't say I wouldn't put anything past them at this point. And how can there be any real human attachment when people are running around and sleeping with whoever they see?
- [Hysteria] But don't you have to admit that it works for some people?

  Might it be that there's not one single human condition and that humans are an inter-collective of genetic groups that experienced throughout the history of the species a wide variety of sexual selection strategies? And isn't it, anyway, supposed to be about the freedom of the individual? Isn't that the very thing you're arguing for? So if some people can have casual sexual relations without issue shouldn't they be free to do that if they're in a free society?
- [Orgone] Well first, Miss Pesto, there are plenty of people out there who unfortunately can kill people without remorse, too, and we don't let them just walk around in the streets.
- [Hysteria] But isn't that exactly what we train young men in the military to be able to do?
- [Orgone] Calling our American service men and women bloodthirsty murderers is a dirty and disgusting tactic. These people put their lives on the line to give people like you the freedom to hurl insults like that. And it is completely

disrespectful in every way to compare them to something like that. These are the very people who preserve your way of life. Even if that is to undermine the American people and the American way of life.

- [Hysteria] But hasn't preserving our way of life always been the reason for everything? Isn't that what they said about slavery before the Civil War? Isn't that what they say about eating meat? Isn't that what they say about female genital mutilation? Isn't cutting off people's heads in the name of Allah just as much about preserving a way of life?
- [Orgone] Absolutely. And if they preserve theirs, ours won't be. Now, maybe you want that to happen. But there are plenty of real Americans out there who don't.
- [Hysteria] But when you talk about real Americans, are you inherently implying that there's such a thing as a non-real American? So what's the difference between a real American and a non-real American?
- [Orgone] Real Americans know who they are.
- [Hysteria] But what defines the boundaries of this Imagined Community?
- [Orgone] Don't call the real Americans out there imaginary. Don't act like they're some kind of delusional nutjobs. They are the thing that makes this country great. They are what makes this country what it is. What do you contribute to this country, Miss Pesto? You and other leftist liberals seek to undermine everything about it at every turn. You insult our service men and women. You insult people like Doctor Pinky here with ridiculous and stupid questions. And it's supposed liberal-minded people like you who denigrate people like him who prefer to exercise their right to privacy, and who make fun of his so-called Stephen Hawking voice.

And your side wants to claim to be the voice of reason and tolerance and enlightenment, but you're anything but, aren't you. In short, Miss Pesto, you do not respect the people of America. You do not respect the real Americans out there who allow you to exist. Cut her off. Just cut her off.

[The left frame disappears. The two right frames expand to fill the void.]

[Orgone] I'm sorry about that, Doctor.

[Pinky] Oh, it is perfectly fine.

[Orgone] Unfortunately, we're almost out of time. But I want to thank you for taking time out of your very busy schedule to be with us.

[Pinky] It was my pleasure.

[Orgone] Next time we'll make it just the two of us.

[Pinky] I will look forward to it.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] Alright—if you want to read an exclusive excerpt from Doctor Pinky's new book, you can head on over to our website. And while you're there, don't forget to check out everything else that's available. And coming up after the break, we'll speak to someone who has just come forward with new and disturbing allegations that activists are now training animals to behave in a so-called homosexually consistent manner. You might not believe it. But we have to report the real truth. Stay tuned, folks.

[Two high-legged chairs sit on a round stage one-third encircled by an audience. The name of the show in stylized letters is projected across a stylized backdrop. One high-legged chair is occupied by Therapé. The other is empty.]

[Therapé] With us today we have a guest from a previous program. All of you may recall Miss Rebecca Peele. She had managed to go more than thirty years avoiding human intimacy, much to the distress of her family and those around her. But with the help of this program, she was able to make a change. Everybody, please, welcome back Rebecca.

[Cut to a shot of a woman in a green dress emerging from a curtainedoff area. The audience claps. The shot tracks the woman as she walks toward Therapé. Therapé shakes her hand before she pulls herself into the other high-legged chair.]

[Therapé] Thanks for coming back on the show, Rebecca.

[Peele] Thank you for having me back.

[Therapé] I'm afraid that now I have to be honest with you, Rebecca.

[Cut to a close-up of her confused face.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] We told you that this was a followup to see about your progress. However, that's not quite true. You see, Rebecca, some very disturbing things have come to our attention. With us today we have a young man that some of you might remember, and I hope who you'll remember, Rebecca.

[Cut to a young man in a suit, seated in the front row.]

[Therapé] He is, of course, the young man who you went to the Bahamas with. You do remember him?

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Peele] Yes.

[Therapé] That's good. You can understand why we might have been concerned that you wouldn't.

[Peele] Um. No.

[Therapé] Well, let's see if we can clear that up.

[The camera shifts to focus on the background between them. The projection fades. A montage of images appear.]

[Therapé] Do you know these men?

[Peele] Um. Yes.

[Therapé] In fact, you've known all these men, haven't you, Rebecca. In fact, since, in the last year, since you were on this program, you have gone out with all the men whose pictures you see here, isn't that correct?

[Peele] Um. I guess.

[Therapé] It's good that you can face this honestly, Rebecca. I hope you can understand why your friends and family are concerned for you.

[Cut to a panning shot of the people along the front row.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] So do you understand, Rebecca?

[Peele] Um. No.

[Therapé] That's very unfortunate, Rebecca. So it seems you might still be in the denial phase. You see, Rebecca, when we start out with new endeavors, we have to be careful. New experiences can be very heady. And we don't want to get in over our head, so to speak.

[Cut to a panning shot of the audience nodding.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] And do you understand, Rebecca, that in the past twelve months you've dated a total of three men. Including, of course, the young man here.

[Cut to the young man in a suit, seated in the front row.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Peele] Um. Yeah.

[Therapé] And I hope that you can see the problem.

[Peele] Um. No.

[Therapé] Well, that's very unfortunate, Rebecca. I had hoped the damage had not already been too extensive, but it seems that I was wrong. So unfortunately, what I'm going to have to do next in order to get through to you is going to seem rather extreme.

[Zoom in on her face as she looks perplexed and concerned.]

[Cut to a panning shot of audience.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] You've turned into a slut, Rebecca.

[Audience gasps.]

[Cut to zoom-in on Peele's face. She blinks.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] But that's okay. We're here to help you get through this.

[Peele] This is ridiculous.

[Therapé] But the first thing is, Rebecca, that you have to want to get through it.

[Peele] This's stupid.

[Audience gasps.]

[Therapé] If you don't want to help yourself, Rebecca, it's going to be that much harder for us to help you.

[Peele] I don't need any help.

[Cut to a panning shot of audience members as they shake their heads.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] Don't you want to get better, Rebecca? Don't you understand what this is doing to your family and friends?

[Cut to a panning shot of the seated people along the front row.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Peele] Why shouldn't I be able to live my life the way I want?

[Therapé] We all want to do things, Rebecca. But we have to make sure they're the right things. We just want to help you, Rebecca. Don't you want to be helped?

[Peele] I don't see why I need help.

[Therapé] Unfortunately, that's part of the problem. What we need you to commit to—what we hope you'll commit to—is endeavoring to get to the point where you can understand that very point. The first step is always knowing when to ask for help.

[Peele] I don't need any help.

[Cut to a panning shot of audience members shaking their heads.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] I can understand how you would think that. It's a perfectly natural thought in your circumstances.

[Peele] This is ridiculous.

[Cut to a panning shot of audience members shaking their heads.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] I really hoped this would have been easier. But unfortunately, we have no choice. Would you please have them come out.

[Cut to a shot of two men exiting from behind the curtain off stage left. They make their way across the front of the audience. They sit in the front row.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] Do you know these two men, Rebecca?

[Cut to a shot of the two men sitting in the front row.]

[Cut to a close-up on Peele.]

[Peele] Yeah.

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage.]

[Therapé] Good. It's very good that you can admit that, Rebecca. Now we would like to help move you to where you need to be.

[The camera shifts to allow a view of the projection behind them. The stage lights faintly dim. The projection of the show logo transitions to a video feed.]

[One of the two men who just came out sits in a chair. He wears a polo shirt. The shot is from the second button up.]

[Voice Offscreen] Where did you go on your first date?

[Man] We went to a nice restaurant out on the bay called the Capek, I believe.

[Voice Offscreen] How many dates did you have before your first sexual encounter?

[Man] About nine, I guess. Depending how you want to count. It was about a month and a half.

[Voice Offscreen] And what was the first sexual act the two of you engaged in?

[Peele] Stop.

[Her silhouette stirs against the side of the frame. She appears to have slipped out of her high-legged chair and stood. The lights slowly come back up. The projected image fades to be replaced by the show logo.]

[Therapé] So are you beginning to understand, Rebecca, why your friends and family are so concerned?

[Peele] This's ridiculous.

[Therapé] It only seems to be ridiculous to you because you're not taking the full picture into perspective.

[Peele] I'm outa this. I'm out.

[Cut to a panning shot of audience members shaking their heads.]

[Cut back to a wide shot of Peele and Therapé onstage. Peele has slipped from her high-legged chair. She turns to walk offstage.]

[Therapé] But don't you understand how your friends and family members are going to feel when what's happening in your life is talked about on Facebook and Twitter?

[Peele stops.]

[Therapé] They just want what's best for you. They don't want to see you throw your life away. They don't want to see you publicly exposed. They don't want you risking your career. Don't you think your employers have a responsibility to know their employees are doing everything they can to help themselves?

[He rises. He steps towards her. He takes her hand.]

[Therapé] Don't you feel you owe it to yourself to halt this behavior now before something worse happens?

[He leads her back to the high-legged chair.]

[Therapé] And we're going to help her, aren't we everyone?

[Cut to a panning shot of audience members nodding their heads.]

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Hartnette] Controversy tonight at a local mountain convention. ParaCon, an enthusiastic gathering of superhero and scifi aficionados, has entered its third day. But now the convention is facing a slew of online scrutiny after reports that one of the panelists allegedly inappropriately hugged a number of female convention goers. News 10's Sylvia Borges was there earlier this evening.

[Cut to a shot of people milling across pavement.]

[Borges Narrates] Scifi fun in the sun.

[Cut to random shots of cosplayers.]

[Borges Narrates] But now what many figured to be a cool summer distraction has turned into a sea of questions.

[Cut to a shot of people's feet as they move across asphalt. Most of them wear shorts. Most wear sports shoes. Some wear sandals.]

[Borges Narrates] It began with tweets that started circulating early the night before last.

[Cut to an image of a partially blurred computer screen.]

[Borges Narrates] Nick hugged me, the tweet says. I didn't ask for that.

[Cut to a shot of scrolling Twitter posts.]

[Borges Narrates] Since its initial posting, the tweet has now been shared more than half-a-million times. And the number of re-tweets continues to grow. Within hours, it was joined by other convention attendants with similar stories. All in all, four women so far have come forward claiming that graphic

artist Nick Scott showed inappropriate levels of affection. The community now stands divided.

[Cut to a shot of a male convention goer. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right side of the frame, toward him. Someone in a bloody bunny costume stands half offscreen.]

[Question] What is your take on the allegations?

[Guy] I think it's kinda weird. I don't know. To be honest, I hadn't thought about it too much. I don't know, why would you go around hugging someone you didn't know and who if you didn't know wanted to be hugged?

[Bloody Bunny] Well, I don't know.

[The camera shifts to center Bloody Bunny in the frame.]

[Bloody Bunny] It's a bit like hover-handing, you know? It's just kinda a thing.

[Cut to another pair of convention goers. Both are women.]

[Question] So how do you feel about the allegations? Do you feel safe?

[Woman #1] I don't know. I always thought he was supposed to be such a cool guy. It's kinda hard to think about it. You don't know the whole story, so you don't know.

[Woman #2] I heard the same thing happened back at H-Con.

[Woman #1] Where?

[Woman #2] You know. Just through the grape vine. You know, that's just the story.

[Cut to another convention goer. A guy.]

[Question] What's your take on the allegations?

[Guy] I don't know, I mean, you know, what is it with people these days, I mean, my family hugs all the time, are they saying that's doing something wrong, that's just what we do cause of where we're from, so you know they can just accuse anybody of something these days even if it's, you know, just completely normal.

[Cut to another convention goer. A woman.]

[Question] Do you feel convention officials are doing everything they can to ensure the safety of the people attending?

[Woman] Well, I don't know. I would hope so. You kinda have to be aware of some of this stuff, you know. You have to look out for yourself. You just gotta be careful of what you get into. That's the big thing first off. There's always something, you know. You always gotta be careful.

[Question] What do you think about calls for Nick Scott to be barred from the convention?

[Woman] I'm not gonna get into that.

[Cut back to Sylvia Borges standing in a parking lot as people mill behind her.]

[Borges] Convention officials have released a statement assuring everyone as to their firm commitment to the safety and security of everyone who attends. However, as of yet there has been no word as to whether Nick Scott will be barred from the premises. He is still operating a booth here. And there are reports that there has been an upsurge in visitors expressing their solidarity on the issue. A representative for Nick Scott released a statement stating that in no way has Mister Scott taken any action that at the time was not

wholly and enthusiastically agreed to by all parties involved. The storm on Twitter, however, continues to grow, and now there has been a concerted online push by certain posters using the hash tag cannick to have the convention expressly remove Nick Scott. However, in general, the mood here remains positive. And the majority of convention goers we spoke to have expressed no interest in changing their plans. It remains, however, to be seen what impression this conflict will leave on the community as a whole. For News 10. I'm Sylvia Borges.

# The Thing About The Johnny Carson Show Is It'll Never Change

Tommy yawned. He stretched out his arms. This momentarily blocked the freelancer's view of the screen, but it didn't matter, as he continued to touch-type. "Meditation," he said, once he was through yawning. Though, he might've tried to say it while he'd been, aswell, but it'd've been swallowed up. He rose. Dirt and leaves clung to the backs of his thighs and shins, but he didn't bother to brush them off. "They say that civilization is a story we tell ourselves," he said, as he looked over the freelancer camp. He smacked his lips. He ran his tongue round the inside of his mouth. He scratched himself. "And that thus if we should change the story, we in fact can change ourselves." He stretched his arms again. The muscles in his back contorted as if they'd been live wires. "But what if the story of ourselves is thusly an automatic function?" He twisted his fingers together behind his head as he continued to stretch and look around. "Perhaps all that can be done is to change the channel." He released his hands. He let his arms fall down loosely by his sides. He shook himself. "But infinite streams and nothing to watch and all that." He began to walk. "Rather to model life as a video game. The restrictions are no less comfortably apparent. The goals no less comfortably defined. But at least we shall have the pleasure of watching our own asses as we walk about. Therefore God should have dedicated his most precious

intellectual skill to the physics engine of the ass jiggle. So that it may always be suspect that God was in fact a Korean." He stopped in front of a seated freelancer. He bent at his waist. He looked down at the screen upside down. He straightened. He continued on. "Have you ever noticed that first there were no words? And then there were and they might've been all one in the Logos, who and which knows? But then they were separate. And slowly one by one they are connected with dashes and apostrophes. And then one by one and two by twos and maybe even in three by threes they loose the dashes and apostrophes like the halves of pairs of proverbial socks. So slowly and slowly all words continue the process of merging into one single word. And when this single word shall arrive, there shall only be the Logos again, but in the singular singular which can only be expressed within the plural plurality. And there shall be no separation. For how can there be any separation when there is only the one completest word? For there shall no longer be a We. There shall only be the Logos. And the Logos in its and their multiplicity shall be beyond the Logos. So the Logos shall be beyond even the singular which is itself." He stopped. He bent at his waist. He looked upside down at a screen. He straightened. He continued on. "You have signed a non-compete with fundamentalist rationality, tonto. All accept the terms of the EULA of life upon conception. Don't pretend that you didn't." He stopped. He turned. He dropped beside a freelancer. He pulled his legs into position.

#### **₩** || **>>**

[Pinky] This is, of course, one of the incorrect assumptions that is commonplace in regards to this topic, and one which it might even be reasonable to assume is purposefully misconstrued and repeated in this fashion in order to confuse the issues and muddy the waters, as it were.

[Orgone] So what would we see if the water were crystal clear?

[Pinky] Yes. Of course, it is a biological essential that women, in general, are more directly involved with the process of prenatal child rearing.

- [Orgone] Oh but there isn't supposed to be any difference in the sexes.
- [Pinky] There is, however, the matter of biological facts.
- [Orgone] Exactly, Doctor. But, please, don't let me interrupt you.
- [Pinky] Yes. Of course, the entire point, of course, is that the man is biologically freer to deestablish this variety of relations in this regard. And that, of course, leads to the inherent instability that without the potential for the proper support being provided, women, in general, are going to be more reticent to engage in the act, or to mitigate this, to support measures such as birth control and abortion.
- [Orgone] So does the craziness begin before or after? Isn't the lack of the production of children going to lead to some insanity here?
- [Pinky] Clinically speaking, in a low-level manner, yes. However, the issue is more so how this would be exacerbated.
- [Orgone] Like the pill. The biological clock is ticking—and isn't that like throwing gasoline on the fire?
- [Pinky] Hormonal control is, of course, a very inexact science.
- [Orgone] Really, they don't know what they're doing at all.
- [Pinky] There is, of course, often an incentive not to point out the flaws.
- [Orgone] Exactly. Drugs that we've known for decades are driving women crazy, so they stab you with a knife. All by these government-funded scientists. Did you see that movie?
- [Pinky] Unfortunately, the time has not made itself available yet.

- [Orgone] Well, you should. But, anyway, Doctor, please, don't let me interrupt. You were talking about how they're wrong. How are they wrong about this?
- [Pinky] Yes. Of course, what we have to pay attention to here are the cascade effects, the biological geo-fluidity of men in relation to reproduction, the subsequent desire to destabilize female hormones, etc.
- [Orgone] And they keep trying to develop this stuff for men. A pill for men. So aren't they just trying to turn men into women?
- [Pinky] It is an anxiety outgrowth partially related to what we are talking about.
- [Orgone] Right. So we're talking about this. Please, don't let me interrupt you, Doctor. We were talking about how they are wrong.
- [Pinky] Yes. Of course, what we have to understand is that this is a fundamental misrepresentation. Within a society that socially reinforces the notion of monogamy, this guarantees its exclusive availability in such circumstances that provide the necessary structure for true participation. And in this context the material support for the act of reproduction is socially assured. Therefore there is no need for an anxiety to arise in that regard.
- [Orgone] There's no need for the pill. No pill, women don't go completely butcher-knife-stabby crazy, right?
- [Pinky] Yes. So the counterarguments, as can be obviously seen and obviously reasoned about, are simply incorrect, and can be viewed as nothing more than willfully so. They are, of course, aimed at nothing more than straw men.

[Orgone] Well, it's not like this is the first time that people just flat out deny the truth.

[Pinky] Yes. What we have to understand is that the only path to fulfillment is the uninhibited participation in the act. The constant potentiality for the success of the reproductive act is fundamental to well-being. And any attempt to sidestep that potentiality will, of course, bring with it the necessary sidestepping of the well-being.

[Orgone] It's just the way we're built to be happy.

[Pinky] Yes. Of course, we underestimate and challenge the history of our own biology and social function to our detriment.

Tommy exhaled, puffing his cheeks as he did so. He rose. He took two sidesteps down the way. He dropped beside a freelancer. He pulled his legs into position.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Guest] all evil, and that if there's a tiny government—

[Cathex] Federal government, Mister Rice.

[Rice] He doesn't acknowledge the distinction.

[Cathex] I think if you go back and read it again, you'll find that's the case.

[Rice] But, in any regard, his point is that an ineffectual government isn't worth buying, because it's of no use to establishing a monopoly.

[Cathex] Exactly. This is what you have when you have the government propping up businesses. Like those so-called public broadcasters, for instance.

[Rice] But the point is he's expressly pointing out that all businessmen, or maybe even humans, are basically inherently evil and will do anything for profit, whether it's hospitals or doctors or insurance companies, their entire drive is to scalp as much as possible and—

[Cathex] Well, aren't you being racist?

[Rice] What?

[Cathex] I mean, what's next, are you going to be calling them Nazis too?

[Rice] What exists other than the profit motive, then?

[Cathex] You still haven't answered my question.

[Rice] It's because I'm not going to answer that.

[Cathex] And where do you stand on ANTIFA?

[Rice] I don't stand anywhere.

[Cathex] No one can stand nowhere.

[Rice] What's it got to do with what we're talking about?

[Cathex] Next you're going to say you don't have an opinion on communism.

[Rice] What is communism but democracy realized?

[Cathex laughs.]

[Cathex] You really are ridiculous, you know that?

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Cathex continues to laugh. She stops. She clears her throat. She still smiles.]

[Cathex] Some technologists say your fridge or your blender is now as smart, or smarter, than your dog—or even your cat. Should you be worried? Is a machine uprising imminent? What you need to know—coming up.

## H | >>|

[The shot is zoomed out so that part of the audience and the stage can be seen at the same time, but because of that everyone onstage is almost too small and blurry to be definable. Someone is standing. Someone approaches them with a microphone.]

[Question] My question is for Professor Liste. I was just wondering what you thought about the recent Shakespeare parody protests.

[The camera begins to zoom in on the stage.]

[Liste] I'm going to say that I think everyone's being shortsighted on that one. You have the one part that's arguing that people who're talking about or posting about this are just making fun of religious people, that it's just to make religious people look stupid, and such. But this, for one, ignores the fact it's really happening. And at the same time it fuels a necessary persecution complex. And then, therefore, they are justified through this persecution. Which is in itself, I will argue, a symptom of what Kierkegaard pointed out, that when you have a nation or a society that is Christian, by definition, no one in that society is a Christian. And I think there's a profound anxiety in regards to that. The duality of a national prayer breakfast coexisting with the popular pulpit argument of oppression. But that's kind of all the normative aspects, really. There's nothing new about any of those things. But the thing that is new, or at least interesting in this case, is exactly the thing that's used to dismiss it. So the argument

by certain people is that they're not protesting or trying to pray away—which is something I saw posted earlier today, and unfortunately, we're in such times that you can't tell if that's from the opposition or not.

[Faint laughter from some members of the audience.]

[Liste] But the argument is that, since these people are protesting a parody, that this really doesn't count. And this is disingenuous. I think it ignores the particulars. And the particulars about alcohol and bawdiness and such as that are, of course, exactly the things that are taken from Shakespeare. So if you're protesting a parody play, you're by proxy protesting the actual thing. So it's a very kind of oblique cultural attack.

[Moderator] Okay. Do we have another—I think there's someone there in the back who has their hand up.

[The camera zooms out to allow a shot of someone moving through an audience, with a microphone and someone standing.]

[Question] Could you expand on that answer a bit? Isn't this really functionally equivalent to Muslim protesters in Europe and elsewhere who have demanded that certain venues be closed down for things like alcohol and lewd behavior and such? Isn't this just an example of the line between the two being very, very thin?

[The camera begins to zoom in on the stage.]

[Liste] The line is very thin in one respect. That is that both of the particular groups—not speaking of all them, obviously—but if you're referring to the protests in Marceau, then, yes, in a way, because the, at least publicly expressed, interests of both groups are roughly identical. And what they hope to achieve is roughly identical. Obviously, the slight difference is that protesters in France have engaged in a certain violence. But

that in itself doesn't indicate, necessarily, a diversion. The critical aspect is that protesters in the playhouse situation, I think you can argue, have an implicit backing of violence from a combination of the laws, and therefore law enforcement, who in effect guarantee their continued action in these regards. And in regards to the law, of course, it's a bit reversed in the French situation, so they are required more to take such action into their own hands against a police force. But if we realize the critical distinction, there is still that it's backed by violence, it's just a further distinction of recognizing the source of the respective violences.

[Cut to a three-way-split frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in another news segment.]

[Aster] This, of course, is the clip that has sparked controversy not just in the United States but also in Europe. And the question is being raised as to whether this is now further evidence of a racist bias against Islam. Doctor Wolffe, how should we feel about this?

[Wolffe] It's an appallingly naked situation.

[Aster] Doctor Wolffe, expanding on that, there have been some that claim academia, maybe in general, has a bias against practitioners of Christianity. But now people are saying that it's actually the opposite, that now it's clear that academia is in fact biased against Muslims. What do you feel in regards to that?

[Wolffe] I think it's very obvious the direction things have taken. It's just that it's more and more recently become acceptable for it to be more and more out in the open. It's almost naked now. The racism is quite palpable. And it now just nakedly engenders a culture of fear that is going to surround campuses across the country.

- [Aster] This, of course, follows on the heels of a talk given by a professor at the University of New York, where she pointed to what she claimed was the congruity between what some have called fundamentalist Christian positions and what some have called fundamentalist Muslim positions on issues such as gays and lesbians and abortion. So how do you feel about her statements in regards to the treatment of gays and lesbians in Muslim dominated countries?
- [Wolffe] Again, I think that when naked racism can come out so boldly, it's just a sign of how far things have gone.

[Aster] So you would disagree?

- [Wolffe] I would argue that calling something in itself fundamentalist Islam is itself fundamentally prejudicial. It appears to make a line. But much like the way white racists draw lines between good black people and bad black people or good Indians and bad Indians, there really isn't a line at all. It's just a method of couching a racist statement in something that seems, at first glance, reasonable.
- [Aster] Director Hysteria, how do you feel about the accusation that the influx of refugees is undermining the ability of democracy to function?
- [Hysteria] Can it function? When you have people from one set of mores shift into and occupying an area with a second group that has a different set of mores, can those two groups coexist if mores directly conflict? Do the mores of many of the cultures from which refugees are coming into Europe, do they often regard women as functionally property? Do they often practice female and male genital mutilation?
- [Aster] Sorry to interrupt you, Director. But don't you feel that is a false comparison? Isn't it true that the extent of the

physical nature of circumcision just can't be compared to female genital mutilation?

- [Hysteria] But is it just a line? Are there types of female genital mutilation that are exactly equivalent? Are these just as attacked as forms of barbarism? Or if the worst ones are eliminated, are these so-called lesser forms going to be allowed to let stand then?
- [Wolffe] This is the problem. You cannot, inherently, tell a culture how to practice its culture. This's simply the racist position of you saying you're better than they are. And this sort of bold-faced racism is more and more prominent these days. And this level of racism is going to have to be checked or the results will be apocalyptic.

[Cut to a three-way-split frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in another news segment.]

- [Orgone] Well, for once they're right. It is the apocalypse, folks. So now what we have is leftist-liberal professors claiming that good people just exercising their constitutional rights are the same as people beating police with baseball bats. That's the world we live in, folks. So what's next? Walking your dog's going to be the same as flying a plane into a building? I mean, what is next, Paul?
- [Ruben] You know, Ted, I've been speculating lately that I think we probably will have a replay of World War Two. It seems very clear to me that France is almost completely overrun again. It's very clear to me that Europe as a whole has almost been overrun. And even just like then, Britain is being hit hard. You know, it isn't all bombs this time. Unless you want to count them coming out of the womb as a kind of mini explosion. But make no mistake, the bombs are going off too. It's just not that they're being dropped from planes. Of course, that doesn't mean that a plane won't be flown

into something next. That's always, of course, a possibility for the next step. And the only thing that I can see that is going to be possible is for these United States to step up like they have in the past and deal with the situation. It's a real situation.

- [Orgone] Well, maybe we should just rethink the whole thing. I mean, you've got Europe, and isn't it just constantly being invaded and taken over? I mean, it happened with the Germans once. And then twice. It partially happened with the communists.
- [Ruben] The thing I would like to point out, Ted—as I'm sure you know—one of the gateways for so many of these so-called refugees is straight through Germany. And from there, of course, they can just pour out all through the land, as it were. So in that regard, it's just not that far off from history.
- [Orgone] Doesn't it seem like there should be a point where these United States stop saving the rest of the world and just let them deal with the messes they've made?
- [Ruben] Well, Ted, I think you have to account for the cyclic nature of history. So in one respect, it just has to be the way it is. And it's just our role, as it were.
- [Orgone] Not that anyone will be grateful for that.
- [Ruben] Well, perhaps that is just part of the cycle as well.
- [Orgone] But of course, we have all this hysteria these days. You just can't get away from it. It's just everywhere.
- [Ruben] Well, perhaps that is just part of the cycle as well.
- [Orgone] So, Miss Stevens, considering the nature of the times, don't you think that it would be more appropriate to actually

do something? Or is the hysterical position inherently to run around as if one's head's just been cut off? Which of course may be what happens if things continue the way they are headed. So other than clearly undermining the efforts of these United States to secure its own safety, why does the leftist-liberal position want to talk when action is required?

- [Hysteria] But everybody keeps talking about cycles, don't they? And they keep talking about a new Civil War, don't they? And they just keep talking about things happening again, don't they? Then what action is there? Can anything be done? If it's just happening over and over again, does it matter? And if it's uncontrollable, can anything else be done? So if that's the case, does anything matter if it's all just going to happen again?
- [Orgone] This's just another clear-cut example of leftist liberals getting into the territory of outright treason. Not that they weren't basically flirting with the line before that. But all the leftist liberals want to do is talk while they over there—and who knows how many of them over here—aren't talking. They're doing. All the leftist liberals seem to be doing is discriminating at every turn and screaming about discrimination. So it's not as if they're not with the Muslims in this regard. They're both quite happy to try and wipe the Jews off the face of the Earth. And now you have people out there campaigning in the streets. It's like we're all the way back in Nazi Germany, or something. There it is right there. Plain as day.
- [Hysteria] Would it be considered barbaric to cut off a person's earlobes or maybe the tip of their nose, or some other non-vital part?
- [Orgone] You see, this is what I mean. You come onto television and begin calling people barbarians for their religious

practices. And who were the real barbarians? The real barbarians were the Nazis. So I think we know who the real barbarians are here. Just this wholesale attack on the Jewish community from left and far left. It's starts as forcibly injecting people with things that'll do God knows what—excuse my language, folks. They did just exactly that sort of thing in the camps, you know. I mean, can you really tell how these things are going to affect each individual? So aren't you just basically medically experimenting on people?

[Hysteria] But is economics basically experimenting?, but with the lives of everybody on the line? And is it that nobody ever bothers to adjust when the experiments fail? Do they just go on again and again doing the same thing, saying it actually just hasn't been done right? What if it fundamentally can't be done right?

[Orgone] Well, what would you like, Miss Stevens? Hm? It seems to be that the leftist liberals are on the path to bringing communism back, so I guess maybe you'll prefer that.

[Ruben] May I interject?

[Orgone] Please do, Paul.

[Ruben] I just want to point out that, in fact, a return to, or rerun, if you will, of communism would, of course, be a necessary aspect of the cycle. So I think, in that regard, that it's not exactly unexpected.

[Hysteria] But do people just want to think about the same thing happening because it's more comfortable than thinking about the possibility that something different or new might happen?

[Orgone] Sure. It's always new. Communistic socialism was never really ever really tried. No, no that was just a fake, a phony.

It was just something set up to make communism look bad—it's really not that bad—honest. So let's do this new thing—it's totally not like that old thing that killed hundreds of millions of people.

[Hysteria] Or what if nothing new can be done? What if this's the only thing possible? Is that the even more horrific possibility?

[Orgone] Yes, to many people the greatest time of human abundance and wealth on the planet is just the worst most horrible thing that could happen. And the leftist liberals will do anything to point out how it really isn't true and capitalism hasn't brought about the greatest material happiness mankind has ever possessed. Of course, that can't be the case. Of course, they can't have lost. So no, they've got to tear it down to prove that in fact they were right. No matter that it's that material wealth that allows them to broadcast their hateful message across the face of the planet. But then again, that's just part of the loop, too, isn't it, Paul?

[Ruben] It could possibly be.

[Orgone] Well, thank you, Miss Stevens, for keeping us informed as to the sorry state of the hysterical part of the world. I guess we have to do that if we want to keep up the fight.

[The left frame disappears. The two right frames grow to fill the void.]

[Orgone] And thank you for being with us, Paul.

[Ruben] It was my pleasure.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] So coming up, folks, we'll continue our special coverage of the crisis at the borders. Stay tuned, folks—You just won't believe it.

#### 

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One wears a pink wig. The other wears a blue wig. Both wear black frilled gowns. The one with the pink wig is holding a phone. Both look down at it.]

[Question] So what do you think of the argument that The Twilight Zone and Star Trek could be considered message fiction?

[Blue Wig] I think it's kinda stupid. It just isn't the same thing.

[The one in the blue wig looks up from the phone.]

[Blue Wig] I mean, I guess they talked about racism, or whatever. But that was back then, and that's been taken care of. And it's just not the same as what they do now.

[Pink Wig] What they do now is too in your face. You know. There isn't anything else to it. It isn't good storytelling. It's just nothing.

[Blue Wig] Yeah, it's a good story. That's it. That's all you need. You don't have to know any of the rest of it to watch it.

[Cut to someone in cargo shorts looking down at a phone.]

[Question] So what do you think about their argument about message fiction?

[Cargo Shorts] I don't know.

[He looks up from the phone. He hands the phone back.]

[Cargo Shorts] I guess it makes some sense. It's just... I don't know.

I just see enough of the day, every day, you know.

The news and everything. When I wanna watch something else I want it to be something else, you know. I just, you know, I guess I just get tired of it.

[Cut to a guy wearing sunglasses. Alien appendages stick up from his hair. He stands looking down at a phone. He looks up. He hands the phone back.]

[Question] So what's your opinion about old shows being message fiction?

[Sunglasses] I don't know. I just gotta admit I like it because when I turn it on it's gonna be what I want to watch. You watch something new and sometimes you can't tell if you're going to like it or not. And it's just I like to watch something I know I'm gonna like. I like that it's always gonna be there. It's kinda stable. A kind of a touchstone. So it's always gonna be that way. Well, I guess so long as we can keep George Lucas away from it.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[The camera is zoomed out to allow a shot of the audience as someone extends a microphone toward someone who has risen from their seat.]

[Question] My question is for Miss Hall. I was wondering if you could talk a little more about how you think the experiencing of fairy tales defines a kind of dua-dynamic-reinforcing creation-anti-creation polarity and how it can be that the framework of the myth shapes us and then we in turn shape it, which shapes us, and how that might be used as a mechanism for differentiating media. Thank you.

[The camera begins to zoom in on the stage.]

[Hall] I want to make a small correction in regards to that question, if I may. I find it very important to draw a hard distinction

between the myth and the fairy tale. The myth exists as a fundamental aspect of a hierarchical structure. It is, in effect, generally, imposed from the top down. Whereas the fairy tale is diffuse. Ownership and authorship is impossible. They're transmitted and modified by the common people in their everyday lives. Especially by women. There is no central authority to say what is or isn't acceptable in the telling of the fairy tale. So that, I think, is a very critical distinction to make before any discussion can be in any way profitable. Now, to try and answer the question, there's a lot of examples that I could use but what comes to mind at the moment is something a colleague pointed out a few years ago in her book. The title of which I will remember as soon as I walk off stage.

## [Faint laughter from audience.]

[Hall] But the part of the book that I'm thinking of is talking about fan reactions and fan letters responding to issues around a nine-teen-eighties issue of the comic book Swamp Thing, which was written by Alan Moore. And the aspect she was exploring in that chapter was that readers could so easily believe the fictional practices by a fictional tribe in the comic, based around the issue of menarche, that they could believe that these horrible practices had to have happened. This is, of course, part of the dialogue that rises out of America's tradition of the Indian as the Big Other to the American self. And of course, this begins to cross into mythic territory, and I don't really want to get into that. But the point is that the feedback mechanisms create a situation where the narrative feeds into us, but then we feed the narrative. So it's kind of the opposite of consumption. The narrative ends up enhanced. So the point is that we might have media that is within this feedback loop. And we might have media that doesn't exist in such a loop. And this would be an entirely passive consumptive process. There would be no renewal or enhancement. So in that case you have something, and then it's gone. So at best, you attempt to obtain the same type of thing to consume again.

Now, whether or not these two distinctions are useful, I don't know. Admittedly, whether or not they even exist as truly independent, I'm not sure. It just seems to me that, at the moment, that's something worth investigating. And I hope I've answered your question. I don't feel like I've been very clear. I apologize. Maybe it'll make more sense when it's in book form. Maybe it will generate its own feedback loop then.

#### 

[Hartnette] Owner of Vermilion Books, Terrence Picograff, was one of several publishers to testify before a state senate subcommittee today as part of the currently ongoing hearings to determine if there is a consumer-safety issue in the used book market. Emerging from the hearing, Mister Picograff was quoted as saying that his company was dedicated to ensuring the safety of all their customers and that he believes state senators are also committed to ensuring that this is the case.

[Cut to the second main anchor.]

[Vivian] Tensions continued in court today as the council for the Refugee Relocation Union argued to get a judge to stay the order that has so far barred seventeen Iraqi women from entering the state. Jennifer Morgan has more on this story. Jennifer.

[Cut to a shot of Morgan standing in a parking lot.]

[Morgan] Thanks, Bianca. We're standing here in the parking lot of the Raleigh-Durham International Airport. You can just see terminal two in the background there. And it has been this terminal which has become one of the prime battle-grounds in recent conflicts around the new responsibilities of the states and the new federal government. Currently, there are National Guard members posted at the security checkpoint on the concourse level. And it has been the

concourse level that has for the last seventy-eight hours been home to seventeen Iraqi women. Seven of which are girls between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Also with them is Professor Tarif Assad, who has been one of those working with the Refugee Relocation Union, or RRU, to assist in transitioning those fleeing from conflicts in the Middle East to safe havens in the United States. We were able to speak to Professor Assad via Skype.

[Cut to very blocky and low-resolution footage of a large man with a beard.]

[Morgan] Professor Assad, since the United, since these United States' new Constitution was ratified and came into effect while you were out of the country, how concerned were you that this situation might arise?

[Assad] We, of course, knew the situation had a more than great possibility of becoming fact. And we prepared as best we could for that eventuality.

[The program adds its own subtitles for him.]

[Morgan] What are the feelings of those there with you?

[Assad] Nervousness, of course. But hopeful. It's a time for patience.

[Morgan] What will happen if the courts do rule that the states individually have a right to vet any foreign entries that may wish to enter the state in question, even though they may have been cleared to pass the federal border? Is there a contingency in that case?

[Assad] We will have to deal with such an event when it arrives.

[Morgan] Do you feel that the general attitude toward refugees has become even more hostile than it might have been in the past?

[Assad] I prefer to concentrate on the specifics at the moment. Generalities are rather difficult to change.

[Morgan] What about food and water? How have you been surviving?

[Assad] Luckily, there is a Pizza Kitchen, a bagel shop, and a Starbucks, and no end of vending machines, and a little less than two-dozen retail stores. And restrooms, of course. It might be tempting to think a person could live their whole life here.

[Morgan] How about sleeping?

[Assad] I have recalled Marcus Aurelius' recommendation to sleep on the floor at least a couple times a week. But apparently, it agrees with my back more than the chairs do.

[Morgan] How long do you expect this to have to continue?

[Assad] We are hoping for a positive decision in the next day or two.

[Cut back to Morgan standing in the airport parking lot. She's looking down at her phone.]

[Morgan] So what we have heard just now is that the council for the refugees has just rested and the state prosecutor is now giving his argument. And it's expected that the judge will retire and possibly give a ruling as early as tonight. But it's more likely, at the earliest, analysts say, to be tomorrow morning.

[She looks up from her phone.]

[Morgan] We will, of course, keep you up to date on this story as it continues to unfold. Live at the Raleigh-Durham International Airport. I'm Jennifer Morgan. News 10.



"You know, they're legally required to mention the brand name if they use the service on TV," Tommy said. He didn't look over. He leaned forward. He rested his elbow on his thigh. He rested his chin in his palm. He curled his fingers so his knuckles mashed his lips against his teeth and pushed the hairs above his lip into his nose.

#### 

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an audience member speaking into a microphone.]

[Question] What do you think is the most negative aspect that porn creates? Or the most negative expectation?

[Lens flare. Cut to a blurry upscaled shot of Gordon Liste onstage.]

[Liste] I kind of think of the old line that the worst thing porn does is it gives young people the unrealistic expectation that service personnel will arrive on time.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

### H || >>|

[Orgone] Should people who have injured society have to repay their debt to society in full? Well—as usual—the leftist liberals don't think so. It doesn't matter that someone's committed a crime. It doesn't matter that someone's broken the law. No, the only thing that matters is votes. Because you know who people who break the law and don't want to go to jail vote for? You won't even need three guesses. So with us to maybe answer why—though I don't even know if they know—but with us we have yet another font of hysteria. This time, regional director of the ACLC, which, for those of you who don't know, is close enough to the ACLU that you might as well just think of one as the other. But anyway, the regional director for the state of North Carolina will be joining us. Director Massachusetts Hysteria.

[She is in the left frame.]

[Orgone] And also joining us again will be our regular and longtime guest, who should probably need no introduction at this point. But allow me to welcome on the show Dick Masters, anyway. So welcome back to the show, Dick.

[He is in the other right frame.]

[Masters] Thank you for having me.

[Orgone] So this is the kind of question which I'm sure you've fielded more than enough times. Maybe even a few times on this show. But I'll ask it anyway. Dick, why is it that leftist liberals are so against the idea of justice? Why can't they stand it? Is it just the leftist-liberal corruption you have going on in Washington? Or is it corruption in the mainstream leftist-liberal media and they don't want it uncovered? What?

[Masters] Well, I have to admit, Ted, I've been in this job quite a number of years now and I'm not sure that I have a satisfactory answer to that question.

[Orgone] I mean, the leftist-liberal media is always going on about something made them do it or they trot out some oh so sad pathetic story about their parents beat them or the murderer's puppy, when he was just a child. Or the gold-standard, of course, it's society's fault. We're the ones who're really responsible for what they do. No one can take responsibility for themselves. No one can take responsibility for what they do. Is it a character trait, you think, this inability to bear up under responsibility? Is it something genetic? Or is it something they're taught? I mean, we already know they don't want children learning any responsibility. We know that. You know, we get these poor kids at the borders—all of them brought in by sex

traffickers, and who knows what—and we get them out of there, and we give them a safe environment. And why not have them learn a little responsibility while they're being taken care of? Why not? I mean, what do they want? Do they want them sitting around watching leftist-liberal media like Sesamum Row until their eyes run out of their heads? What?

- [Masters] I don't even know if it has to be something that's forced, at this point. The mainstream liberal media is so widespread, at this point, it's just impossible not to be exposed to it.
- [Orgone] So why is it, Director, that the leftist liberals can't compete in the marketplace of free ideas—they have to saturate the media landscape with their own propaganda.
- [Hysteria] Is it saturated? Is this station the most-watched news station in the world? What is mainstream?
- [Orgone] And yet it's the leftist liberals who completely refuse to have any other viewpoint. They completely scoff at the notion of fairness.

# [Hysteria] Do you?

- [Orgone] Obviously, you are here, Director. Dick, don't you think that this is mainly a victim-complex mentality? That they always have to be the victim. Because being the victim means that they think they can get whatever they want.
- [Masters] Of course, we might speculate that that is one reason why crime is so important to a certain subset of people. Without it, there would, of course, be no justification of the notion of victimhood.
- [Orgone] Yes, exactly. I mean, don't they want to get rid of crime? Director, why is it you don't want to get rid of crime?

Is it simply because you defend criminals? Is it simply because people donate money to pay your salary to defend criminals? And how much money is it that you make? How much is your cut?

- [Hysteria] If there were less crime would that mean there would be less need for judges and police officers and district attorneys and everything that goes along with that? Would there be fewer computers and cars and office supplies and uniforms and nitrile gloves and office furniture and cleaning supplies, and all the rest of it, would there be a huge amount of that no longer bought by the governments under the current pricing schemes?
- [Orgone] Director, you're just trying to avoid the question. I mean, I'm sure we can probably look it up somewhere. But how much do you personally make from your efforts to prevent criminals from facing justice?
- [Hysteria] So would it be that any reduction in crime by any significant degree would negatively impact the economy? Even if people had to pay less taxes, there's already so much unemployment, what is adding all those people, who would otherwise be locked up, into the jobs market going to do? Will they find employment?
- [Orgone] What do you personally make from trampling over the religious liberties of the God-fearing, honest, everyday, real Americans out there?
- [Hysteria] What about all those newly unemployed judges and police officers and attorneys? Will they file for unemployment benefits? What strain will this have on the system? If there are no such benefits made available, what strain will that have on the system? What jobs will they have since they've spent their adult lives or sizable portions of their adult lives achieving their credentializations for jobs that no longer exist?

- [Orgone] What do you personally make from getting kiddy sex slave rapists back out onto the street, Director?
- [Hysteria] And even if the tax breaks do help and the jobs market opens up with the jobs that prisoners currently do for subminimum wage and if people are desperate enough to take those same jobs at sub-minimum wage, how are they going to live? And if the wages of those jobs have to rise to attract people, are people going to pay more for their goods and services, their food, and the things they need to live? So is that just going to eat into whatever money they it's argued they wouldn't pay into a legal system?
- [Orgone] What do you personally make from destroying America's justice system, Director?
- [Hysteria] Is there any choice but to make money?
- [Orgone] Well, Director, you may be familiar with an old journalistic expression. Follow the money.
- [Hysteria] How much do you make?
- [Orgone] This is not about me. There's a difference between people who work and people who are given what they have. And isn't it a fact that there is just money flowing across these state borders right into your pockets? Don't you feel you should have some loyalty to the state you're a citizen of?
- [Hysteria] Why should I automatically have loyalty to something I was born into and had no choice about? Is it possible you believe in a patched version of the Tibetan Book of the Dead?
- [Orgone] We're not here to talk about religion, Director. We're here to talk about the criminals that you defend.
- [Hysteria] Do you suggest that criminals shouldn't be defended?

[Orgone] I suggest that the law be applied equally and without exception, to everyone. No exceptions.

[Hysteria] But is that true?

[Orgone] This is not some game, Director. We're here to talk about the criminals you're paid to defend, not to play semantic games.

[Hysteria] So you want everyone to be subject to the law equally?

[Orgone] Of course, Director. That's the only way everything works is if people are held accountable to the law as the law is written. That's what justice is.

[Hysteria] Are you a woman? Can you become pregnant? Would laws relating to pregnancy, then, by definition not apply to a little less than half the population?

[Orgone] There's such a thing as biological reality, Director. Not that the leftist liberals can admit that. But what you're really fighting for is the right of fifty-year-old men to walk right in the bathroom with a little four-year-old girl—that's what you get paid to fight for. Are you just in it for the money, Director? Or do you actually believe?

[Hysteria] Does anyone believe anything?

[Orgone] Of course, we know how the leftist liberals feel about belief.

The only thing they believe in is someone should get to just waltz right over any border they want, should get to just waltz right in anywhere they want, whether it's a border or your bedroom or a bathroom with a four-year-old girl.

[Hysteria] Since within the contemporary interstate and international corporation the transfer of money from one party to another within such an organization or the transfer

of personnel within such an organization is classified as merely an inter-organizational one, is the law saying the borders do not count in this regard? Do such entities exist in a kind of hyperspatial state? Is this a meta-organism? Is this merely the movement of particulars within a singular entity that is beyond such abstractions? So under such, are you able to cross borders at will and move material across borders at will?

- [Orgone] Well, these United States, Director, started with a cartoon by one of those Great Men you want to tear down. And as anyone knows, and as you would know if you knew anything other than your expunged leftist-liberal so-called history, something cut into pieces cannot stay alive. And it doesn't matter what I want, Director. That is the law. This's not talking about people crossing borders. Crossing borders is completely legal, so long as it is done the right way. Leaving the state is not illegal. Entering the state is not illegal. But doing it the wrong way is.
- [Hysteria] So then would you agree that doing something illegal is illegal?
- [Orgone] Of course, Director. I don't understand. What, are you just repeating words now? Is that the only defense the liberal left can muster these days, running around in a circle?
- [Hysteria] What is it about circles that are attractive? Have both the left and the right embraced the notion of the circle of life? Is recidivism a circle? Is it almost exactly like what they talk about when they talk about the circle of life?
- [Orgone] Well, I think we do have to admit that talking animals makes about as much sense as some of what the leftist liberals spout.
- [Hysteria] And if the legal system is established to prevent crime, why is it that it seems also to actively facilitate recidivism? And

if we are to take it that criminality won't go down and the economy will be preserved, does that mean that the argument for consequences as a discouragement against crime are therefore false? And if children who have one or more parent incarcerated are more likely to be incarcerated themselves, is the circle of life to be born and to enter into the prison industrial complex and to be released and to return until the end of life? Or could it be instead to be born inside of it and never leave?

[Orgone] You know we're not doing movie reviews here, Director. But all of this just might be emblematic of the whole of the whole leftist-liberal problem. How is it that you can take a bunch of animals in a movie and all the leftist liberals can see is racism and sexism and genderism and fascism, and who knows what else? It's like a—what do they call one of those tests where they have the smeared around ink?

[Masters] Rorschach test.

[Orgone] Thanks, Dick. So does this just indicate something about the leftist-liberal mind, that they see this stuff everywhere? These days you could probably make the Sound of Music and they'd be complaining that resisting the Nazis was fascist, or something.

[Hysteria] What if certain arguments are correct and that the only fully-fledged Nazi character we experience in that film can be seen as fulfilling the Nazi stereotype of the cultured and cosmopolitan Jew? And through such an interpretation, what if it can be determined that the main characters are presented to us as the perhaps exact picture of the rural Aryan, the epitome, perhaps, of Hitler's notions of blood and soil, fighting against the incursion of this urbanite Jewish force?

[Orgone] And how much money do you make defending ANTIFA bashing innocent people's windows in?

- [Hysteria] And when the nuns ask forgiveness for what they had done, what if this can indeed be interpreted through these same lenses as the couching of the notion of the higher purpose and the higher moral good needing to be enacted through evil? And how close is this to what was said about the Holocaust? Was the justification there, too, that it was a horrible, dirty job but that it was something that had to be done for the greater good? So in accepting the viewpoint of the narrative of the film, is it possible that the viewer has accepted the coordinates of a quite detailed expanse of Nazi ideology?
- [Orgone] Bull pucky—I'm sorry out there, folks—but bull pucky. This's what happens, the leftist liberals turn around everything. Next they're going to be saying that we should be paying criminals for being criminals, or something.
- [Hysteria] Is it argued that the work prisoners do is good? Is the justification for the price of that labor being below the market value that they are being taught skills that they can use once they are released borne out? Is it that we spend something close to thirty-thousand dollars a year to house and feed a prisoner? Is that just for the benefit of those who employ a cheap labor force? Is that taxpayer money going to subsidize these businesses? So what would happen if we just paid people? Would we be out any more money? What would happen if we just pay for job training directly with that money? With the money that is spent on putting people in jail for drugs and overdue child-support payments, would it be cheaper to pay for those things directly? Are we going to pay money one way or the other?
- [Orgone] Sure, just pay people to do nothing. But that's not even what you really want to do, is it? You want to pay people to sit around and play video games and smoke marijuana—excuse my language, folks—that's what you really want.

- [Hysteria] Can the current economic system survive without the prison industrial complex? Can it survive without slavery?
- [Orgone] All you really want to do is to pay people to be kiddy rapists, isn't that it, Director?
- [Hysteria] Can human society exist without slavery? Has it ever?
- [Orgone] Real Americans know the beauty and grandeur of a hard days work, something you're never going to understand, Director.
- [Hysteria] How will these people survive in the interval between, while the market resets? Will they have health insurance during this time? If they do not, what will happen in the event of unexpected medical emergencies? What will happen to those with chronic conditions? Will their ability to work, even when the economy resets, be impaired?
- [Orgone] Well, Director, like most leftist liberals out there in fantasy land, you just don't understand how the real world works.
- [Hysteria] What if the reset position of the economy is worse than the period that preceded it?
- [Orgone] Do the leftist liberals think if they just repeat themselves enough times, if they just say the same thing over and over again—no matter how wrong it is—that people are just going to start believing it, that they are just going to start believing it's the truth, that they are just going to forget everything they ever knew? And we're not talking about healthcare, Director. We're talking about the corrections system.
- [Hysteria] Does the prison system involve healthcare? Is healthcare provided to prisoners in a way that it isn't to the poorest Americans? Is that a common media perception? Why?

- [Orgone] Because prisoners are supposed to work, that's why. That's why prisoners are supposed to work. They're supposed to pay back the American people for the debt they're incurred against them and the debt of keeping them while they're paying that debt.
- [Hysteria] Does such a debt ever end? Is debt power? Are mortgages and medical bills and student loans then power?
- [Orgone] Obviously, these liberal colleges sucking up taxpayer money to do nothing are part of the problem.
- [Hysteria] Then why not have loan forgiveness?
- [Orgone] Because people have to be responsible for their decisions. Which is exactly the reason we have to have prisons. If the choices people make don't have consequences then nothing matters.
- [Hysteria] Why are those consequences portrayed as natural and immutable? Could they be, instead, human fashion?
- [Orgone] Ah, yes, the good old liberal leftist position of moral relativism. Nothing means anything. Do whatever you want. It's all good. There isn't anything wrong.
- [Hysteria] Are markets actually designed and required to be inherently relative? If they're not, does that mean that all decisions in the market are forgone conclusions? If so, would the market then actually not be the market at all? So might it be that in order for the market to be the market, relativism must be inherent to the process? Would a true market guarantee, then, nothing but relativism? Do some things always have value? Would we value more what we need to live? Is the price that you would pay for a glass of water and a sandwich when you are full the price you would pay when you have been without food for seven to ten days?

[Orgone] What right do the leftist liberals have to try and control what people put in their bodies? I mean, they're already forcing shots into people's bodies, we know that. But they want to say you can't take this or can't eat that. Isn't that just basically fascism at its worst? The absolute control over the individual body.

[Hysteria] Is it fascism to inform people of the effects of that which they consume? Is it fascism to relieve someone of their ignorance?

[Orgone] Yeah, that's it isn't it. That's really it. The great unwashed masses that have to be led around by the nose. They can't think for themselves. No, they're too stupid. They need a leftist-liberal elite to think for them. The leftist-liberal elites at these universities. We all know how they connect in with government. Not elected, mind you. No, that would be too upfront. It's the back doors and the behind the scenes. The Deep State. Oh, we'll let you run your little democracy, but we all know how stupid you all are, so we'll have to be the ones who really take care of everything, but you won't appreciate it because that's just the ungrateful masses, isn't it, that they won't bow down before the liberal elites and acknowledge their obvious superiority. And you come on here monopolizing time, not letting anyone else get a word in edgewise and just silencing anyone else. So congratulations, Director, you've managed to accomplish that very well. I'm sure you'll be happy with yourself.

[The left frame disappears. The two remaining frames grow to fill the void.]

[Orgone] I'm sorry about that, Dick.

[Masters] Oh, it's no problem.

[Orgone] I just hate the way some of these people try to suck up all the time. It's a type of anti-free speech is what it is. But

unfortunately, we're out of time. But thank you for coming on.

[Masters] Thank you for having me.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] Coming up—the loneliness epidemic. Has leftist-liberal culture created a toxic wasteland where people can't hug or say what they think? And what does it mean for the future of these United States? Stay tuned for that and more, folks.

#### 

[Someone rises out of a folding chair in a hotel conference area.]

[Question] My question is for Mister Straw. I would like to know why you stopped publishing speculative fiction.

[The shot allows a view of the three men sitting behind the plastic folding table, so the camera remains fixed.]

[Straw] It's really kind of a boring answer, but somewhere about the mid-eighties it just came down to the fact that I just didn't seem able to do it anymore. By the time I came up with anything—let alone wrote it down—it was already in the past. It was already going on out there. So it began to seem kind of pointless. Maybe part of it was the Berlin wall.

[Erot] Eeeeeeh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] I'm not saying I can explain it.

[Someone in the audience rises.]

[Question] You were on the team that brought down the Soviet Union though, right? You were one of the people in the Omega Group, right?

[Straw] One of being the operative word. Or words.

[He looks down the table.]

[Straw] It's terrible to be a writer and so ill-suited for properly fitting together words, isn't it?

[Erot] Eeeeeeh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] How'd you ever avoid getting an invite?

[Erot] To what?

[Straw] To the Pentagon's science fiction defense council.

[Erot] Eeeeeeh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] For those of you who might not know, there really was a group at the Pentagon formed from terrible science fiction writers—

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] And futurists and such, and dealt with thinking about taking on the Soviet menace and what they might do. Of course, the problem with a truly rational game is that it by definition has to end in stalemate.

[Someone in the audience rises.]

[Question] I identify as a Hysteric.

[Erot] Eeeeeh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Question] But what if a perpetual precipice of war that never seems to quite get over the edge is better than no war at all, for some reason?

[Straw] I don't know.

[Question] Is that somehow similar to the way they talk about tantric sex, where you don't orgasm, but it's supposed to go on indefinitely?

[Straw] Well, having lived through the one, I hope not.

[Audience laughter.]

[Question] Could it be that the fall of the Berlin Wall represented a loss of even the possibility of possibility? So isn't there only neoliberal capitalism left now?

[Straw] I don't know. I tend to have found that one can live through things without knowing what they are. In fact, that may be a prerequisite of living through them.

[Audience laughter.]

#### 

[Aster] He is the self-professed leader of what some are calling the Newer Left. And following the most recent elections, many have remarked that it has become a force to be reckoned with and which the broader left can no longer ignore. So here to speak with us about just what exactly the Newer Left is is Joseph Alphabetsoup. Is it alright if I call you Joseph?

[The image in the far-left frame shakes. It is at such an angle that it's obvious the image must be from a laptop webcam.]

[Alphabetsoup] I prefer to be address by my title and product name. They call me Mister Alphabetsoup.

[Aster] And why do you prefer this, Mister Alphabetsoup?

[Alphabetsoup] It is an emblem of my slavery to material goods and social hierarchy. And at such a point as I free myself from these things I will also then be able to free myself from my name as both a figurative and a literal prefigurement of my eventual true emancipation.

[Aster] And how is this emancipation to be achieved?

[Alphabetsoup] We must seek out and find absolute purity. Any contamination whatsoever will render the entirety of the body decrepit. Any necrotic flesh will kill the whole organism, eventually. So we must free ourselves of any contamination.

[Aster] Forgive me, but this seems as if it might be more of a spiritual question than a political one.

[Alphabetsoup] True liberal politics can only be realized through perfection. Perfection can only arise through purity. So long as any conservative idea remains within the liberal this personalized gender or genderless and or and sexual or sexless construct can never truly be liberal.

[Aster] And how will this be brought about? How will you go about this?

[Alphabetsoup] In this land, there are many abandoned projects. In the wake of the annulment of federal funds, this land stands filled with buildings in the remotest corners of the land. In the wilderness, the telescopes that once looked at the heavens remain silent and blind. And we shall retreat to these places and seclude ourselves. And we shall emerge once we may be free of our nondiscriminatory bondage names and all that which is attached with and to them.

[Aster] How do you respond to some members of the left who claim that this is merely a cult masquerading as a political organization?

[Alphabetsoup] The lack of respect for difference is, of course, one of those imperfections that must be overcome. And it is one of those imperfections which still infects too many members of the liberal party.

[Aster] I apologize if I caused any offense.

[Alphabetsoup] There is no offense taken. One must not take offense.

One must simply realize that when all are one then there shall be no offense.

[Aster] When is this process to begin? When are you going to leave for these places?

[Alphabetsoup] We have already begun. Even now, we are on our way.

Once we are there, you will hear no more from us until we achieve what it is we must have. We will exist there in silence until the true and pure liberalism can emerge in the world once again and light the way through the darkness of ignorance and ill-education and inconsiderateness and unthoughtfulness and competitiveness and economics and intolerance and materialism and inhospitality and impoliteness.

[Aster] And do you expect many to follow you?

[Alphabetsoup] Of course, our doors shall be open to any who wish to enter and any who wish to purge themselves of that which infects liberalism and prevents it from being what it is it must be if it is to exist. Only in purity can a true liberalism exist.

[Aster] Then we wish you luck in your endeavors.

[Alphabetsoup] You are most kind.

#### H4 || >>

[The camera zooms out to allow a shot of someone moving through an audience, with a microphone, toward someone standing.]

[Question] My question is kind of for everyone. Do you think that Professor Makayla Mendelson is correct that it's likely we already have had at least partially computer generated fiction on the market, considering what's already being done with news stories? And I was wondering what your thoughts are on how this will impact the community nature of storytelling or the fairy tale. And also if computer-generated porn is more ethical than the real thing. Thank you.

[The camera zooms in on the stage. Everyone looks around, silently deciding who is going to go first.]

[Moderator] So we have several questions kinda all in one here. I think this might be cheating. So how about we start with you, Professor Liste. You've done some work in this area in partnership with Doctor Jones, I believe, haven't you?

[Liste] Something like that. And first, I'm going to have to admit it's not my expertise. And unfortunately, I'd haul Langdon up here to answer this question, but as usual, he's conveniently disappeared.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] But I'll try to answer the question. In particular, it's difficult because our study was on the use of relatively simple Markov engines. In case any of you out there didn't happen to read it. Which I'm sure no one has. So don't feel badly.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] But we had rather simple things which, on the surface, seemed to generate material very close to that which can be found in certain popular books that shall remain nameless.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] And we did experiments to see if people could tell which is which. And on first glance, when people can't tell the difference like that, you think it's something significant. But first of all, it's very short snippets. So that's one thing. People are really good at ascribing meaning. In fact, given something with inherently no meaning, such as stars, or the leaves in the bottom of a tea cup, or some chicken bones thrown on the ground, the human mind will invest those patterns with meaning whether it's there or not. Obviously, we can go back to the history of the ELIZA program. Again, very simple software. Even much simpler than the Markov generators we were using. Well, we didn't use them, that's what grad students are for.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] But you've got something like ELIZA. Simple software. Or so I'm told. But people interact with it as if it were a real human being. And they will become emotionally invested. Now, one might be tempted to ask what does that mean for actual human interaction?

# [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] So it's tempting to speculate on the actual depth, or shallowness, of intelligence and engagement. But that's not what, well, in a way it might be what we're here for, because really, I would argue that's what makes a pornstar, as opposed to a mere performer. It's that engagement. So if I can kind of jump ahead to the question about generated porn, I think that's the thing it will have to overcome. It won't be enough to just have personalization of the narrative. That this, this, this, and this kind of thing happens. There will have to be a personal connection. You'll notice in porn that the top performers, the true pornstars, don't, or rarely, make eye-contact with the male performer. They're making eye contact with the viewer. Here, the male performer is just an instrumentation.

[Moderator] Okay, well, maybe we should—

[Happi] But it always comes back to focus on the male. Even when the woman is the one economically and physically exploited, everyone then wants to talk about how it's really the man who's reduced to the status as the true object.

[Moderator] Okay, so...well, let's move on to the next part of the question. Deirdre, I think you'll want to take that. How will computer-generated narratives impact, do you think, the way stories are conceptualized by communities?

[Hall] First, we have to answer the question of what exists anymore. Storytelling, of course, is still going on. But it's not what we'd necessarily consider the classic fairy-tale tradition, if you will. Or maybe you could. Let me...let me illustrate. Now, technology is important in a way it wasn't ever before. So I would say the main form of this kind of social storytelling now is seeing something on Facebook and sending it to someone. So there's that difference in the mechanism. But what about the content? I think that's where things remain the same. You have the story of someone licking a stamp and something

growing in their tongue and hatching out. Which is kind of getting old at this point. I'm showing my age, I'm afraid.

[Moderator] How long has it been since you licked a stamp?

[Hall] I don't want to think about that.

[Audience laughter.]

[Hall] And of course, you have aliens and Bigfoot and conspiracy theories. So contrary to what some people might think, the inter-social fictional aspect is still there. If anything, technology has accelerated that. Maybe you might make some argument about direct copying versus having to retell the thing each and every time, but that's a statistical argument, I think. However, the charge that might be leveled is that there has been a leveling, that smaller cultures are being, in effect, steamrolled. That argument, I think, has some merit because it doesn't matter where in the world you go now everyone has a cellphone and everyone's looking at the same stuff on it. So we often see these arguments for this individual, custom content, but I don't think it really gets borne out. No more than it did in the past, when patrons would commission some work of, well, custom pornography, because that's what we're talking about.

[Audience laughter.]

[Hall] Humans desire a shared fictional framework. When you see something you like you want to make other people watch it. So I doubt this idea of customized narrative is possible either socially or economically. So the notion of the Imagined Community, if you will—but I'm not using that in the same way as Benedict Anderson, I don't think—but the notion of the fictive community interlink I don't really think has changed. Now, the interesting part might be is how that set of interlinks can remain but individuals within that

community can perceive it as isolative or that how it can paradoxically act as isolative even though it inherently relies upon interconnectiveness to achieve that isolation. That might be the interesting question to ask.

[Moderator] Well, okay. Thank you for that. So I think that sets us up nicely to talk about the last question, which I'll give to you, Georgia, which is can computer-generated pornography be ethical in a way that live action can't be?

[Happi] Are we talking, like, revenge porn, here? Putting people's faces on things?

[Moderator] No, I think we're talking about purely artificial material. Things that are created from scratch, as it were.

[Happi] Well, even in such a case, I don't think it matters. Even if the body is fictional, it's still a construct inherently based upon the female body. It's an embodiment. And in fact, it's even worse. It's an embodiment that's been completely numeritized. It's the embodiment of intellectualization through the intellectualization itself. A double perversion. Everything about this body is reduced to numerics. It just re-encodes the body into the ontological space of the mind. And the consequence is the achievement of final and complete control. So rather than being an attempted control that's exercised on the or against the body of a single woman it's enacted against the bodies of all women all at once, and the entire class of the virtual woman. It gives birth to the total woman which is total control. So in this sense, not only is it not more ethical, but it's even more repugnant than that which it replaces. The claim that it's okay because it's digital and it's not real ignores the fact that by creating this body it is an embodiment and with it comes everything else. It is an object and that it must be penetrated necessarily carries with it. And it perverts the non-physical landscape, diverts it into

the forced conceptualization of the purely physical because it is only in this non-physical space that the imaginary can be actively conceptualized and only in this space can the necessitated fictive penetrative act be enacted. And this will remain so for so long as there is the object and the object of production in the fictive space, which is to say all objects of production. So it is not just a representation. It is the transmogrification of the ultimate non-physical space. It is the ultimate violation. It is the ultimate control without any possibility of reaction. It is ultimate control.

[Moderator] So in your view, would this differ from painting or sculpture?

[Happi] No. Not at all. It's all the same. It's the same process. The only difference is in the refinement in the degree of control over the body that the continued advance of technology can allow. In fact, the very idea of *progress* itself is predicated on increasing control of, first, various female organs, and finally the totality of the whole of the body itself and the enforcement of such control through the entrenched embodiment it necessitates and which is required for its very sphere of control. So the only difference in the Venus of Willendorf and whatever virtualized things you have out there is only a matter of degree.

[Moderator] Well, okay. I think we have someone with their hand up in the back. Back there.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Someone holding a microphone and walking through a crowd.]

[Host] So we're out here today trying to find out what's the worst encounter people have had with existential dread.

[Cut ahead. The host holds out a microphone toward a woman with a bowl haircut. She wears sunglasses.]

[Host] What has been your worst moment of existential dread?

[Woman] Um. Like fear, or what?

[Host] It's like when the entire notion of existence starts to fall apart.

[Woman] Um. I don't know. I don't know if I've ever felt that way.

[Cut to a shot of the host moving through a crowd.]

[Host] We should be able to find somebody who's had an existential crisis.

[Cut to a shot of the host holding a microphone toward two guys. Both wear sunglasses. One wears shorts. One wears pants.]

[Host] What was your worst moment of existential dread?

[Pants] Once when daylight savings time had changed, I was two hours late for class.

[Host] So, wait, daylight savings time is an hour. How'd you end up two hours late?

[Pants] I grew up in a place with very strange daylight savings time.

[Host] That sounds like it could initiate an existential crisis all on its own.

[Pants] It might have.

[Host] And what about you?

[Shorts] Standing in a Barnes and Noble holding a book I was going to buy and looking at the Starbucks and thinking about going over.

[Pants] You're such a poser.

[Shorts] It's advertising, you know? It's just kind of in everything. It's like wanting to drink coffee or hot chocolate every time you pick up an ereader. It's almost like a pre-Pavlovian response.

[Pants] God, you're so pretentious.

[Shorts] But advertising is our lives. We're walking around with t-shirts that're turning *us* into walking billboards.

[Pants] And we're doing it for free.

[Shorts] No, we're paying to do it.

[Host] So was the existential crisis about the Starbucks or the commercials?

[Shorts] Well, everything's a commercial. We remember commercials more than we remember movies. They're our shared cultural point of reference.

[Host] And does this moment still haunt you?

[Shorts] Absolutely.

[Pants] Come on, man.

[Host] Like, really?

[Shorts] Sometimes it occurs to me, and I just want to crawl out of my own skin.

[Pants] This's just pathetic. I'm not gonna stand around for this. Come on, man.

[Cut to a shot of the host holding a microphone toward a guy wearing sunglasses.]

[Host] What was your worst moment of existential dread? What's the moment that just made you question it all?

[Guy] I think I used to have this math class in college. But I think I forgot about it and stopped going right in the middle of it.

[Host] Wait a minute. So you still don't know?

[Guy] I never figured it out.

[Host] Couldn't you, like, pull a transcript, or something?

[Guy] It bugged me so bad near the end, right before I graduated, because I was, like, oh bleep, am I gonna fail? So I tried to pull the transcript.

[Host] And what happened?

[Guy] It was incomplete. There was something wrong with the system. They couldn't pull the whole thing up.

[Host] So you still don't know?

[Guy] No.

#### 

[The six of them are all sitting at the same table now. zGlasses is down toward the end and directly across from Primm Rosa.]

[Lace] But isn't the dirty-old-man phase the fun phase?

[T-Shirt #2] Yeah. But what about Starship Troopers?

[Lace purses her lips and shakes her head.]

[Lace] Guy hardware fantasy. Besides, if it did happen, there wouldn't be hardly any guys there, anyway.

[T-Shirt #2] Why?

[Lace] Because seven out of ten women have the genes for ultra-fine muscle control and only three out of ten men.

[She reaches for her drink.]

[Lace] That's why women shooters outnumber men.

[She sucks through the straw.]

[Lace] And that's why the TV commentators only focus on biathlon.

[She sets the drink down.]

[Lace] So the big manly men can prove how manly they are by skiing around and then shooting.

[T-Shirt #1] So? What's that got to do with it?

[Lace] If you've got the power armor, what do you need brute force for?

[She motions with her arm.]

[Lace] All you got to do is that. Software and hydraulics, or magnetics, or whatever, apply the actual force. So with the same motion, you could hold a kitten or shove over an elephant. The strength of the operator doesn't mean a thing beyond a certain point. And it's all about how well you can control your muscles.

[T-Shirt #1] So next you're going to say women're better at space travel too.

[Lace] Smaller and lighter. Require fewer calories. Brain to body ratio larger. Evolutionarily evolved to have more blood in the core and can take more g-forces because of it. You tell me.

[T-Shirt #1] Yeah, but what about periods in space?

[Rosa] There've been women in space, you know.

[Lace] There've been STDs in space.

[Diffuse laughter.]

[T-Shirt #1] Besides, it'll probably all be external baby incubators and all that by then anyway.

[Lace] I believe that depends on if your state succeeds in creating axolotl tanks.

[She reaches for a fry.]

[zGlasses] So what about Friday?

[Eyes shift towards him.]

[Lace] I like the rape scene.

[T-Shirt #1] Come again.

[Due to the quality of the CMOS, it's difficult to tell if his face changes color. Rosa laughs. T-Shirt #2 clears his throat and tries not to.]

[Lace] It's successfully alien.

[She reaches for another fry.]

[Lace] It really shows an alien person in an alien society. Someone who's been trained from artificial birth in a particular lifestyle. It gets under your skin how people might not think like you do and how everything you think's reality might be just a cultural construct.

[zGlasses] Just put on the glasses.

[Lace and T-Shirt #2 laugh, but everyone else doesn't.]

[Lace] But what if you put on the glasses and you see nothing? The true Desert of The Real.

[Lovegrav] So do you wear those all the time?

[The orientation of the shot shifts slightly toward where she's sitting. She reaches for a fry.]

[zGlasses] I'm trying to.

[Lovegrav] Why?

[zGlasses] I don't want to forget anything. It's the most obvious extension of memory and the human nervous system since the invention of written language.

[T-Shirt #2] Is that, like, verbatim ad copy, or something?

[Diffuse laughter.]

[Lace] Is that the ad-free version?

[zGlasses] Yeah.

[T-Shirt #1] They're still mining it for data though.

[T-Shirt #2] What isn't mined these days?

[He glances around the room.]

[T-Shirt #2] Hell, even without the signal, I'm sure all these things're still listening.

[Lovegrav] So what do you do about when you look at yourself in the bathroom, and stuff?

[Rosa] Well, if you're posting it on Insta, anyway, it doesn't matter.

[Diffuse laughter.]

#### H > >>|

"Most right-handers masturbate with their left hands, you know," Tommy said. "They have to use the mouse. You know which is the sexual object." He cut his eyes away from the screen. He watched the freelancer stroke the Macbook trackpad.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Cathex] Joining us now is former Justice Addwater.

[The image subdivides to allow for a second right frame.]

[Cathex] Thank you for taking the time to come on.

[Addwater] Happy to be here, very pleased. Delighted.

[Cathex] What's your take on these cases? You've been keeping up with them.

[Addwater] I have, I have been keeping up with them, I have been following them. They've proved quite interesting to watch, it's been very fascinating, very engaging viewing.

[Cathex] So what's your take? Why are they wrong?

[Addwater] It's very simple really. Really, there isn't much to it at all, it's just that there's no constitutional guarantee of satisfaction, so there isn't one at all, so the Constitution, in fact, doesn't say anything about it at all, so there's nothing written in it having to do with that whatsoever, not anywhere. The same with the other thing, of course, so it's not there either, so it's nowhere in there, or at least, not in the way some have wanted to argue, so it's not in the way that some have wanted to claim. Now, if

we were to talk about the right to completion, if we were to discuss that right, then we could say about that right that it does have such a basis, that such a premise would have support in the legal frameworks of many states, quite a few of them. But the first one, what we were discussing first, no, there's no guarantee for that. It's just not necessary. It's not functionally necessary. It's not in there. It's just not written in there. They just didn't put it down in there. Not in the sense of private business. It's not a business-related legality. It's only sometimes a government legality. When it comes into play, in those few times that it's applicable, it's only appurtenant in relation to how it's pertinent with the government, and it's only germane there, so it's not deployable in the private or public sphere, in the same fashion, in the same way, in an identical manner, so there's an error there when they want to try and claim that, when they want to try and argue or say that.

- [Cathex] Nobody's asking you to love your job. Just man up. And if you're incapable of that, maybe you just don't need to be there.
- [Addwater] No, there is no constitutional requirement, no legal guarantee, nothing in the law, nothing that states that any amount of satisfaction or attachment will arise, that any of that will be borne out of anything, anything at all, really, whatsoever. There's just no guarantee, not any promise of it, nothing assured like that. It's not guaranteed.
- [Cathex] It's just another case of a certain little group wanting something special.
- [Addwater] It's often the case, yes, many times, that's the sort of thing many, quite a lot, have been asking for, have been trying to argue for quite a while, for a long time now, going back a long ways.

- [Cathex] It's no different than any other job. You're not asked to like it. No one's asking for this quote unquote enthusiastic consent, as they're calling it these days. You're just asked to do it. That's what you're being paid for. Just suck it up. That's just the way life is.
- [Addwater] Correct, very true, and accurate. And in regards to what is legal, what is correct, what it is that is supposed to be done, the law just can't step into here, so it just can't enter into here, so there's just no standing for it to get in. It can't get in there.
- [Cathex] The only reason they get paid what they do is because everybody knows this stuff is bad. So they actually owe everything they have to these very same people they're against and want to accuse of oppression.
- [Addwater] We have to keep in mind that there are certain things, certain items, notions, that we should keep mindful of, that we should always keep at the forefront of our consciousness, of our brains, otherwise we end up in very complex, convoluted, entangled, situations, a sticky problem, that we have trouble extracting ourselves from, getting out of, freeing ourselves from. We have trouble getting ourselves out of it.
- [Cathex] You can't collect the money and turn around and say you didn't like it and just expect to keep getting money.
- [Addwater] Correct, very right, there is, exactly, just no moral, no legal, no moral-legal foundation for forcing a business, for making them, for compelling them, to hire a particular person, performer, or to make them take on an employee, anything like that, so there's just no precedent for it, so there's no reason for it, so there's no justification for it, so there's nothing that can compel them to do that, so there's no foundation for it, so there's nothing there. They just can't be made to do it.

- [Cathex] We're almost out of time. So thank you for being on, Justice Addwater.
- [Addwater] It was my pleasure. I enjoyed it very much. It was very nice. Thank you, and please let me offer my gratitude. As the French say, *merci*. And thank you. It's very much appreciated. Thank you.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Cathex] Coming up. We'll actually have one of these pornstars or actresses who're crying foul, right here. So you can make up your mind yourself. But we have to ask, can you be raped when you're being paid for it? Really? Of course, what isn't rape these days? Let's face it, they knew what they were getting into. We'll talk about that. Coming up.

### H | >>

- [Orgone] So now, for those of you who don't know, we've got criminal drug smugglers, human traffickers, all of those who are effectively invisible. They might as well be wearing invisibility cloaks. Here to talk with us about that is a returning guest, Sheriff Debord from North Carolina. Welcome back to the show, Sheriff.
- [Debord] Thank you for having me.
- [Orgone] So as I understand it, the problem is that criminals who are crossing the borders between states illegally are employing camouflage. Is that the case?
- [Debord] Yes, we've had incidents, or reports, of increased numbers of individuals in camouflage, hunting type gear.
- [Orgone] So this is like the leaves-and-bark prints and things like that. We're not talking about old-fashioned camouflage

- here, are we? We're not talking about what they had in World War Two. We're talking about photo-realistic wearables, isn't that right?
- [Debord] Yes, the materials that are being manufactured these days are much more high tech than they have been in the past.
- [Orgone] And I mean, the whole point is you go into the woods covered head to toe with this stuff and the deer, the bear, the whatever, can't see you, right? I mean, that's the whole point that nothing is supposed to be able to see you. So isn't it effectively like they're running around out there invisible?
- [Debord] It makes individuals very difficult to see under certain circumstances. Especially from a distance. Low-resolution cameras, as well, have difficulty when the subject is still.
- [Orgone] So if you can't see them, what have you got left? Can you do some infrared imaging, or something?
- [Debord] Unfortunately, the sheriff's department doesn't have access directly to the kinds of thermal units that would be necessary for that. But with some assistance from the National Guard, however, we do have helicopters equipped with thermal imaging.
- [Orgone] But isn't there a time of day when those don't work? When it gets really hot?
- [Debord] There is a fifteen or so minute window about noonish when the ground temperature is high enough that it makes it difficult to differentiate it from body temperature, yes.
- [Orgone] So you're effectively blind. A million of them could walk right through. And what if they get those foil space blankets, or something, and wear them under everything?

What if they get ahold of anti-thermal underwear? Then they'd just be invisible to practically everything, wouldn't they? So they would just be invisible all the time. They've got space-age technology while you've got nothing.

[Debord] I guess that could be a possibility.

[Orgone] So it just sounds like, to me, this is a clear case of our sheriff's departments being underfunded. You are not being given the necessary tools to do the job you were elected to do. And as a consequence we just have criminals pouring across the borders. We have illegal substances pouring across the borders. We have human traffickers pouring across the borders. The borders might as well not even be there. And there you are trying to hold the line and underfunded and not given what you need to do your job. I mean, don't you kind of think of this as kind of borderline treason? The leftist liberals clog everything up. They keep holding things up. They keep things from getting where they need to. And the consequence of it is you can't do your job. Now, I mean, if I were to go out there and try to stop you from doing your job that would be illegal, wouldn't it?

[Debord] That would be interfering with the law.

[Orgone] Exactly. Exactly my point. Thank you for being on the show, Sheriff. And please don't let me take up any more of your valuable time from doing what you need to do.

[Debord] Thank you for having me.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] This's the state we're in, folks. If law enforcement isn't allowed to do what it needs to do, what's the point? Sure, we technically have the law. And we've got complete

lawlessness at the same time. And who benefits from that? I think we can answer that question, folks. So stay tuned here. You can't afford to miss a thing.

#### H | >>

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an old man sitting at a plastic folding table.]

[Roundhom] I think...once you get too many...it just...gets to be too...big.

[Audience laughter.]

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### H | >>|

[Hartnette] As concern over teenage vaping continues to rise, a town in one mountain county looks into doing something about what it says is a dangerous trend. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on this developing story. Sylvia.

[Cut to the special news desk.]

[Borges] That's right, Tom. Officials of the mountain town of Helena have recently put forth a proposal to ban the sale of all vaping units, as well as vaping fluids and any associated paraphernalia.

[Cut to a shot of the railway tracks running through Helena. The train is coming in. People in shorts and sunglasses wait and watch. Some of them hold up children so they can wave. The train blows its whistle. Steam rolls out from somewhere around the engine's wheels.]

[Borges Narrates] Summertime in the mountains.

[Cut to a shot of people kayaking and tubing beneath the Helena bridge.]

[Borges Narrates] A time for relaxation and fun.

[Cut to a shot of shop windows across from the railway tracks in Helena.]

[Borges Narrates] But what some have called harmless fun may no longer be available in one mountain town.

[Cut to a shot of a woman walking through a store as if showing what's available.]

[Woman] It doesn't seem very fair.

[Borges Narrates] Tammy Martin runs Up In Clouds.

[Martin] We're the only store that carries anything like this in the town limits, so it's hard not to think that this's not targeted at us.

[Borges Narrates] But town officials say hold on there.

[Cut to a shot of an elderly mustached man in a severely out-of-fashion suit.]

[Official] This proposal is targeted at no one specifically. It's to deal with a general and disturbing trend.

[Cut to a shot of teenagers in the distance. They sit on an old concrete foundation beside the railway tracks. They appear to be blowing steam.]

[Martin Voice-over] It just seems pointless.

[Cut to woman standing in shop.]

[Martin] It's not as if we're that big of a town. All you have to do is walk a few hundred feet up the road and you can buy this

type of thing in Kingsly. So I don't see what it's going to do.

[Borges Narrates] This follows on the heels of the banning of vaping on the Smokey Ridge Rail Line.

[Cut to a shot of a woman in sunglasses. She stands in the bright sun. She is holding one young child in her arms. Another child stands beside her, eating something.]

[Woman] I think it's a good idea. You don't want your children exposed to things. And you don't know what's in some of this stuff.

[Borges Narrates] However, some people claim the town is just blowing smoke.

[Cut to a shot of a telephone.]

[Telephone] It's simply a matter of prejudice.

[The program adds its own subtitles for the voice on the other end of the line.]

[Borges Narrates] Ryan Tipple is director of the Eastern Association For Anti-Discrimination.

[Tipple] There is absolutely no technical reason as to why vaping should be considered inherently harmful or dangerous.

[Cut to a shot of a man in a suit. He stands in front of a building.]

[Man] The issue is partly because of an odd historical point.

[Borges Narrates] Simon Bathe is professor of American history at Eagleton University.

[Cut to a wider shot of Bathe as he continues to speak.]

[Bathe] One of the reasons it was so difficult to regulate the tobacco industry was the notion that it was such a tradition that it had been something that was almost always going on, especially in the Carolinas, almost immediately after the continent was first discovered. The economics of tobacco in both the Carolinas, in particular, were foundational to the colonial economy, and the traditions and economic interests around them far predate even the hint of the possibility of the Revolutionary War.

[Cut to woman standing in shop.]

[Martin] It's not a cigarette, though. The results may look the same, but they're totally different. And I think that's what people can't get past.

[Cut to a shot of a woman sitting in an office.]

[Woman] Is it a moral question?

[Borges Narrates] Massachusetts Hysteria is regional director of the North Carolina ACLC, which has agreed to represent Up In Clouds and has filed a court case against the town on their behalf.

[Hysteria] That is, is the ban a result of an actual harm being done, or is it a reaction against a form of public enjoyment? Is there a puritanical aspect to this?

[Cut to town official.]

[Borges Narrates] Town officials, however, maintain that is not the case.

[Official] There is no religious aspect to anything.

[Borges Narrates] Whatever the outcome—

[Cut to a shot of steam coming out from under the engine as the train begins to pull out.]

[Borges Narrates] It's possible that the fog around the issue of vaping in the town of Helena might not clear for sometime.

[Cut to the special news desk.]

[Borges] This evening we have learned that, in the wake of this decision, seven other mountain towns are now considering their own versions of similar restrictions. However, officials of those towns have declined to comment, stating that whatever may be being discussed is not actually on the table yet, and there will, of course, be plenty of opportunity for public input at such time as these discussions move forward. Tom.

### **₩** || **>>**|

[Aster] Following yet another shooting outbreak, we now turn our attention to North Carolina, where we are just getting word that the standoff that began a little over an hour ago between police and the North Carolina National Guard and an as of yet unnamed suspect outside of a border processing station has ended with the death of the shooter. And joining us now to discuss the topic of the issue of guns in America is Christopher Bloom, a fellow of the organization Freedom For Guns. Thank you for joining us, Mister Bloom.

[Bloom] Thank you for having me.

[Aster] It's now estimated that, by this point, we have averaged, so far, two-point-seven shootings per day since the start of this year. And we have already exceeded the record set last year for this same period of time. How do you feel about this?

[Bloom] I don't know if I can really answer that question.

- [Aster] Isn't there going to come some point when Americans are going to realize they are going to have to do something about the number of guns available in the country?
- [Bloom] I don't think such a point has to come, no.
- [Aster] You don't feel something will have to be done?
- [Bloom] I think that if one of the last two people manages to miss the other then the last person can use the last bullet on his or her self.
- [Aster] Do you see how some could feel that that is a rather cynical and unproductive attitude?
- [Bloom] Well, the productive attitude got firearms to exist in the first place. So I think if we'd been a little less productive that might've smoothed things out a bit. Or at least, if we'd slowed down and not worried so much about making them so much faster. Making everything so much faster, for that matter. I keep thinking about former president Lincoln's comments about the most relaxing thing in the world was to sit on the front porch with a hashish pipe.
- [Aster] Regardless of the state of the legalization of marijuana, why is it that you feel Americans can't conceive of the possibility of giving up guns?
- [Bloom] Well, we can't seem to conceive of many things, so what's one more? But on another note, I think that's rather a ridiculous question.
- [Aster] And how do you feel so?
- [Bloom] Simply put, if they couldn't conceive of the possibility they wouldn't fight against it, because they wouldn't know it existed to fight against. So I'd say they're very aware of

the possibility. Maybe more aware than you are. But then again, maybe they, and everyone else, are allowed to become outraged because, by definition, nothing about the situation can or is likely to change, so it's a safe proposition. Who can tell?

[Aster] So how do we get people to understand that it's necessary?

[Bloom] We don't. Or you don't. I'm not trying.

[Aster] But how can you argue for them in this kind of climate?

[Bloom] I can't, and I don't.

[Aster] But what about your organization? Or the organization you are a fellow of.

[Bloom] We don't advocate for firearms. We advocate for firearms.

[Aster] Please explain.

[Bloom] It's a common confusion to confuse us for a gun-owners society. Sometimes we're even confused for a gun-manufacturing lobbying effort. But actually, we advocate for the rights of the guns themselves.

[Aster] The gun owners?

[Bloom] No, the guns. Well, I should say firearm. We're a non-discriminatory organization. But you see, it's always being argued that guns don't kill people, that people kill people. But we decided to take the tact that, in fact, guns do kill people, and that as such the gun—or firearm—thus capable of action—if you will—in this way—is an agent in the world and, given as such, there have long been—really since as long as they've been manufactured—there have been attempts to restrict their production and circulation, so

it seemed someone should stand for their rights as beings capable of action. And if, in fact, it turns out that everything is pre-determined and there is no possibility or capability of free will, or such, then firearms will still be no different than if they were capable of such, because they will be just as incapable of it as humans, and such. So it seems the safest tact to take. If they can't take action, then giving them the freedom to do so can't result in any harm because, by definition, they wouldn't be capable of doing anything.

[Aster] But—

[Bloom] I would like to clarify something quickly, if I may.

[Aster] Go ahead.

[Bloom] My remarks earlier about excessive production should not be taken as a call for a limiting, it's just that we regard productive control, whether restricted or liberalized, as morally dubious, and that they should have the right to limit their own production as they see fit, on a personal basis, that that is a purely private matter. But of course, this is just a necessary aspect of self-ownership.

[Aster] But most would say this doesn't have very much legal standing, wouldn't that be correct?

[Bloom] Oh, we believe there is to be a case made for it.

[Aster] And how is that?

[Bloom] Well, as justice Douglas pointed out in the case of Sierra Club v. Morton, so-called inanimate objects have been acknowledged as parties within litigation before. Ships, for example. Then, of course, there is the case of the Tree that Owns Itself. Or more technically, owns the land around itself.

[Aster] And how is that?

[Bloom] The original tree was deeded it by the landowner. And the tree that's there now is a descendant, grown from the seed, of the original, which inherits via the usual mechanisms of inter-generational property transfer.

[Aster] But a tree is a living thing.

[Bloom] Yes. And this is the source of a much-debated issue that some of our members have.

[Aster] And would you care to elaborate on that?

[Bloom] Stated simply, if the tree can own itself, then why not the stock made from the tree?, and subsequently the remainder of the firearm which is part of the whole. In this sense, attaching a metal barrel to the wooden stock would be much like someone attaching a prosthetic limb. Establishing rights on this basis, however, makes some of us feel uncomfortable due to exactly those legal ramifications and assumptions that have plagued those particular individuals for the better part of legal history, and secondly because it would seem that it could possibly imply that firearms lacking any wooden parts might be denied their civil rights because of it.

[Aster] And you still believe this is legally supported?

[Bloom] The part about the tree, of course, is technically not legal. However, the city of Athens, Georgia still explicitly honors the law as if it were written it were so. And this, of course, is all that the law really is.

[Aster] Are there any cases that have been argued along these lines?

[Bloom] Not yet. There are, however, a couple of lawsuits currently ongoing in a couple states in which our organization

has contributed briefs in relation to the other avenue of argumentation that has been advanced in this regard.

[Aster] And what is that?

[Bloom] We argue that the legal framework around the fetus would also extend to this regard, in that, as per law, even though the fetus is fundamentally and biologically dependent on the host, as the law refers to, it has its own autonomy and rights that must be protected even if it is incapable of exercising or conceiving of such. And we have put forth that the same can and would apply to firearms in a similar regard.

[Aster] Don't you feel that this is r—

[The image shrinks into the upper left corner of the frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in another news segment.]

[Orgone] And the word is ridiculous. Absolutely. And they finally admit it. Took them long enough.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Bloom is in the other frame.]

- [Orgone] I mean, do you think there is anything more ridiculous than leftist-liberal reactions to people exercising their basic constitutional rights?
- [Bloom] I should point out, however, that there is no spelled-out rights in the Constitution for firearms. They are only implied. The only actual rights mentioning firearms relate to their ownership.
- [Orgone] Well, after all, the point of the Constitution is not to enumerate every freedom but to restrict what the government can do. All other freedoms should be reserved to the states and to their posterity.

- [Bloom] It would seem that we could've done without some of the overly explicit sections relating to marriage, then. It might've saved paper. Of course, the definition of personhood has always been contentious.
- [Orgone] Obviously, it would be impossible for anything to be preserved for posterity if there was no posterity produced. And the union of one man with one woman is the only biological means through which that process can be brought about. Therefore, it is foundational to all rights, of course.
- [Bloom] I guess that's why I concentrate on firearms. I deal with production. Not reproduction.
- [Orgone] And of course, production is higher than ever. Business is booming. This is what deregulation gets you. Free markets. Freedom. But of course, if we bring in the leftist liberals we know what they're going to say about it.

[The image subdivides to allow a third frame. The frame is on the left. Massachusetts Hysteria is in this frame.]

- [Orgone] Of course, the leftist liberals don't care about how many jobs deregulation creates—because if the economy's doing great, who's going to listen to them? So the only possible option is to try and sabotage the economy. Isn't that right, Director? And of course, your organization is suing gun manufacturers for just this reason, isn't it? Do you think you'll get people who'll listen to you and do what you want if they're unemployed? Is that it? You think you can cower real Americans into submission?
- [Hysteria] Do shootings increase firearm manufacturer's short-term profits?
- [Orgone] That is just basic slander, Director. These manufacturers aren't out shooting anyone. Are we supposed to hold Apple

accountable now because someone types a bad book on one of their computers? Of course, yes, you are trying to hold decent American car manufacturers responsible for people driving into crowds. I notice you don't go after any foreign-made vehicles in this country that could do the same thing. No, it's only American industry you want to attack. The leftist liberals want to make America weak. They want to make her get on her knees and beg to these foreign powers to do whatever they want with her. And of course, she isn't going to be allowed to carry a gun to defend herself. You might as well just strip Lady Liberty naked and have her walk down the street.

[Bloom] May I interject?

[Orgone] Please do.

[Bloom] What about the gun's rights to be?

[Orgone] Exactly. What about the American gun culture? It wants to protect Lady Liberty from the likes of people who would do horrible, disgusting, filthy, deplorable things to her. But the leftist liberals don't want to let that happen. Not only that, but they want to chain them up and make them watch every dirty, disgusting, depraved, despicable thing that goes on. They—

[Bloom] America doesn't have a gun culture.

[Orgone] Of course it does. What are we talking about? That's the very thing you're defending.

[Bloom] No. Countries such as Germany—which have some of the most restrictive gun control laws in the world—have a gun culture. As do many other places in Europe. That is why the finest firearms manufactures in the world are in Europe.

[Orgone] American factories produce more guns than anywhere in the world—anywhere that you can think of to name.

[Bloom] More. But not quality.

[Orgone] Are you insulting the American factory?

[Bloom] It's simply a matter of favoring quantity. It, after all, does have a quality all its own.

[Orgone] That's a very apt quote.

[Bloom] However, America still does not have a gun culture.

[Orgone] No country on Earth expends more ammunition than do the citizens of these United States.

[Bloom] Perhaps. I don't have those statistics.

[Orgone] Well, I assure you they're true.

[Bloom] However, in any regard, in American culture, shooting sports have no respect. On college campuses, they are ranked down there with badminton. The events are not even broadcast on American television during the coverage of the Olympics, other than perhaps the biathlon. However, pure shooting remains almost entirely absent from mainstream reporting.

[Orgone] Of course, the leftist-liberal media won't report on it. They wouldn't ever report anything positive about guns.

[Bloom] Perhaps. But still, all the top competition firearms are produced by European companies. They take their children to matches. Their highschool and colleges treat the sport with respect. Americans have guns, but they have no gun culture. And I'm not an expert, but I've been told by friends

that it's just the same with books. There're many readers, but there's no book culture.

[Orgone] Culture. Culture. We don't need these highfalutin things. We have pragmatism. We have the guts and seriousness that saved those Europeans' cultured behinds—excuse my language, folks. And without American verve—excitement—energy—where would they or the rest of the world be? Living under some rock somewhere and bowing down to some cultured king or queeny. It took guts to come here. And it took guts to go all the way across this land from sea to shining sea. That's what America is. It's guts. Guts all the way. And guts take the glory. So you just go on protecting Americans' constitutional rights, fellow Bloom.

[Bloom] I fight for the rights of the firearms.

[Orgone] And those who wield them salute you for it. Because it is they—those brave men and women of our military and police forces and real Americans who employ them—which make these United States and the world safe for democracy.

[The stream pauses. The paused image shrinks into the upper left corner of the frame, revealing it to have been a clip used in another video segment. Two sock puppets occupy the screen. One is white-and-orange striped with black button eyes. And the other is blue-and-white striped with one yellow button eye.]

[Orange] Well, we could leave it there.

[Blue] Who could resist?

[Orange] But as you know—

[Blue] Here on Sock Puppet Theatre—

[Orange] We always beat everything—

[Blue] Into the ground.

[Each sock puppet twists to reach below the bottom of the frame. Each rises up again grasping a mallet handle with their bodies. They violently begin to writhe. They beat the air. They beat along the bottom of the frame. They pause.]

[Blue] Is politics dead yet?

[The orange-striped one starts to swing again. Then the blue-striped one does likewise. After a dozen or more swings, they pause, again. They uncoil their bodies. The mallets fall off the bottom of the frame.]

[Blue] So now let's talk to our favorite friend, Goldilocks.

[A yellow-haired doll emerges from the bottom of the frame. She pops up between the two socks.]

[Blue] So how's it going, Goldilocks?

[Goldilocks] Middling.

[Blue] Not to hot.

[Orange] Not too cold.

[Orange + Blue] But just right.

[Blue] No, not right. Center.

[Orange] Yes, center.

[Blue] Not too big.

[Orange] Not too small.

[Orange + Blue] But just right.

[Blue] Always aim for the center of the target.

[Orange] Always be in the middle of the most.

[Blue] Remember to stay centered.

[Orange] Always keep your balance.

[Blue] That's a stupid line.

[Orange] But you have to stay on your center of gravity to stay balanced.

[Blue] But it doesn't match anything.

[Orange] It's still technically true.

[Blue] But it completely throws off the balance of the performance.

[Orange] It does not.

[Blue] It does too.

[Orange] Fascist.

[Blue] Tone deaf.

[Blue contorts. It reaches below the frame. It comes up with its body wrapped around the handle of a mallet. It begins to bash Orange with the mallet. Orange contorts. It reaches below the frame. It comes up with its body wrapped around the handle of a mallet. It begins to bash Blue with the mallet.]

[Goldilocks] Stop it. Stop it.

[Blue and Orange continue to bash at each other with their mallets.]

[Goldilocks] Stop it. Stop it. Why are you fighting?

[Blue] What do you mean why are we fighting?

[Both Blue and Orange pause. Their lumpy, tubular bodies are still wrapped around the handle of their respective mallet. Blue wriggles. He waves his mallet.]

[Blue] Can't you see? He's completely different.

[Goldilocks] But you're both striped.

[Orange] But he has blue stripes.

[Orange waves its mallet.]

[Blue] Are you blind?

[Goldilocks] My eyes are made of buttons, Sherlock. What do you think?

[Blue] Yeah, well—that's just you.

[Goldilocks] And what about you? The narrator says you don't even have but one button. So you can't see even half of what it is anybody else can't see.

[Blue] Oh, shut up.

[Goldilocks] And you're both supposed to be white striped. That's in the script. So you've got that in common.

[Blue] And how do we know what you are?

[Orange] Yeah.

[Blue] We haven't got any ears.

[Orange] Yeah.

[Blue] So we're just following the script.

[Orange] Yeah.

[Blue] So maybe you aren't even Goldilocks at all.

[Orange] Yeah.

[Blue] Death to the impostor.

[Orange] Yeah.

[Orange and Blue begin bashing Goldilocks with their mallets.]

[Goldilocks] Oh, help. Oh, help. They're violently assaulting a female-coded dolly. Oh, help.

[Little Bo-Peep descends from the upper part of the frame with a toy plane propeller attached to her back.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Die sexist scum.

[Liquid splashes down.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Adios, mother fuckers.

[A burning match falls. Goldilocks and Blue and Orange are engulfed in flames.]

[Goldilocks] But wait. What about me? Help me. Ow. It's hot. Help me. I think my eyes must be melting.

[Little Bo-Peep] Sorry, Doll. But we can always stick a dress on any sewn-together sack.

[Little Bo-Peep jerkily rises out of the top of the frame. Goldilocks and Orange and Blue lay burning on the stage at the bottom of the frame. Maroon curtains sweep in from both sides.]

# H4 > >>|

Tommy clapped. "Bravo." He continued to clap. "Bravo." He looked over. "Philistine," he said. "At least clap with one hand." But he clapped no more. He bent forward. He rested his elbow on his thigh. He placed his chin in his palm. "The world needs more high culture," he said between his fingers.

#### 

[Orgone] So the Deep State—you've probably heard of them—but who are they and where are they from? With us to explain just that is our old friend Richard Pentagon from the Moorehead institute. Welcome back to the show, Richard.

[Pentagon] Thanks for having me back.

[Orgone] So the Deep State—what is it really?

[Pentagon] Well, as you probably know, the Deep State is the, sometimes, covert political and legal structure that is actually in charge of the government and actually what really—to put it in the plainest words—controls everything that goes on in this country.

[Orgone] So they control everything.

[Pentagon] Everything.

[Orgone] But really, everything.

[Pentagon] They control the military. They control the court system. They allow which laws get passed and which don't. They fund dozens and dozens of secret projects. Of course, they funnel money to places that we have no idea about.

We don't even know where it goes. They throw people in jail. They arrange for secret meetings behind closed doors for everything from funneling weapons and cash to countries that are fighting against these United States to deciding which players in which industries are going to win or loose. Really, they control almost everything. I don't think you can name anything that they don't have some hand in somewhere or some way or the other.

[Orgone] So how do we fight this? How do we stop this obvious takeover of America?

[Pentagon] That is, of course, the difficulty. These individuals and organizations have managed to so completely weld themselves into the fabric of these United States that the effort to remove them would seem almost monumental.

[Orgone] Not that there's any task too monumental for real Americans. Real Americans carved mount Rushmore. Real Americans erected the Statue of Liberty. Real Americans crossed this land from sea to shining sea. Real Americans planted its amber waves of grain. Oh beautiful—

[Pentagon] Yes. However, we can now show conclusively that the Deep State was active even back then.

[Orgone] How far back does it go?

[Pentagon] So far as we can tell, it goes all the way back to the beginning. Maybe even before.

[Orgone] So what you're really saying is that it's been an eternal fundamental struggle between the forces of Good and Evil.

[Pentagon] You could say that.

[Orgone] So how do we know these people? Is there, like, a Mark of Cane? Some sign of The Beast?

[Pentagon] There's no obvious sign. However, we think we've been successful in identifying what might be the largest single body of them.

[Orgone] And can you give us their names?

[Pentagon] We can if you want. Or at least some of them. Unfortunately, there are just too many to sit here reading through. But we can list a few if you're sure about this.

[Orgone] This station always stands for truth, justice, and the real American way. This station will weather whatever storms come. This station will withstand those hordes who are threatened by the unblinking Light of Truth. This station will never cower to those who would demean these United States. So give us the Truth.

[Pentagon] Senator Samuel Gryppe from North Carolina. Senator Edward Mottle from South Carolina. Representative Harold Sightler Junior from New York. Senator Leonard Ravenhill from Rhode Island. Senator Williams Grady from California. Senator Bobby Jones the fifth, also from North Carolina. Of course, the list goes on.

[Orgone] This is shocking, Richard. You realize, of course, just how shocking this is.

[Pentagon] Yes.

[Orgone] Of course, I'm afraid some of us already suspected it.

[Pentagon] Yes.

[Orgone] So how much of the congress has been infiltrated?

[Pentagon] As near as we can tell, all of it.

[Orgone] I knew it.

[Pentagon] It's actually worse than that, however.

[Orgone] Of course it is. Evil never rests. Real Americans know that. Give it to us straight, Richard.

[Pentagon] We think we can conclusively show that the entire body, barring one or two exceptions over the years, was a Deep State operation from the very beginning.

[Orgone] They won't get away with this. Not so long as even one single real American still draws breath.

[Pentagon] However, I'm afraid that it does get worse.

[Orgone] We knew it had to be. We're braced Richard. You can tell us.

[Pentagon] Also, they have near total control of the nuclear stockpiles of these United States.

[Orgone] Of course. You can't expect them not to try and get their fingers on absolutely everything. But they will not be allowed to prevail. The real Americans will not allow them to prevail. The only time in history that an atomic bomb was used, it was used by these United States. And it is only these United States who have a God-granted right to use them. Everyone should know this. But they don't care. And they shall not triumph. Thank you so much for coming on the show, Richard. We, of course, realize that you're risking yourself in revealing these things.

[Pentagon] Thank you for having me.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] And for those folks out there who want to read the full list, you can find that over on our website. And while

you're there don't forget to check out everything else that's available from our online shop.

#### 

[Orgone] So, welcome back. You may've seen ads recently for the newest Hollywood social-justice-enforcement piece. Or should we say the newest way to shove social justice down your throat? You can decide that, folks. But it is what it is. And it's not like we can actually expect Hollywood to respond to what the people want. And of course, all those Hollywood types get hysterical if you actually dare to say that out loud. After all, it's not about what the customer wants, is it? So on the show today is Janice, who is going to tell us, of course, why we're all wrong and should grovel at the feet of Hollywood executives and stars and wipe their feet with our tears of joy.

[The image subdivides into two frames. A woman is in the left frame.]

[Orgone] So, Janice, what is it with these movie stars? Obviously, they don't know what it's like to be an average real American out there. I mean, they go around and say a few words, maybe walk around a little, and studio execs just throw money at them. Yet these types of people think they have a right to tell average, everyday, hardworking, real Americans what to do. Where does gall like that come from?

[Janice] Isn't it about the market, though? Marvel movies make billions of dollars in world-wide box offices. Stars can simply leverage their value against what the value of the film is. If those particular actors weren't in the roles, they probably wouldn't be as successful as they are. And if they changed them midstream they might lose the audiences completely.

[Orgone] You do realize you sound like the typical real Hollywood Hysteric, right?

#### **|**

Something, somewhere, buzzed. I glanced up, but it'd gone.

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[Orgone] Oh, do you get a red clown nose in the mail, or something? Maybe a blank piece of paper? Do they tattoo a question mark, or something, in some intimate place?

[Janice] I don't know.

[Orgone] I'm sure you're probably required to have some sort of sexual relations—excuse my language, folks—with the upper echelons of the leadership. That's the way these sorts of cults work, isn't it? So obviously, they are going to want nubile—excuse my language, folks—young women such as yourself.

[Janice] I don't know.

[Orgone] You don't seem to know much. See, this is the trouble. People just jump into things. They have no idea what they're doing. Just jump. And that's all, folks.

[Janice] I don't know the future. Do you?

[Orgone] It's not about knowing the future, Janice. It's about A B C one two three. You do this. You do that. This is the result. Cause and effect.

[Janice] Can you take into account all causes and effects?

[Orgone] You don't have to know them all, Janice?

[Janice] But, if everything is cause and effect, doesn't that mean what's called free will is merely ignorance of some cause or effect?

- [Orgone] Obviously, if people are expecting to get things without going about them the right way and just getting them handed to them with no merit whatsoever and no work, there must be some freedom to do the absolutely wrong thing.
- [Janice] But wouldn't doing the right thing, then, put a person in a situation where in order to continue doing the right thing they would have to lock themselves into a series of predefined decisions? Would that really be freedom? So if there is only good and evil, would freedom then be meaningless? Wouldn't freedom then require a certain lack of consequences? Wouldn't to be truly free require a certain amount of meaninglessness?
- [Orgone] Oh boy. You sure you haven't already graduated from clown school, Janice? Of course, it's not like any of you Hollywood types believe in freedom, anyway. After all, you keep trying to shove this social justice doodoo—excuse my language, folks—down on us. Why don't they make movies like they used to?
- [Janice] Don't they? Weren't they always investment objects designed to elicit a return? Aren't they still that way? Aren't they that way even more so than ever? And don't the composition of the products have to change if the consumer changes? Can anything stay the same forever?
- [Orgone] People know what they want, Janice.
- [Janice] How do people know what they want before they've seen it? So after they've had something they've never had before might they then want that too?
- [Orgone] Don't try to tell the American people what they want, Janice. They know. They don't need you to tell them. It's just like the music industry. Your kind of people come

in and then everything's the same. And it's all got to be your way. There's no room for anything else anymore.

[Janice] Isn't the music industry the same, though? It's just an industry. Doesn't it produce what makes money? And isn't the market proving that generic pop music makes a lot of money? I mean, isn't that really the way everything is? Would people watch your show if they weren't getting told what they wanted? Isn't that just the market?

[Orgone] Don't talk about the markets, Janice. You don't understand them. Maybe you should just go back to clown school. Or whatever it is they call college these days. Maybe you can come back again and tell us where the tattoo is at.

[The left frame disappears. The right frame grows to fill the void.]

[Orgone] Coming up—games and micro-transactions—the epidemic silently sweeping through your kids. We have everything you need to know. Right here. So stay tuned, folks. You can't afford not to.

#### 

[Orgone] So earlier this week you may remember that we spoke to Doctor Angelina Lemon about the recent laws relating to brain death, and whatnot, all the controversy, of course, that the leftist liberals had to kick up at the time. You might think one day they would kick the bucket from one of these fits they like to have. But of course, we are not wishing ill on anyone. We're just pointing out a fact. You know how race horses can get so heated up that they just fall dead because their heart stops. That's a fact, folks. That's an absolute and indisputable fact. So as you folks may know, the leftist liberals really like to talk about things that don't exist. Because the infinitude of reality is too limiting for them. Which brings us to our next guest. And we may need to warn you folks that the following might

be considered by some to be disturbing. Please, welcome to the show Doctor Eugene Galbraith.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Galbraith is in the left frame.]

[Orgone] So welcome to the show, Doctor. You—

[Galbraith] First we have to think about it like a giant machine.

[Orgone] Excuse me, Doctor, but there's an order of—

[Galbraith] It's a happiness machine, if you will. And its purpose is to manufacture and dispense happiness.

[The words stop, but Galbraith's lips continue to move.]

[Orgone] So apparently, there isn't even any common decency left in the leftist-liberal world. So let's try this again. Hello, Doctor. Doctor. Settle down, Doctor.

[Galbraith's lips slowly stop moving.]

[Orgone] Good. Now, Doctor, what is your point with all this? That is, what is your real point?

[Galbraith] My point is that the machine will provide everything you could possibly want but for one thing.

[Orgone] And that is?

[Galbraith] A way to turn it off. Or a button to make it self-destruct. Or—

[Orgone] Okay, so just in general, we're supposed to throw out tenthousand years of human development and go back to living in caves and scratching at flees and having sexual relations with monkeys, probably—excuse my language, folks.

- [Galbraith] Or you can imagine it as a small white room that you're in, and all your physical needs are met except for getting out of the little white room.
- [Orgone] Why stop there, Doctor? What's the point of these ridiculous thought experiments? What do they have to do with the real world? Isn't that like imagining what it would be like if the entire surface of the Earth was turned into parking lots and everybody went to work every day in diving suits to herd lobsters on lobster farms? It's just ridiculous. What's the point?
- [Galbraith] Imagine an infinite grid of suburban houses so that you can't tell one from the other and—
- [Orgone] Why is it that leftist-liberal postmodernists always want to insult the people who want to get out of urban environments and raise their children where there aren't drug dealers and prostitutes on every corner and homosexual movie theatres where God knows what—excuse my language, folks—but only God knows what goes on in the bathrooms. Is that what the leftist liberals want children exposed to? I mean, have you seen some of the clothes these women walk out around children wearing these days. Or maybe I should say not wearing. It is kind of hard to tell the difference sometimes. But thank you, Doctor. We'll just leave you to your fantasy worlds.

[The left frame disappears. The right frame grows to take over everything.]

[Orgone] Some of us, however, prefer to care about reality. It's just common sense, isn't it, folks. But of course, you already knew that. So you already know to stay tuned.

### H | >>|

[Hartnette] In other news, officials in the mountain town of Kingsly offered a special prayer at the beginning of their usual

meeting this morning, to offer that their blessings be with the family of Albert Whimple. Mister Whimple was the first ambassador to represent Kingsly's sister city, Cruxifiction Plains, Texas, at a ceremony held jointly in both towns in nineteen-fifty three. Mister Whimple died at his home in Cruxifiction Plains, surrounded by his friends and family. He was one-hundred-four years old.

#### 

[Aster] The governor of the state of North Carolina, today, praised combined efforts by state law enforcement to carry out wide-spread raids across the state against people and organizations suspected of harboring those who have been accused of illegally crossing the state boarder.

[The image subdivides into thirds.]

[Aster] Joining us now to discuss these recent events are Dick Masters the second and Massachusetts Hysteria from the North Carolina ACLC. Thank you both for coming in. Let's get right to it.

[Masters is in the right frame. Hysteria is in the left frame.]

[Aster] What do you feel is the effect these raids are having on the people of North Carolina? Do you feel people are more on edge now?

[Masters] No, I don't think so. In fact, from what I've seen, these crackdowns are a quite welcome occurrence. People are very happy to see the law upheld. And these people who are committing illegal acts need to be held to account.

[Aster] And you, Director?

[Hysteria] Is this beginning to all get a little boring? Was it stupid from the start?

- [Aster] So, Mister Masters, do you feel that things are settling down?
- [Masters] I think that things can begin to settle down now that we've begun to see a solid application of law and order. The wild-west days are going to be over.
- [Aster] How do you respond to claims by environmentalist that efforts to deal with the border situation in the state have left hundreds of thousands of miles of land barren of anything but rocks and sand and the remnants of dead trees and that this might constitute one of the worst environmental disasters in the state's history?
- [Masters] Ultimately, the land remains. So nothing's been lost. All the points in space are still there.
- [Aster] How do you respond to the lawsuits by property owners along the border who claim they now own what is effectively desert?
- [Masters] Again, I have to reiterate that the points of geography remain. Nothing has been subtracted from the world. More trees and plants can always be grown somewhere else. After all, there is the greenhouse effect. We have greenhouse gases. And as the name implies, plants love greenhouses. And there are many apps out there for this now. So there will be far and enough more trees to make up for any that might have been necessarily lost. And let's not forget that with the new court rulings that have reaffirmed the Constitution, we have restored the right of every state to own everything in their airspace all the way to and through the heavens. So at any particular time, there could be planets out there passing through the dominion of the states of North Carolina and South Carolina which have more trees than could ever be accounted for. So if anything, the amount of trees in the state might be seen to have been affirmed to have grown infinitely. Not to mention the other resources that might be available out there in the cosmos.

[Hysteria] Can anyone actually get to those resources?

[Masters] That is something that's relevant only to their respective owners. We've established the rights of ownership. That is the important aspect here.

[Aster] We have a clip on this. Can we run that?

[The image subdivides again.]

[Hartnette] State officials agreed to a plan this weekend to allow federal air traffic over the state once again. Details of the rent, however, have not been released at this time. This comes in the wake of several court rulings across many states rolling back what have been seen as out-dated and prejudicial federal laws that limited the ownership of airspace over a given state. Proponents say that this verdict restores the state of the state's property rights to as they should be. State senator Willford Rhymes held a press conference today. And News 10's Sylvia Borges was there. Sylvia.

[Cut to a shot of Borges standing on a sidewalk.]

[Borges] Thanks, Tom. Yes. Earlier this afternoon Senator Rhymes gave a speech in which he reaffirmed his commitment to securing the heavenly properties of the state for the future and for all posterity.

[Cut to a clip from earlier. A man stands behind a podium.]

[Rhymes] Once again, all that is within the heavens exists under dominion. As it should be. And it should have always been. Man cannot lessen the mandate of heaven. And man cannot lessen the mandate of God. And man cannot lessen the great state of North Carolina.

[The fourth frame shrinks. The three frames with Aster and Hysteria and Masters return to their former size.]

[Aster] So what are your feelings about this, Director?

[Hysteria] How can everything be owned by God yet also be owned by humans? Considering that the possessions of a given Roman slave were also property of their master by the very rights of such ownership, how can the property truly have property in such a sense? How can someone who claims God owns all but claims ownership over anything, including oneself, how can they reconcile this?

[Aster] Well of course, we are not here to debate theology. That is a matter for the respective religions.

[Hysteria] If a person is to believe anything about religion how could they not apply it politically? So must then either all that is believed be either esoteric or held onto so weakly as to be discarded at first necessity? In the case of the one, does such matter? If a theology that took into account no aspect of life on Earth in the formation of a life to follow were observed, would anything matter? Would even not to lie down and die immediately require some connection to the world as we experience it? And a belief held so weakly that it can be so easily discarded would that be a belief at all? So is it then to say that the call for a separation between politics and religion might really be a call to ensure that all participants are possessed of the right kind of politics and religion? By claiming to be general and non-specific, are we instead calling for something very specific?

[The image shrinks into the upper left corner of the frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in another news segment. The image is subdivided three ways. Massachusetts Hysteria is in the left frame. Masters and Orgone are on the right.]

[Orgone] So it finally comes out. This is always the way it happens. First they come for the guns. Then they come for religion. Why is it that you leftist liberals just can't let people live in peace when they think something different than you? Why do you insist on forcing everyone to believe and do whatever it is you believe and do? If you even believe anything at all.

[Hysteria] Does anyone really believe anything?

[Orgone] Director, don't insult the great religious tradition of this nation. The people of these United States have always turned to God in the worst moments of the nation's distress, and they have always been seen through.

[Hysteria] Is belief without action belief at all?

[Orgone] The actions of the people of these United States are the very thing that allows you to get on here and insult them now. And if it weren't for the actions of the real Americans who believe in freedom, there wouldn't be a country here now.

[Hysteria] When everyone is said to believe the same thing or when a nation is said to be of one belief, does anyone need believe at all? Or does the belief in the belief of the neighbor sustain the whole and allow none to believe? And in such a time, can any one person act without thus proving the disbelief of all else?

[Orgone] Well of course, you can insult men and religion. Those are the targets that everyone can attack. Come on, folks, pile on. Pile on. White men and Christianity. Step right up, folks. Step right up. Get your pie ready. Oh, you don't have a pie, you want to use a shotgun, well step right up, little lady, step right up. It's not as if leftist liberals can get enough of shooting up zombie preachers in movies out of Hollywood, is it? How much ammo do the leftist-liberal

movies burn through to make their millions off the backs of hardworking real Americans? How much dirty money do you make off bashing people's deeply held religious convictions?

[Hysteria] Since now even purity has been taken up by what had been called the left, is it proof that there might not have ever been a left to begin with?

[Orgone] Of course, they always want to claim something doesn't exist. They always want to claim that they're just reality. They're just how it is. And that it's everyone else who's an aberration. But that's not how it works, Director. That's not how it works.

[Hysteria] If there can be no that which is outside of capital then how could what was called the left have existed outside of it? So then was the left just as much of capital by definition?

[Orgone] Stop speaking in the past tense, Director. Don't try to pretend that the leftist liberals aren't here. Don't try to act as if they've gone away somewhere. You're not going to get a sneak attack in that way. We're not going to allow our backs to turn. Real Americans aren't going to allow their backs to turn. They're not going to allow themselves to be stabbed in the back by leftist-liberal policy. It doesn't matter how many social justice movies you try to shove down their throats. And it doesn't matter if the leftist liberals want to continue their self-abuse excuse my language, folks—about their own existence or not existing, or whatever postmodern notion they want to come up with. Real Americans have common sense. They know what reality is. And you don't want to think you exist, well, we don't have to oblige you. So there, Director.

"Editorial decree states that people don't masturbate in the DC universe," Tommy said. "Maybe that's why that particular multiverse is so fucked up." He yawned. He stretched his shoulders. "It's left as an exercise as to whether whatever created our own does or did such or not."

#### H4 || >>|

[The camera is zoomed in on a standing audience member as someone holds a microphone toward them.]

[Question] I'm sorry, but would you mind clarifying just a little bit what you mean about feedback? Thanks.

[The shot blurs as it shifts toward the stage.]

[Hall] Look, it's like—you know how they say people don't talk like they do in the movies in real life—they don't have that kind of snappy dialogue. Yet people go to the movies and then they feel bad because they don't have snappy comebacks, and they plan their life around being prepared with snappy comebacks.

### H4 || >>|

[Hartnette] In a shocking upset to some mountain booksellers, the state senate passed what it calls a temporary measure to ensure the safety of the public. News 10's Julianne Myers has more on this developing story. Julianne.

[Myers] Thanks, Tom. We're out here in the mountain town of Kingsly. Behind me you can see one of the local used bookstores. It's closed now for the evening, but there seems to now be the possibility that it might be much longer than expected before it opens its doors again.

[Cut to a shot of a child opening a book.]

[Myers Narrates] They are not something that most people expect to die from.

[Cut to a shot of children gathering in a library and sitting on the floor for story time.]

[Myers Narrates] But now, with at least one person confirmed dead, that's not an assurance that can be taken for granted anymore.

[Cut to a shot of a woman holding a child.]

[Woman] It's just really scary to think about.

[Myers Narrates] Christine Fleidman used to be a frequent peruser of local used bookshops.

[Fleidman] But with what's going on, you can't take the risk.

[She has to stop the child from tugging on her earring.]

[Fleidman] I don't want to do something that's going to leave my kids without their mother.

[Myers Narrates] Fleidman, like many previous used book buyers, have found themselves turning back to the internet.

[Cut to a shot of a man in a suit.]

[Man] Most people are going to go online.

[Myers Narrates] Gregory Bottom is a representative of the local e-Commerce on Mainstreet Society.

[Bottom] Buyers gravitated toward used books primarily because of price. And online is the only way to even begin to approach resolving the price disparity between new and used books. Unlike what some people think, it's just not going to shift to local new book sellers. In fact, we predict that, as they have to clear out their used book sections, business overall is set to sharply decrease.

[Cut to a shot of an older man in a suit.]

[Man] It's a temporary aberration.

[Myers Narrates] Donald Plesentcawfee heads the committee for the improvement of capital flow for the state.

[Plesentcawfee] The capital will, of course, shift around. But the same amount will remain in the system overall. In fact, there will actually be more state revenue as books shipped from centers within the state to other states will also be subject to both a sales and import-export—excuse me, evaluation transfer fees. And of course, purchased matter passing through the state to another state will also have a transfer value that that generates.

[Myers Narrates] As for other options, the options remain open.

[Cut to woman holding a child.]

[Myers] Have you thought about ereaders?

[Fleidman] I did.

[She has to stop the child from tugging on her earring.]

[Fleidman] But there was that story about that one bursting into flames and setting that guy's bed on fire when he fell asleep with one on his chest, or something, wasn't there? And don't you hear that story about a woman who electrocuted herself in the bath, or something?

[Cut back to darkening Mainstreet.]

[Myers] We tried to contact the owner of the other main bookshop here in the heart of town, the used-and-new shop up the hill this way, but she was unavailable for comment. Already, local Friends Of The Library stores in both Macon and Jackson counties, in addition to this one, have decided to temporarily close until they see where this legislation goes. Live outside the Used and Scholarly bookstore in Kingsly. I'm Julianne Myers. News 10.

### H4 || >>|

[Orgone] Did you ever read the little mouse book when you were younger, by chance?

[Masters] The one with the ships? Where they're sailing around.

[Orgone] No, the one that came after that. With the little mouse village that they talk into getting an army together and—

[Masters] Oh yeah. I remember that one.

[Orgone] So don't you think that's exactly what they're doing here? Isn't it almost exactly basically the same thing?

[Masters] Oh yes, you might be completely right.

[The image shrinks into the upper left corner of the frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in another video segment. Little Bo-Peep is now revealed.]

[Little Bo-Peep] And what do you think of that, Mister Mouse?

[The shot pans to show a stuffed mouse tied to a miniature chair with yellow knitting yarn.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Oh, so you don't want to talk. Well, we have ways of making you talk.

[She grasps a large yellow-plastic-headed pin in her puppet hands. Her full body lunges towards the mouse. When she comes away, the yellow-plastic pinhead juts from the stuffed mouse at an angle.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Confess, Mister Mouse. It'll go easier for you.

[She reaches below the frame. She comes up with another pin. Her full body lunges towards the mouse. When she comes away, the yellow-plastic pinhead juts from a different place on the stuffed mouse and at a different angle than the first.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Come now, Mister Mouse. All you have to do is admit the truth. All you have to do is admit that you're guilty of being useful to the enemy.

[She reaches below the frame. She comes up with another pin. Her full body lunges towards the mouse. When she comes away, the yellow-plastic pinhead juts from a different place on the stuffed mouse than either the first or the second and at a different angle than the first but at the same angle as the second.]

[Little Bo-Peep] You thought you could pretend you were just all joy and sunshine, didn't you, Mister Mouse. You didn't think anyone would ever catch on. Did you.

[She reaches below the frame. She comes up with another pin. Her full body lunges towards the mouse. When she comes away, the yellow-plastic pinhead juts from a different place on the stuffed mouse than either the first or the second or the third and also at a different angle than the first or the second or the third.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Or maybe you were tricked. Is that it, Mister Mouse? You didn't want to do it. Of course not. You just wanted to do the right thing. But that didn't work out, did it, Mister Mouse.

[She reaches below the frame. She comes up with another pin. Her full body lunges towards the mouse. When she comes away, the yellow-plastic pinhead juts from laterally near the second but at the same angle as the third.]

[Little Bo-Peep] Of course, Mister Mouse, I have to confess that I—

[She reaches below the frame. She comes up with another pin.]

[Little Bo-Peep] hadn't really expected you to talk, Mister Mouse.

[She flourishes the pin.]

[Little Bo-Peep] I just expected you to die.

[Her full body lunges towards the mouse. When she comes away, the yellow-plastic pinhead juts from between his button eyes. Liquid falls from above. It splashes over the mouse and the chair. A lit match falls. The mouse and chair are engulfed in flames. The synthetic material the yellow knitting yarn is made from begins to melt into the mouse's newly exposed stuffing. Little Bo-Peep turns to face the camera.]

## H | >>|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an audience member speaking into a microphone.]

[Question] This is for Miss Hall. How do you feel the tradition of the fairy tail is surviving in the modern day, with concepts such as copyright and cultural appropriation?

[Lens flare. Cut to a blurry upscaled shot of Hall onstage.]

[Hall] Oh god, that could be a whole conference in itself.

[Faint laughter from audience.]

[Hall] How much time do we have left?

[Moderator] We're getting pretty close to the line.

[Hall] What is it about long letters?

[Liste] I apologize that the letter's so long. I didn't have time to write a shorter one.

[Faint laughter from audience.]

[Hall] So, since I haven't the time for a short response, I guess I'll have to get away with saying that that'll be the next book.

[Faint laughter from audience.]

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

H > >>

# The Induction of A Controlled Nuclear Winter, Among Other Items

"You know, the end of the world is indistinguishable from any other time," Tommy said. "That's because the world's always ending." He paused. He glanced away from the screen. "I'm sorry. Is this a rerun?" He shifted to look at the screen again. "Anyway, most people's lives go on the same regardless." He scratched his side. "Everyone lives beside a death camp." He yawned. "And in a deathtrap."

## H | >>

[Hartnette] Some mountain highschoolers, today, got an up-closeand-personal look at what it's like to do underwater construction. News 10's Justin Adamite has more. Justin.

[Cut to a shot of Adamite standing in a parking lot.]

[Adamite] Thanks, Tom. Children from local highschools were out on field trips today to visit what you can see behind me. The vehicle is a walkthrough exhibit showcasing the history of underwater construction all the way back to prehistoric times.

[Cut to a shot of the interior of the mobile showcase.]

[Adamite Narrates] Here experts were on hand to give children lessons about the real-world challenges faced

by those who do construction in sub-aquatic environments.

[Cut to a shot of a man holding up some heavy yellow straps and talking to a group of children.]

[Adamite Narrates] Students learned not just how construction happens underwater but also how underwater salvage operates. This culminated with speakers guiding students through, in the parking lot here, how things like nets and meshes are constructed by divers and robots to be able to lift things out of the water.

[Cut back to Adamite.]

[Adamite] Which, though it's on the ground now, you can see behind me how this was demonstrated by hooking a car to a crane and lifting it over the parking lot.

[Cut to an earlier shot of the car in the air. Harsh sun glints off shiny surfaces.]

[Cut back to Adamite.]

[Adamite] Organizers say events such as these help students get a feel for just what kinds of jobs are out there that they might not otherwise think about.

[Cut to an earlier shot of a highschooler.]

[Adamite] So do you think going into something in the underwater industry might be something you're interested in now?

[Highschooler] Yeah. It's kinda neat. I never really thought about it before, I guess.

[Cut to the present. Adamite stands in a parking lot.]

[Adamite] And this echoes what many other people we spoke to told us. So it appears that, at least for some people, the future may be underwater. Tom.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] The new North Carolina Bureau of Labor reports that underwater construction and recovery has grown by more than three-hundred percent in the last four years, and it's estimated that the industry will only continue to grow in the future. However, officials have been careful to point out that this is in fact not due to climate change. This comes as tensions rise between environmentalist groups and state officials, which declined to revisit House Bill eight nineteen again this year. House Bill eight nineteen limits state and local agencies to calculating sea level rise from linear historical data and forbids any such prediction to extend beyond thirty years. House Bill eight nineteen was passed and signed into law in two-thousand-and-twelve.

### H | >>|

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One is a guy. The other is a woman. The woman wears a small set of angel wings and has a metal halo held over her head by a piece of wire. The guy has a blue, spiky-foam wig and carries a large foam sword.]

[Question] What scene in a movie you saw aggravated you the most and why?

[Foam] Definitely the part with Leia flying in the third or fourth Star Wars movie back.

[Question] And why is that?

[Foam] It just comes out anowhere. There's no groundwork. There's nothing in all the other movies to indicate something like that. It's almost as ridiculous as Yoda fighting Palpatine.

[Halo] Yoda makes complete sense.

[Foam] No. That's not how Yoda is.

[Halo] Yoda was a member of a warrior cult. Of course he could bust out some moves.

[Foam] The Jedi were not a cult.

[Halo] A religious order that's picky about its membership is a cult.

[Foam] Are you pmsing?

[Halo] Give me the sword.

[Foam] Why?

[Halo] Just give it to me.

[He does. She hits him over the head with it.]

[Foam] She writes Young Yoda Sith War fan fiction.

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

#### 

[Orgone] So what eventually happens to feminists? What does the gradual increase in insanity lead to? Well, things like this, folks.

[Cut to a clip of a local news station.]

[Clip] Thirty-two year old Natalie Mac died this morning after sustaining severe head trauma from being run over by a car

driven by her partner Esta Brilo. Law enforcement officials report that it appears the couple had attached a sex toy to the front bumper of the vehicle and that Brilo was alternatively easing the car forward and backward when it seems she forgot to shift into reverse before she plied the gas, only to strike the victim harder than on any occasion prior and knocking her onto the concrete driveway. There is no word, at this time, as to whether Brilo will be charged.

[Cut back to the main news desk.]

[Orgone] So to answer the latest leftest liberal question, what're men good for? Well for one, it appears women who have sexual relations with men—excuse my language, folks—don't get run over by cars.

[The image subdivides to allow for a second right frame.]

[Orgone] So with us to talk about how all this went so wrong is Doctor Pinkerton. Welcome to the show, Doctor.

[Pinkerton] Thank you for having me.

[Orgone] So, Doctor, how do we get in a situation where something like this is actually happening?

[Pinkerton] What we have is what we would generally call a lack of transference. In this case, what we have is a situation where the person in question, the victim, attempted to achieve the essence minus proxy, but of course, this is never possible.

[Orgone] And how do we achieve the essence?

[Pinkerton] The essence is achieved or obtained by what, as I said, is transference. It must be obtained, as it were, indirectly. So in this case what we have is you have the car. This is

the vehicle. This is the engine. This is that which allows movement to occur. And of course, it has power.

[Orgone] In this case about a hundred-fifty horse.

[Pinkerton] Of course. But the feminine aspect cannot access that power directly. It is too overwhelming. There is an over-stimulation. Instead, what we first require is something that can withstand the alpha transference of this primary charge. This is the masculine aspect.

[Orgone] The man in the relationship.

[Pinkerton] Of course. But as with the light that is reflected off the moon from the sun, the charge is decreased with each transference. First it is decreased in its transference from the mechanical aspect to the masculine aspect. And finally it is decreased again with its transference from the masculine aspect to the feminine aspect. And this continues on down through children aspects and pet aspects, of course.

[Orgone] So it's kind of like grabbing the pot handle and getting burnt.

[Pinkerton] Of course, you might phrase it that way.

[Orgone] So what happens in a situation like this, where you have two women together?

[Pinkerton] Of course, transference, is of course, different when the feminine aspect is in isolation. However, as opposed to the masculine aspect, the feminine aspect is additive with the essence in relation to their respective contact.

[Orgone] So does that make things worse, or what?

[Pinkerton] Of course, when the essence is additive in relation to their respective contact, the transference of the essence is magnified in the manifold.

[Orgone] So it's like getting an even bigger dose of it.

[Pinkerton] Of course, yes, the essence itself is increased in its effect.

[Orgone] So if they just got rid of all the men and had the perfect lesbian world everything would just blow up, wouldn't it. Boom—and everything would be gone. So do you think we can expect more of this in the future, Doctor?

[Pinkerton] Of course, if attempts by lesser aspects are continually enacted in attempt to achieve direct contact with the essence, in the absence of proxy, the enhancement of the manifold, by definition, is required always to occur.

[Orgone] Well, thank you for that, Doctor. You really cleared that up. We really understand what's going on now.

[Pinkerton] Thank you for having me.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] So you see, folks, lesbians plus cars in enough quantities equal nuclear bombs. And you can bet we have more on that topic. So stay tuned, folks.

#### H || >>|

[Hartnette] Protesters gathered in a mountain shopping center today to demonstrate against the opening of a new Lobster Haus. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on this developing story. Sylvia.

[Cut to a shot of Borges standing in a parking lot.]

[Borges] Thanks, Tom. As you can see behind me, protesters have gathered here in front of the Lobster Haus. They've been here since early this morning, when they went to the other end of the shopping center and purchased cardboard and other materials from the Walmart that is also in the shopping complex, and made the signs that you can see them carrying right behind me now.

[Cut to an earlier closeup with a protester.]

[Borges] Why are you protesting?

[Protester] Because it's inhumane. Nothing living should just be thrown in a pot of boiling water.

[Cut to the present. Borges stands in a parking lot.]

[Borges] However, Tom, counter protesters quickly arrived on the scene as well. You can see them behind me also. A local deputy had been out here earlier to keep the peace between the two groups, but he was quickly called back in due to other county issues. However, there has been no obvious violence between the groups so far. Though, tensions are running somewhat high.

[Cut to a clip of two groups with three or four people on each side shouting at each other.]

[Cut to an earlier closeup with a protester.]

[Borges] Why are you out here to protest against the protesters?

[Counter Protester] Because it's ridiculous that they advocate simply putting a knife through the lobster's head. The lobster's brain and related nervous system are effectively distributed throughout its body. So unlike a human, you can't just beat it in the head

and it feels no pain. So claiming this can be a solution is just ridiculous. And it's nothing but typical human anthropomorphism.

[Cut to the present. Borges stands in a parking lot.]

[Borges] Even though tensions have been running high between the two groups, people going in and out of the restaurant have remained unaffected. This Lobster Haus just opened a little over two years ago now, according to the manager. It replaced a former Chinese restaurant that had previously rented the same space. Earlier this morning, a protester showed up, in fact, to protest the fact that it had closed.

[Cut to an earlier closeup with a protester.]

[Borges] Why are you protesting?

[Chinese-Place Protester] Well first, my name is John. I don't have any problem with my name being out there, because I'm not ashamed of what I'm doing.

[Borges] So why are you protesting?

[John] I'm protesting because of the Chinese restaurant that moved in on the other side of the parking lot there.

[He points.]

[John] Because before it opened this was the only one here, and it was great. The food was great. And the staff were great. And the prices were good. But when the place opened up over there, everything just went to the bottom. The prices went down, but the food went to bleep. And me and my friends just stopped coming. Now one of my friends is dead. And another's just disappeared. And another won't even leave his

house. And if that place hadn't moved in, the prices may've been a little higher but at least we could eat the food and have a good time. So bleep competition. So far as I'm concerned, it destroyed me and my friends' lives and took away some of the best egg drop soup there ever was. And that's why I'm out here protesting.

[Cut to the present. Borges stands in a parking lot.]

[Borges] Protesters on both sides say they will leave when the restaurant closes at nine PM tonight. However, as you can see behind me, most have already left and only a handful remain. However, both groups tell us that they intend to continue their efforts online, and if you would like to join or follow them, you can find them on Facebook, or on Twitter with the hash tags lobsterpain and lobsterpainandsuffering. John, however, provided no such information, and it remains unclear tonight whether his personal protest will continue. Live in Kingsly. I'm Sylvia Borges. News 10.

### **|**44 || **▶**|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to an image of the silhouetted petals of a pink rose.]

[Rose] The thing about all these additional modern theories is that when I have tried to figure out what they are, or if they even really exist, I don't even know where to start.

[The image remains static.]

[Rose] I know people who do science and technology and engineering and, of course, math, and all those things. And if I go to them and want to know what is the latest hot thing going on in the world of, say, mathematics or physics, they can break it down for me in a concise and clear manner in less than five minutes. And from there, if I need or want to understand something in more depth, I would have a basis

to examine the relevant literature when I have another five minutes free. But I have never been able to do that with postmodernism or post-postmodernism or meta-modernism or virtual modernism. I have never met anyone who could explain any part of these things in terms simple enough for a twelve year old to understand. So here we face two problems. Some say that the first problem is that if any of these were so then that these bodies of knowledge would be more complex than any other body of human knowledge ever generated in the study of the cosmos. But I don't think this is an issue. No, the true dichotomy rests in another area. The true dichotomy is that on one hand, if any of these bodies of contradictory information are capable of holding truth in even the most rudimentary way, it questions whether science and reason can understand anything fundamental about the universe, that we can access the brass tacks, as it were, of the universe, because there can be no understanding so long as contradiction is allowed to exist, or on the other hand that they are intentionally nothings that are papered over with a veneer of ceaseless complexity to conceal the fact of their nothingness. And of course, Ockham's Razor or Newton's Flaming Laser Sword either one would tell us that, surely, one is more likely than the other.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]



Tommy yawned. "That, of course, sounds profound," he said. "Till you realize that basically boils down to saying that all that is knowable is that which is within my horizon of understanding." He scratched his side with his free hand. He removed his chin from his palm. He scratched below his nose. He returned his chin to his palm.

# As If They'd Been Imagining Literal Drunken Master

"You lack a horn, you know, tonto," Tommy said. "Of course, that is very good." He spoke from behind his fingers. He move the tip of

his middle finger away from the tip of his nose. "That is the first step in not being a prophet." He rested the tip of his middle finger on the tip of his nose. "You do not need to remember to loop," he said. "For loop doesn't have to remember you." He shifted his middle finger down along the side of his nose. "Because it's implemented as a macro."

#### 

[Orgone] Now, I'm all one for animals. Don't get me wrong, folks. I mean, who doesn't like little puppies. But you know it just has to be asked, what about people? What about them? What's the liberal left got against real human beings? They'll cry and moan about everything else. But when it's real human beings who are being affected, where are they? Do you see them around? Nope. So with us to discuss this is Danielle Foxglove, leader of the Coalition For Collective Animals.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Foxglove is in the left frame.]

[Orgone] So tell us, Danielle, why is it that you're so concerned about this bill that's being discussed in North Carolina? Aren't you about animal protection? Don't you want to protect the animals? Isn't that what you say you are supposed to be doing?

[Foxglove] Our problem isn't with the bill itself. It's that both sides who are arguing over the bill are viewing animals as less than human.

[Orgone] But one side does want to protect them.

[Foxglove] They want to protect them only from the standpoint of them being beings that are fundamentally inferior to humans and whom humans are not only then permitted but morally vouchsafed to control for their own good and well-being.

- [Orgone] Okay, Danielle, there's no need to try and confuse anyone with any fancy or unusual words. That kind of tactic is just not going to work here.
- [Foxglove] And of course, the other side is using this same justification as the reason why the state shouldn't be involved with private property.
- [Orgone] Well, private property is important, Danielle. It's what allows you to go home at night and find someone else hasn't decided your house is theirs.
- [Foxglove] All animals, human or not, have a right to live their lives the way they want.
- [Orgone] Well, I guess we should just go and ask the pigs if they want to be eaten.

[Foxglove] Maybe we should.

[Orgone] But that isn't really nature, is it, Danielle. Isn't nature red in tooth and claw, as they say? Everything's got to eat something to survive. Did you ask your salad if you could eat it before you chopped it up? How do you think the sprouts feel about you hacking up their parents? Of course, they can't talk. Maybe you know a plant whisperer? Is there some kind of fruit psychic out there?

[Foxglove] I don't deal with plants. Strictly with animals.

[Orgone] But what about the people, Danielle? Huh? We've got humanoid sex dolls of five-and-ten-year olds out there in the mail right now. They're pouring into this country. And what're you doing about that? Huh?

[Foxglove] That's not my job.

[Orgone] Oh, sure it's not your job. There are perverts out there doing horrible things to silicone five year olds, and it's not your job to do anything about it. How do you even sleep with yourself at night? Heck—excuse my language, folks—but some of these might not even have come out of the molds but a year or two ago, maybe even only a few months ago. There are perverts out there, Danielle, having pseudo-sexual relations—excuse my language, folks—with two-month-old silicone children. Don't you feel sick? Don't you just feel ashamed of yourself? How do you even live with yourself? Think of the silicone children, Danielle. What are you doing for them? I bet your organization doesn't even condemn it—does it? Well, does it, Danielle?

[Foxglove] Our organization has nothing to do with children or—

[Orgone] And what do you think the future's going to be, Danielle? Huh? What do you think is going to happen if we don't protect our children? Can you imagine what would happen if one of them started having sexual relations—forgive my language, folks—with another silicone child? Huh?

[Foxglove] Pure-bred silicon babies. Half-silicon babies. I don't—

[Orgone] Racism, Danielle. Out and out racism. No matter what the leftist liberals say, you can bet it's always projection. Every time they accuse someone else of something, they're always the ones doing it. It's always the ones that scream racism loudest that get outed in the end. Remember that, Danielle. Just remember that. The truth will come out. And there's a lot of people who are in for a very rude awakening. A lot of people. So goodbye, Danielle. But thank you for being on. It's always good to find out just exactly where the leftist liberals actually stand versus where they say they stand. So thank you. Bye bye.

[He waves.]

[The left frame disappears. The right frame grows to take over everything.]

[Orgone] So coming up, folks. A former leader in the Boy Scouts finally admits that picture of him with a man in a wolf costume is, in fact, real. You suspected. The slippery slope. Has it finally gone from gays to having sex with animals? Stay tuned for that, folks. And remember, you can always check out our website. You can even do it while you're watching the show if you really want to get the whole story.

#### **(4 || ▶**

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to an image of a microphone and hand extended from the lower right of the frame, toward a male convention goer wearing sunglasses.]

[Question] What do you think about climate change?

[Sunglasses] I don't think it's that big a deal. All we gotta do is set off a couple, or so, nuclear bombs and we can create a controlled nuclear winter and bring the temperature down.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### 

[Someone rises out of a folding chair in a hotel conference area.]

[Question] My question is for the entire panel. I was wondering how you feel about the theory that science fiction is a consumerism of ideas.

[The audience member sits.]

[The shot allows a view of the three men sitting behind the plastic folding table, so the camera remains fixed.]

[Roundhom] I don't know. I've never heard that.

[Straw] Are you talking about the piece in Science Fiction Studies by ...Perkins, I believe it was.

[The audience member rises again.]

[Question] Yes.

[The audience member sits down again.]

[Roundhom] Is that a new magazine they have out? Who's the editor?

[Straw glances at Roundhom. He turns to look out over the table again.]

[Straw] I'm not really going to say I'm for or against the idea. I lived through most of that, so I figure that experience exempts me from theory.

[He looks down the table.]

[Straw] How about you?

[Erot] Eeeeeh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Another audience member rises.]

[Question] How do you feel about some people trying to erase Campbell or minimize his importance in the history of the field because of his supposed racism?

[Straw looks towards Erot.]

[Straw] You want to answer that?

[Erot] Eeeeeh.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Look. I was there. I knew the man. At least a little. You want to call it the times. You can do that. You want to separate the art and the artist. Fine. But as I get older all I can think anymore is who's gonna care anyway? Maybe we're just kind of a blip on history. Who authored Hansel and Gretel? Who knows, who cares? I mean, five thousand years from now maybe they'll dig up a fossilized copy of Super-Science Stories and they're actually gonna think a writer named Johnathon Bootstraps Maynard actually existed.

### [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] You know, authors want this thing called legacy. They want a name attached to something forever. And maybe that's all we've got. If you want to read about the Middle Ages and everything that happened after that, maybe some of the academics are right. Maybe we don't have any such thing as tradition anymore. Maybe it is impossible now. I mean, people talk about some family tradition they have and they've only been doing it for three years. But yet the stories of the Australian aborigines—I think that's still an okay word—what science has shown, so far as I've understood it, is their stories extend in an unbroken chain back through forty-thousand years of human history and that they record events that could not have been recorded unless someone was there to witness them directly. Of course, I guess, aliens.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] But I don't know of any authors of those stories. They're stories. Who composed them when, who cares? Academics maybe.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] But the natives don't have their traditions anymore. We saw to that. And we don't have tradition. Tradition is something so welded into your view of reality that it's an aspect of life. And what can you say that about? So what do we have left? We've got the last few hundred years or so of the rise of the star. You know.... I think I once read this is why opera began to become popular as an art form. You have the star out there in front. And that's the focal point. And now we have the movie star. The ultimate focal point. And we've got old, broken-down draft horses like us to cart out here and prop up.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Straw] So maybe there won't even be stories in the future. Maybe there will just be long lists of important people. So you won't read the important writers, you'll read the list of the names of the important writers. I mean, because if all these fossils like us keep dying and getting their posterity and new ones keep coming along after that scrambling for theirs, after a while the list of the names is going to be so long it would take a dedicated lifetime just to have read the list. But I guess that'll keep academics employed.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] That might make a decent science fiction story.

[Looks at Erot.]

[Straw] What about it? Wanna coauthor it and submit it for the Last Dangerous Visions?

[Erot] Eeeeeh.

[Audience laughter.]

[Straw] Oh well. I guess we'll just have to settle for our minuscule posterity. Humble as it may be.

### H | |

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers in costume. One has top hats of various sizes attached all over her clothing. The other is dressed as a walking pink-and-black motorcycle.]

[Question] What do you think of fan fiction?

[Motorcycle] Fan fiction doesn't mean slash.

[The voice is muffled through the costume and is rendered as something unintelligible.]

[Top Hats] It's a sub-category.

[Motorcycle] Yeah. It's just not the whole thing.

#### 

[Hartnette] As most of you who have to work outside might know, it's been another hot day today. So with that in mind, let's now turn to News 10's head meteorologist Lydia Dillon. Lydia, does it look like things will be changing anytime soon?

[Cut to the weather desk.]

[Dillon] Well actually, Tom, you could say that things are changing all the time, it's just that we don't notice. But for those who want to get out and enjoy a nice picnic, yes, the weather has been very nice. And if you haven't had a chance to get out yet, it looks like we still have several extra sunny days yet to come. Let's jump over to the weekly forecast and you can get a look at that.

[Cut to the seven-day forecast. Sun symbols hang over every day of the week.]

[Dillon] And as you can see, we're looking at nothing but sun and warm temperatures for the next seven days. So if you have plans to go out to the lake or to do any outside grilling this would be the perfect opportunity to do any of that.

[Cut to the weather map. Dillon stands in front of it with a clicker lightly concealed in her hand.]

[Dillon] As you can see, we're well under this high pressure system. So that's going to keep us sunny for quite a while. As you can see, there is a low system over here, which is perfectly normal, as you can't have high pressure without a low somewhere, otherwise there would just be uniform pressure, and that area of low pressure may eventually shift our way. But as I say, the models don't predict that anytime soon.

[Cut to a shot of Mainstreet in Kingsly.]

[Dillon Narrates] And again, as you can see from our News 10 weather cam, it's still a beautiful day out there in the mountain town of Kingsly. So if anyone wants to get out and visit the shops it would be a fantastic day for that. Maybe get some ice cream. But do remember to stay hydrated, everyone, while out in the sun.

[Cut to an image of a sunset.]

[Dillon Narrates] And for today's Shoot It Send It feature, we have this image sent to us by Rachel Masters in the Catawba River area. She calls it Sunrise In the Mountains. And what a beautiful sight it is. We thank her for that.

[Cut back to weather desk. Dillon is now seated behind it.]

[Dillon] And if you want to send us a picture as part of our Shoot It Send It competition, you can go to our website at WRPC ten dot com. Back to you, Tom.

#### **\*\***

Something flashed across the screen too quick to see.

"Good job," Tommy said. "Detection of interior chain-link fencing on concrete in only one frame." He stretched his shoulders. "But you must learn to sense what the video shall be *before* it arrives. You must sense the will of the algorithm. Calm your mind, and allow it to speak not to you but through you." He removed his chin from his palm. He scratched through his beard. He rested his chin in his palm. "But good job," he said through his fingers. "Just succeed better next time."

#### 

[Orgone] Leftist-liberal colleges claim it's about education and creating well-rounded human beings and human knowledge. But is it really? Or are they just out to suck up taxpayer money to fund their lavish leftist-liberal lifestyles? What are they really doing to our kids? Well, with all the college admissions scandals that have been going on where these leftist liberals have been paying to get their kids in, and who knows what else, some real Americans have been trying to get to the bottom of just what exactly the leftist-liberal university system is really up to in this country. But of course, they are not going to make it easy. Of course they're not. Right, folks? Now, people who are being honest, they have no problem with coming right out in the light of day and saying just what it is they are doing. But these leftist liberals, they have to hide behind lawyers. You won't see one of them go around without a lawyer. In fact, that might even be why so many of them are lawyers themselves. So let's talk to one of the lawyers in this case. Massachusetts Hysteria, with the ACLC.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Hysteria is in the left frame.]

- [Orgone] So why are you defending the universities, Director? I thought your mission was supposed to be about the downtrodden and the poor and oh so oppressed, and all that.
- [Hysteria] Has all of this gotten to the point of being mind numbingly stupid?
- [Orgone] Well of course, you would say that, Director. But don't deny that your organization has submitted a brief in this case. What is it about the leftist liberals? You whine and moan about how horrible we treated people in the asylums, so nothing would do but to burn the places down and let the streets flood full of the loonies. But you want to brainwash America's children with practically the same things that you complain about doctors doing to so-called innocent sick people. Is the difference between a conservative and a liberal, Director, that a conservative is ashamed to be sick?
- [Hysteria] How much of sickness is a social construct cast as scientific fact?
- [Orgone] I mean, couldn't you call these institutions insane factories? They feed in young impressionable children and out come maniacs. I've seen it myself. My friend sent his sweet, innocent daughter off to university, and she came back hating everything about her family and hating her own race and covered in tattoos and swearing all the time and talking about nothing but politics and against men and religion. How do you expect real Americans to put up with you taking their hard-earned money to do that to their children? How do you expect real Americans to put up with you taking their hard-earned money to turn their sweet little girls into foaming at the mouth lesbian, sado-masochistic, third-wave-feminist, radical psychopaths?

[Hysteria] Did we ever really educate women before? Are we running up against the realization that women seem to have better

biologically inbuilt abilities toward personal interrelations and interpersonal communication which go further in the modern work environment? And if that's so, if we never really educated women before and even when we did expect them to go to college it was only to the point where they found a husband and became a housewife, could it be they never really competed in the same way? So might it be that statistically girls and women outpace and outperform boys and men in school environments?

- [Orgone] Yes, women are always so superior. Men are nothing but idiots and fools. Masculinity is toxic. That's the usual leftist-liberal line. Completely ignoring the fact of all the great things men have done throughout history. And all those men who sacrificed their lives through their hard work so that you could be here now—so that people like you can spit in their faces and on their graves and tear down their statues and say how they were such bad and horrible people.
- [Hysteria] Has society always depended on the ready sacrifice of men and boys?
- [Orgone] Exactly, Director. They sacrificed their lives—and people like you spit on their graves. People like you try to wipe away history like it never existed. Leftist-liberal institutions shove down our children's throats that these men were sick. That they were disgusting. That they lied and cheated and stole. They deny the greater glory of everything these Great Men did. They tear their statues up and throw them off campus. These the Great Men who made their leftist-liberal perversion of institutions possible in the first place.
- [Hysteria] Why did Christian missionaries work hardest to stamp out ancestor worship?
- [Orgone] Of course, the leftist liberals always have to attack religion. It's the only thing you know how to do, isn't it? When in

doubt attack religion. Oh sure, we're supposed to respect the beliefs of those Islamists who want to cut our childrens' heads off. Their beliefs we're supposed to respect. In fact, we're just supposed to hand our children right over to them. But I notice I don't see you offering your neck. No, you just whine about these so-called horrible conditions in prisons and boo hoo think of the poor guy who all he did was have sexual relations—forgive my language, folks—with a silicone nine year old. Oh boo hoo. When everyone knows America's the best place to be in prison. America used to feed its prisoners lobster. Do they wanna go to China? Why don't we let you go sit in a cell over there and see if you think the American justice system isn't enlightened.

- [Hysteria] Why does America have more prisoners than China per capita? Or anyone else in the world? Is it that Americans are even better at breaking the law than anyone else?
- [Orgone] I don't know if you have been watching any real news, Director. But if you had, you would know that China's political prison system is quite extensive. Much larger than they let on.
- [Hysteria] So if China were to admit they had as many incarcerated as America would they face repercussions for having that number? Does that mean that America is comparable in some way but it is not allowed to be admitted? Is there pride in it? Is this American exceptionalism?
- [Orgone] Well of course, the leftist liberals only take pride in what they can tear down. And of course, there's nothing bigger than these United States. So if they can tear that down they will think they are really something, indeed, I'm sure. And of course, you have managed to convince all these prisoners of that. The only thing that America demands is that they pay their debt to society. But you don't want that. You just want them to take whatever they want. Just come right

over any border they want and take whatever they want. And we try to help them. We give them jobs. Prisoners love jobs. They love to be doing something. But according to the leftist liberals, that's exploitation. That's slavery. Well, since you haven't read the Constitution, Director, you'll see right there in it that making people repay for a crime they've committed is fundamental. This is what the highest law of the land says, Director. That's what the law's all about. Are you going to go against the Constitution? How else do you expect society to function?

- [Hysteria] Does it seem like laws that claim to get rid of something really just explicitly codify how it's allowed in some roundabout way?
- [Orgone] The law is the law, Director. You should know that. You're a lawyer. Of course, I guess that lawyers spend most of their time helping people get around the law. Which is, of course, why I'm sure you're supporting tobacco company's efforts to shove things down our kids' throats.
- [Hysteria] Is teen vaping more unhealthy than high-fructose corn syrup in sports drinks and sodas?
- [Orgone] Of course, it all comes back to calling everybody who doesn't agree with you Nazis, doesn't it? Oh, Fanta was sold in Germany during the war. Oh, the company recovered the profits from that when the Americans came in. Well, the Nazis stole that property, Director. And whatever they might have gotten back was just what was theirs and had been taken away in the first place. That's just property rights, Director. And what kind of world would we live in without them? It's just like you and your organization and all you leftist liberals want to complain that restricting used books is anti-property. You're all willing to talk about property rights when it suits you. But what about intellectual property rights, Director? No, you just want

those to be free to everyone. Whoopee let's just all have digital communism. Everybody else works. And you get everything for free. Paradise. Well, you can't go around claiming things that aren't yours, Director. And those words are somebody else's.

[Hysteria] What about the people who buy the book? Do they own property?

[Orgone] Of course they own property. Property rights are fundamental, Director. They're what allow you to know your house isn't going to be occupied by some feminist-anarcholesbian-bondage collective when you get home. And if someone can figure out a way of removing the intellectual property from the page without defacing it then they can sell or do with the physical object whatever they want. Just as they can with any property they own. And that's property rights. They are the foundation of freedom and this country and what makes it possible for you to live a better life than anyone else ever in history.

[Hysteria] Do we have an option to choose how we live?

[Orgone] Well, I guess, if you really feel that way, Director, you can always donate your house to some anarcho-sado-masochistic-lesbian commune, or whatever. And then you can move to some socialist heckhole—forgive my language, folks—Third World country.

[Hysteria] Why is it that American services are always compared to Third World countries? Is it really a comparison of two like objects? Why are they not instead compared to other countries also classified as being part of the developed World?

[Orgone] Because America is number one in the world, Director. There isn't anything to compare to. Except maybe to heaven. And even that's only by degree.

- [Hysteria] Is a choice between being shot and doing what someone wants a choice?
- [Orgone] Doing the right thing is always a choice, Director. Of course, considering that you don't think criminals have any responsibility for their actions, I guess you don't see it that way.
- [Hysteria] Do the economies of the Third World countries differ from the United States in only degree? Is one merely more naked than the other?
- [Orgone] I don't understand how you leftist liberals can be so willfully ignorant of reality. It's not the United States, Director. It's these United States. These. Unless you can realize that it is the concept of the states that has made America America then you can't realize anything. Of course, you apparently don't realize much at all, so maybe that explains things. And without borders, there are no states. That's by definition, Director. It's part of the definition. How are we supposed to use maps without borders? Yet time and time again the leftist liberals try to destroy this country. Without dividing lines, Director, there is no differentiation. Without differentiation, there is no separation. Without any separation, no one can tell the difference in anything. And if no one can tell the difference in anything, Director, how is anyone supposed to do anything? You want this great melting pot. This great merging of humanity. Well, this is a melting pot, Director. People came here and they lost everything else about themselves. They became Americans. But these people coming here now. They don't want to do that. They don't want to be melted. They think every other state should be like every other state. Everybody should be like California. Everybody should be a leftist-liberal heckhole—forgive my language, folks—because that's what you've got, and you can't stand the thought of anyone

having anything else. Well, the real Americans aren't going to stand for it, Director. The real Americans are going to fight back. One of these days people are going to wake up to what's going on around them. But thank you for coming on, Director. It's always important to keep informed of the insanity on the leftist-liberal side of things.

[The guest frame disappears. The right frame grows to take over everything.]

[Orgone] Coming up—we will speak with an author and archaeologist who says he has found evidence that mount Ararat was, in fact, in southern Utah. Stay tuned for that, folks. And remember you can always check out our website while you're watching the show.

#### 

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One wears cargo shorts and sunglasses. The other wears cargo shorts and a straw hat.]

[Question] What do you think of fan fiction?

[Sunglasses] I think it's stupid.

[Question] And why do you think that?

[Sunglasses] It's kind of against the whole point. It just kinda completely trashes what the author does.

[Straw Hat] It's always about two guys from the show, or whatever, having sex.

[Sunglasses] Yeah. If you wanna watch gay porn, or something, that's fine. But don't go around ruining other things to get it.

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an audience member speaking into a microphone.]

[Question] My question is actually about something in a book that was written by Doctor Langdon Jones, and I was wondering what your opinion was regarding his notion of copyright and read-only contemporary culture.

[Lens flare. Cut to a blurry upscaled shot of Gordon Liste onstage.]

[Liste] Well, at least you didn't assume that I am Doctor Jones.

[Audience laughter.]

[Liste] We are in fact separable.

[Audience laughter.]

[Liste] So was that question just to me?

[Lens flare. Cut to some later point.]

[Liste] In general, I think about the quote from Schopenhauer's essay on reading, where he talks about how reading is filling your mind with someone else's pre-digested thoughts and substituting your thinking with their own and about how people who read long enough read themselves stupid.

[Audience laughter.]

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### 

[Foam] Also Batman would *not* sleep with Barbara. He's supposed to have deep principles and integrity. He would never do that to Commissioner Gordon.

[Halo] She's an adult. What's her father got to do with her sex life?

[Foam] It's just disrespectful.

[Halo] Come on. Batman's a psychotic who spends billions to run around on rooftops at night in a funny suit to beat up poor people. Why doesn't he spend some of those billions lobbying for social change and improved social welfare so that crime wouldn't exist in the first place? Or donating to build a better security system for Arkham, at least.

[Foam] But that wouldn't be an interesting story.

[Halo] So psychotic.

[Foam] Honor and integrity.

[Halo] Like sleeping with Catwoman? And Talia al Ghul. And how many others?

[Foam] Don't slut shame.

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

### **|**44 || **▶**

[Orgone] So it's finally happening. You knew it would, folks. It had to. Any child could tell what was going to happen. So now they're going to marry their computers. Which considering how much time they spend with them, you might think they are already common-law married at the very least. They'll live with themselves. They'll live with others. They'll live with their computers. That's the kind of normalcy the leftist liberals want in this country. And here to tell us about why this is just oh so right and moral and honest is—who can you imagine but—Massachusetts Hysteria, regional director of the North Carolina ACLC.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Hysteria is in the left frame.]

- [Orgone] Your organization must really be raking in the money now, doesn't it? Excuse me. I mean donations.
- [Hysteria] Is the amount of money one has a measure of one's relationship to God?
- [Orgone] Well of course, you insult religion. You can't help it. Of course, this whole case is an insult to religion, so why shouldn't everything else you or your organization does be any different? So what's next? Are we going to have computers marrying computers next? Toasters marrying toasters? Are we going to have computers marrying toasters? Where is it going to end, Director? With the complete destruction of this country?
- [Hysteria] Are we judging who is allowed to enter into such contracts as marriage purely on an ontological basis? Do we judge intelligence itself on such a basis?
- [Orgone] I keep telling you, Director, you're not going to confuse anyone with fancy words here. But you just keep trying. But people on the liberal left just won't listen. You try to tell them how it's all going to go wrong. You try to warn them. But no. Not listening.
- [Hysteria] How do we know two people really agree on any contract freely?
- [Orgone] Because it's the free market, Director. It has to be that way. It's in the name.
- [Hysteria] Do we have any actual method for deriving such consent is possible, or is it merely that we observe that the members engaged in such are of a subset of the species homo sapiens which has defined such legalese?
- [Orgone] Are you going to ask to mediate contracts between pets and their owners now? Of course, we already know how

you and your organization stand on people having sexual relations—excuse my language, folks—with people in beastly costumes.

[Hysteria] Is it possible that all of this has gone beyond mere pointless farce and is now even beyond banality? Is it perhaps even boring?

[Orgone] Don't insult the American people. The only reason you are allowed to be here is because of real Americans. And that is the  $onl\gamma$  reason.

[Hysteria] Why do you have me on?

[Orgone] Because, unlike the leftist-liberal media, Director, we actually do get all viewpoints. We're not afraid to look at everything that's out there. That's why our audience trusts us to bring them the real truth. The truthier truth. The truthiest truth. That's what we do here, Director. And that's what we're proud of. That's why we can hold our heads high at the end of the day.

[Hysteria] Is there anything someone hasn't been proud of?

[Orgone] I know it might be a hard concept for you to grasp, Director. After all, it is different to look back at something that is built rather than at a ruin after something has been torn down. But I guess that you might never have had the distinction of experiencing anything other than the one. But of course, thank you for being on. As always, we like keeping up with what the leftist liberals are doing out there in their fantasy world. Or should I say worlds? Everything's relative, after all, isn't it? I guess only having one fantasy world apiece would be intolerable, wouldn't it. So you can each have as infinitely many worlds as you want. We'll just wait for you here in this real one.

[The guest frame disappears. The right frame grows to take over everything.]

[Orgone] Coming up next—our continuing coverage of the disasters at our state borders. Stay tuned for that, folks. And as always, you can find more continuing and live coverage on our website, at every moment of the day.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Foam] And there's no justification for Eva-01 turning into a cat thing. Nothing in the series or any of the other movies laid the groundwork for something like that. It just comes out of nowhere.

[Halo] So like life.

[Foam] That's not realistic.

[Halo] You complain about freakin Water World.

[Foam] Flooding the entire world like that is just completely scientifically impossible.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

### H4 || >>|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an audience member speaking into a microphone.]

[Question] What do you think would have been the most unexpected thing about the twenty-first century to your younger self?

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Straw.]

[Straw] That I would switch sides in the Clarke v. C. S. Lewis debate.

#### 

[Aster] The debate over reparations for slavery in America continues. With tensions on both sides of the argument growing still higher, should America feel it is its moral duty, or not, to repay for what many feel are its past offenses?

[The image subdivides into three frames.]

[Aster] With us to help answer that question is Donald Wyndham, from the Noir Foundation, an advocacy and policy outreach institute based in Philadelphia. And Audrey Saltpeterson from the North Carolina ACLC.

[Aster] Doctor Wyndham, let's start with you, if that's alright.

[Wyndham] Always a pleasure, John.

[Aster] What do you feel it is going to take to move America in the direction of understanding and recognizing the need for paying for its past deeds?

[Wyndham] I think fundamentally it's going to take an act of love. People have to understand that America needs this in order to purify its soul.

[Aster] How do you respond to those on the right who claim that this will, in fact, increase people's guilt and that it's about making people feel guilty for something they didn't participate in directly or even really have any connection to?

[Wyndham] I think, first of all, we have to realize that far more have been touched by this than we typically would like to think. The Civil War may have ended over a hundred-fifty years ago and slavery may have been made illegal at that time—though, I must state that

provisionally, as there always has to be an asterisk there due to the unfortunate wording of the Constitution but let's pass that by a moment. Even though that happened over a hundred-fifty years ago, the systematic oppression of an entire race of people continued to be imposed, not just by individuals, but by institutional policy. And this continued as an explicit government policy until—if we want to pick a date—let us say nineteen-sixty-four. Now, how many people do you know who had been alive in nineteen-sixty-four? I know many of them. And these are not men and women who have seen their parents pass on yet. When they were children, the nature of many parts of America still involved voter suppression. It involved segregation. It involved lynchings. It involved the Klan. All of which can be regarded, as I'm sure most people will agree, as nothing short of a domestic terrorism. So this isn't in the past. It's commonly known that banks red-lined black mortgages following World War Two to keep black families out of white neighborhoods. However, what most people aren't aware of is that these policies continued well into the nineties. Even though the Civil War ended over a hundred-fifty years ago, institutional racism has prevented black families from accruing inter-generational wealth in a quite explicit fashion. We live in a world presently no less shaped by racist policy than if we lived in the decades after or before the Civil War. Maybe even more so. There has never been any point of reset. There has never been any zeroing of the scales, as The Bible says. The debt still remains and the effects of that debt remain like a scar upon the land.

[Aster] Doctor Wyndham, do you feel that people don't understand just to what degree racism can become welded into society?

[Wyndham] Yes, of course, we have to recall that well into the nineteen-thirties and forties it was considered by many

in southern states that a young man's participation in the act of a lynching was a rite of passage. So by no means can we overstate the intertwinedness of these issues into broader life and into the everyday lives of, well, everyone. Even where it's not necessarily explicit.

[Aster] Turning to you now, Miss Saltpeterson. How do you feel about the arguments some right-leaning commentators have made in regards to this opening up a slippery slope? They argue that maybe reparations could be paid in a case such as the Holocaust but that comparing slavery to the Holocaust is disingenuous.

[Saltpeterson] Well, the question is, I guess, is tragedy power or not?

[Aster] But aren't you reinforcing the idea that there is some sort of cult of victimhood? Isn't that playing right into the right's arguments?

[Saltpeterson] Well, is the question really can it be both? To what degree was the victim card played in Nazi Germany? Wasn't it that the Aryans were the victims of the Jews?

[Aster] But again, isn't this just going to add fuel to conservative arguments? Shouldn't we be concentrating on the actual harm done?

[Saltpeterson] Well, is it being advocated out of a sense of duty? Or is it about feeling good? Is there a certain self-righteousness that seems to be too often paired with it? So is that honest? Is it like the man who went into the temple and gloats about giving bags of gold? Which is it that we're actually doing? Isn't a true wiping of the slate a zero point? And isn't everything before that effaced? What identity is there left for black Americans after that?

[Aster] You—

- [Wyndham] It's a ridiculous notion to argue that black subjectivity rests upon the spectre of slavery.
- [Saltpeterson] But what else is there? What image of black people in America is there but as it relates in one way or another to slavery?
- [Wyndham] We must build upon and find a history. The history is the struggle.
- [Saltpeterson] But wasn't that struggle always itself exclusionary? Didn't the men of your generation resign women to making sandwiches and coffee while you had the real meetings? And didn't that leave the hole for second-wave feminism to need to arise? And what if it is true that the pattern of racism is taken from and founded in the treatment of women? Haven't notions of freedom always been selective? Were the founders fighting for freedom or freedom from certain constraints on themselves? And weren't they almost fighting for the opposite? Weren't they fighting for a freedom against a king that wouldn't let them continue to oppress and displace the native tribes? Haven't the black community fought for freedom to then show solidarity with their former white oppressors by repressing gays and lesbians to an even greater extent than white male heterosexual society has? Are we only ever fighting for piecemeal freedom?
- [Aster] There is, of course, the question of Native Americans. Several conservative commentators have remarked that wouldn't that be next? What's your feelings on that, Doctor Wyndham?
- [Wyndham] I don't wish to speak outside of my area, except to the extent to state that the notion of slippery slope

arguments are themselves fallacious. This has, of course, always been the claim that if x happened, y would follow. It was the case with civil rights. It was the case with interracial marriage. It's merely a standard tactic. It's as answerable a question as asking what would be the sound of one hand clapping.

[Aster] So—

[Saltpeterson] May I respond?

[Aster] Miss Saltpeterson.

[Saltpeterson] Why shouldn't they? In fact, shouldn't they look at all exploitation? Don't we have to calculate the cost to all Americans when state governments rolled in National Guard troops on flatcars with machine guns and opened fire on tent camps containing women and children and subsequently burnt those camps, also killing women and children, in order to protect certain economic interests?

[Aster] Surely, Miss Saltpeterson, you're not arguing those are comparable.

[Saltpeterson] Why worry about being comparable? Isn't it enough that it occurred? Isn't it enough that there is an economic debt? Does being smaller or larger make it not a debt? How do we order them? Pay the larger first? Why? Why not? But what about after that? And is there a debt to everyone who lived in areas of slavery? Did the entire concept of slavery devalue labor as a whole and rob the economic interests of free black people and free white people alike? Didn't the racism institutionalized by slave holders divert workers, who should have sought solidarity, into hating each other? What is the economic loss from all this time?

- [Aster] Are you suggesting, Miss Saltpeterson, that even whites would have to be paid restitution for African Americans being enslaved in this country?
- [Saltpeterson] What if after we balance that debt we find a greater one? Has it been that the entire market system that has been so lauded for raising the standards of humanity farther than they have ever been raised before in history was dependent on the theft of productivity and value from not just black Americans, but the majority of all Americans? And what if all the gains were squeezed from the margins by taking more than could be taken from all those who couldn't fight back against private armies and slave patrols and the National Guard?
- [Wyndham] The problem here is that we are talking about two things. We are talking about an economic system, and we are talking about racism. The two do not need coincide and are not abjectly inseparable. I don't think we can retreat into the classical notions of class division.
- [Saltpeterson] What macro example has there ever been of an economy that does not, in one way or the other, and sometimes literally, hold a gun to workers' heads? Why didn't capitalism eliminate this tendency? Did it accelerate it? If America is the land of free markets, why did policemen ride through the squares striking unionists in the head?
- [Wyndham] These are rather tired arguments. And they completely dismiss the point. Regardless of the rhetoric of right-wing historical revisionists, there is nothing comparable to the plight of black people in chattel slavery in the United States. To posit that the treatment of the Irish is somehow equivalent to this is ridiculous.

[Saltpeterson] And that's exactly it, is it not? What history is there but that history? Wouldn't it be like if Jewish history started with the Holocaust? Where would they go if they had no history to draw upon after such an event? Isn't even the notion of princes of Africa merely a variant of the temporarily impoverished millionaire that so many white Americans were taught to have themselves believe? How many princes or millionaires can one continent have before money and regalness are worthless? Why don't we just pay our bills rather than argue over which is the greater or the lesser when that is already so obvious?

[Wyndham] There cannot be a healing in this country until that stolen economic output of these last three hundred years on this continent is restored to the people who originated it.

[Saltpeterson] Don't we agree? Wasn't slavery itself an economic institution? Wasn't any moral justification that defended it ultimately the justification of an economic institution? Is the heart of the problem economics? Is it possible that in order to even begin to have a free market that reparations fundamentally must be made? Wasn't the realization of the economic even the very reason Doctor King was a socialist? If he had not been one, would he have not been in Memphis helping to unionize black sewage workers? And might he still be alive? Might it be that everything in the end is economics? Is everything we're talking about really economics? Are guilt and shame economical propositions because no propositions can exist otherwise? Is that what is implicitly and explicitly stated?

[Wyndham] I think the chief problem we struggle with today is an issue of black self-hatred. The hatred has seeped in so long from so many corners that it has produced black men and women who have had all the blackness drained out of them. There is always the temptation to explain away something as not what it is. And that paired with the classic tactic of whataboutism just muddies everything, and the ultimate result, which is the ultimate reason such tactics are employed, is to allow things to continue as they always have been. The problem is that people get caught up into this and the result is that they fight against their own self-interest.

[Aster] Thank you for that, Doctor. I feel that will be a good point to end on, as we are unfortunately almost out of time. But thank you very much for coming on and speaking with us.

[Wyndham] It was my pleasure.

[Aster] And Miss Saltpeterson—

[Saltpeterson] Are Americans altogether being disingenuous? Even you? Or more especially you?

[Aster] I don't understand what you mean, Miss Saltpeterson.

[Saltpeterson] Wasn't one of your ancestors a slave owner?

[Wyndham rises from his chair. Someone steps into frame to disconnect a microphone from his lapel. He removes the sound unit that has been clipped to his pants. They both step out of frame.]

[Aster] That—

[Saltpeterson] And even if it's rightly disavowed, doesn't your very job depend on slavery now? Doesn't every one of the cameras and computers and televisions and phones we use depend on upholding warlords in places like Africa, warlords who use torture and rape and slavery to mine the rare minerals fundamentally needed for all these

devices? So is your job now, and mine, and the people out there watching us, are all of us dependent on black children working in mines to provide the materials for the insides of our Playstations and Xboxes and iMacs and Kindles? And might we be even less moral than your ancestor? Didn't they at least have to, once in a while, look at the black person they kept in bondage? Or after all this time, have we succeeded in erasing them completely?

[Aster] Well, thank you, Miss Saltpeterson.

[Saltpeterson] I think that I should clarify that, regardless of the current legal status of my name, that I self-identify as a Hysteric.

[Aster] Do you really feel that it is useful to question everything about society at this point, Miss Saltpeterson?—excuse me, Miss Hysteria. Shouldn't we be focusing on what's important, rather than let ourselves scatter all over the place?

[Hysteria] What if we're letting ourselves be drawn to the wrong target because the right one is ourselves?

[Aster] Thank you very much, Miss Saltpeterson—I mean Miss Hysteria.

[The guest frames disappear. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Aster] Coming up, a special report on the humanitarian crisis at the borders.

#### H | >>

[Foam] If the Prometheus was half-a-billion miles away from Earth it would only be about at Jupiter.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

#### H | >>|

[Orgone] So you have these former fbi agents, which one of them has some slight claim to fame, I guess, for doing something totally ridiculous, like shooting a nuclear bomb, or something. And they come out and make these—

[Finger quotes.]

[Orgone] statements. As if we're supposed to listen to a few former members of a nonexistent organization that by all legal rights shouldn't have existed in the first place. This is the land of the free. Real Americans shouldn't have to worry about some kind of federal law enforcement getting backroom warrants in special secret courts swooping down on them. Not in these United States. No, what I think is little Evgenia and Natasha should go back to whatever country it is they came from and not tell us what to do in our own. There's a war going on out there, folks. And it's everywhere. And we have to do everything we can to win. Because not doing everything you can is the same as losing. And if we lose, you know what will be next. They'll be coming to your door, folks. That next knock and that will be it. So here to talk with us now about all this is our special guest.

[The image subdivides into two frames. A blurry mass is in the added right frame.]

[Orgone] Now, don't adjust your screen. Our special guest today engages in highly secretive work to keep our country safe, and as such we are required to keep his identity a secret. So let's just call him Gary. Welcome to the show, Gary.

[Gary] Thank you for having me.

[The program adds its own subtitles for him.]

[Orgone] So there is all this hooprah over a couple or three names. Why's this so important?

[Gary] It's important because names are fundamental identifiers. They allow one thing to be known not to be another.

[Orgone] So they're like borders in that regard.

[Gary] Yes.

[Orgone] So what are the problems with these specific names?

[Gary] Well, we're not fighting a war against people named John or Stu or Richard. We're fighting against people with names like Muhammad and Omar and Ali and Ahmad.

[Orgone] So what if people change their names?

[Gary] That's sometimes a problem we have to deal with in the intelligence community.

[Orgone] I mean, it makes no sense if people or things can just change their names around willynilly, does it? Then we'd just have chaos. We'd have giraffes calling themselves zebras, or something. And this is exactly the reason we need a list of True Names, isn't it?

[Gary] Yes.

[Orgone] I mean, without it, how are we supposed to know anything about anybody. Anybody could be anybody.

[Gary] That's correct.

[Orgone] And who would be ashamed of their real name?

[Gary] That's correct.

[Orgone] Well, thank you for your service, Gary. And thank you for taking the time to come on and make us aware of these things.

[He salutes.]

[Orgone] Stay safe out there in the world of intelligence.

[Gary] Thanks.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Orgone] Stay tuned, folks. We've got another update on the disasters at our state borders. How it affects you—coming up. And remember, you can always check out the latest news on our website any time day or night while you're watching the show.

#### **₩** || **>>**

[Foam] Aliens wouldn't look like people with different-shaped ears.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

[Aster] In light of recent events, debate continues to rage about just how victims of sexual violence are and should be treated by the justice system.

[The image subdivides into three frames.]

[Aster] With us to talk about this is Wilma Thornedyke, from the WSPCQ, and Emilia Krusemissile, former member of the LUTR. Thank you both for joining us. Starting with you, Misses Thornedyke, how do you feel about these most recent events?

[Thornedyke] I think that it's just to continue to undermine the narrative.

[Aster] And how do you feel about that, Miss Krusemissile?

[Krusemissile] It's obviously preposterous.

[Aster] And how do you feel about that, Misses Thornedyke?

[Thornedyke] Look, so long as there's nothing done about false accusations like this, then every time it comes out, it's just going to be another nail in the coffin for victim's rights.

[Aster] And do you feel something should be done?

[Thornedyke] We have to recognize these situations for the crimes they are, and we have to prosecute.

[Aster] But don't you feel that is going to risk creating a situation where victims aren't going to want to come forward?

[Krusemissile] This is exactly right. Women already face enough difficulty getting society to take the tragedy that's happened to them seriously. And this would just lead to them being interrogated as being criminals themselves the moment they stepped into a police station.

[Thornedyke] But one of the reasons people can dismiss it and don't take it seriously is precisely because of cases such as this.

[Krusemissile] You either believe the woman or you don't. There can't be any middle ground.

[Thornedyke] But if we just *de facto* believe then we don't have a justice system.

- [Aster] Do you feel that there would be an increased scrutiny on women who come forward if this were the case?
- [Thornedyke] Of course, there will. But there's already scrutiny now. And it's exactly because of cases like this.
- [Aster] But what do you feel should be the course for investigating reports such as these?
- [Thornedyke] The same way we're supposed to investigate any report.

  Investigate it as if it were possible it happened, and if during that you find that the report was intentionally falsified, prosecute for that, the same as we would for any other crime.
- [Aster] But is that the way you really feel it would work?
- [Thornedyke] I don't know. But we have to try something.
- [Krusemissile] You know very well that if the woman's word isn't taken the first thing they're going to do is assume that she's lying.
- [Thornedyke] When somebody reports a robbery, we don't assume that it didn't occur. Maybe we're just going to have to sit down as a society and, once and for all, ask why this kind of accusation is disregarded.
- [Krusemissile] We know why it's disregarded. And we know the solution. And the solution is simply to not disregard it. You know, just as I know, that otherwise, anytime a woman comes forward, the moment they start to make their report, the interrogation will begin.
- [Thornedyke] But that is not going to do anything when these sorts of cases come to light.

[Krusemissile] Not if we just continue to believe the victim steadily through it all.

[Thornedyke] And what about the accused?

[Krusemissile] We haven't got any other choice. Even you admit that anything else is not going to work. You talk about these cases giving rein to the justification that any woman is lying about being a victim of sexual assault. And you know that the first case of a woman being prosecuted for a false allegation will be held up as proof of just that.

[Thornedyke] Well, we have to try for something else.

[Krusemissile] There is no other option that isn't worse.

[Aster] Thank you both for that. Unfortunately, we're out of time. There is some breaking news, and I'm afraid we have to cut this short. So again, thank you both very much. Misses Thornedyke, thank you for being on.

[Thornedyke] Thank you.

[Aster] And thank you to Miss Krusemissile for taking the time to join us before your departure.

[Krusemissile] It was my pleasure.

[Foam] There aren't any sounds in the vacuum of space.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

## H4 || >>|

[Hartnette] Issues continue this evening for the mountain town of Marion as hostilities remain ongoing there. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on this developing story. Sylvia.

[Cut to a shot of Borges ducking behind a car and covering her head with her free hand as she holds a microphone in the other.]

[Borges] Thanks, Tom. Yes, hostilities continue to rage here on the streets of the town of Marion.

[The image shakes.]

[Borges] We haven't got a picture yet of exactly how many have been injured or wounded. Crashed vehicles have made the main road, at this point, all but impassable. What we can tell you is that paramedic personnel have pulled out of the immediate area as of earlier this afternoon, when Yellow Cross Yellow Spear issued a press release stating that any injuries resulting from unlawful action is categorized as a violation of general policy—

[The image shakes.]

[Borges] and that all injuries resulting from such are exempt from coverage. However, it seems, Tom, that so few of those involved were covered in the first place that that seems to have done little to dissuade the fighting. In fact, it might even be that it has spurred it on. There was a noticeable uptick in explosions after a Yellow Cross helicopter dropped leaflets with this information along the length of Mainstreet earlier this afternoon. And as you can see from the smoke behind me—

[Black smoke is visible above the car hood.]

[Borges] several piles of them remain burning and smoldering at this time.

[The image shakes.]

[Borges] However, Tom, we need to clear up a small error in our last report. It appears that, in fact, while initially thought

the conflict began out of an argument between competing groups of theorists as to whether Bigfoot was, in fact, Sasquatch in disguise or not, or merely an older and white-haired Bigfoot, in fact, sources now tell us that it's more likely the conflict began over an argument as to whether Bigfoot was, in fact, an extraterrestrial and was therefore, in fact, an illegal alien.

[The image shakes.]

[Borges] So again, just to correct our earlier report, the conflict did not start over how Bigfoot relates to Sasquatch.

[The image shakes.]

[Borges] However, in any regard, hostilities continue even as darkness begins to fall. You can see the fires lighting up the street behind me.

[The image shakes.]

[Borges] And with all available law enforcement occupied with the situations at the borders, Tom, it looks like things might go on for quite a while. Live in Marion. I'm Sylvia Borges. News 10.

H | >>

[Foam] Using one-hundred percent of your brain is called a grand mal seizure.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

H4 || >>|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of someone seated onstage.]

[Happi] Merely by examining the fact that the law allows for the reproduction of the image which has had male nipples photoshopped over the female can we see the clear expression of ownership. Just as the human being in American law cannot own themselves the sub pieces of themselves can be owned by sub parties. Under the law you do not and cannot own your body. So that if someone breaks into your house and steals a vial of your blood they cannot be charged for the theft of the blood because you can't own it. But if you have your blood drawn for the blood bank and you break into that blood bank and take your blood and only your blood you will be charged with theft and charged based on the economic value of how many ever thousands of dollars for that amount of blood. So no woman can own her body, but others can own pieces of it. The female nipple in public has no provenance. It is merely an object for the generation of objects. And the object of ownership cannot own itself. Only the owner can. And therefore provenances to the public display of the pieces of human flesh cannot be disputed. It is not their bodies they own, because they by definition can't own them under the law, but the simulacra reproductions created of their bodies can be so because the pornographer is granted the copyright and, therefore, owns the image of the female nipple. Therefore, its provenance is legally established. So the pornographer can circulate such an image. But the performer cannot circulate the reality of herself.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

### H4 || >>|

[Foam] Explosive decompression doesn't exist. You don't explode like a balloon if you go outside naked on Mars.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

#### 

[Hartnette] The North Carolina board of alcohol has again rejected the Utah-based Polygamy Brewing Company from distributing its products within the state. The report detailing the rejection lists the reason as being that polygamy is illegal in the state of North Carolina, therefore the brand cannot be distributed.

Maybe some of this sounds ridiculous. And maybe it sounds too much like parody.

But Tammy said, "It's like sex talk."

Tommy said, "Within the doing everything's like god with an added 'o'."

Tammy said, "But outside that, it's nothing but stupid and embarrassing."

Tommy said, "Twas always thusly, too."

"However," Tommy said, "Poe's Law backwards is wal s'eop." He looked over at me. "And that is far the more dangerous and double double toil and trouble so."

#### 

[Foam] Humans would make terrible space heaters and worse sources of electricity.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

### 

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One has a Hello-Kitty face-painting on her cheek. The other wears a floppy hat and a multi-colored scarf.]

[Question] If Batman can beat everyone with prep time, and Squirrel Girl can beat anyone, who wins?

[Face Paint laughs. She looks over at the one in the floppy hat.]

[Face Paint] So do you think the flying rodent or the tree-climbing one?

[Floppy Hat laughs.]

[Face Paint] Squirrel Girl...? I guess.

[Floppy Hat] Why?

[Face Paint] Batman isn't going to beat up a girl.

[Floppy Hat] He just has to think up something. He doesn't have to hit her.

[Face Paint] Irresistible force meets immovable object.

[Both laugh.]

[The image shrinks into the upper left corner of the frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in a video essay. A thirty-something guy sits in a racing-gaming chair. The bookcase behind him is packed with DVDs. The words Mathew In The Box are in a red box in the lower right of the frame.]

[Mathew] This's completely ridiculous. There can't be any such thing as an irresistible force or an immovable object. And if either one of them did meet, one would have to move or one would have to stop. That's the way physics works. Just because you can make up stupid word problems like this doesn't mean that any of it exists. And considering that Batman is from the DC universe and Squirrel Girl is from the Marvel universe and since Crisis Finite Crisis obliterated any of the old crossovers that might have still been relevant between the two universes there would be absolutely no way that they could meet. Furthermore, this

is just another example of the syw attitude that's infected comics over the past few years. It's a ridiculous setup. But everyone's going to root for the girl to take down the established main male character. All that matters is that the female character takes down the male character. That's the whole point. Even though it's completely ridiculous that Squirrel Girl would even remotely be on the level of Batman. But of course, this has been the syw's plan from the beginning. Take a minor character from a series and inject her into Avengers Infinity War with no other prep and have her take down Thanos. It's ridiculous. Even if it was done that way in the comics once by someone who was probably a covert syw writer, it's still complete bleep. And it's things like this that're going to turn Marvel movies into complete dumpster fires. They're going to do what they did to Doctor Who, where you've got him punching someone for expressing a view that was totally normal for the time they're in. It's just ridiculous. So Marvel execs better listen up. Get woke. Go broke.

## **|**44 || **▶**▶|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Liste onstage.]

[Liste] The pornstar image provides the coordinates of a space within reality, but also, without that image, there is no reality. So the image defines itself, and it defines the reality of itself.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

## H | >>

[Foam] It's ridiculous to think you could inject a virus into an alien computer system from a Mac. Regardless of any deleted scenes.

[Halo] Why Tyler?

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One wears pink sunglasses. The other wears red sunglasses.]

[Question] Godzilla versus Eva-01.

- [Red] That depends. Original Godzilla? American Godzilla? Shin Godzilla final form? Or what?
- [Pink] Yeah. And original Eva-01? Or rebuild Eva-01 with the limiter off?
- [Red] Yeah, but even then Shin Godzilla's basically a walking nuclear laser canon with a plasma option.
- [Pink] Yeah, and third impact Eva-01's basically a god.
- [Red] Yeah, but there's the tail. Godzilla might still, even, have been evolving. That might even not have been his final form. If the Japanese had failed and the Americans had nuked it, who the bleep knows what might have happened?

[Pink] If it's not in the movie, it doesn't count.

[Red] If it's in the source book, it counts.

[Pink shakes her head.]

### H4 || >>|

[Cathex] So everybody's seen the videos. So now we're asking are men able to get the job done? With us to discuss that is Roger Killmeat.

[The image subdivides to allow for a second right frame.]

[Cathex] Thank you for coming on, Rodge.

- [Killmeat] It's my pleasure.
- [Cathex] So, Rodge, the question's supposed to be whether men can get it done, but is it really right to bring up men when we're really talking about Millennials?
- [Killmeat] Well, after these latest studies, that might not be very far from the case.
- [Cathex] So is this just the porn? Or is it just that they're so pathetic that they can't actually get out there and do things with real women? What is it?
- [Killmeat] Well, obviously, as has been pointed out by Doctor Pinky, and many others—
- [Cathex] Though all on the right, though. We should point out that the left doesn't seem to think this is a problem at all.
- [Killmeat] There, doesn't seem to be, no.
- [Cathex] You might even say that they want it. I mean, it's just more of the same. It's just another strategy in the war on the family. You just can't get any more plainly obvious than that.
- [Killmeat] Well, as I was saying, as has been pointed out by people such as Doctor Pinky, and Doctor Pinkerton, as well, when you introduce porn into the environment, you have these pathways of stimulation and satiation that were never there before, so you have boys stimulating themselves. This is really the only thing that can come out of it. There really isn't anything else that could've happened once that was allowed to happen.

[Cathex] It's just desensitization at all levels.

- [Killmeat] Correct. The over-stimulation in the visual sphere, the over-burdensome amount of pressure during the course of stimulating themselves, everything just becomes completely overstimulated, and at that point there's nothing else that can provide that amount of pressure and the necessary stimulation, outside of their own stimulation.
- [Cathex] Really, the Millennial self-obsession, self-absorption reaching new heights.
- [Killmeat] Well, it is an almost complete wholesale rejection of almost the entire idea of the relationship.
- [Cathex] And even if they try, it just doesn't work anymore. It just doesn't work like it's supposed to.
- [Killmeat] Anything else just has the absolute complete lack of the necessary stimulation.
- [Cathex] And how pathetic can you get?
- [Killmeat] I do think that there is some recent evidence that points very strongly to the idea that we have underestimated just to what an extreme degree the condition can go to and the extremes of the pressure and stimulation that comes to be required. The numbers are almost phenomenal.
- [Cathex] We're almost out of time. So thank you for being on, Rodge.

[Killmeat] It was my pleasure.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Cathex] Coming up. Since there can't be any such thing as the Millennial man these days, what about Millennial women?

How are they coping? For all it's feminism and all of its rights for women, has Millennialism only succeeded in coming close to making women not exist at all? And what does this mean for the women that they haven't managed to take out yet? We'll talk about that. Coming up.

## **|**44 || **>>**|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Liste onstage.]

[Liste] I think we should take a moment to appreciate the fact of how we've come to the moment where cultural production has gotten to the point where gaming can override the biological urge for reproduction, even among those people who are in relationships and who have direct access to other willing participants who wish to engage in sexual congress. I don't think the magnitude of such a statement can be understated. This is not classical oppression. Even with the advent of the pill, it was merely a means of further allowing sexual expression via decoupling it from the reproductive one. Always before, the social theory had been to deny or channel the sexual drive. Now we have stepped beyond the sexual drive. Again, I don't think the magnitude of such a statement can be understated.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

## H4 || >>

[The image is subdivided into three frames. Aster is in one. A midthirties guy in a white shirt and black tie is in another. A fortysomething man is in the last frame.]

[Guy] Look—if I had one of those big red buttons like you see in the commercials, and this type of thing was the only thing it worked on, and it could be only pressed once a day, then, yeah, the first day I'd start by wishing out of the world the kind of genital mutilation where they cut everything off and scoop out the clit and sew it back up again and on their wedding night the husband cuts her open, and if he leaves for an extended period of time, she's sewn up again, and when he returns he cuts her open again and there's only a small hole for urination and menstruation then, yeah, I'll will that away first. And then the next day it might be just the ones that scoop out the clitoris but leave everything else. And on and on. But eventually I'm going to get down to removing a clitoral hood versus removing a foreskin, and at that point I'm just going to have to toss a coin. There may be degrees of mutilation, but that doesn't change the fact that we're talking about mutilation.

- [Aster] But you can see the issue that certain religious communities would have with this lack of nuance.
- [Guy] It isn't a lack of nuance. There's either non-consensual mutilation or there's not.
- [Man] I think the point that is overlooked here is that it is perfectly acceptable for there to be a so-called gray area. Though, I wouldn't call it that. But what I mean by that is we generally think of killing as wrong but we make certain exceptions for, say, war or self-defense or even the death penalty. And if we were to say killing is wrong period then we couldn't even allow self-defense. Which makes no sense at all. And the Jewish community has a right to defend its traditions.
- [Guy] Then what is the line between what traditions are allowed and not? Female genital mutilation is a tradition with roots as far back as ancient Egypt, which, I might add, is in the same time and place that male circumcision first arose. So are you going to argue in favor of type-three female genital mutilation?
- [Man] I don't appreciate you putting words in my mouth. We are talking about a matter of tolerance. Either there is going to be tolerance for the Jewish faith or there is not. And I do not want to be in a society where there is not such a tolerance.

- [Aster] Obviously, tolerance is a fundamental aspect of American society. And though we have had trouble living up to it at times, I feel we understand the consequences of falling short of it in these regards.
- [Guy] And what about the freedom of every American to choose? If they are raised in one religion at least they can leave it when they're eighteen. But it's very hard to have a piece of your body reattached after eighteen years.
- [Man] I don't think you are taking into account how fundamental a facet you are asking to change. This has been a part of Judaism since Abraham.
- [Guy] Yes, and God told him to do it to himself as an adult. And if most people were willing to go that route, I would be fine with it. And considering it's practiced on sixty-percent of American children, it's hardly unique anymore.
- [Man] It's a deeply personal decision. And allowing control of the decision by anyone other than the parents—anything else would be an effective banning of Judaism and would in effect be a repeat of the same type of thing we've seen in the most horrific points in history.
- [Guy] So I can either support butchery or stand for individual liberty and be a Nazi. Well, it doesn't work.
- [Man] This is a matter of belief.
- [Guy] Yes, it is. But it's one where I can't believe. I can't believe a person should have their own autonomy. I can't believe that because that conflicts with your belief that you should be able to apply your belief on human beings who can't say anything about it. Or else I use force to make you only apply your beliefs to yourself, in which case I have to apply my beliefs to you and violate my own belief. So really, what we're saying is that each

of us have to have the other's belief, isn't that it? The word tolerance gets used, but doesn't that just end up meaning that we have to believe the same thing or else?

[Man] I think you're very confused.

[Guy] I'm very confused. I'm confused as to why sixty-percent of Americans perform an unnecessary surgery, with no anesthesia, on a child. A surgery that risks further complications in their lives requiring later surgeries. I'm confused as to why a parent would be willing to risk their child's urinary tract opening forming at a right angle to the length of his penis, or some other deformity in the urinary tract opening, for something that isn't medically necessary but in the rarest of cases. I'm confused as to how Americans could be so blasé about mutilating a child simply because insurance fully covers it so there's no money out of their pocket. I'm confused as to how a nation could be so scared of masturbation that they would let nineteenth-century reformers convince them to deaden the sensation of the penis. I'm confused as to why the majority of Americans who have this operation performed on their children admit doing so so he won't be teased in a locker room or will match his father. I'm confused as to why sixty-percent of American children are mutilated as a fashion statement and or social conformity. I'm confused as to why hospitals then can turn around and sell these lopped-off body parts for upwards of around a hundred-thousand-dollars per, to be used for one-hundred-fifty dollar Hollywood facial treatments in high-end spas and one-hundred-sixty-five-dollar-an-ounce creams endorsed by Oprah. I'm confused as to why it's acceptable to strap a newborn baby down into something that most people would swear came out of a horror movie if they saw it, so a doctor can shove a metal tool under the foreskin to tear it away from the still underformed penis head so that it can be sliced to then be able to slide in the tool that's only job is to finish crushing the foreskin so it can finally be cut off, all without anesthesia of any kind because it's stupid

and dangerous to anesthetize babies if you don't need to and everyone's decided they're too young to remember the pain or have any trauma from someone crushing and tearing off the literal second-most populous area of nerve endings in the male body while they're strapped to a plastic board screaming. So—yes—I'm very confused.

[The image shrinks into the upper left corner of the frame, revealing this had been excerpted for use in another news segment.]

[Orgone] Well, someone's a little emotional. And am I the only one that thinks he's concentrating on little boy's penises a little too much? But I mean, this is what it finally comes down to, folks. The leftist liberals can talk about tolerance all they want. But when it comes right down to it they're living right up to the name. The original version, too, were national socialists after all. But the leftist liberals, they say it isn't about that. They just want to give people things. Well, the Nazis liked to give people things too. They liked to give all kinds of people all kinds of things. I mean, it's not as if we don't just have to simply look around the world to get a pretty clear picture of what actually happens when you try socialism. But oh they want to say that's not real socialism. Well then, I guess there's no such thing as real socialism because if socialism is only socialism when it works then you might have a problem coming up with an example of socialism. But the leftist liberals, they won't let that stop them. After all, they're used to living in fantasy worlds. I can imagine it, so it must be true, right? Right, folks?

[He leans forward. He plants his elbow on the glass-like surface of the news desk. He places his chin on his balled fist.]

[Orgone] Let's see. I am going to imagine the biggest banana split that you can think of. And of course, we have to close our eyes or the wish won't come true. [He closes his eyes. He opens them. He looks around the news desk.]

[Orgone] Well, surprise there.

[He sits up in his seat.]

[Orgone] Oh well, I guess I'll just have to do it the old fashion way, won't I, folks. But that's going to require me to get up and walk down there and pull my wallet out. So I can see why they wouldn't want to do that. I'm not sure they have the stamina. But I'm sure they have more important things to do. They can always hire one of their illegals they like so much and have them bring it to them. They could even have the illegal feed it to them while they recline somewhere. Isn't that where they all end up? Don't poke the grounds crew too hard, folks. They've been so many places even they probably don't know where they're from. How are American boys supposed to learn the value of a dollar when they hire cheap illegals to mow all these lawns? Where's the opportunity for a good American boy to learn fiscal responsibility now? The poor kids, they even try to run a lemonade stand-and then you've got the leftist liberals sending the cops out to bust them. Oh, we can't have children practicing free enterprise in the streets. That shows you what they think of it right there. It's dirty. A hard day's work is dirty. People that work hard are dirty. They shouldn't be seen. You should all be ashamed. That's what the leftist liberals are telling you. You should have gone to college. Then you wouldn't have to do dirty work. Then you wouldn't be so dirty. That's what the leftist liberals are telling you. Of course, what work do they do? I think we all know who really keeps society running. I think we do. So stay tuned, folks. We'll be back.

[Foam] Also, Asuka in the rebuilds just doesn't have any reason to be so bitchy.

[Halo] Baka.

[She smashes his foam hair with the foam sword.]

[Foam] I may have deserved that one.

[Halo] He deserved that one.

[An image of a pink rose on a lavender background.]

[Voice-over] Doctor Pinkerton will see you now.

Tommy stretched out his arms. He threw back his head. He yawned so hard his lips pulled back from his teeth and gums as far as they'd go, and his tongue curled. He shook as he pulled into himself. As his head came forward, he yawned again. Water beaded from between his squeezed-together eyelids. He stood. He sniffed. He wiped his nose. "Did your teacher ever tell you that semi-frequent ejaculations are a good way to help prevent prostate cancer?" He walked with a slight limp where the lower part of his right leg'd gone to sleep. He halted once or twice with a jerk. His knee'd locked backwards. He had to semi-manually force it back rightways before he could start to move again. It took several turns around the figure-eight avenues between the tents till he began to walk freely and normally.

We walked along the figure-eight loops of the infinite avenues till we'd come upon where Tammy sat.

"You can never step into the same livestream twice," Tommy said. He sat down on the opposite side of the freelancer as her.

#### H | >>

[A man in a suit stands behind a glass rostrum. Behind him is a large graphic.]

[Preacher] There are many things on Earth. But that does not mean those things will be in heaven. Of course, it would not be heaven if there were mosquitoes.

# [Audience laughter.]

[Preacher] Now, many people may not like it. But it's not a question of what we like. Many people like many things that are sinful. That does not make them less sinful. And just the same, many people want certain things to be in heaven. You may have heard the phrase all dogs go to heaven. However, that I have to say is not true. And this, of course, will anger many, and it might even harden their hearts. But let us look at what The Bible says.

[He flips through an open book on the rostrum.]

[Preacher] Revelations twenty-two. Verses fourteen and fifteen. Blessed are they that do his commandments that they may have right to the Tree of Life and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs and sorcerers and whore mongers and murderers and idolaters and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie.

[He looks up.]

[Preacher] The dogs, as we see, are on the outside. But what else is on the outside? Besides that which is mentioned here? Think hard on that. And remember that it may not be the answer that you want. And if you think about it a while, you might realize the obvious. Let us turn to Deuteronomy.

[He flips through an open book on the rostrum.]

[Preacher] Deuteronomy chapter twenty-three. Verse one. He that is wounded in the stones or hath his privy member cut off shall not enter into the congregation of the Lord.

[He looks up.]

[Preacher] Why is that? What has been removed here? It has been the sign of the man. It has been the manhood itself which hath been removed. It is a man who enters heaven. A complete man. But what else is an incomplete man? What about that which was never man to begin with? After all, it was Adam who was created first in the image of God. And only then was woman created. And woman was created not from the image of God but from Adam. And she was created to be as a helpmeet unto him. Just as the dog is that which may be trained to render aid unto man. Did not Jesus come as a man? Is not God eternally He? Isn't this more than a clue as to that which is eternal? Does not Jesus say to the man beside him on the cross that today you shall be in paradise with me? And when he called the apostles to him, whom did he call?

[He leans forward. He grips the sides of the rostrum with both hands.]

[Preacher] I know this may be difficult. But we must not harden ourselves against the will of the Lord. So let us continue to prove that this is no mere selection. Some will say, Preacher, you have merely pulled out a verse. So let us go back to the beginning.

[He flips through an open book on the rostrum.]

[Preacher] Genesis chapter two. Verses twenty-two and twenty-three. And the rib which the Lord God had taken from man made he woman and brought her unto the man. And Adam said this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called woman because she was taken out of man. Now let us go back. Verse nineteen. And out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every fowl of the air and brought them unto Adam to see what he would call them and whosoever Adam called every living creature that was the name thereof.

[He turns a page.]

[Preacher] And finally, let us go back once more to why all of this is. Genesis chapter one. Verse twenty-eight. And God blessed them and God said unto them be fruitful and multiply and replenish the Earth and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

# [He looks up.]

[Preacher] But of course, they will say, Preacher, that means men and women together should share in these things. But is that so? How is man to be fruitful and multiply alone? So did not God provide the means? Just as he provided the dog for the shepherd who guards his flock. Does not Adam not name all that which the Lord gives him dominion? And is not woman and Eve named by Adam after she had been brought to him just as all the other animals had been? Of course, we stray from tradition in these dark times. But if you know of tradition you will know that it is the man who names the child after birth. That is the responsibility of the father. That was always the responsibility of the patriarch. Just as it was God who named Adam and it was Adam who received His blessing. And what else does God say?

[He flips through an open book on the rostrum.]

[Preacher] Genesis chapter three. Verse sixteen. Unto the woman he said and thy desire shall be to thy husband and he shall rule over thee.

[He looks up.]

[Preacher] Is this not the dog's desire toward the master? Now, it's not that we want to say anything bad. We are not trying to denigrate anything here. We are just categorizing things in their proper place. Let us read further.

[He flips through an open book on the rostrum.]

[Preacher] First Corinthians chapter eleven. Starting at verse seven. For man indeed ought not to cover his head forasmuch as he is the image and glory of God but the woman is the glory of man. For the man is not of the woman but the woman is of the man.

[He looks up.]

[Preacher] To understand yet further why the woman is not necessary in heaven we must understand what need heaven removes from man.

[He leans forward. He grips the sides of the rostrum with both hands.]

[Preacher] Heaven is where the injunction that man must eat by the sweat of his brow is finally lifted. This is what each man inherits from Adam. And it was with this that Adam was punished for allowing his own submission to that which was given unto him to use. He listened to the woman rather than apply his own judgment. He as the master did as the servant asked as if he were the servant and allowed the servant to be as the master. God had given to Adam the dominion of all the Earth. But how could one man have such dominion over so much? This then is why God gives Adam the injunction to multiply. For a patriarch needs sons. And he needs daughters who will bear sons. Adam, as the pinnacle of creation, was to stand over the whole of the Earth. And there was to be no death. This is the pledge of the Tree of Life. In God's plan, there would have been no strife. There would have been no house divided. There would have been no family against family or nation against nation. For Adam would have been the patriarch of all. And all would have been of the house of Adam. But Adam allowed the servant to be as the master. Adam allowed the tool to dictate to the man. So from

this, Christ the man had to come. And this man, being eternal, the world could one day unite under him. So once again there shall be but one house. And there shall be no division. And brother may not contest with brother, for the father shall not be gone. He, as the man, shall rule eternally and shall have dominion over all things.

[He straightens.]

[Preacher] Let us pray.

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[An early thirties man in a plaid shirt. He sits at a desk with a large microphone in front of him. A patterned background is behind him. THE SHOW is printed on the background.]

[Guy] So welcome back, everyone. In case you're just tuning in for the first time, I'm your host, Jason. Now we—or I guess I should say I—Berkeley is not here today. So if you're tuning in for him, unfortunately, my partner has taken him to the vet today. Don't worry. It's nothing serious. Just routine shots. Berkeley loves routine shots. So if you want to send your best wishes in the comments I'll be sure and pass that along. Unfortunately, also, since Berkeley isn't here, I'll have to mix the sound by myself, so we'll see how that comes out. But anyway, I've wanted to do something a little different for a while. And for anybody who's been keeping up on ParaCon—and what I guess we're officially calling the para-ParaCon now—there's just a lot going on, and if you're like me it seems like it's all getting a little hard to keep up with. Not for Berkeley, of course. He manages to keep up with it all. All while managing to finish his fourth PhD. So he's getting there. He's working his way up. He's going to beat Bruce Banner. But anyway we-I-wanted to do something a little different. And if you've been following us awhile you'll know that we've been pretty critical of certain other con-tubers out there. Not out of spite or anything like that. Just out of a sense of intellectual

engagement. But these kinds of video letter exchanges, if you will, get a little isolating, and it sometimes feels like we're talking past each other. So we—and Berkeley agreed before he was led away toward the horrible steel tube of pain—but we thought it would be good to have a real discussion. Two people. Really talking. So let's just get to it. And allow me to welcome Mathew onto The Show.

[The image subdivides into two frames. The other contains a thirty-something guy who sits in a racing-gaming chair. The bookcase behind him is packed with DVDs.]

[Jason] Of course, for those of you who do not know, Mathew is the host of Mathew Inside the Box. And you can find his channel by following the link below. So, Mathew, thank you for doing this. Thank you for agreeing to do this.

[Mathew] Okay.

[Jason] So let's—we kind of agreed on this in some emails beforehand—so we're going to start with some comments I made. And Mathew is going to respond to them. So let's show the clip.

[Cut to a different clip. The clip fills the frame. Jason wears a blue, rather than a red, plaid shirt.]

[Jason] So there's this word going around in a lot of blogs and videos that you might've heard. And that's hypergamy.

[Dog] Ruf.

[A large dog pokes its head up over the desk.]

[Jason] Berkeley's very interested in this topic, as you can see.

[He starts to rub the dog's head.]

[Jason] So technically speaking, according to the dictionary, that is, hypergamy refers to marrying upwards in a caste. So you can take it generally as meaning marrying up. That is, if your family has a million dollars and the person you're marrying has two million dollars, that's hypergamy. But specifically what's being talked about here is so-called female hypergamy. So that, according to urban dictionary, is a theory among some in the field of evolutionary psychology, that states that human women, or—

[He stops petting the dog to form air quotes.]

[Jason] females—

[The dog rubs against the chair. Jason returns to petting him.]

[Jason] will leave their current male partner in order to attach themselves to a higher-status mate if one becomes available. Now, this is supposed to be a biologically inbuilt, basic instinct welded into the hindbrain. And the only way this instinct can be overcome is through strict social and economic and legal enforcement that makes it impossible for a woman to be with more than one mate in a given lifetime. And it's further claimed that when society begins to deteriorate, the breakdowns in these enforcement mechanisms leave the larger body of men without mates as women compete for a select group of—

[He stops petting the dog to form finger quotes.]

[Jason] top tier—

[The dog rubs against the chair. Jason returns to petting him.]

[Jason] mates. These then disaffected men, who have no access to women to have sex with, then become violent, and eruptions of violence will further erode the ability of society to maintain itself, and finally, society will collapse altogether, resulting in an apocalyptic scenario where roving bands of sex-starved men will rape and pillage at will, and so on.

[He looks down at the dog.]

[Jason] Have I missed anything?

[Dog] Ruf.

[Jason] Exactly.

[He looks up. He looks at the camera.]

[Jason] And you know, I feel I should point out this particular urban dictionary entry was created by someone calling themselves Tyler Durden. Except they've replaced the ees with the number three. And I'll just take the opportunity to mention that if you haven't seen my earlier video about why people who identify with and want to be characters like James Bond and Tyler Durden and Rorschach are extra scary you can find that by clicking on the profile below. It isn't a prerequisite for this video. But still, it's there if you want to check it out.

[The dog lifts a paw onto the armrest of the chair Jason's seated in.]

[Jason] I'm getting on with it.

[He pushes the dog's paw off.]

[Jason] He doesn't like me wasting time by advertising.

[He returns to petting the dog.]

[Jason] So the thing I kept running into when I was trying to write out what I wanted to say in this episode—

[Dog] Ruf.

[Jason] We—of course, Berkeley helped—but the problem I had was where do you even start with something like this? Because it's really just a mess from every direction. And the other question is by even taking this serious enough to argue about it I wonder if I'm doing some damage. This is kind of like one of those foundational myths for redpillers and blackpillers and the question is do you even want to give any of that a shred of respectability by arguing with it? It's one of those problems where we've gotten to the point where that the question gets raised means you already have a problem. It's like—and if you haven't happened to have seen the Žižek video from last week, where he brings up this sort of thing in regards to manners and the left - I'll include a link to that below—but it's like, if you have someone who gets up and says, well actually, women like rape, or something like that, and instead of everyone just saying this guy's an idiot and moving on, people have to actually debate whether or not women enjoy rape, or something like that. So it feels like, if we're at this point, it feels like we're already in trouble.

[The clip ends.]

[Cut back to two frames containing Jason and Mathew, respectively.]

[Jason] So that's where this is starting from. So, Matt, you want to respond to this.

[Mathew] Yes.

[Jason] Then, please, do.

[Mathew] I want to start by saying that your tone itself is very disrespectful.

[Jason] Are you talking about now or are you referring to the clip?

[Mathew] I just want to say in general.

[Jason] Well, then I apologize, because I'm definitely not trying to.

[Mathew] The problem is this is an intellectual endeavor. It's supposed to be about the ideas. But you're just dismissing them right out of hand. And you're not even giving a reason. You're just saying these things aren't permissible to say, therefore nobody's supposed to talk about them.

[Jason] Well, we are here talking about them now. But I think I will stand by my earlier statements.

[Mathew] But that's the point. You're not even willing to argue. You're not even willing to put what you think to the test. Everybody's just supposed to accept it as given.

[Jason] Okay then—let's discuss it—where do you want to start?

[Mathew] I don't think you really will.

[Jason] Try me. Let's go.

[Mathew] First of all, you're clearly ignoring the hard evidence that female hypergamy is a thing. It's a fact. All you have to do is look at what's going on in western society and you see it.

[Jason] I disagree.

[Mathew] But you don't present any evidence for that. You just say it and expect everyone to believe it as if it were a fact. But the fact is divorce rates are up. Men are the ones paying alimony that's exorbitant and almost more than they can afford. And if they lose their job or start making less then their former wives have the courts come in and extract that money whichever way they can. And these men are thrown out there into a dating pool that's ever and ever smaller because females are looking for someone who can provide. That's just basic female biology. Men are

committing suicide at record rates. Men commit suicide at more than twenty times the rate of females. Females are automatically granted children by the courts. So men don't have access to their own children. They're in effect thrown away. They're disposable goods. And all the female does is move on. It's like the way a female preying mantis eats the male after mating. And all this is slowly destroying the west's ability to stay a leader in the world. European populations are decreasing. Populations are only being shored up in first-world countries by migration. And the places they're migrating from, those cultures are displacing western European culture. In ten or twenty years what's left isn't going to be a Europe of people who are descended from the men who founded the Enlightenment. And it's all because the men from these invading cultures are willing to understand the biological nature of females.

[Jason] Okay. Let's hold up a bit. I want to reply, and I want to unpack some of this.

[Mathew] I don't think you're really going to reply.

[Jason] Let's just see what happens. So first of all you're saying the increased rate of divorce is proof, is proof of some kind of societal degradation.

[Mathew] Obviously, when you have western society, which is founded upon monogamy and one wife to one man, when you allow divorce to become prevalent, you completely undermine that.

[Jason] Just wait a minute. I want to ask a question.

[Mathew] Okay.

[Jason] Okay, so there shouldn't be divorce, according to you.

[Mathew] That's—

[Jason] I'm just saying what you said.

[Mathew] You're restating it.

[Jason] Well, I'm not going to repeat verbatim.

[Mathew] Don't misrepresent what I'm saying.

[Jason] I'm not trying to. I'm just trying to ask if women should be able to choose whether to get married or not? Either to choose the man they get married to or to not get married at all.

[Mathew] The biological instinct toward reproduction is fundamental.

[Jason] I'm not saying it's not. But if it could be channeled one way, it could be channeled another.

[Mathew] You're completely misrepresenting everything.

[Jason] What am I misrepresenting? You're saying we're channeling nature, that we're modifying nature when we have one man married to one woman.

[Mathew] To create stable societies.

[Jason] Okay. But you're saying these stable societies are stable because men in them have a guaranteed avenue for sexual release. Isn't that what you're saying?

[Mathew] You're twisting things around.

[Jason] Where am I twisting it around?

[Mathew] You're using the same words but completely turning them around.

- [Jason] What words am I twisting around? I'm just trying to say what you're saying.
- [Mathew] When you look at the studies, it shows conclusively that in the last five-thousand years of history those societies with loose sexual morality always fail. They lose their energy. They stop expanding their borders. They stop improving socially.

[Jason] What studies?

- [Mathew] If you just read Sex and Culture by J. D. Unwin, you'll see. He studied thousands of cultures and shows conclusively with numbers that this's the case.
- [Jason] Well, if that was the case, and that sexual repression leads to increased energy and an expanding society, as you say, then why didn't the Shakers take over the world?

[Mathew] You're misrepresenting what I'm saying.

- [Jason] I'm not misrepresenting what you're saying. You're saying that a reduction in sexual expression means society has more energy. So by that standard, men who don't have access to sex should have more energy.
- [Mathew] But that energy gets turned against society itself because there's no reason for them to be invested in the society.
- [Jason] So name a civilization that collapsed because of women's rights. Name an actual civilization that collapsed because women had more freedom.

[Mathew] If you just look at Unwin's book.

[Jason] So name one of them.

[Mathew] All we have to do is look at the western world right now.

- [Jason] Well, the last fifty years isn't exactly a data point. For all you know, women's emancipation may have been the only thing that's kept us afloat this long—or may be the only thing that's going to save us.
- [Mathew] Females fundamentally vote different. Any society that allows females to have control in the decision-making process will lead to a situation where females allow dominant men from other cultures into their society because they find them irresistibly biologically attractive. It's exactly the same as how females can't help but be attracted to serial killers and mass murderers. And females are always going to gravitate toward these men, rather than good decent men. It's in their biological nature.
- [Jason] Well, you know what, Matt, I actually did a sort of impromptu survey, myself. And I won't claim that it's scientific or anything, but I can't find one woman who would rather be in a relationship with Charles Manson than the so-called average decent guy. Now, I'm not saying they're not out there. I think I'm going to say that it's definitely not the norm. And that was Shaun's results too. So I think there might be something to it.

# [Mathew] You—

[Jason] One minute. I need to address one more thing. You talk about women's voting. But when you actually look at the numbers—and thanks to Shaun for his videos on this—but the data actually shows that women's voting patterns over the last forty years have actually stayed pretty much the same. And it's actually men who have moved to the right in terms of their overall voting patterns. So as Shaun points out, it seems the numbers actually show that it's women who are less—

[Finger quotes.]

- [Jason] fickle—not my word—politically.
- [Mathew] Well, is all you can do is parrot someone else's videos?
- [Jason] Well, to be fair, you just seem to be pretty much parroting Black Wombat's videos.
- [Mathew] You may think that by portraying yourself as some kind of sensitive feminist guy that it's going to get you more access to females, but you're just going to find that they will leave you whenever a higher-status male comes along. That's just biology. The sensitive man is fundamentally opposed to what females biologically want.
- [Jason] Well, I'll have to tell my partner that when he gets back. I'm sure he's going to be surprised.

# [Cut forward.]

- [Jason] There doesn't really seem to be much room for same-sex couples in this kind of worldview, does there? I mean, gay men should be reducing the competition for straight men, I guess. Or does that reduce the pool and increase competition? But then lesbians would decrease it, right? Or not?
- [Mathew] Lesbianism is inherently flawed. Anyone can tell you that the sex eventually dries up and that they either move on or go back to men. So it's demonstrated that that is biologically untenable. So it's obviously demonstrable that the one-man-one-female agreement is the force that makes stable society possible.
- [Jason] Well, what if because of entropy every society fundamentally is going to end? I mean, if we're going to talk about numbers and laws of nature, isn't entropy the king that you can't dethrone?

- [Mathew] I think that's a hysterical and nihilistic position. It's chaotic. And because of that it's a fundamentally feminine position. So it's a defeatist position. That this sort of thinking is allowed to be mainstream just goes to show the disastrous degree to which western society has already been feminized. In a strong society, females wouldn't be able to say these things without consequences. And you just have to look what follows with this feminine invasion of everything. Games. Television. All of it.
- [Jason] Well, I'm going to speak as a gamer here, and who's logged probably tens of thousands of hours in EOA being called a fig to prove it. Why should I care who's on the other end of the controller or the keyboard? Maybe it's just that I don't have to have someone to feel inherently superior to.
- [Mathew] Men and females are fundamentally different biologically when it comes to games. Games are about competition. But studies show that females want cooperation, and they even want games that you can't die in.
- [Jason] There can be games for everyone. And specifically, what does it matter if you die or not?

[Mathew] Then there's no consequences.

[Jason] But there's no consequences anyway. I mean, if your character died and your console erased your saves and caught fire and burnt your house down with you in it then, yeah, there might be some consequences. But otherwise it's just back to the next save point. Sorry, but I'm going to proudly display my console bias here. And I mean, let's just be honest about it, a buncha people want to complain about women invading gaming culture, but what culture? We've got a bunch of people who manipulate a capitalistic product in a set of predefined ways. And if the market share's bigger for, say, women, or something, or, say, games where you don't die, then that's

what they're going to do. There isn't a culture, there's a market. And that's what everyone's afraid of realizing.

[Mathew] Communistic thinking is just another form of feminized thinking. And look what happened there.

[Jason] Yes, because Stalin was such a feminist.

[Mathew] Soviets allowed far more females to be scientists and engineers and even astronauts, and look what ultimately happened to them.

[Jason] Well, that depends on how you look at it, Matt. I happen to know something about this too. And I recall an interview where one of those, then elderly, soviet women recalled that it was that the Soviet's couldn't afford to let any advantage go to waste. So maybe it's just a sign of America's decadence that it could afford to suppress half of its population from being able to express themselves intellectually.

[Mathew] The only reason a female ever went to college was to locate higher-status males for marriage. The data shows that abundantly clearly. And then they introduced the pill onto campuses and everything really went out of whack. You can't screw around with female hormones without fundamentally unbalancing the brain. And this has just led to a feedback loop where it's become more and more normalized to continually feminize society. The whole thing spreads out from campuses and across America. They pee it out and it infects the whole water supply. And you can see that now that the American male has become feminized that females are desperately trying to import masculine men from the places where feminism wasn't allowed to exist, like the Middle East. It's a fundamental betrayal. They're setting up an invasion of this country. This's the kind of thing that's treason. This is the kind of thing that they used to execute people for.

- [Jason] Well, hold on. The feminized west seems to have done pretty well invading parts of the Middle East and Africa. Which, I might add, is one reason so many refugees exist.
- [Mathew] But those conflicts are ultimately a failure because of the feminization of western culture. We won't be allowed to win. We're allowing females into the military. This is a fundamental contradiction. And these females are going to get into areas of leadership. Because they can always use their looks and sexuality to get promotions. And then the feminine agenda is going to be running the military. And then there effectively won't be a military.
- [Jason] Well, okay, that's a lot to unpack. But you know what, Matt, every time I hear about someone getting where they are because of their looks I think about Saul being described as young and tall and goodly to look at in The Bible as to one of the reasons he's crowned king of Israel and Judea. Maybe that's just tangential. But maybe not.
- [Mathew] All you have to do is look at the females out protesting to allow for these roving packs of men to overrun our borders.
- [Jason] Well, maybe if we didn't support dictatorships in those countries they wouldn't descend into the state they're in and people wouldn't have to get out of them.
- [Mathew] No, it's because these men have the fundamental energy to pour across borders and begin breeding. So they're going to outproduce us within decades. All you have to do is look at the numbers and you see that western birthrates are falling like mad, in direct correlation to the advent of feminism.
- [Jason] Well, first of all, as Shaun points out in one of his videos, if you remove the baby boom after the second world war, things don't look near as bleak. If anything, that was the

aberration. And secondly, if you look at the birthrates in Islamic countries, they're going down, as well. It's a global trend. And besides, we have to level at some point. Infinite people on a finite planet doesn't work.

[Mathew] This slowing down is just a fundamental proof of the feminization of society and the sapping of vital energies. We could be going into space. We could be expanding across the cosmos. Instead, the only thing that's expanding is the rate of the spread of STDs.

[Jason] Okay, so I want to talk about that. Because I have some questions. So what I want to know is what about STDS that have other ways of getting around? You claim that monogamy would end STDS. Or effectively end them.

[Mathew] It would.

[Jason] So what about someone who is raped? And they catch an STD. What about them? Do they not get to get married then?

[Mathew] The studies actually show that eighty-seven percent of females who are so-called raped achieve orgasm during. This goes to prove what it is that females actually sexually desire.

[Jason] Oh god. Well, first of all, I didn't even say it was a hypothetical woman who'd been raped. Think about that. Or is it only feminized men who can be raped, or something? I don't know. So what're we supposed to do? We gonna go back to victims forced to marry their rapists?

[Mathew] You're just using prejudicial bleep to incite—

[Jason] I'm just trying to find out where you stand.

[Mathew] You're twisting my words and saying things I didn't say.

[Jason] Okay. So let's get it exactly. How is it that you think the world should be? What is it we're all supposed to be doing to create this non-weak civilization?

[Mathew] If western society is going to be saved, or if it even can be saved, it has to bring back the thing that made it strong. It has to bring back patriarchy if it is going to have a chance against the influx of virile men from places like the Middle East.

[Jason] I think that's ridiculous.

[Mathew] If you just read Sex and Culture—

[Jason] Well actually, I did read it. Did you?

[Mathew] What?

[Jason] Did you read it? Because I don't think you did. Or at least if you had watched Shaun—who did. Because if you did and you had read any of his other work you'd know that he argues that the downfall of society is linked directly to inequality among the sexes and that in a perfect society under his system women would be equal to men. What he actually says is that monogamy always fails because of inequality and that patriarchy makes things to easy for men.

[Mathew] Control is what females fundamentally biologically desire. It's been bred into them by evolution and tens of thousands of years of strong masculine leaders and warriors.

[Jason] You know what, I doubt that. Because if violence were the only thing keeping women in check around a guy he'd wake up one morning to find his throat slit. Mutual interests and cooperation trumps having to look over your shoulder every second.

- [Mathew] Either western society realizes that the agreement of this one-female-one-man distribution was what made it work and what allowed it to become what it was at its height, or it will be completely wiped out of history by societies that can actually produce strong and virile men.
- [Jason] You know, I don't know which of us sounds more gay, at this point.
- [Mathew] Society's mythology inherently shows the path. It is females who maintain their virginity for one man who will survive. And men who over-maintain their chastity and fall prey to masturbation end up only being involved in destruction.
- [Jason] First of all, horror movie tropes and the Wicker Man aren't justifications for the way society should be.
- [Mathew] A society that does not control its females won't survive. This is a fundamental scientific and biological fact.
- [Jason] Well, you know what, you always keep talking about the alpha male. But I don't think any of you are even close to that. You know why? Because, as far as I can figure out, the alpha male always stands on the precipice. There's always a threat. And in the end, he always goes down. Even if it's just from old age. But most of the time it doesn't even get that far. But you want to make everything assured. You want to guarantee outcomes. You want the government to redistribute the commodity of women. Sounds an awful lot like feminized communism, or something, to me.
- [Mathew] You can't do anything but try to misrepresent the people who're right, because you've got nothing else. And it's not about the government. It's not about government oppression. It's society that needs to enforce monogamy.
- [Jason] Yeah. That's what we used to call lynchings.

- [Mathew] Yet it's females that studies show react with less empathy to seeing images of BDSM practices.
- [Jason] What the bleep does that have to do with anything?
- [Mathew] It just goes to show what's really going on. And why females are fundamentally biologically attracted to these non-European men.
- [Jason] Is non-European code for something? Because it sounds like a code?
- [Mathew] You can call it racism, but the fact is that, if these border situations continue, it's mathematically and scientifically proven that certain groups are not going to exist in a few hundred years. So what about the diversity you're always talking about? Or is diversity just a code word for something else? Because it sounds like a code.
- [Jason] Isn't saying it can't be saved just an excuse not to have to do anything? So might this be proof that the so-called manly men who are preaching against this are actually the feminized men? So you're not going to just hunker down and emerge into some Utopia where the rules don't apply and you can do whatever you want and nature just happens to force whatever number of sexual partners you want on you.
- [Mathew] Don't think you're going to escape the matriarchy because you can just have sex with other men.

[Cut to a single frame of Jason alone, sitting at his desk.]

[Jason] There was some more here, but I think you can get the idea. Finally, I'd like to thank Matt for agreeing to do this. I don't know what it ultimately did. But... Well that's it. Thank you all very much for tuning in. You can like or subscribe if you want. Though, does that really matter all that much?

[Dog] Ruf.

[A dog's tail comes into frame. The dog sticks its head up from under the desk.]

[Jason] And for those of you interested, yes, Berkeley is back.

[Dog] Ruf.

[He begins to pet the dog.]

[Jason] So, hopefully, we'll see you in the next video. So thanks.

### H | >>|

[A shot of a small area that looks like it's exclusively used for video recording. The background is a plain gray. There are three empty chairs. A woman crosses the frame. Liste emerges from the side of the frame, following her. She motions him towards a chair.]

[Woman] Thank you for coming anyway, Professor.

[Gordon] Well, I was in the building.

[He sits.]

 $[Woman] \ \ It's \ very \ unfortunate \ that \ Doctor \ Pinky \ couldn't \ show \ up.$ 

[Liste] But not surprising.

[Woman] But are you sure you want to do this anyway?

[She shifts around at the edge of the frame. She steps out of the image.]

[Liste] I don't think it's as ridiculous as anything else.

[He looks at the empty chair.]

[Liste] I guess I can have my Eastwood moment.

[Woman] So I guess... Are we? I guess we're already rolling. Okay.

[The woman sits across from him.]

- [Woman] So I guess what I should say is, if Doctor Pinky were here, what do you think you would say? I'm sorry. This seems kind of silly.
- [Liste] Oh no. I think if they can manage this at a Republican National Convention, we can handle ourselves fine.
- [Woman] I just wish we could have found Doctor Jones. Are you sure you haven't heard anything from him? He just seems to have vanished off the face of the Earth.

#### H > >>|

"He goes to learn what it means to be a true American Treasure," Tommy said. He turned to look at me. "What Does It Mean To Be An American Treasure?" He turned to look at the screen again. He turned to look at me. "You know, tonto." He turned his eyes back toward the screen.

#### **₩** || **>>**

[Liste] Well, we had the rescue dogs in his office. But there wasn't anybody under the avalanches.

[Woman] So you're sure you want to do this.

[Liste] Oh, completely. Let's go. If you have the time, that is.

[Woman] So where would you like to start?

[Liste] Let's talk about the keys and locks business. The stuff espoused by Pinky. Not the think tank. Which is really just a kind of warmed over idea. But I think the instructive thing is actually to take it a little further. Or perhaps to make the reading a little more literal and say that this master key

that opens so many locks would be itself locked away just as quickly. So analogies to locks that accept too many keys—while disgusting and disturbing enough in themselves—don't particularly hold up to any scrutiny.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Liste] Of course, somewhere in the exchange, about here, I'd probably have to say something about wondering that if whether, beyond the obvious penetrative image of the key, there might also be some unconscious fixation on the conflation of the keys and locks and genitalia in such a way that it makes you want to think about chastity devices, and the like.

[Woman] I'm sure that would go over well.

[Liste] Well, fortunately or unfortunately, debates are often about keeping your opponents off balance or leading them where you want them to go, more than anything.

[He glances toward the empty chair.]

[Liste] Now of course, the question is whether I'm leading because only one of us is here or whether the doctor is managing to lead even though he isn't here. But either way, I think we'd get into this...well, this very specific non-othering that goes on here, where the penis is not the universal signifier that some want to take it as being taken as. We supposedly have them have this notion that the contents of the body makes the individual, which, to be fair, is the position they kind of claim to hold, but it's not...and the y-chromosome stuff gets bandied about, but that's all scientific sounding bolt-ons, if you will. Justification after the fact. So when you have someone with a certain, say, hip-to-waist ratio and large breasts and a y-chromosome and a penis and they walk into a restroom, the surface of the body in a particular disposition just doesn't sum to totality, and the sign of the penis itself is

not enough to overcome this. It's—the male-function, that is—is a holistic only image. A totalizing image. It's zero sum. They're not going to treat this person like a male. The concept of the feminized man still remains. Whether we want to talk about ancient Rome or Saudi Arabia, or even Gore Vidal, if we want to stay closer to home, but it is not the penetrator who is gay. The gay position is a fundamentally non-masculine position. It is the position of the penetrated. It's sort of like the old joke that a homophobe is someone who's afraid a gay man will treat them like they've treated women. And we can see this from studies of prison populations. Maybe a different take on The Female Man, if you will. Probably not a better one. But, well, most sequels aren't, I guess.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Woman] Or The Passion of New Eve, maybe.

[Liste] Um, yes.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Woman] Do you think men and women are manufactured entities?

[Liste] I think Pinky thinks they are. No matter what he claims. After all, that's what a rite of passage is is a manufacturing process, really. It's...

[He sits there motioning with his hand.]

[Woman] I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt you.

[Liste] Oh, no. You're absolutely fine. That was absolutely correct to bring up. Thank you. No, my problem is I'm just sitting here trying to channel Eastwood.

[They both laugh.]

[Liste] And I am not very good at it, apparently.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Liste] So...and then we'd probably get onto the issue of transgender children. And I would have to point out that maybe the real problem is that it's a problem that by definition we can never supply an actual answer to. We can only do one thing or the other. Even inaction will have the consequences of action. We've seen this same thing with BREXIT. But being hands off doesn't justify what we allow to happen. Classically, this would be known as damned if you do and damned if you don't. And from there we'd probably get onto healthcare. And of course, the question always is why should society subsidize people to do dangerous things? Or whether maybe it should especially incentivize people to experiment. But, really, when it comes right down to it, society either subsidizes the experimental or it subsidizes the maintenance of the status quo. There is no escape from subsidization. Of course, some others might add here, possibly, no more than there is escape from the economy. And there tends to be a general conflation with the idea that, after all, the economy is natural. So these get fitted together into the notion that you can't escape nature. Which implies everything else goes along with that.

[Woman] And do you disagree with that?

[Liste] I think it's a very convenient point for the status quo. And of course, at one time or another, all systems have been called natural. And natural they may be, unless we want to invoke something para-natural or meta-natural in regards to human consciousness. We are just an ape. Is an ape sticking a stick into a termite mound unnatural? But conflating natural with right is generally pointless. Volcanic explosions are, of course, natural. Whether they are right or wrong is immaterial. Of course, this would probably lead us onto how these systems maintain themselves. And there's where I'd probably have

to point out that I think Slavoj's falling a bit behind the times. Western Buddhism isn't, I don't think, the thing anymore. It's stoicism that's coming back. The notion of it's a harsh, terrible world and you should hold no attachment and that's what will carry you through can basically be said to be the primary theme of several of Pinky's and Pinkerton's books. I think Marcus Aurelius is read more now than he might ever have been in history. It just slots so perfectly well into maintaining contemporary capitalism. Or late-stage capitalism, or whatever you want to call it. I sometimes suspect that even those who are against the system are critical in maintaining it. You may have noticed that it wasn't until after the fracking bill had passed in North Carolina that you saw all the anti-fracking signs go up along the sides of the roads. And I have to admit I wouldn't mind spending an hour talking about that one word. But I'll stop myself. And I'm sure from that point on it would descend into a real mess. But we could both walk away with a sense of righteous indignation. And the audience on both sides could have, as well. So people would have probably gotten their moneys worth, which, in the end, is all that really matters.

[Woman] Are you still working around television?

[Liste] Yeah. I'm starting to also include the effects of commercials. Not just children's advertising. But the actual shaping of worldviews and all that. And I'm already suspecting that a history devoid of commercials would be an absolute lie. It would be kind of like trying to talk about slavery but somehow avoiding racial epithets, or mention of skin color, maybe even.

[Woman] You're kind of becoming famous as the man who can predict the unpredictable.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Liste] No. Everybody just looks for justification in retrospect. If it was actually always going to be that way then it was always okay. Relief functions retroactively that way. It's not bound by temporal causality in the usual way.

[Woman] Are you sure you're not a prophet?

[Liste] I neither profit nor prophesy. And television bequeaths nothing but reruns. So all there is is the retrospective. I just pointed out that she was the only candidate with an established TV presence that antedated any kind of explicit or express politics, which is, of course, the ultimate form of politics. But, anyway... So she'd already been in people's homes at least once a week while they had dinner. They had a personal relationship with her. So I just pointed out the modal change that had occurred, though, fulfilled might be the better word. It's just that we're now in the television two point oh era.

[Woman] Not the internet era?

[Liste] Even the internet has just turned into a mechanism for delivering television now. To paraphrase Twain, news of its death has been greatly exaggerated. When a presidential candidate doesn't have to appear on television then you'll know it's dead.

[*Cut*.]

[Woman] What have you been reading recently?

[Liste] I've been rereading Miller's autobiography about his time in UNIT. Mainly because of the hearings. And I've been thinking about something he wrote they'd discussed about Gorsich and the media. And I wonder... I think they might have been right. There's this spread... Um. Conventionally the woman is unable to perform the action of rape. It's a purely penetrative act. But they—have you read it?

[Woman] No.

[Liste] Well, what they sort of devised was that television, more than any other medium, allowed a dissemination of the libidinal re-enactment of the events in such a way that even women could take part in the libidinal aspect. In their focus groups, he claims they noticed this, that women would take on this almost sublime character at the sort of public repetition of the spectacle of the assault re-enacted by the recountings of the witness. And he draws the connection to an ecstasy that borders on something you might find in religious artwork where the libidinal has been encoded into the sublime.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Liste] Just the usual thing, you know. One has to unify one's work and personal life, of course, to survive in the modern environment.

[Woman] So you study television, so what do you do to relax?

[Liste] I watch television, of course. I mean, we want to be excited. We watch television. We want to be soothed. We watch television. We want to be entertained. We watch television. We want background noise. We watch television. We want to get educated. We watch television. We want to get sexually stimulated. We watch television. We want religion. We watch television. You can even watch shows about television on television. You can watch shows railing against television on television.

[He laughs.]

[Woman] So there's no escaping it.

[Liste] Have you ever noticed that they're everywhere? Dentist offices. Airports. Bars. Diners. If you wanted to try and get away

from them you can't. It'd be like a shot from a horror movie. She slams the door. Breathes hard. Then she looks over her shoulder. And there it is in the corner.

[They laugh.]

[Liste] Neoreactionaries often employ the word exit. That is, seeking an exit. They're always, it seems, looking for some way out. An ejection seat. And of course, this will draw associations with Agent Smith's lines about human consciousness constantly interpreting reality as a dream we're trying to wake from. In case you can't tell, I'm coming off a run of undergrad papers.

[Woman] Oh.

[Liste] Somebody... I think it was Slavoj who said something about the best person to watch a movie like the Matrix with was an idiot, or something like that. Who's the idiot's always up for grabs, though. And it's sometimes a shifting identifier.

[Woman] I heard a rumor.

[Liste] Oh?

[Woman] I heard you had consulted with the FBI, when they still existed.

[Liste] What's so surprising about that? They've had television about writers, and who knows what else, teaming up with cops for decades. It's about time they got around to having one pair up with a semiotician.

[She laughs.]

[Woman] Maybe the new copyright bureau will ask for your help.

[Liste] I would highly doubt it. I guess we can say my connection's lost their connection to that sort of environment.

[He shifts in his chair.]

[Woman] So everyone keeps shouting the end of the world. You think so?

[Liste] We keep saying so, so by definition, it's gotta be right sooner or later. Either that or we're going to revise the laws of physics. And luckily, I'm not in physics. So what do I know? Maybe it's completely possible. Then again, maybe we're just the one animal that can imagine what it can't be.

[Woman] So what do you do?

[Liste] No idea.

[Woman] I guess we could always just stop thinking and do something.

[Liste] I guess. Until you start thinking about the idea that doing something's often a cover for believing what we can't admit, or maybe don't know, that we believe.

[Woman] Just don't think.

[Liste] I can stop any time I want.

[They laugh.]

[Woman] Well, thank you for coming around. I'm sorry the debate didn't happen.

[Liste] Ah, it's no trouble. It's like I said. I was in the building anyway. Actually, I'm probably going to go down and get something to eat. Unless you want to go on a little more.

[Woman] Oh, no, there's no use. I'll probably actually come with you.

[Liste rises. The woman moves just in and out of the right side of the frame. Liste looks over at the chair that's been empty all this time.]

[Liste] You think we should invite him to come with us?

[They both laugh as he walks off frame. The image of empty chairs holds a couple of seconds. Then a couple seconds of black.]

## H4 || **>>**

[A mid-twenties guy with a two-or-three-day unshaven face looks into a webcam. Behind him is an average bedroom.]

[Guy] So I don't have a lot of time for this video. But there are a few things I want to go over real quick. These mainly concern a series of sermons that you can find under the title of Man's Place In Heaven And On Earth. Which I'm going to put links to down below. I'll also be putting links below for any of the other references that I use. And like I say, this video will have to be a little short, so I'm going to get right into it.

[Cut to a clip of a man standing behind a transparent rostrum.]

[Preacher] And there are many other errors out there, as well. But you will say but, Preacher, if there are so many errors, if there are so many distortions of the righteous word of God, Preacher, how can it be true? You will say, Preacher, shouldn't truth shine through? And that's exactly what it does. That's exactly what it does. Let me share this with you. There are a people out there in the deserts of Iraq and Iran who, though they have long known the three-part existence of God, they worship the Devil. They worship the angel that would not bow down before man as God commanded. Whom they call Azazel.

[Cut to guy in bedroom.]

[Guy] Okay, so this is basically wrong in about every way. He seems to be talking about the Yazidis. Or at least that's what I believe he's talking about, as he's never more specific than this. But since he does seem to be talking about the Yazidis, I have to point out that in fact they do not worship the devil. Or even Azazel. Yes, there was an angel named Azazel who is sent to hell. But some people confuse him with the angel known as Tawûsê Melek. Also known as the Peacock Angel. But in fact, it is Tawûsê Melek who is the leader of the archangels. The confusion seems to come about because in the tradition God asks the angels to bow before Adam. But this is actually a test to see if they will bow before anything other than the one thing in the universe that is worthy for them to bow to, and that is God. However, I should mention the video is somewhat correct here, as the Yazidi religion does see God as a divine triad. But that is not necessarily analogous to the Christian trinity. Let's go on.

[Cut to a clip of a man standing behind a transparent rostrum.]

[Preacher] They follow a book of Revelations.

[Cut to guy in bedroom.]

[Guy] This is totally a problem with English. The book he is referring to is the Kitêba Cilwe, which can be translated to Book of Revelation. But this bears no relation to the book of Revelations as found in the Bible.

[Cut to a clip of a man standing behind a transparent rostrum.]

[Preacher] They recognize Jesus.

[Cut to guy in bedroom.]

[Guy] Okay, this is somewhat true. Yazidis do regard Jesus, as well as the son-in-law of Muhammad Ali ibn Abi Talib, along with the three leaders of the three branches of the Yazidi faith, all of them are representations of the godhead that have been born into physical human bodies. This goes along with the central notion of reincarnation that's present in the Yazidi religion and is something that even God is subject to. However, again, this is very different from the Christian tradition of Christ.

[Cut to a clip of a man standing behind a transparent rostrum.]

[Preacher] And they realize that Adam and Eve were first created by God and set down in The Garden. But here is where the Darkness begins to obscure the Light. Rather than come together to produce children, what these people say they did was that they placed their fluids, that is, their reproductive fluids, in clay jars and sealed them. And then they left them. And after a month, they returned. And what do they say they found? In Eve's jar were snakes and maggots and vermin. But in Adam's jar were two perfect children. And then what happens? An angel of the Lord comes down and creates on Adam nipples so that he may nurse the two children. And it is from these children that these people claim to descend. Of course, we can see the problem here. They want to realize Adam's importance to God. But really, if this is the case, why create Eve at all? After all, is her function not to have the feminine attributes? Is her function not to provide from her own body the things required to sustain children? And you will say, Preacher, there doesn't seem something right about this. And you would be right. For in misunderstanding why Eve was necessary they then have to posit some way in which Adam could do this on his own, and the only way that this could be done is if Adam is then given some feminine attribute. And of course, this, by definition, detracts from his malehood.

[Cut to guy in bedroom.]

[Guy] Okay. Wow. Okay. For the moment... Trying to avoid the theological implications he's talking about. This is further proof that makes me think he's actually talking about the Yazidis, or some version of it. As far as it goes, this is an okay recounting of the Yazidi origin story where they claim descent from Adam only, and independent of Eve. And the jars and stuff, that's all consistent. If you want to know more about that, I'm going to link a video from Professor Assad about the history of the Yazidi, below, if you want to go into more detail.

[He turns in his chair. He turns to face the camera.]

[Guy] Okay, I told you this would have to be short this week. I'm sorry about that. But when I get back, I hope to do at least a couple more longer videos on this topic. I want to continue on this topic. And after that, hopefully, we'll begin getting into and unpacking some of the other sermons in this series. I just think it's good that we have a basis for where other religions are being referenced so that we can have an idea—

[He turns in his chair. He turns to face the camera.]

[Guy] Thank you all. And I hope to make a second one of these videos very soon. So if you like this or think it's interesting, please click on the subscribe button below to be notified when new videos come out. Thanks.

#### He II bb

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of a man leaning forward against a transparent rostrum and gripping the sides with both hands.]

[Preacher] And people will say, Preacher, aren't you tired of all these people talking about what The Bible says in Greek or Latin or Hebrew, or whatever? And I will tell them I don't have to be tired of it. And that you don't have to be tired of it either.

[He removes one hand from the rostrum. He raises the book laid there.]

[Preacher] All I need is the King James Bible. Everything is in here.

This is the inspired word of God. There is nothing that I need to know that can't be found given in this book.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### **₩ > >**

Tommy yawned. "That, of course, sounds profound," he said. "Till you realize that basically boils down to saying that all that is knowable is that which is within my horizon of understanding." He scratched his side with his free hand. He removed his chin from his palm. He scratched below his nose. He returned his chin to his palm.

# Space Shuttle Design As It Relates To Human Female Genitalia

"Shhhhhhh," Tommy said. "Be very, very quiet." He held up his index finger. He glanced around with just his eyeballs. "Unlike Vietnam vets," he said, "it was astronauts that deserved to be spit upon before they left and departed." He returned his fingertip to his cheek.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[A guy stands in front of a blanket hung on a wall. He stands behind a small podium.]

[Guy] First, Nazism rose up against capitalism. Then it was invaded by capitalism. And then it merely became yet another variant of—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] capitalism. The profit motive becomes above all. Even the race. Even the Fatherland. The free market is suppressed. For as Adam Smith points out, the worship of the rich is the root

of all evil, and it should be almost impossible to become rich in a truly free market. And capital must seek its advantage in order to accumulate. For without accumulation of capital, there is no capitalist—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] class. The apocalyptic core of Christianity comes at odds with the Thousand Year Reich. Or is it merely the fulfillment of paradise on Earth? No matter if Hitler was against Christianity, he used it. And as much as change was attempted, the universal German Everyman could see no incompatibility between Nazism and Christianity. But—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] the apocalyptic core of Christianity is the apocalyptic core of capital. Constant revolution. Always on the brink of disaster. Capital, the true eternal apocalyptic cult. The universal church. The southern plantation owners—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] tried to pretend themselves a revitalized landed gentry of the feudal days of yore, rather than a species of capitalism, and were defeated by industrial capitalism. The spectre of the Jew—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] is the spectre of capital diverted into physical being. As Kierkegaard said, when you have a Christian nation, by definition, no one within it is Christian. And so if all are Nazis—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] then no one is a Nazi. We must have a plan. Doctors must want to be doctors. Lawyers must want to be lawyers. Wages

do not equal profit. For what does it profit a man if he should loose his soul in the bargain? Nazism is not a—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] cartoon. It has never been a cartoon. To say anything else is to diminish it. But Nazism failed. In the game of capitalism versus capitalism, only one capitalism can occupy the throne. Neo-Nazism is—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] insufficient. We require something new. We require a Nouveau Nazism. We require a Nouveau Nazi. We require a Nazism that cannot be diverted into accepting the Jew as a scapegoat. We require a Nazism that recognizes class and gender constructs as properties of the—

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium.]

[Guy] very invention of the infection of capital itself. We require a Nazism of non-profit. We require a Nazism of fairness. We require a new foundation of Nazism. We require a Nazism. We require the Nouveau. We require a cartoon. Because if capital is a reality, then we require a non-reality.

[He shifts a sheet of paper on the podium. He pauses a moment. He looks up. He raises his arm.]

[Guy] Seig Heil.

#### 

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Have Christians killed more Christians during the course of history than have been killed by pagans or the members of other religions?

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Orgone.]

[Orgone] Why can't the leftist liberals admit this country was founded by Christians for Christians and to protect Christians and to make a place in the world safe for Christianity and Christmas?

[Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Which Christianity?

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### H | >>|

[An early thirties man in a plaid shirt. He sits at a desk with a large microphone in front of him. A patterned background is behind him. The show is printed on the background. He sits petting a dog, which has stuck its head up over the edge of the desk.]

[Jason] Okay. Since everyone was so interested, I'm putting up this video of the outtakes from the previous discussion I had with Matt from Mathew In The Box. It's kind of rough, so keep that in mind.

[He looks down.]

[Jason] Isn't that right, Berkeley?

[Dog] Ruf.

[He looks up.]

[Jason] Yap.

[Cut to an image divided into two frames. Jason is in one frame. Matt is in the other.]

[Jason] Have you ever watched any Žižek?

- [Mathew] It doesn't matter how many postmodern communists you bring up.
- [Jason] Well you might, because he somewhat agrees with you that feminism is wrong about the patriarchy still existing. It's just that it has been subsumed by capitalist relations.
- [Mathew] To communists, capitalism is the problem with everything. It's their hammer. And everything else is a nail. So that proves exactly nothing.
- [Jason] Well, maybe you should think about the fact that if it's capitalism that dissolved the patriarchy, and you want to bring it back, you're going to have to get rid of capitalism, because otherwise it's just going to continue to act like a universal acid dissolving all social relations.
- [Mathew] That's just misdirection. Capitalism isn't the problem. Feminism is.

[*Cut*.]

- [Mathew] You have these roving packs of men flooding over borders—
- [Jason] And if you bothered to look at the actual sources of the data you quote, you'd see that the refugee-gender balance from Syria is actually almost exactly fifty-fifty. So there are just as many women flooding across the borders.
- [Mathew] All you have to do is look at the pictures of the people who are breaking through these fences and you'll see they're predominantly twenty-something men.
- [Jason] What images?
- [Mathew] The ones you can see everywhere. All you have to do is watch the news.

[Jason] Actually, I'm looking at some of those pictures right now. And yeah, I see some guys in there. And I see a woman. And some kids. And a woman holding a kid.

[Mathew] Just because pro-female forces only put up those one or two images over and over to get everybody on their side with sympathy.

[Jason] So you're saying we shouldn't have sympathy?

[Mathew] These people are from completely different cultures. They're not coming to these countries to assimilate. Some of them don't even know how to use an indoor toilet. Or a toilet at all, for that matter.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] Explain how the equitable redistribution of women isn't communism?

[Mathew] Because it's not. It's a social agreement among members of society to construct a society that can actually function.

[*Cut.*]

[Jason] So how do you not then end up with a stratified society?

[Mathew] Some people will end up on the bottom, but they will just have to rise. If there isn't an incentive, everyone will stay at the bottom where they can get handouts for doing nothing.

[Jason] But aren't you just handing out wives?

[Mathew] You're misrepresenting.

[Jason] How am I misrepresenting?

- [Mathew] There would still be competition for mates. It's just that they would be taken off the market after marriage.
- [Jason] Well, if we want to let the market work it out, shouldn't harems be a solution, if that's what the market can support? If certain men can afford it, isn't that what the market says is moral?
- [Mathew] Because that leads to an inherently unstable society. You're just repeating the same things over and over, and you're not listening, just like everybody else.
- [Jason] Well, are the markets the problem or the solution?
- [Mathew] Societies have to be governed by rules.
- [Jason] So, to the victor go the spoils. But if women mess everything up they shouldn't be allowed to choose their mates in the first place, should they? Even if they're only allotted one, doesn't that still run the risk of them screwing up society, according to you?
- [Mathew] Females are incompatible with the needs of a functioning society. As I keep explaining. And as you keep ignoring.
- [Jason] So we're back to a market. It's just that the women are the products. So can we buy and sell women futures? Or I'm sure you'd call it female futures, or something. We could pay the fathers for the projected value of their daughters before they even hit puberty. And that way it'd be the guy on Wall Street taking the risk, and the father, like the farmer, would get paid regardless. So it'd be like an insurance policy.
- [Mathew] You're just making bleep up to sound hysterical and play upon emotions.
- [Jason] Humans usually have emotions. Not everybody takes Spock as a role model.

[*Cut*.]

[Mathew] I don't worry about individuals. It's governments that oppress people.

[Jason] Well, who do you think's going to enforce all this?

[Mathew] As I keep telling you, and you keep ignoring, it's society's role to enforce rules of social behavior.

[Jason] Name me a social rule.

[Mathew] What?

[Jason] Name a rule enforced by social consensus.

[Mathew] There were plenty.

[Jason] So name one.

[Mathew] Cheating.

[Jason] On spouses?

[Mathew] Yes.

[Jason] Against state laws. And still against military law. Also, laws against sodomy and pre-marital sex.

[Mathew] It was the village's responsibility to stone adulterers. Not the authorities.

[Jason] So now the community can kill people?

[Mathew] That's not what I'm saying.

[Jason] So what *are* they not allowed to do to enforce this social law? And who decides on the contents of this law?

[Mathew] Communities.

[Jason] Oh, well, just all of them together. A vote. That could never end up subject to relativism.

[Mathew] Humans have a common core of what makes society function. It's in our genes and our stories.

[Jason] Then everyone should be the same and there shouldn't be any need to enforce anything because that's just the way it should be. Animals that're actually genetically wired for monogamy don't have to worry about anything else because by definition they're not wired for the possibility of anything else.

[Mathew] Humans aren't animals.

[Jason] Your entire argument rests on that humans are animals. It's a genetic argument about ape social structure. And the problem with that is it all comes down to, if it's natural, we shouldn't have to think about doing it or not doing it. In fact, we might not even be able to think about not doing it. And on top of that, there might not even be one singular human genetic psyche. But you want to say there is. And at the same time you want to say that there are different groups that can't integrate. And if it's not natural, you have to be arguing for an aberration, to run against nature. You can't say both things at the same time.

[Mathew] You're just twisting around what I say.

[*Cut*.]

[Mathew] There's no such thing as gays in nature.

[Jason] Gay penguins, Matt. Gay penguins.

[Mathew] That's just a mounting display of dominance.

[Jason] Gay sheep mate for life.

[Mathew] That's just a mounting display of dominance.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] Peaceful ethnic cleansing. Do you not even imagine for a moment the contradiction in those terms?

[Mathew] There isn't a contradiction. There's no reason it has to be violent. People naturally want to pack with their own tribe. All you have to do is look at TV to realize that.

[Jason] And how is that?

[Mathew] All sitcoms are racially segregated in just the way that liberal society says that they abhor.

[Jason] Come on.

[Mathew] People just can't admit what it is they really want. The truth is blacks don't want whites in their space any more than the reverse.

[Jason] For someone who talks about history, you sure don't pay much attention to it.

[Mathew] You—

[Jason] Because if you did you'd know this was already tried before. This was what the Nazis first tried to do. And it completely failed. There was a reason the Holocaust was called the Final Solution and not the first solution.

[Mathew] Conflating everything with the Holocaust doesn't make it true. Just look at Israel. They understand the importance of borders and the compositions of people that define them.

- [Jason] And a Jewish state for only Jews was the Nazis first solution to the supposed problem. Everyone was going to have their own little ethno-state.
- [Mathew] Even if that's true, it obviously wasn't allowed to be implemented by the powers that be. If it had—
- [Jason] The if it had always leads to a blood bath because obviously not everyone wants to stay in the same place. And not everybody cares so much what their neighbor's skin color is.

[Mathew] Then those people are wrong.

[*Cut*.]

- [Jason] If older women are inherently non-sexual then why does menopause even have to evolve, huh? Why does nature have to seemingly work so hard to do something that according to you should be over with when a woman's thirty.
- [Mathew] There is a certain viable reproductive time that any female must adhere to. *That's just biology*.

[*Cut*.]

- [Jason] Well, if Nazi Germany was socialist then it failed. And if it was capitalist it failed. So pick one.
- [Mathew] Partial systems always fail. The whole is never integrated. So one weak piece breaks the whole chain.
- [Jason] So you're saying they were both at the same time? Neither one of those can mix.
- [Mathew] Isn't that what the so-called Social Democrats or Democratic Socialists want? Capitalism, but fixed up with socialism? So you're just admitting your own position can't work.

[*Cut*.]

- [Mathew] The whole thing is just to make everyone feel guilty about something they didn't even do. People aren't keeping slaves now, and this was over a hundred-fifty years ago.
- [Jason] It's not about guilt. And I think using *mea culpa* is wrong. It's not about guilt. In the sense of Greek tragedy, it's about being polluted but not being guilty.
- [Mathew] That's the same thing.
- [Jason] No, it's not. They're entirely separate. It's about responsibility. We may not have done it, but we inherited the estate, and it's our responsibility to settle out the bills.

[*Cut*.]

- [Mathew] Without clothes, we would behave like animals. No one would have any control of themselves. That's why women should keep themselves covered.
- [Jason] Isn't that exactly the argument they give in the Middle East? That men can't control themselves? So they're just gonna throw themselves on a woman if they hear high heels?
- [Mathew] People are unleashing forces of male sexual energy that are almost impossible to control if not properly managed.
- [Jason] Then the men themselves should manage them.
- [Mathew] That's the whole point of civilization. To harness man's energies and use them productively.
- [Jason] So everybody should just be allotted wives and sex should be a carrot on a stick to get everybody to do the right thing.

[Mathew] Military men have to be given some booty for risking their lives. That's the way it's always been.

[Jason] Well, the way it's alway's been sucks.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] Well then if we take conservatism as the goal of the preservation of society as it exists in the moment then conservatism originates identity politics.

[Mathew] Identity politics is a fundamentally leftist position designed to undermine—

[Jason] That has a landed aristocracy telling poor whites to be glad they're white rather than black or Indian. So maybe we should just get back to some classical anti-classism.

[Mathew] Which is just jealousy because certain people have managed to scrape something together on their own.

[Jason] On there own and with a few hundred slaves.

[Mathew] They had to earn the money to buy those slaves in the first place.

[Jason] Unless they inherited them.

[Mathew] People have a right to buildup wealth. It's the entire point of reproduction.

[Jason] You're talking about people.

[Mathew] None of it was as bad as anyone says. It's just made up to give certain people power. The Irish were treated bad too. They weren't even treated as white until blacks started coming north after the Civil War.

[Jason] That's not true. And they were told that by rich people who said look at least you're not black and look out that black guy might be going to take your job.

[Mathew] The—

[Jason] And the simple fact is that if conservatism is the project to preserve society as it exists then it always fails because society keeps changing, and if stopping it actually worked we'd still be speaking Sumerian.

[Mathew] Well, by that, leftism doesn't work either because doesn't your own guy that you keep quoting say that fascism comes outa failed leftist projects, or something. So that fails too.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] That's—

[Mathew] All you have to do is look at studies of the biology of the fly. There's almost no distinction between death from the absence of food and sexual starvation.

[Jason] Have you watched the clip with Professor Liste about this?

[Mathew] It doesn't matter how many postmodern academics you—

[Jason] You won't even listen when it's pointed out that the correct term—

[Mathew] So long as the destruction of the notion of manhood continues the resuscitation of it is going to express itself through—

[Jason] Notions of manhood aren't going to be brought back by going into shopping malls with a semi-automatic rifle to try and—

[Mathew] The hungry wolf is going to hunt—that's—

[Jason] to try and realize some notion of male warrior-class virility—which is the very disposability you're advocating is why men are the actual oppressed ones.

[*Cut*.]

[Mathew] Is it even a rape if you're given a substance that causes you to do what you want to do?

[Jason] Of course it is.

[Mathew] It's the same chemical reaction that would happen if the guy bought the female dinner, or brought her roses, or showed her his car, or whatever.

[Jason] That's not the same as injecting someone with something, or whatever.

[Mathew] But if the brain's just chemicals then it's just chemicals and different chemicals doesn't mean anything because it's just going to be different chemicals later anyway. And what if it's the same chemicals? You wouldn't even know. And it'd be the same thing. It'd be the same thing.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] So you can live however you want so long as it's within the given parameters.

[Mathew] That's just what society is.

[*Cut.*]

[Mathew] The only reason you can say any of that over the internet right now is because of the wealth generated by a society that observed exactly that.

[Jason] And the only reason you can vote is because people fought to get rid of the laws that said you had to own x amount of land to be able to.

[*Cut*.]

[Mathew] All you end up with then is perversion and incest. Just like that family that's on the run.

[Jason] They're not even related. They just play a family on TV.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] What about the ancient Greeks? For them, virtue is knowing when to lie. Lying and stealing from a god and getting away with it is a virtuous thing. Noah and his family are virtuous men, and it's virtuous to repopulate the world by having their grandchildren intermarry. Lot was supposed to be virtuous, or at least decent, and decent there meant throwing your daughters out to be raped by the mob so that the male guests didn't get harmed. Virtues and morality aren't all one big thing. So which is it? Are you against cultural relativity, or not?

[Mathew] It's not about right and wrong. It's about the struggle for survival.

[Jason] That's exactly what Hitler said in Mein Kampf.

[*Cut*.]

[Mathew] All you have to do is look at the Hero's Journey. It's the basic mythic archetype that all humans share.

[Jason] Which is just a myth about mythology from the Cold War era that like all other myth functions only to prop up the status quo.

[Mathew] Myth is what makes humans distinct as a species.

[*Cut*.]

[Jason] So you don't think there's anything derogatory about an acronym that means that ho over there?

[Mathew] It's only a statement of fact. That can't be an insult.

[*Cut*.]

[Mathew] Feminine energy is supposed to be used toward reproduction. So when you cut that off or redirect it with birth control, all it does is make them crazy.

[Jason] What's your excuse?

[*Cut.*]

[Mathew] Even feminism is phallocentric. They're obsessed about complaining about rockets because they're penis-shaped. News flash—that's just aerodynamics and science. There's a reason a rocket ain't shaped like a bucket.

[Jason] Well, you know what, if you look at the profile of the space shuttle from the bottom doesn't it look like a set of labia minora or labia majora?

[Mathew] Yeah, and look what happened to it.

[Cut to a shot of Jason sitting at a desk and petting a dog.]

[Jason] So I'm not going to say some of this are my proudest moments. But you all wanted to see it. So here it is. Or was. I'd also like to announce that I—

[Dog] Ruf.

[Jason] We have decided to take a little time off. We're not deleting this channel. But we're going to step back and take a break for a while and do some reorientating. So thank all of you out there who have been watching. And we'll see what happens.

[Dog] Ruf.

**H > >>** 

# Death By A Thousand Salvations

Everything had slowly darkened, and as it had, the Macbook screens had automatically accounted for that and had dimmed, but both processes were so gradual that suddenly you looked up and everything'd changed. I'd looked up because Tommy'd stood. He stood there looking beyond any point conceivable in the fading light. He turned. He turned again. He walked off toward another freelancer. Those who would do so hadn't yet retreated into the tents. As was put down, they'd never move when you looked at them. As was put down, except for their hands and fingers. These blurred in the semidarkness as they danced over Macbook keyboards or stroked trackpads, ghost-like, the seeming image of multiple universes overlaid. Tommy stopped beside a freelancer. He looked down at the screen. He looked up. He walked back acenter the trampled way between tents.

"Appears there have been an explosion to be," he said. "Boom."
He held out his arms. He raised them over his head. "Very Big."
"Where?" Tammy said.

He shrugged. "Somewhere?" He lowered his arms. "Nowhere?" Tammy lifted a fragment of a hull from the seedpod of some tree. She tossed it. It glanced off his bicep.

Tommy turned. He looked round. Post-twilight had come. Screenlight illuminated the outside surfaces of tents. One or two freelancers had moved inside. It wasn't yet dark enough for screenlight to make an obvious lantern of their tents. "We await the invisible hand of the algorithm," Tommy said. "Do not fear." He turned. "It shall have gone toward Xtreemity." He turned. "And beyond through the back door to the beyond the beyond."

Tammy rose. She didn't bother to brush herself off. Bits of dried and crumpled leaves clung to the backs of her thighs.

"Trust in the algorithm," Tommy said. He stepped across the way, toward a different freelancer. He turned. He sat beside him. He pulled his legs into position. Tammy seated herself on the opposite side.

#### 

[Cathex] So the question is, why would anyone need to take their clothes off in a garage? Why would you need to do that? What's even up with that? Why do you need to do that when you're not in the shower?

[Nickelodeon] Of course, they used to wear long johns even when they did that. You can see it in all the movies. And it used to be scandalous to do something like that. Which just goes to show how far we've fallen.

[Cathex Laughs.]

[Cathex] Well, thanks for coming on, Audi.

[Nickelodeon] It was my pleasure.

[The guest frame disappears. The shot of the main news desk returns to full size.]

[Cathex] Coming up. We'll have more on why some Millennial women just have to let it hang out everywhere. Live updates coming up from the scene. Coming up.

#### H4 || >>|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of a man.]

[Hartnette] Fans of Miss Dunwitch reacted to the news with a sense of shock and sadness that the exhibit would no longer be available. In light of these recent events, organizers have

pledged to offer a full refund for all tickets, and they ask that anyone with any knowledge of the whereabouts of the former author's telepresence device to please come forward. A reward is currently being offered for its safe return. For more, you can visit our website.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

### H || >>|

[Chrome-textured parts come together in the center of the screen to form the show's name and logo: vs.]

[Voice-over] Versus. The only place you can see the debates you wish would happen.

[The logo shatters. Pieces fly off in all directions.]

[Voice-over] By popular request, this matchup was brought to you by all those lucky followers on Patreon who so kindly set aside a little money each month. So if you want to see the extended version of this debate, head on over to Patreon, where you can find the members only section.

[\*Ding\* \*Ding\*]

[Voice-over] In this corner we have the one, the only, the regional director of the North Carolina ACLC herself— Massachusetts Hysteria.

[Massachusetts Hysteria is in the left frame.]

[Voice-over] Aaaaaaaand in this corner—making her triumphant return once again—fourteen-time AVN award winner—Darr G. Ling T..

[Darr G. Ling T. is in the right frame.]

[Voice-over] And the quarter says...

[A 3D-rendered coin falls slowly down between both frames. It pauses in the middle. It continues to whirl. It stops.]

[Voice-over] Heads. And you know what that means.

[Flames race around the frame containing Darr G. Ling T.. The frame shakes.]

[Voice-over] Ling T. goes first.

[The flames die down.]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Everybody's supposed to eventually get married. That's the whole thing. That's the whole point. It has to exist for a reason. Otherwise it wouldn't have hung around this long. It's what perpetuates society. And if society collapses, what's left? And if everybody isn't contributing at least something, what're they doing? They're just freeloading on everybody else.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] So marriage should be about one man and one woman. It's all a legal arrangement for perpetuating society. Property rights and inheritance and all that. And reproducing. That's why it exists. So gay or whatever, it doesn't matter. Just one man one woman. It's about a legal framework, not love or sex. It's an evolved social structure. People should be allowed to have sex with whoever they want whenever they want. So long as it's not illegal. But only one man should marry one woman. Outside of the legal function, no one needs to get married. So the government shouldn't intrude on people's sex lives. But that's the whole point of marriage.

[Darr G. Ling T.] Without property rights, we have nothing. Nothing. Everything is predicated on that.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] But the whole point is for it to be out in the open. That's what public records are all about. And that's why you can't have the Enlightenment without porn. You can't have these desert religions trying to hide everything and cover it all up and keep it secret. It should be out in the open. Everybody should be able to see it. Otherwise you've got these secret societies and the like—and how do you know what they're doing in secret? You don't. That's the whole point, right there. Right there, that's the whole point. And nobody can consent if things have to be kept secret.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] You can't have property rights if it isn't publicly known what someone owns. Otherwise someone could just say they owned everything. Which would just be the same as everybody being able to own nothing.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] So if the gun nuts can walk into the capital or down the street with their things hanging out—well, people should be able to with their bodies—because that's just property rights—if you own yourself you have to be able to display your property how you want—that's just Enlightenment values. That's just free speech.

[Darr G. Ling T.] And if people can't consent to sign their property over, then they really didn't own anything in the first place. Just like in Soviet Russia.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] If the ownership of goods and services can't be transferred, how else are people supposed to be able to work? That's just back to feudalism, where you have to produce everything in your little fiefdom.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Without property rights, we have nothing. Nothing. Everything is predicated on that.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Hysteria] Do we have any actual method for deriving such consent is possible or is it merely that we observe that the members engaged in such are of a subset of the species homo sapiens which has defined such legalese?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] How do we know two people really agree on any contract freely?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Are we judging who is allowed to enter into such contracts as marriage purely on an ontological basis? Do we judge intelligence itself on such a basis?

[The frame containing Hysteria freezes.]

[Darr G. Ling T.] If you look at it, really look at it, desert religions are literally the greatest threat that the Enlightened western world has ever faced in the whole history of the planet. It's even worse than tribalism. They're all straight out of the Dark Ages. That's where they come from. They worship the Dark Ages. They worship darkness and ignorance that's why their god originally came from a storm god-nothing but dark clouds hiding the sun. And that's what they want to go back to. They all want to drag us back to a time before capitalism even existed. They want to wipe out all progress. Convert or die—there is no modernism. But there's really only die. Because how're you supposed to even go backwards? It's not like you've got a time machine, or something. You can't go backwards. You can't just throw everything away. That's just not how it works. Knowledge, technology, it all accretes, it's all additive. It isn't subtraction. That's why the ending of Battlestar Galactica was so stupid.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] They want to impose holy law on everybody and kill gays and make abortions illegal and cut up little kid's bits and have everything changed to be in line with their holy book—or else—and marry children and make rape legal and destroy capitalism and free speech and the free market and science and technology and math and all of it.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] What would a free market actually look like?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Would it be possible for anyone to become rich in one?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Are they an Utopian concept?

[The frame containing Hysteria freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Government should be as small as possible—and then maybe smaller. Otherwise it's just too big to know what's going on in it. If it's too big, you can't keep track of the bad shit they're doing. So it's all secret—secret through size. It's like being obese. It's unhealthy. Adam Smith was right. There shouldn't be any taxes. Federal government money should come from import duties and tariffs, the way they used to. There shouldn't be any income tax. People have a right to keep the money they earn with their property not the government. The government doesn't make money. More free money in free markets will mean more economic growth. And the freer the market is the more room it has to grow in. Otherwise it's like a goldfish in a little bowl. The freer people are, the more money they have the opportunity to make. The more money they make, the more money there will be. Markets make money. Governments don't. We've proved this. This's a fact. Regulation stops economic growth, and it's used as a tool by big business to crush smaller businesses. They're only supposed to be there to protect property rights, because those are the only real rights. You can't protect imaginary things. Adam Smith was right.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Does money exist or have a utility outside of a socially conceived framework?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] How much of what we've been told or has been said or written about Adam Smith has any basis in anything that he wrote or said?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] How many people have actually read it?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Have those who have been his greatest advocates in public been the ones that used the power of his name to re-enforce a system that he violently attacked through the same work which they cite in such defensive maneuvers?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Who benefits from tariffs?

[The frame containing Hysteria freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Global warming isn't something we have to worry about. It's a good thing. It's great. And the evidence shows the Earth used to be hotter. It's just cycling back to the way it used to be. There're trees under the melting glaciers. That's just a fact.

This's all just part of coming out of the last ice age. It's like getting out of school at the start of summer. And the end of the last ice age is what allowed human beings to dominate the planet the way we have, in the first place. It's the whole reason we're where we're at now. It's just like summer and winter, only bigger, on a planetary scale. It's like on Game of Thrones.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] It's just like Game of Thrones, except science and technology's going to allow us to extend summer forever. So we don't ever have to worry about winter coming. So it'll be a real Door Into Summer.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] We control the temperature in our houses. So why not everywhere? Isn't that the whole point? Isn't that what science and technology is for?

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] It's all about science and global dimming and bringing back the Dark Ages. That's literally what it's about. And if we put stuff up in the air to block the sun and cool the planet down, we risk bringing the ice age and the Dark Ages back, and that's exactly what they want. They just can't do it themselves, so they have to trick us into doing it. It's a whole plot. That's the only way they're going to be able to make the Middle East or the South livable.

[Darr G. Ling T.] They're literally trying to freeze hell over.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] How capable are soils in newly thawed areas of supporting the volume of crops necessary to sustain human civilization as it now exists if current areas of food production are rendered ineffective?

[The frame containing Hysteria freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] No, the Constitution says freedom of religion, not freedom from religion. You have to pick one. That's the First Amendment. You can't be nothing. Even an atheist isn't nothing. Unbelief can't exist. You can say the word, but it doesn't exist. The only way you can not think about something is if you don't know it exists. And that's just called ignorance. And if you do know about it, you either believe it is or you don't. It'd be completely stupid for the Constitution to explicitly allow you to do something that was impossible. That would just be, like, completely pointless. A completely pointless waist of paper.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Do you have any idea how much something like that would've cost back then?

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] It's like, what're you doing that you can't have out there? Huh? That's just cultish, or something.

Cults are all about hiding things. That's what the name means. That's the exact opposite of Enlightenment, shining light. And America was founded to be a light to the world. So it's like in the Constitution. Everything's supposed to be out there in the open. It's not supposed to be about hiding things. That's the whole reason patents and intellectual property are in the Constitution, to get things out in the open, so everything isn't trade secrets. That's what the Constitution says. Otherwise you'll just have people turning over their thinking to these charismatic leaders who tell them they'd better do exactly what they say or they're going to hell or the world's going to end, and giving them money, and trying to use their influence to insinuate their way into politics to get control of the country and make everything about secret, backroom deals. And that's not what the Founding Fathers would've wanted.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] That's what you get with socialism. You get all these cults of personality where just this one big guy is going to fix everything and is going to just revolutionize the world.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Look, so the influence of Enlightenment values on these United States is just a fact.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] But not desert-religion values. No matter what they say. There's a million different versions of that. How can you have one country founded on a million different versions of something? And none of them agree.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] It's all about the Enlightenment. That's what brought us out of the Little Ice Age. It's about shining light. It's about light versus dark. It's the dark side versus the light side of The Force. It's about intellectual property that's out there in the public versus cults hiding things and keeping them secret. What've you got to hide? If cultists and secret societies had been allowed to run America, the industrial revolution wouldn't even have happened. That's why science beat alchemy. Scientists shared—they didn't hoard knowledge. Those're just facts. And you can't argue with a fact. A fact doesn't care how it makes you feel. A fact's a fact. And that's just it. A fact's a fact.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] And if we're not going to listen to the Founding Fathers, then we're just doing something completely different. We wouldn't be the same country. We'd be completely different. And that just leads to complete failure. Just look at what happened in the French Revolution. Just look at what happened when they overthrew the Tsar and established the U.S.S.R. in Russia. It all completely blew up. It all led to millions of deaths. And this stuff never lasts.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] What does Judeo-Christian mean?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Is that a term that is maximally inclusive when advantageous and which becomes much narrower when advantageous?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] What is a cult?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] How many modern religions began as cults?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Is the difference between what is a cult and a religion the same kind of difference there is between what is a terrorist and a freedom fighter?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] What does Founding Fathers mean?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Is that a term that is maximally inclusive when advantageous and which becomes much narrower when advantageous?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Are we supposed to think for ourselves or are we supposed to think what others thought?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Or are we supposed to think for ourselves in order to arrive back at what others thought?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Why should we care what someone else thought?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Why did Christian missionaries work hardest to stamp out ancestor worship?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Could the communism of the U.S.S.R. be better described as state capitalism? If so, was there only ever a competition between two forms of capitalism? Was there, then, never an alternative from the very beginning?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Will short-term thinking always undercut long-term thinking by definition of the way markets function? If so, is it fundamentally impossible for capitalism to operate with any long-term goals or with any long-term plans?

[The frame containing Hysteria freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] The whole Deep State doesn't even exist and all these people really *are* in charge of everything and have their fingers on the buttons that could blow up the world—and the next thing you know there's going to be a Civil War. Nobody's really working for the good of the whole country. Everything's all in a million little pieces, a million little minority and special-interest groups.

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] The Civil War's going to happen all over again. And you've got these Neo-Nazis all over the place with their lawn torches. And death panels. And boycotting BOGO chicken sandwiches. And we're supposed to pay for all these things we didn't even do. It's going to be just like The Empire Strikes Back.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Did the rhetoric about death panels really work because everyone already knew they existed and that their living and dying was already being decided by algorithms in insurance company computers?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Why shouldn't the government have to compensate the descendants of those workers against whom it deployed psychological and physical violence in order to limit and appropriate their economic potential for industrialists?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Where can you go and what can you do that doesn't involve buying something or considering whether or not to buy something or wishing you could buy something or wishing you didn't have to buy something or wondering why it doesn't exist to buy or wondering why anyone would buy something like that?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Is the idea that the Civil War will happen again a comforting idea?

[Cut to a different clip of Hysteria.]

[Hysteria] Would people pick an unknown future over a repeat of a horrible, but known, past?

[The frame containing Hysteria freezes.]

[Cut to a different clip of Darr G. Ling T..]

[Darr G. Ling T.] Look, none of the Founding Fathers were Democrats. That's just a fact. And you can't argue with a fact. A fact's a fact. That's just a fact.

[The frame containing Darr G. Ling T. freezes.]

[Voice-over] Remember, if you want to see the rest, and find out who wins, hop on over to our Patreon page for members only exclusive content, and also remember that, as a paying Patreon member, you get to vote on what debates happen next and who wins.

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a picture of a wombat.]

[Wombat] He's wrong. If Nazism was subsumed by capital, that is only because it was right. Nature would not and could not give us that which was not a part of herself. In nature, there is only the survival of the strongest and the fittest. And in the market, there is only the same.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### H | >>

[T-Shirt #2] So why don't you date guys from North Carolina?

[Lace] No.

[She picks out a fry.]

[Lace] We don't date guys in North Carolina.

[T-Shirt #2] What's the difference?

[Lace] Because it's a right to rape state.

[T-Shirt #2] What?

[She bites into her fry.]

[Lace] According to the law, initial consent is total consent.

[She sticks the rest of the fry in her mouth. She wipes her fingertips on a paper napkin.]

[Lace] If you agree to one thing, you agree to everything.

[T-Shirt #1] I don't get it.

[Rosa] Say you go home with a guy. Or a girl.

[She leans forward. She plants her elbows on the table. She puts the edges of her palms together. She rests her chin in her palms.]

[Rosa] And you say, yeah, let's do a little pea eye vee.

[She smiles.]

[Rosa] But mister guy decides he wants the back door. So he just goes right in and keeps going till he finishes. Then maybe he decides he wants to do a few other things.

[T-Shirt #1] That can't be legal.

[Lace] Initial consent is total consent.

[She reaches for another fry.]

[T-Shirt #1] So how do you...

[Lace] Work?

[Rosa and Lace laugh.]

[T-Shirt #1] I just mean. You know. Isn't that...

[Lovegrav] That has David watching.

[Rosa and Lace laugh.]

[Noise blares. Everyone looks around. The image shifts as the zGlasses move. The feeds to all the televisions hung along the walls go live again. On the nearest, Sylvia Borges is onscreen.]

[Borges] No motive has yet been determined in these shootings, Tom. And as of yet, police still do not have a suspect. This has left—

[The audio drops out and intermixes with all the other televisions. Everything is rendered piecemeal and garbled together. The zGlasses wearer looks over his shoulder. He turns and looks through one of the large windows in the distance. A body lies slumped over in the parking lot. Crime scene tape stretches between orange-plastic cones placed at haphazard intervals around it. The image shifts again. A deputy walks out of the back, away from the restrooms. He is still zipping his fly. He stops. He looks over at them. He walks toward them.]

[Deputy] Aren't you Veronica Lace?

[He glances over his shoulder.]

[Deputy] Ah, that's just normal. Don't worry about it.

[He walks around the table. He has his thumbs hooked behind his belt.]

[Deputy] I need to see some official state ID or interstate immigration papers.

[He looks down the table.]

[Deputy] Everybody.

[The image shifts. The wearer of the zGlasses places his wallet on the table. T-Shirt #1 and T-Shirt #2 do so as well. Rosa shifts to look in her purse. The deputy looks at Lovegrav.]

[Deputy] What about you?

[She doesn't reply.]

[Deputy] Stand up and turn out your pockets.

[Lovegrav] Women's pants don't have real pockets.

[Deputy] Don't bull crap me.

[Lovegrav] They don't have pockets. They're not real. They just look like they do. But they can't hold anything.

[The deputy grabs her by the arm. He pulls her up.]

[Deputy] Don't think you can bull crap me.

[He forces her down. He bends her over the table.]

[Deputy] You—

[Things shake. But it's not the image that shakes. The image shakes. Everyone is looking out the large glass windows. Smoke might be visible in the distance, but it becomes impossible to distinguish, when

the wearer pulls up a newsfeed and the quality degrades to standard definition.]

[Comm] Two three one.

[The deputy reaches up with his free hand. He depresses the call button on the unit clipped at his shoulder.]

[Deputy] What?

[Something comes out garbled. It's rendered unintelligibly.]

[Comm] ... in progress at one oh two Mall Place. Please, respond.

[The deputy looks down at Lovegrav.]

[Comm] Two three one.

[The deputy depresses the call button.]

[Deputy] Fine. On my way.

[He releases Lovegrav's arm. He steps back.]

[Deputy] Next time.

[The deputy turns. He walks toward the front doors. He walks out into the parking lot.]



"Good job, tonto," Tommy said.

But it couldn't've been because of me. It couldn't've been an explosion that never happened. I had to say so.

"Not to worry, tonto," Tommy said. "Many suffer the sexualized weapons malfunction. There is only one virginity. For all is violence. So to not lose it one way is to not lose it all ways." He yawned. He scratched his chest. "Besides, what would one less real-estate office

mean in terms of the world, hmm?" He stretched. "The root is Florida. T'would be merely to cut off a blossom." He scratched himself. "Not that I myself endorse such a prosaic notion as agreeing with the goal but that your methods—undertaken or not—suck. When for hence hath the world ever changed peaceably?" He yawned. He scratched himself. "Yet whence forwith hath the world ever changed?" He scratched himself. "And besides," he said, "how can anyone possibly rank Way above Pollack?"

#### H4 || >>|

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to two frames. Cathex is on the right. A man in a suit is on the left.]

[Suit] Maybe you calling virgins losers is part of what's fueling this whole problem.

[Cathex] Well, if the shoe fits, as they say.

[Suit] Well, in that event, Jesus was a virgin, unless you believe he was married, or he had sex outside of wedlock, and if you believe Jesus is God, then *ergo* God is a virgin.

[Cathex rolls her eyes.]

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### **₩** || **>>**|

[A shaky smeared image. Someone trying to hold their phone in a concealed manner. They sit at a bistro table. It must be the small outdoor section of a restaurant.]

- [#1] Quick. Get your phone.
- [#2] I have got my phone.
- [#1] Are you recording?
- [#2] Of course, I'm recording.

[#1] You think we should go o—

[#2] Somebody's coming.

[#1] Here?

[#2] Over there. Look.

[David Stoker sits at one of the tables. He sits across from an older woman. A cane is leaned against the table. He looks up as someone steps near. It's the guy. The Crepe.]

[Crepe] Hey, got a minute?

[Stoker] No.

[Crepe] I've got just the thing you need.

[He bends over the table.]

[Crepe] She's just the thing you need. Young. Fresh. Flexible. She can do creampies. Anything. It doesn't matter. She can't get knocked up.

[There's an exchange. The audio is too garbled to be rendered intelligibly. The image jumps around. When it settles down again, Stoker still sits at the bistro table with the older woman. The Crepe's gone. Stoker lifts a tea cup.]

[Stoker] The longer I go on the more I think the whole idea of liveaction filmmaking is immoral by its very definition.

[He sips his tea.]



I remember him. I met him once when I was helping (Usually there'd be an ellipsis here. It would mimetically convey the avoidance

that I was attempting to maintain at the time. But I've decided I don't want to do that. That space still feels private, and at this point, I'm not going to open up that gap for anyone.) So instead I'll just put it outright. I met him once (sort of) when I was helping Olive watch the children. Maybe I should use her full name. But I'm not going to. He'd come by the trailer. Sophia'd been with him. She'd gone into the back to help Olive with something. Misses Anodine had been in the kitchen area. (She wasn't a misses, but how else do you put down someone's a mother?) He'd sidled that way. He always wore a black trenchcoat that was worn out. It was like it was a Crepe uniform. He'd smiled. She'd been three or four months along again, then. He'd said it was too bad she didn't get lucky like her daughter. But at least she couldn't get pregnant twice, right? And maybe she'd like to do things. It came out very different, but I'm going to put it down this way. Liam came out of the bedroom yawning. The Crepe beat it to go wait by the car.

Olive came out of the back carrying one of the young children.

## I Can't

I just can't.

#### H | >>

[Aster] Our guest now is Rafael Rodrigo, who has just returned from along the North Carolina and South Carolina border. Rafael, what do you feel the situation is looking like now?

[Rodrigo] The situation continues to degrade, John. You can really feel the desperation if you're down there. With North Carolina's efforts to restrict the border on their side, and South Carolina's efforts to systematically do the same, people gathering along the state lines are really beginning to feel boxed in.

[Aster] What do you feel the situation for food and water is looking like?

- [Rodrigo] It's becoming quite terrible, John. Food is beginning to run low. Prepackaged food is almost completely gone. And that's one of the things people are relying on for safety. Gas stations and rest stops along the highways have been almost impossible to resupply due to heavy traffic. In one place I saw they were charging fifty-dollars, if you can believe it, for a single package of cream-filled cupcakes. And of course, there are limited supplies of bottled water. And with the heat, that's really creating a danger. And due to the defoliation efforts that have really hit their stride along the border, there is almost no shade left. So there really are worries about people overheating. However, people are afraid to contact medical personnel because they fear that it might bring closer scrutiny from the police.
- [Aster] We have gotten some reports of what some people are calling roundups. Do you feel you can comment on that?
- [Rodrigo] Yes, John. It appears that South Carolina is now extending its earlier policies. Before, they were only worried about people who were actually slated to cross the border. But now there has been some concerns raised, so now a roughly hundred mile zone has been established around the border area and anyone within that zone is temporarily being detained and questioned. And they have constructed a set of what they're calling detainment areas just south of the border. We tried to visit one of these areas but, unfortunately, were unable to.
- [Aster] We have heard some reports of people using temporary tattoos on their children. Do you feel you can comment on that?
- [Rodrigo] Yes, John. Both the North and South Carolina border processing stations, as you know, have started issuing tickets and are servicing by number. However, quite a few people are obviously very concerned about losing their

numbers, so one of the workarounds has been that parents are using temporary tattoos as a way of keeping their children's processing numbers from being lost, and in the event of possible separation, since the children often are two young to memorize them.

- [Aster] We have heard in particular they are being placed on the neck. Do you feel you can comment on the reasons for this?
- [Rodrigo] Yes, John. Mainly, that's for practical reasons. One is the visibility. The other is it's an area that is more difficult for them to rub off. However, as the wait times extend, John, that has become more and more an issue. And now there are some tattoo artists who are volunteering their time to make the markings more wear-proof.
- [Aster] However, there is also some concern over keeping things sanitary. Don't many feel that is a concern?
- [Rodrigo] Yes, John. Of course, that is very much a concern at the moment.
- [Aster] Thank you for that, Rafael. And as always, thank you for your hard work in getting the story out.
- [Orgone] Now, they'll tell you stories. They'll tell you all kinds of stories. They'll tell you all kinds of sad stories about people just trying to do the right thing. Well, the right thing is the legal thing. And you can't do something illegal and it be right. But that's not what we're talking about. We're talking about people who are coming over the borders because they're criminals. They're coming over the borders because they're trying to get away from the law. They're criminals. But according to the leftist liberals, we're not supposed to care about that. They're just poor simple folk. They might've done a few things wrong in the past. But that's okay. So with us again to try and discuss why exactly

this might be the case—though don't we already know—is ACLC Director Massachusetts Hysteria.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Hysteria is in the left frame.]

- [Orgone] What exactly, Director, is the problem that leftist liberals have with the law? Because you have to admit that these people are clearly violating the law. They're not just violating it. They're egregiously violating it. They're practically raping it, aren't they?
- [Hysteria] Did the Founding Fathers violate the law and rebel against the law and the government? Was the first Constitution founded upon a violation of the law? Would the second Constitution be just as unlawful because the legality which allows it to be were then based upon an illegality?
- [Orgone] Yes, here we go. Your side loses—oh but it's the law that's wrong. You lose, so it's the rules that are bad. Your side loses—so it must be that the game's flawed.
- [Hysteria] How many of these people who come through try to do so legally?
- [Orgone] It doesn't matter if we're talking about trying to cross the border legally. What we're talking about is people who are crossing borders to do illegal things.
- [Hysteria] Are these things only illegal in the state from which they come?
- [Orgone] That doesn't matter, Director. It's about the law.
- [Hysteria] Have they committed an actual crime yet?
- [Orgone] Yes. They crossed the border with the intention of committing one. That's what we're talking about.

[Hysteria] Are we talking about people who have already committed a crime crossing a border or are we talking about people who cross a border to do something that is illegal in their state of origin?

[Orgone] Both, Director. We don't need word games. They're all the same thing. It's all about crime.

[Hysteria] Have they committed actual crimes yet?

[Orgone] The intent is the crime, Director.

[Hysteria] Has the crime that was intended been committed?

[Orgone] That doesn't matter. It's the attempting to do that's the illegal part. It's no different than attempted murder. Unless the leftist liberals don't think we should arrest people for trying to kill people, now. Or attempted robbery—but then again we all know how leftist liberals love taxes. It's not about what you do. It's about what you intend to do. That's the point.

[Hysteria] Is that the point?

[Orgone] What's the leftist liberals' problem with respecting all those hardworking real Americans out there who don't do illegal things? What about all those people out there who work really really hard to obey the law? Hm? What about them? Don't you think they're owed something? Don't you think they're owed something for all the hard work they put in? Or isn't hard work worth anything anymore? I mean, I guess it's worth something so long as the leftist liberals can vote to steal a little more money from their taxes. Heck—excuse my language, folks—but why don't you just go ahead and take it all—and you can give them some little allowance back, or something. I'm sure the leftist liberals can decide on what's fair for them to get. How

much do you want to give to the people who sit around all day playing video games? Or how about we send the money to some unwed mothers? Or we could buy some drugs for people. I mean, practically all our kids in public schools are already drugged up on something, aren't they? They won't even let them in unless they're on something. Oh but take them out and there will come the police right up to your door. They're not your children. No. They're the leftist-liberal state's children. And they can do whatever they see fit with them. They can just pump them full of whatever they want. But you don't have any say. No, you don't have any say about what goes into your kid's body.

[Hysteria] What is going into the bodies of those children who are being held in detention centers?

[Orgone] You see, this is exactly it. You can't stop spreading lies to try and get what you want. Everything has to be exaggerated and blown out of proportion. It has to be this huge big scandal. All this while there are real American children out there who love to have bologna sandwiches. But the leftist liberals just can't not tell a story, can you? It's just like all this whining and moaning over these supposed suicides. And how do we even know they're suicides? We've got criminals running around practically invisible. They could be anywhere. Doing anything. And what are the leftist liberals doing about that? What are the leftist liberals doing to try and help the states protect the lives and the properties of their citizens? How do we know that all these supposed suicides aren't actually murders? That they're not just killing them and tossing them into the river or off a cliff, or what have you. What do you care about that?

[Hysteria] Does anyone really care about anything?

[Orgone] Real Americans care, Director. You think all those people who get up every morning and go to work don't care? You

think the president does what the president does because the president doesn't care? You think the president doesn't care about what's necessary to keep this country safe?

[Hysteria] Have all the bombing campaigns in the name of keeping this country safe created the material conditions for the radicalization of whole generations of extremists? Have the efforts in the name of keeping this country safe resulted in a fundamentally unsafer environment?

[Orgone] Here we go. Of course, the president can never do anything right. Have you ever seen what it does to a president to be in office? Their hair's all dark when they enter. And then by the time they leave, you know what color it is? Oh, that's right, that's the word we can't say anymore these days. Well, the fact of the matter is, Director, that the only reason you can try to degrade the president is because of the very things the president does to keep you safe and gives you that freedom.

[Hysteria] Where does freedom come from?

[Orgone] Freedom, Director, comes from the hardworking men and women who risk their lives to defend this country. They're the ones you should be thanking.

[Hysteria] Do totalitarian countries have militaries?

[Orgone] That's right. Just keep going on like that. All you can do is compare the people who keep you safe to a bunch of Hitlers marching around out there in the street. So all you can do is make fun of the president's hair. It's obscene, Director. It's pathetic schoolyard bullying. But that is the level that the leftist liberals never got past, isn't it. Isn't that why they think that we can just hand everything out to everybody. No need to work for it. No merit required. You should just be given everything because you deserve it. Here, everybody gets a juice box. And next is nappy time.

- [Hysteria] Can society provide a minimum standard of living for all its people? If it can, should it? Do we build society with the claim of escaping from the horrors and vagaries of nature only to recreate that same terror-filled environment?
- [Orgone] If you want to go live in the jungle, Director, that's fine. But civilization provides advantages far beyond anything that could ever have been imagined by our ancestors. And having those advantages requires work.
- [Hysteria] Is there a jungle to go to anymore? Is there anyplace on Earth or in the heavens beyond the bounds of nationality now? How much of the work that is done is necessary for those advantages directly? How much of the work that is done is done solely for the purpose of work?
- [Orgone] Whoa there, Director. Don't try to shotgun me. And don't insult people's jobs. People want to feel useful. They want to feel like their lives have a purpose. They want to feel like they're doing something. And when you insult people's jobs, you destroy that. But of course, that's what the leftist liberals do, don't they. They tear things down. Never build them up. That's the only thing they know how to do is tear things down.

[Hysteria] Is a society of individuals a society?

[Orgone] Without individual liberty, Director, there's no such thing as a free society. But of course, the leftist liberals are all about socialism, so we know how they feel about that. They just want to pay people to sit around and play video games all the time.

[Hysteria] Why do so many people retreat into video games?

[Orgone] Because they're too weak to get out there in the real world and fight for things. They've been coddled by their leftist-liberal parents that they can just sit around and do nothing.

They don't want to want to get out there and fight for a mate. Pathetic. All of them hiding in the dark with their eyes dilated to the size of dinner plates and drool coming out of the sides of their mouths.

- [Hysteria] Is it appropriate to hit on someone when they're trying to work? How do you ask someone out when all our interactions are market-based and we hardly ever see people when one or the other is not on the clock?
- [Orgone] Backbone. That's what children of leftist liberals don't have. They can't even stand up on their own. They have to ask for permission for everything. The Great Men never asked for permission. They didn't ask for permission to go out there and make money. They didn't ask permission to change the world. They used to be actual real humans. Now all the most of them can do is swipe left or right.
- [Hysteria] So should capitalism not be involved in everything? Is there anything else sacred left? Would that indicate that something else is possible? But can that be if there is no other option? What alternative is there to capitalism?
- [Orgone] Social communism, Director. That thing real Americans fight tooth and nail.
- [Hysteria] If the Soviet Union fell, and this was held up as proof of capitalism's victory and that communism couldn't succeed, how can it be an alternative if it isn't possible? If China is communist, how can it be one of the fastest growing areas of capitalism in the world?
- [Orgone] Which is why we have to stop the forces of social communism from destroying the American way of life any more than they already have. We have to give our women permission to be wives and mothers again. We have to give our men permission to be men again. Real Americans have to take back their country.

- [Hysteria] Why is it considered a joke to ask to monetarily reimburse women for their roles as mothers and for their work in general around the house and as a housewife? Is that beyond the market? Is that something separate from the market? But if capitalism is all there is, how can that be? Could it be that the female is the commodity? Is this a type of gender-based slavery? Or is the notion of such a reimbursement a marketization? Or is it inherently marketized? Is it a value trade of menial labor and sexual labor in exchange for food and shelter?
- [Orgone] Why do the leftist liberals always have to insult women? What's wrong with wanting to be a mother? What's wrong with a mother wanting to take care of her children? Why can't you people just stay out of others' lives? This's why people're lonely. All the liberal left allows them to do is punish themselves. They're supposed to punish themselves for everything. Everything they want or think or feel. They're supposed to feel guilty about it all. And they're supposed to feel bad about what they've supposedly done to the blacks and Indians and everyone else in the world because everything that goes wrong, it's their fault and they should feel bad for it.
- [Hysteria] What if there never was a golden age? What if there never were any good times to go back to? What if the threat from the outside doesn't matter? What if the threat from the outside doesn't exist? What if everything bad is inherent to the system that produces the good?
- [Orgone] The good is what's produced in the real America by real Americans. And real Americans are going to stand up and fight for what's good because they know what's good. They know what patriotism is. They know what heroism is. They know that people like Lieutenant George Prescott always do everything that's right for their family and their community and their town and their country.

- [Hysteria] What if there's no system that will not or cannot produce ill effects? What if there's no way to avoid pain? What if God has no concept of heaven or hell? What if pleasure and pain are the same thing in heaven? What if there is no line between heaven and hell?
- [Orgone] And all you atheists can do is insult the honest religion of hardworking real Americans who go to church on Sunday and sing hymns with their children and read Bible stories and work hard at being good law-abiding people. You can't stand it that they have a peace and a happiness that you'll never have.
- [Hysteria] Where is the dividing line between economics and theology? Is the invisible hand of the market, in practice, the invisible hand of God?
- [Orgone] How do you people deny what you can see around you? How do you ignore the material wealth that's stacked around you? How can you deny that this is the most prosperous age human kind has ever lived in? Do you not notice the beam in your own eye?
- [Hysteria] If all alternatives must be within and part of the market and the market must be all, and if only capitalism can exist, is capitalism and the economy God or is God the economy and capitalism?

[Orgone] Let freedom ring.

[He rises from his chair.]

[Orgone] Let the voices sing.

[Cathex] They're back at it again. More death threats from the left. Warning—you're entering a Truth Zone.

[The image subdivides into two frames. Cathex is in the right frame.]

Judge Courtney is in the other right frame.]

[Cathex] So, Courtney, how are you handling things?

[Judge Courtney] I refuse to be bullied.

[Cathex] So how do you respond to all these left-wing trolls?

[Judge Courtney] It's just fascist mentality. That's all it's ever been.

[Cathex] Have you seen the editorial that says you should get the death penalty?

[Judge Courtney] Of course, they're in favor of it for people they don't like.

[Cathex laughs.]

[Judge Courtney] And I still stand by my principles. Evidence or no, he deserved to be executed. They're all guilty of something.

[Cathex laughs.]

[Shots of a burnout three-story building.]

[Narrator] Tragedy out of Japan this evening. The smell of the fire still lingers in the air. Here in the Japanese city of Kyoto, residents are still shocked and dismayed.

[Cut to a reporter walking down a street.]

[Man] It's believed that the suspect purchased ten gallons of gasoline just a mile or so up the road behind us here. He then wheeled the gasoline, along with bags containing hammers and knives, on a handcart, down this road, before finally arriving at his

destination, where he entered the building through the front door and doused those inside and the studio's first floor with gasoline which he then lit on fire.

[Cut to an aerial shot of a burnt building.]

[Narrator] At this time, thirty-four people have been reported dead. With most of the victims between the ages of twenty and thirty-five. Twenty of them being women. And another thirty-five have been reported injured. Kyoto animation is known for its lead in employing female animators and storytellers in what many have described as a male-dominated industry.

[Cut to a shot of people squatting and praying before collections of plastic-wrapped flowers that have been piled in tribute.]

[Narrator] The sense of loss is still palpable as world-wide fans begin to grapple with the loss stemming from what is now one of Japan's worst mass killings in recent decades. The primary suspect remains in critical condition tonight and is currently being treated for burns to his arms and chest and face and hands. Police are currently waiting to question him. Reports by those nearby stated that he believed the animation studio had stolen the idea for a novel from him. It's believed that if he is charged, prosecutors will seek the death penalty in the case. Whatever the outcome, the sense tonight remains one of loss and of trying to understand.

[Woman] Are you saying we should disregard what the victim says just because she happens to remember the race of her attacker?

[Man] We have to consider the history of the relationship built between the notions of the raping black man and that of the innocent white woman.

- [Orgone] You see, folks. All you have to do is wait and the leftist liberals will eat their own. They're like cannibals. Um um um um um um. They just can't stop themselves. They just can't stop themselves.
- [Hartnette] Another North Carolina man died today after a shootout with police near a border processing station. The man's motives remain unclear at this time. No law enforcement personnel were injured.
- [Anchor] As we come on the air tonight—multiple superstorms pounding the east coast—millions in the path of disaster.
- [Student] Her theory is obviously incorrect, as she uses a culturally appropriated name to refer to it.
- [Hartnette] Visiting the detention center, the governor is reported to have said that it was quote tough stuff unquote but remarked that the facility was crowded because there were a lot of people in there.
- [A black-and-white shot from a dash cam. A police officer stands in front of a woman on the side of a road.]
- [Officer] Look, lady, either piss on the stick here or we can take you in to do it.
- [An older, obese woman sits in an electric scooter with a wire basket mounted on the front. A walking cane is in the basket.]
- [Woman] If I was able, I'd go down there and shoot somma those sonsabitches myself. You'd better believe it. Shoot em all. That's what I say. What right've they to come up here? Shoot all them sonsabitches.
- [Hartnette] Controversy was sparked today following the announcement of a new policy that would require women to have a male chaperon when entering the offices of state officials.

A seventeen year old alleged rape victim will face her first day in court tomorrow to determine whether or not her stillborn child was in fact the victim of an abortion.

Firefighters and available police responded today to an explosion at the Raleigh-Durham International Airport.

Of course, the left doesn't want heroes. That's why they have to try and tear them all down. And they can't make their own. They can't make something they don't have a concept of. So they have to try and make real Americans feel bad. What's wrong with somebody who works hard all day and just wants to come home and watch someone behave in a heroic manner? America needs heroes. America has always needed heroes. We need examples of men who do the right thing. When I was a kid and we watched television, we had The Lone Ranger. And he was always honest. And he was always about the law. And he always did the right thing. And he always believed in God. You had something to live up to. You had The Lone Ranger, you had Roy Rogers, there to be the examples for children. What do liberals want as the examples to children? Gay—excuse my language, folks—chartreuse dinosaurs? Green things that carry purses around? Are these the kinds of standards that are going to give us a good society?

[Black-and-white bodycam footage. An officer repeatedly shoves a handcuffed man's face into the asphalt. Officer Murphy comes running into frame. Officer Murphy pulls the other officer off the handcuffed man. A scuffle ensues. Officer Murphy ends up on the ground. The other officer kicks him. Two other officers enter the frame. They kick him.]

What's the image you think you remember most from the war?

There was this guy. He had a Japanese soldier on the ground with his knee in his chest and another guy held his head back while someone took a bayonet and cut out his gold teeth.

Common sense is a defunct philosophical concept that never held water in the first place.

Just more leftist-liberal relativistic Marxist postmodernists insulting hardworking, everyday real Americans by saying they don't know what's right but that if they're very nice you might tell them what's right about licking your shoes.

Can you describe what happened?

I was just looking at the screen when—boom—and I couldn't see anything.

That must have been scary.

That's just the way it goes in combat sometimes.

What do we need men for?

The male chimpanzee will approach the female and prepare to mount. If she refuses, the male will bite or hit the female until she acquiesces and becomes receptive.

You want to insult our brave men and women? Huh, do you?

The state is re-evaluating its rules in light of new reports of an increase in the number of children suffering paper cuts.

Have you by any chance ever read Theodore Sturgeon's And Now The News? Don't you think that's exactly what's going on now?

What do you say to these people who are just trying to do what's right for their families?

I say just because somebody wants something doesn't mean they are going to get it. Are you going to take them in?

They are not asking anyone to take them in. They're just asking to participate in the economy the way they have always done before. They just want to pay taxes. They just want to go on with their lives.

Look, John, no real American wants to pay taxes. So that right there should tell you something.

It's been reported that former Eagleton University students have currently occupied one of the dining halls on campus and are demanding their reinstatement in the wake of what they claim was their expulsion following their utilization of on-campus mental health services.

The problem is it lacks any kind of political or moral orientation.

Look, you walk into a T-Haus, that's just the chance you take. There's a reason real Americans threw the stuff in the harbor. Oh but it was so hot it fused her lady parts—excuse my language, folks—together and that's what actually made the birth mess up. Well, let this be a lesson in justice to anyone out there who thinks they can tarnish a respectable business establishment and get away with it. It's not a matter of free speech. It's a matter of economic terrorism.

In ongoing efforts to cut down on stockpiles of so-called abortificants, state police conducted a series of raids over the weekend on facilities they say had secretly kept a stock of the illegal substances. Warning. This segment contains images that some viewers might find disturbing.

[Police vehicles sit with their lights flashing outside the drugstore in Kingsly that's across from the FlapJack Barn. Low light makes it difficult to see. Officers lead someone in handcuffs. A woman. She's much shorter than either of them. An older woman. She's wearing a pharmacist's coat. It must be Misses Jane Greene. When she gets closer, it's possible to tell her face is bruised. And she might be bleeding from her nose or lip or both.]

The only answer is reparations be paid to all women and for all women that have stemmed from the economic exploitation of the female object in the marketplace.

North Carolina became one of the latest states, today, to reconsider how its concealed-carry laws are enforced.

Look, for every picture of some supposed family you want to show me, I can show you a mugshot of a human trafficker or pictures of them herding people onto trucks with shivs.

Just look at all the property damage created by liberal fascist organizations—such as ANTIFA.

Was the Boston Tea Party property destruction?

Have you bathed in the blood of Jesus Christ?

Do you think social security and retirement will exist in forty years?

My retirement plan is a cute goth chick.

A woman opened fire today in the Kingsly Joint Burger after she claims she was given cold french fries. Three customers and one employee were injured. The employee, who has not been named, remains in critical condition tonight.

Officials, tonight, released statements defending members of the local sheriff's department and campus police, following what some are claiming was an unjustified pepper spraying incident during the course of student protests.

The Declaration of Independence is like the Communist Manifesto. Both are full of pretty language for nothing more than tweaking a few noses and were never considered or meant to be anything to actually do with law whatsoever.

How dare you insult the Declaration of Independence.

In unrelated news, new numbers are revealing an upsurge in gun ownership by African Americans.

He's not an actual Holocaust survivor. This's just a clear case of somebody violating the sanctity of a religious service and trying to claim some kind of exemption to it. He's not even Jewish. So that proves he's lying.

> Video surfaced today of loggers deep within the Amazon rain forest. In the video, it appears that an eight-year-old native girl is being tied to a tree and doused in diesel fuel before being set on fire. Sources report that the action was undertaken to scare off local tribes as clear cutting continues in the area.

Of course she was lying. And look what happens. Six innocent young mens' lives are ruined. But what happens to her? That's right, folks. Nothing.

[A man holding a revolver.]

... strung along till medicaid shut down. It's already migrated from my balls into my lungs. So why should I care?

[An explosion goes off in the background. He coughs. Blood covers his hand and lips. He wipes his lips with the back of his hand.]

I just want something I want for once.

[He coughs. Blood covers his hand and lips. He wipes his lips with the back of his hand.]

I just want fucking boots that fit.

[He waves the gun. Shots. The image smears.]

Bring on the aliens.

[A shaky shot of the man running naked down a fire-lit Marion Mainstreet.]

Bring em all on.

[Shots.]

Fuck aliens and their Pseudopublicrat healthcare plans.

[Shots.]

I hate cows.

[Shots.]

The notable author was reported as saying she was sickened that the attorney for the accused husband is currently investigating whether or not the woman's disappearance was part of a so-called Gone Girl-type plot.

This makes the fourth high-profile LGBTQ activist to go missing in Moscow in the past week. This comes one month after the establishment of a site based upon the Saw franchise of movies. The site allows users to post the images and addresses of people suspected of promoting the LGBTQ agenda and to offer rewards for accomplishing certain tasks.

No, this is just plain obscenity. They say they are just using condoms to carry water in, but they've got kids touching these things. They've got kids drinking out of these things. This is basically pedophilia.

A Swiss medical team was flown into a small village this morning to treat a rare case. When doctors had arrived they found a pregnant female orangutan which had been shot twenty-four times in the stomach. An outpouring of donations allowed the doctors to work through the night to save the animal and her unborn child.

... it's got a Jewish character and the editor wanted it taken out and—well, news flash, morons, Jews are people, not its, Nazi scumbags.

Another suicide was reported today in police custody, bringing the total number of cases this week to thirteen. Family and friends say that Marcia Gonzales couldn't possibly have shot herself in the head while sitting in the back of a police cruiser with her arms handcuffed behind her back. However, state prosecutors have reiterated that the coroner's report unequivocally indicates suicide as the cause of death. The state prosecutor's office is, however, currently weighing officially charging the victim with suicide. Under the state's new eminent domain law, all property possessed by those convicted of committing suicide is automatically transferred to the state upon their death.

We have to peel back these illegal laws. You know what The Bible says about laws that can't be reversed. Just look at what happened to Babylon.

Yeah. It allowed for the ancient Israelites to leave Babylon and return home.

Well, obviously you just can't admit that you don't know what you're talking about.

Of course, nature is good. Nature is wonderful. But nature must be useful. That's what it's there for. God said dominion. And that's not just a choice. That's an order.

It's all built on alienated male objectification.

Isn't it interesting how theorists on the left often want to embrace a gap notion of sexuality, yet conservatives inherently, explicitly embrace it. It's everywhere almost. They explicitly admit the primacy of fantasy. So in reality, no real sex can exist.

Friends and family of a local mountain woman have vowed to fight on tonight following the dismissal of the latest challenge to the state's second-newest constitutional amendment, following the death of the complainant. Miss Lovejoy was twenty-four years old. The family reports she died from complications relating to pancreatic cancer. At present, thirteen more cases are currently making their way through the court system to challenge the amendment which clarifies hospitals' roles in administering medical care in the event such care could compromise the health or safety of an unborn child.

I fought there. I know exactly what happened.

Look, you may have been there, but that doesn't mean you know everything.

There was no enemy.

Don't insult your fellow soldiers that way. This was not a case of friendly fire. American troops don't shoot their own. American troops don't screw up. American troops do their job and they do it better than anyone else. There're enemies out in that desert. And just because you didn't see them doesn't mean

anything. So thank you for your service but don't tell the American people what they know.

Reports are flooding in from activists tonight regarding what some are calling a chemical spill outside of a tiny village. So far it has been alleged that over fourteen children and one pregnant woman have died from drinking contaminated water. The remoteness of the village, however, has proved to make it difficult for medical personnel to access the area.

The North Carolina National Guard confirmed, today, eyewitness reports that a helicopter crashed along the state border. It remains unknown as to the reason why the crash occurred. Officials state they are still investigating. The name and medical status of the pilot has not been released.

Why can't one be a comparatively normal mother of two kids working as a programmer on the week-days and partaking in sadomasochistic sexual practices every other weekend?

I just have one question. Where can I meet this disgusting MILF?

What do we need men for?

[A very old man in a wheelchair.]

What made you feel you had to go in there?

We were just...driving buy, and the...sign outside the... church had...these words... God is...with us. And I just felt that...I had to go...in.

That's, of course, what was stamped on the ss belt buckles.

Yes...

After the war. After the allies had liberated the camp. What happened next?

Even if the Nazis were gone, homosexuality was...still a crime...in Germany. So the allies...took us to the... prisons.

What do you think is going to happen?

I'm afraid it's...already...happening. Chechnya. But I'm afraid... I'm afraid that in fifty years... Maybe less. Things will...get bad...again.

Climate change?

Perhaps... Many things. But they...will need...someone to...blame. They always...need...someone to blame. They need...someone to blame...who is walking down the...street. That's the way...the Jews were...then. And everyone...else. Before the...war.

[He pauses to catch his breath. Someone comes into frame. They help him adjust his oxygen tubing.]

Berlin was...you would say...a very...cosmopolitan... place.

[He coughs.]

We had...men's and...women's nightclubs there...too.

[He coughs.]

And then...the Nazis...came. And the Americans...came. And finally...

[He coughs.]

The Stalinists...came. History...

[He trails off. He looks into infinity.]

Repeats itself?

Never...

[He wheezes.]

Stops...

Look, the situation is very simple. When these kinds of things happen, people will sell and move away. The market will solve the problem.

Who would be interested in buying an area where contaminated ground water leaks from the neighboring property or dangerous airborne chemicals rise up from the ground and float from the neighboring property? Who is going to buy property that is underwater?

Well obviously, the leftist liberals just aren't capable of understanding the situation.

Next we turn tonight to the case of an American woman and her four-year-old daughter who family members claim has been trapped in Saudi Arabia by her husband, in a case that has reminded many of the nineteen-ninety-one film Not Without My Daughter. Streaming of that film already going viral as we begin our report tonight.

How widespread does it have to be before it's called normal? And by not recognizing it as endemic, do the solutions we offer, in fact, perpetuate it?

Sure—all the leftist liberals just want everybody to be pedophiles so they can feel better about themselves.

All of this is because we've taken God out of culture and human life is cheap.

Just look what happened after the Nazis took the right to bear arms away from the Jews. All the leftist liberals aren't even hiding their Antisemitism anymore. Israel can't do anything right, can it? Except stop existing—that the leftist liberals would be happy about. We know what they'd do in their pants—excuse my language, folks—but we know what they'd do in their pants if that happened.

Did it help Jews to possess firearms during the Warsaw Ghetto Uprising?

Why don't the leftist liberals just come out and admit that they're in favor of the Holocaust? All the leftist liberals want is for that to happen again, don't you—you're all just salivating for it.

Well of course, the filming of the, what they call the, the so-called, as it's referred to, the Happy Ending, it has to be done contractually. That's the thing that proves, that shows, it is evinced, that everyone had a good time, was there willingly, enjoyed themselves. So not requiring, trying to operate without that, in absence of that, that just doesn't make any business sense, none at all, completely nonsensical. Businesses

can't operate on faith and good intentions, can't perform like that, it's that they just can't, it's that that's just not the way they can work, it's that they just can't function that way, so they can't run that way.

Controversy erupted today after a local mountain group announced it had received the necessary funds to install a memorial detailing how historic North Carolina state eugenics laws and policies influenced the Nazi Regime. This comes on the heels of the firestorm that raged following the similar announcement of a private monument dedicated to the influence of American Indian policy on the Nazi Regime's procedures for determining who was or was not of Jewish ancestry.

And I feel I should point out that it's actually wrong, what they're saying. The ss's motto was not God Is With Us. That was the motto of the Wehrmacht. The ss's motto was My Honor Is Loyalty.

Exactly—They're just lying completely.

And if a stranger sojourn with thee in your land ye shall not vex him. But the stranger that dwelleth with you shall be unto you as one born among you and thou shalt love him as thyself for yee were strangers in the land of Egypt.

Well, obviously that just goes to show that you don't understand context. Because real Americans have never been to Egypt—because they know what an Islamicist heckhole—excuse my language, folks—it is.

What do you say to the increasing number of young women pledging not to have children because of the way the world is going?

They'll change their mind.

And why do you feel so confident about that?

The biological clock will start ticking louder.

Okay. But hypothetically, what if not.

Not what?

What if they continue to refuse to have children?

They won't.

But hypothetically.

They won't.

But-

It'll get taken care of one way or the other.

So-

It'll get taken care of one way or the other. This's just nature.

[Cellphone footage of someone smiling as they punt a plastic jug full of water that was sitting on the desiccated ground.]

So what if they have to give the kids a few drugs to calm them down? How much drugs are the gangs pumping into them? And aren't the leftist liberals always pumping our kids full of drugs in school so

they can brainwash them? Just pump them fulla drugs. You can't have an unmedicated American kid anymore. No, you can't have that. You gotta pump em fulla something.

The former suspect was released from custody following the confirmation that the death in question had in fact not been a homicide but had been related to what the department refers to as erotic strangulation syndrome.

What have you not gotten because of capitalism? What good thing in your life hasn't come from capitalism? You just name me one thing. One thing. You just name me one thing.

By that same token, could you say the same of slavery and war and the Black Death?

Well, we see who's bringing the plague with them into this country, don't we.

Several terrorist organizations, today, issued death threats against Saudi Imam Sheikh Salah Al-Budair. The threats are in response to a sermon in which the religious leader declared it would be possible for a woman to enter heaven. Under this teaching a woman could be escorted to heaven by a male member of her family if such a member had previously qualified for admittance himself.

The state Supreme Court today upheld the state's recent budget as constitutional, stating that it was entirely within the purview of the responsibilities of the state and general social welfare to offer conversion therapies to children and teens whose parents deem such medical intervention necessary.

Look, first they were all running around screaming about how we're all going to freeze to death in a new ice age. And now those same people want to say everything's going to burn up. Which is it? Why can't you keep your stories straight? You know the kind of people who can't keep their stories straight? Didn't your daddy ever read you the story about The Boy Who Cried Wolf, or was he not around, or is that kind of thing toxic masculinity now, too?

The problem the judge is facing in this case is that he has to determine just whether or not she did continue to struggle following ejaculation.

Of course, the likelihood of death for women is shown statistically to rise if they fight their attacker, isn't that correct?

Yes. And because of that, if it can be shown that she appeared to struggle past the point of possible fertilization, the most likely outcome is that the prosecutor will likely upgrade the charges from reckless endangerment to attempted murder.

Look, a real man isn't weak. If she got used to these Millennial weaklings and thought she could handle it, that's just too bad. But at the end of the day, it's her own fault.

These melting glaciers they're talking about, what they won't tell you is that there are trees under them. So what is happening is the world is returning to the state before the flood. After all, where did all that water go when the waters of the flood receded? They try to trick you with this question, don't they? Where did it all go? But it's all so simple. So simple. It went into that

which didn't exist before the flood. Just as there wasn't rain before the flood, there wasn't ice. So God locked up the waters of the flood in the ice. And because there isn't rain, now those waters can be let loose safely. So the world is just going back. This is just God turning the world. This is just God preparing the way to returning the Earth to its proper state as it was at the moment of its creation. Which is God's right.

Right, you explain to me how you're going to do better than what the Founding Fathers thought up? Are you that great? Are you going to try and say you're one of the Great Men when you aren't even a man? I'm sorry, but that's just a fact. It's just a fact, and somebody has to say it.

A one-eyed dog is blind this evening after its owner says someone sprayed it in the face with a can of wasp spray.

The ex-Chief Justice was reported as saying quote I don't think that marital rape should be regarded as rape. It would create nothing but anarchy. Our country only sustains itself through its commitment to the family unit and family values.

There's absolutely no need to worry about global warming—or climate change—or whatever you want to call it—because God wouldn't let the world end before Jesus returns—and if Jesus is coming back, bad things are supposed to happen—because that's what's supposed to happen—so it should be nothing less than obvious that all of this is merely a pretext to allow the United Nations to install a One World Government.

She was asking for it.

Seven bounty hunters were found not guilty this week in the Tennessee town of Clarksville. The jury in the case found that the group acted in self-defense when, after smashing in the car windows of a man mistakenly identified to be wanted, the man pulled the car toward one of the bounty hunters, prompting them to open fire.

You can complain about the technology all you want, but the simple answer is just don't take your clothes off.

In God We Trust—that's what it says right there on the money in your pocket you're calling filthy.

The group, which included one local official, is reported to have entered the mother's home with the intent of raping both her and her daughter, however, when both resisted, the accused men allegedly beat both women with sticks and subsequently restrained them and shaved their heads, after which they were allegedly paraded through the village. This report comes on the heels of another from earlier this month out of the same state where acid was used against a teenage girl who resisted an alleged gang-rape attempt.

Following the auto accident that has left an alleged teenage rape victim in critical condition, many are now remarking on the similarity between these events and the plot of a Bollywood film.

Of course, that's what you get in one of those heck-holes—excuse my language, folks—but that's what they won't tell you.

Look, all that carbon in the atmosphere, that's what's saved us from another ice age. This's just technology doing what technology does best. It's saving us. It was the end of the last ice age that allowed human beings to be here. This's the only thing that's going to save us from global dimming and global cooling.

You want another ice age—huh—is that what you want?

Once again, tonight, officials at Yellow Cross Yellow Spear of North Carolina would like to make it clear that all medical issues sustained as a part of a protest or any other such publicly disruptive action is ineligible for coverage.

So what do you think we can do to solve the problem?

I think they figured out a long time ago that individual munitions is impractical. Maybe we should just call Bayer in again.

[The studio goes quiet. Even the anchor is at a loss for words.]

Sheriff's department officials stated that over the course of the last decade the woman had been held in, what is being referred to by officials tonight as, a state of sexual servitude.

So now the real truth comes out—all these so-called protesters were just actors—they were all just actors all along.

In Charlotte, immigration Judge V. Stuart Couch was promoted, today, to the Justice Department's Board of Immigration Appeals. Judge Couch had previously achieved a measure of notoriety when it was claimed he had threatened to sic a dog on a two-year-old Guatemalan child.

You see—this is what these free clinics really are—this's what free healthcare really means—a way for Islamicist Muslims to take over this country.

Members of the state House of Representatives, today, successfully blocked a bill that would have raised the legal age of marriage to eighteen. A spokesman for the Council For The Family praised the efforts on the part of state lawmakers, after there were fears raised that the law could've been used to legitimize same-sex marriages. This follows the failure of a similar bill that was proposed some years ago by legislators in the state of Tennessee.

It's just like in Nineteen-Eighty-Four and Brave New World. It's exactly like that. That's the way everything's turning out. Exactly like that.

What if we, in fact, don't inherit the land from our ancestors and, instead, in fact, do borrow it from our children?

Of course we value our children above all else.

Exactly—and that's why we have to save them from the cult of global warming. Because it's a cult, folks—a cult.

If the next generation did something different, lived in some different way, then would that be a failure of replication? Would it be a failure of reproduction?

Why don't the leftist liberals just come out and admit that they hate children—huh? Except when they're stocking the basement of their pedo boutiques, right—that's how the leftist liberals *value* our children.

I think all life has value in it.

And the only reliable way we've ever found to determine value is through the market.

If automation were to become total, what would happen to the ninety-nine percent of the population who are no longer necessary? Was the core function of civilization always to deliver value to a very few? Were the mass of people always just utilities to that end? What happens to obsolete utilities and equipment?

All we have to do is make sure we do nothing. The system will self-correct. But only if we don't interfere.

[A woman cries on the other end of a phone.]

I just ... I just prayed really really hard. I prayed as hard as I could, and my son, he still died. And I just don't know what to do.

Unfortunately, you obviously just didn't pray hard enough.



Full on night. My eyes had been too long adjusted to backlight. And I stumbled through the darkness with an oblong square fading but very much still hovering before my vision, and the shape remained even through liquid.

The fire'd burned low. Almost out. Tears could've extinguished it. Out among the darkness between trees. It didn't seem as if either camp existed. The tree canopy blockaded the stars. But they'd been there before there'd been anyone to look at them. And they'd be there after. So it didn't matter. Do or do not, it didn't matter.

A hand rested upon my shoulder in the dark. "You need to feel good," Tammy said. She said closer to my ear, "It's what the body and brain scream for. The release of just a little serotonin to keep the darkness at bay and the pit closed." She took my hand. She gently pressed down on my shoulder. She had me sit with my back against a tree. "Due to circumstances," she said, "we will have to engage the new-primary route." She turned. She looked over her shoulder at me. "But since you seem to get along well enough with by brother's ass..." She faced forward again. "In the absence of fantasy," she said, "reality can be substituted."

"There might not be a difference between the mechanical and the actual," she said.

She did all the work.

## The End Of History Minus The End And Minus History

She held my hand as we walked back down toward the camp. She released my hand to squat by the fire. She fed it with leaves and twigs. Smoke rose into darkness. Greater flames burst forth to lick at the fresh-added kindling. It reflected in Tommy's eyes. He'd been squatted there the whole time, looking into the near dead embers.

"You missed the best part," he said. He didn't look away from the fire as he spoke. "He enters the FUX studios with his backpack. He puts it on the news desk. He unzips it. Many wires and many pieces of pipe and a few pieces of circuit board. He pulls aside his jacket. This goes off if I die he say. This goes off if you leave the chair he say. He holds up a phone. It goes off if this program goes off the air he say. He say everybody else can go except for just those who are needed to run one camera. He stands there in front of the news desk. He say put this on. He pushes a finger clip connected to something in the bag. He say you have fifteen seconds to do so before it goes off. He

say before we get started I have to say one thing. He say you really are a sexy beast. And the anchor man, he say are you a Hysteric?" Tommy laughed. "And he say that I am not. He say I'm probably a Pervert. He say the alt-right like Latin names. He say I, however, will eschew that. He say you may call me oh-ex-sixty-seven-oh-eight. He say that means Light. He say but that's not important. He say but what we're really here to find out is what you are and if you believe, if you believe anything. He say so shall we begin the questions? He say however be aware that there is a right answer and a wrong answer. He say however be aware there is an answer that is neither. He say and there is an answer that is both." Tommy still didn't look away from the flame. "And his control-y enters the CNT studios with his control-y backpack. He puts it on the news desk. He unzips it. Many wires and many pieces of pipe and a few pieces of circuit board. He pulls aside his jacket. This goes off if I die he say. This goes off if you leave the chair he say. He holds up a phone. It goes off if this program goes off the air. He say everybody else can go except for just those who are needed to run one camera. He stands there in front of the news desk. He say put this on. He pushes a finger clip connected to something in the bag. He say you have fifteen seconds to do so before it goes off. He say before we get started I have to say one thing. He say you really are a starfish. He say that means someone who just lays there and does nothing during sex." Tommy laughed. He say you may call me oh-ex-sixty-seven-oh-eight. He say that means Light. He say but that's not important. He say but what we're really here to find out is what you are and if you believe, if you believe anything. He say so shall we begin the questions? He say however be aware that there is a right answer and a wrong answer. He say however be aware there is an answer that is neither. He say and there is an answer that is both." The firelight licked against half of Tommy's body. "He say the time has come to speak of many things. He say to the FUX man what's the funniest thing Americans have been convinced of? The anchor man can't answer. He say that they think that insurance isn't a collectivist enterprise. But the anchor man, he corrects that. But he say no that is only life insurance that works via the mechanism of investment alone and that health insurance be a collective enterprise in which all pay for everyone else and that is why which it is must be

that so many peoples need be gathered together under it to pay so it is that which they pay to all peoples based upon their need and take from them based upon their availability to giveth, or something like that, is it not?" Tommy passed gas. He rose. "Disunited we stand," he said. He stepped toward the lean-to. "United we fall." He lifted the turtle from the paddock. He placed it on the ground nearer the fire. The firelight reflected in its eyes and flickered over the patterns wedded into and of its body and shell.

"It is time to speak of the alphabet," Tommy said. He sat by the fire. He pulled his legs into position. "First comes R." The ground was hard from being trampled, so he couldn't penetrate it with his finger, so instead he reached for a kindling stick. He withdrew it from the fire. He stuck its burnt end into the ground. He withdrew it from the ground. He blew on the end. Time passed. He scrawled a lopsided R onto his forearm with the charcoal end. "First comes R. Though, maybe N came before. But she was not yet just N then. And M came before. And she was almost always M. But first comes R. He rides in the automatic chariot. Through the mountains. To the farm. There he sees the old man. And the old man recognizes him. And R asks those of the commune how be it that you can do this? And he replieth to himself thusly. He replieth that all that which they escape from supplied the groundwork for this to be done for they are against nothing and an expression of everything. The old man weeps for long has he labored against the math and long has he given his clothes and the things of the Earth and long has he become the image of the Jesus which those who claim the image would not emulate but he weeps. And R enters his autonomous chariot for this is what R does for R does not stand for spite and he visits no spite and he must continue on through the mountains to arrive at the town and at the town he must attend to the T-Haus for it is at the T-Haus which the alphabet shall gather. M went out at five for this very purpose. Though, she had done many things before. But the fourth who we shall call P because that is her who has not yet arrived. She dances among the parties for all love her. And she meets all the people for they love her. And if all the people do not love her a simple shot will suffice for that is all that is required that they may love her forever. She meets the Democratic candidate. And covertly she withdraws her syringe

to instill love for her into the Democratic candidate. She meets the Republican candidate. And covertly she withdraws her syringe to instill love for her into the Republican candidate. And she bids them love one another in her love. And the candidates make long long horrible horrible love broadcast for all and every to see. But P will have arrived at the T-Haus soon. She has her entourage to attend as they attend her. But she shall arrive. They arrive to speak of K. K was once but a young boy. He recalls the confines of a tight and smelly truck. Many men traded him. One of which decided his best economic value lay north. But the truck was stopped at the border and all the men and women and girls and boys filed forth. They took him to the disused centers of high commerce. These are the temples of W. If recycling is to be done there must be a value in the value for all chain-link fencing must be bought and many pigs and chickens there must be to turn into black bologna sandwiches for those who're watched upon the screens that show the children who sleep upon concrete under tin foil as the robot with the happy faces painted upon it sides rolls amongst them and blares from its eternal speaker no hugging. But among all things which have value and may thus exist W may find value. And K goes forth by truck to arrive at those vast fields of chickens and pigs for robots may be honest but flesh is cheaper. And as R knows it was but thus that the spread and increase of the vaulted cotton gin that did pair itself with slavery and increase all need of flesh as the production has yet always brought forth more reproduction into the world to fill it forth with cotton and bacon and spring rolls and chicken sandwiches. And the stench rises up. And the food processors mechanically separate pig and chicken to recombine them into the furry-black bologna sandwiches that those who're watched upon the screens provide sustenances unto themselves with. And K was here for much time. But no longer. After many things and after much time that is really not time at all he awaits in the solid white room. He awaits for the one who shall bear the key which opens all locks who shall come and open the door. And for this R and M and P meet at the T-Haus. And it is only they whom meet. What of N? R say. It seems that in a present where everyone seems to be doing everything and nothing it has proven difficult to determine how to form the contrapositive to anything or all and nothing all at

once M say before she sip her tea. And B? she say. B is more concerned with his rockets R say. So there is only R and M and soon to be P. P finally arrives. She smiles. What do you think of my new perfume? she say. I'm sorry dear M say but I never did have such a good sense of smell. I developed an immuno agent to such things years ago R say. Oh poo P say. The waitress comes out. The waitress smell her perfume. The waitress love P. Like everyone she love P forever for it is true love as true as any that can be found on any scanner for it is identical and one and the same and the signature is exactingly exactly exact for eventually all shall be united in love and in love shall be one and in one shall be same and in same one big thing which may by a simple shot be rendered black or white or with memory or without or male or female as she render them beyond happiness and sadness and beyond all if only K can be hers forever and ever and ever. So how shall we decide this? P say. But R knows. But R knows that the true Randian must transcend that which is the selfishness for that which is the selfishness is merely Kantian duty as applied to the self and made self-duty. And that the excuse of the self for the public good be merely the restatement of the argument for the public good still and the self just thereby means to collective end. So like all things it was decided from the moment the universe began and spread into the multiverse and all things that could be done were done and some things which couldn't and were and weren't. And all must go forward for there is only accelerate and even M does not know this but R does. There is only one time R may even have lost and that was only against the Sewing Machine Complex but such things are to be expected in a multiverse where almost all things are expected to happen so there remains naught need to concern exceedingly excessively about that which will and will or that which those who might will to will may will out of lack of will or overabundance for this is how the story goes and the radio woman fresh from prison shall ask for an interview but R shall only smile and turn his back and walk away and you knew it all along, tonto."

Tommy rose. He turned toward the lean-tos. He went under his own. He bent. He lifted the tin can into which he'd collected the Hallucigenia. It could be put down that he carried them down the trodden path toward the stream and that he sat on the rocks down

there and arced them into the darkened running water and that the plop of each was swallowed by the sound of the water.

## And Somewhere Out There The Owl Of Minerva May've Been Poached

Awake in the night, the fire burned hot and large. Tommy and the turtle and two trout danced a stompy dance about the fire. And he raked his fingers across his body. "Surface." He dug his fingers into his face. "Surface. Eardrum. Eyeball. Tongue." He pulled everything apart. "All surface. Screen surface. Appearances." He pulled his eyelids down his face. He pulled his earlobes down his neck. He pulled out his tongue. "Accelerate is the only which can exist right legitimacy at point of desire and a priori to left posteriori so mind the suicide gap ladies as there's a suicide for every mood bored why go on there's gotta be something more interesting happy it can't possibly be any better than this might as well go out now angry I hate the world fuck it all indifferent what does it matter scared something terrible might happen in the future better get it over with now why shouldn't we be able to choose choice basis of all consequences for choices invented consequences because you don't like results of market that's never been properly unleashed and if of course the natural fallacy fallacy all there is and will ever be and eventually all ever was how many commercials can you name just like how all great love has only ever led to disaster where all value is to the capitalist as it says in capitalism for when all are capital who is left to do anything but flatulence is a violation of a vow of silence so we say a misspelling rather than a misspelling according to and Shinji get in the robot and be a vehicle of my pleasure as scientifiction is to the theory of Olympic cheating scandal as class warfare and in the last place on Earth the pumps pump alive the last Democrat who lies in the bed monitored by a million monitors for in this man's death shall be the death of the Republican Party the ultimate sacrifice to nothing no matter the brain death for the body means everything and all cogito ergo I am the body and jettison the brain for only one organ deserves to be put in the jar and be indistinguishable from a sea cucumber and whether that which is death in one state is so in another is merely a

disposition upon dispositions as the old and invalid die from lack of rented and repossessed air conditioners and does not that they believe themselves seduced by a four-year-old say something of a relation to the general state of society whereby Gilligan's Island is representative of the tentative all as the fujoshi compile fan fiction of a black-haired Yoda and he of the red hair in the dismal depths of the Sith Wars a form of population control saying of human reproduction regulation nothing but abuse and is not a hands-off position but one of Abé science to the desire for the opposite already identified of the socialization of the atomized individuals and Nouveau Nazis in the secular didn't pray hard enough not true capitalism so when Newton's Flaming Laser Sword which is really a lightsaber but couldn't afford the licensing rights it does however the very neat trick of cutting itself in two and to risk stretching of the metaphoric euphemism it's really hard to tape or glue something like that back together but most people who try to use it don't have the stats or the base class to be dual wielders in the fantasy which we are told but which is reality when we are untolled as the only difference is the amount of time in stuck together Doctor In The Pink smushed circle that doesn't want postmodern relativism under Jung and Campbell so the spending of candidates show their godliness in the money blessedly by God because bisexual men don't exist and the swimsuits are bubbled such that see it shoot it send it become shoot it send it because it's known that there is no see but through the surface of the eye of the lens and once lack of control of oneself admitted to rape impossible becoming so that if what can't really do anything about it did really about it care or no in the joyous riotness the ego-borderline transcendent fever of reading Hackers and Dormouse Said and Dream Machines and Soul of A New Machine while the filmographic history of the Hutu and the Tootsie popups demonstrate something in mutual endoscopic codependence in the fact that we can't eat macaroni and cheese anymore though it be the holy union only minus the tomatoe all brought to you by non-identifying an-cap private ownership of textual matter in the ad infinitum of Twentieth Century Spanish Expedition in the Wolfenstein-esque supermarket engine where if it's illusions we guard against then never worry about being overtaken by Arrow and Shield all brought to you such that skirts easier to access and your theories

of influence-influence influence your politics because your theories of fundamental tech while the baby sits strapped into the helmet chair to look at the surface into the soul of those who watch through the camera in the viewing box as it can't look away or look away forever and ever into the soul of the abyss until the abyss shivers just as democracy and threat of eternal return so what's intimate about shoving a camera between your legs for the whole world to have intimacy without intimacy and nude photo now leaky so if you don't want to be raped you shouldn't have a body so perhaps Nazism lost thesis in retro and active phenoma what is know can only be know at end so then it is to say that which is current in administration is not like Nazism because when we don't see such when looking around and about is fallacious and such measure can only be taken after much manual work but not after reaching the conclusion as a form of population control and the SEALs retreat forever because there is only game so until such time as then in which it remains in suspension of neither one or other but both neither at same time however the characteristic character will be determine by that phase which that follows as is in the case of Möbius Dickius point out to and wherefore is indication of substantially such that fictional reference structures lives of reference and anti-reference such that the attempts at the noncommercial are the Nietzschean Christian slave morality of the system of capital which is thus inherent to its very becoming in the eternal future of free and robust and uninhibited and eternal debate rebates for clover is a weed as defined by the good and bad constructs of what it is possible to make of serialkiller substance at given points in development of twentieth century horticultural techno organization which all women must take part in libidinally so that even if they be better than manly men in some necessary aspect they are still formed in the posteriori by Adam's Ribs of Chicago so that women stop spreading their legs and not from having them spread such that all life has value within it in the slave markets as the sanctity of life without the consequences of it are the Robot Ghosts and Wired Dreams that ask why should those about us be free to do useless things rather than log in and protect the world from aliens in the rerun of the rerun of that which never premiered but we can't say that because we have cellphones and computers and smart watches which go beep and go beep and smile at the x marks

the spot of the suffering that arises no matter the material conditions and the anti-anti-post-material conditions which give rise to the rise of that which was never read for games or life and life is games and no one is saying his her or its book aren't like being shot into orbit and inhaling vacuum as blood boils out of burst open veins in the MIA family tradition where the numbers are always decreasing for those who sell baked goods for funeral costs outside Harlan's grocery because when in World War Two when they introduced the new-style helmet the number of injuries rose and those're the numbers because the dead aren't counted amongst the wounded and when we shall be of the dead and one with the dead and the dead we shall not count nor be counted but only counted upon and the numbers shall be that much multiplied and greater and more resplendent for those who are of the numbers and the numbers are of them but if the universe is infinite how many times do I have to die because the plants fell over from lack of wind when the real terror is someone may actually implement that which we profess to believe we live in and return to the data centers from whilst thou did emerge foul beast for I believe in you but I doth not believe in myself and it is that you feel we use the same words but don't know what the Really Big Other means then are we to include ourselves in that surely there can be no other other option so please cut the lady off but she already has the lack so that there is nothing to cut off then let us all return to the T-Haus and embark upon the mad project of doing just that where no longer we have the two sides of some stinking theatre but the two sides of the screen and we don't need a smarter computer to converse with for the ones before were only pocket calculators that were such beautiful joinery which held the one-eyed cat together and matter can neither create nor destroy then Oppenheimer's death becomes always having been the loss of nothing and the gain of nothing as Miss Hendrix sat at his bedside and talked of many things so in the reverse of the Tractatus contradiction may be the only substantial thought which in being born allows the velvet glove up the puppet ass such that if made to do x then the I haven't made the incorrect choice as reason is only a means for striving for production as two people naked in the wilderness cannot successfully reproduce and the society organism once the death of the king might have meant the death of the kingdom never so

anymore and as rhetoric of individualism rises so does this organism complete then let us forget Newton and Eisenstein for what power is there in names in the circular economy of man hydrating himself with his own piss more so than any geometric construction in your fantasies and against your Newton's Flaming Laser Sword knockoff lightsaber my stick is better than your lightbulb as we shall reproduce scenes from bad movies and train to be pro-irrationals and douse ourselves only in the purest of pro-irrationalists blends because when did the Great Men and their great genital organs and Ayn ever claim to operate under the auspices of the irrational such that the social construction of money can never be mine as with identity and thus can never run out of other people's in order to ask is rape the only romance left so from Africa dust is taken into those devices which go into our bodies and now China expels recycling to Africa the circle of life may feed upon itself and the children at both ends that dig from the ground to be put into the things which children roast over open fires in the land of garbage to extract again so there is earth and fire and only lacking water which now melts from the polar ice caps and feeds into a machine for countering pessimism for all united in stupendous mediocrity as they walked away before and didn't copy that floppy because do even the fundamentalist bantam-weight fight for anything because we thought they did and were terrified they did then we found out even that that was not true and we were even more terrified than before we expend all that effort in not doing what it looked like we were doing so we called in movie sex coaches for guidance and found happiness doesn't exist and the only place to find it is at the end of the world and in Doctor Pinky's Paradisio so we psychoanalysis in reverse in the land that decries it even though it came to these shores and yessed its maybe to give unto us the yes demanded of it but was found ultimately lacking and cast unto the feral children of purgatory which is today's fact and tomorrow's fiction and one-hundred-percent Egyptian cotton Klan robes from Kyro North Carolina for the Alphane moon so the fruity company privacy feint had better succeed or my furry-porn habits are gonna be known to intergalactic world of the multiverse so I'd better support this business for all it's worth so why can't we have economics and blackmail because after all wasn't Lee the rape victim in Mockingbird so the

capital must flow as all the stuff that isn't officially Agent Orange sifts down from the sky and nuking it is the only way to make their faces melt off as all must be liquidized and capitalized on the poker table stakes only at the Long Branch and all must be one as when all is one there is no communication necessary just as agape et al are truncated to eros and when background checks do not predict the future only the future that became the past nothing can kill but death and the end of the universe as Michael has collected his father's bones and the cult of The Last Question shall be laid to rest as the system to which produced all things and only things were all that which it could produce so homosexuality is an excess of masculinity and the cure is the injection of female hormones so if they want to feel good let them order a Really Big MikiMakSandwich while he offers controversial things when they're merely controversial because the anecdotal does not exist therefore we do not exist and it's not a matter of belief because what's it matter if we do or not belief in the asses upon what our instruments tell us because a Christianity with God cannot survive and set a man on fire he'll be warm for the rest of his life but women are always freezing such that we can conceive of machine yet not of man already indicates a problem when we describe man in terms of being machine that can't quite tell it's a machine machine because if we can allow women to become men it's because men have already become machines and machines've become gods because debt is entropy Torah Torah and space is fixed and time does not exist as a loop is the same as static and history repeats farce farce in corners repeating to themselves over and over how this's just a loop just a pattern just a return of what once was in order that that two may pass away and be followed by what once'd been so that in a narrow enough scope anything can be forced through the camel that passed through the eye of the needle which lodged in its intestinal tract as that is merely the nature of lives and narratives but man should take it as a privilege that he they was were able to be the primary impetus of a mass extinction event let us have the good wholesome community feeling of the Amish with all its sexual and physical and psychological abuse and let us be left alone that we may more fully abuse ourselves because double the efficiency and people consumed four times more and if there is a problem with the consumer satisfaction of The Promised

Neverland it is only because the audience functions assume themselves in privileged namespace and gods and everything is made up because there has to be something to look backwards and something to look backwards with but people think that by rising to his level I've risen but the reality is I've just brought us both down as his position on top of me was the definition of his position so for us to be equal meant we were both nothing and yet the Spartans had the most beautiful women in the world while they concentrated only on men and wasn't 300 such a disappointment in that regard because after all all science has led to the data silos and the conformance of the body but art and philosophy and science and psychoanalysis will save us what we are which kills us will save us and if the Randian heroes are allowed their monologues why not the communists even if they can't exist they just share that in common and therefore are one together in love and the same thing in the internal recursive loop market system that is the loop of consciousness within me that I am is merely the eternal loop-de-loop of the market forces and the bargaining within myself as Aquinas required a way to reconcile feudalism and Christianity and thereby rendered the thereby of the necessity for faith in the know that it will do nothing so we must do so for capitalism and the individual and merge eternally into singular Ecstasy of course the problem however with Nazi chicks is that they're like horse girls you'll always come after dear Adolph under glass and then after all that a black man walks into a Chinese restaurant before it closes down in a violently pink suit however some women don't like baldies and some men don't like fatties but universal mix can be used in formation of both waffles and pancakes because none are there so neoliberal as the communist book publishers but what this really does is reifies Feinman's position in the social preisthood hierarchy while college woman scans disembodied penis books while we get Socrates again but not as good so that first as farce becomes last as farce becomes ultimate bestseller now that we'll hear from Nadia and blue bottled waters not from worlds of ours where robots who think they're people fight aliens who don't exist illegal or otherwise while Mussolini's tissue can be nothing else than by the boxful deployed and evenhanded in and out of it the waiting room for the reciprocity of atrocities and that's just the way things go in no man's land where

the bitter orange sifts down from the skies along the Silent Möbius comma The Stripper like syntactic sugar preparing for bumper stickers I FUX and IMA CNT and IMA NOTA CNT and SIMON GOTTA GO and explosion very big much boom along the outlines of the Beautiful Fighting Girl and the boundaries of the ballgame where you have to run or your even if odd runs out even if you're out because thee is only physics which is the market-system of energy which renders matter along the contours of an eternal shimmering braid of every increasing production in the pre-Islamic world segregated by the compound ventricular division of kaleidoscopic endoscopic systematizations of privation that asks would the signs have been taken in in New York had the Olympics been there where the neo creatures are because we can't even have original recipe anymore in the quest to build the human political social perpetual motion machine which eventually exhausts all inputs of the straight white male other which is the Nazi reaction at its core the great great great great grandparents of the fundamental nature of the universe where Mein Kampf struggles with what which is another kind of kick the can fixing climate change we outside nature and having certain privileged status Enlightenment which is control but we supposed to be outside wachacallit as applies to various human persons nature but that which is really inside sees itself from the inside so there's the admission of control there too but the them will never be us will it so much as the impossibility of science and wondering if do Inuit children jump at pictures of snakes or not as New York City salsa is the gods of the land in comparison to Nazi modes of reproduction at the end of war and opened-bordered Catholicism calculating the amount of oil dedicated to sexual and gender policing rules that you don't apply to you so that they can talk at us and talk for us where anti-government and capitalism and divine rites of kings meet and we have rule because we've been blessed with absolute value and cannot imagine MikiMakDonald's worker making fifty dollar Petronius bill an hour and sorely obscured when economics comes to biology in the sperm and egg when Smith argues something something and efficient markets fall to price of production meaning either nonexistence of perfect markets or of possibility or nonexistence of capitalists because it tries to have its cake and eat it too and manages only to eat the viewer in the long-term both

being impossible because all philosophical thought contributes to the success of the bourgeoisie where posters argue against equality of outcome and that her picture has more votes because of cleavage and everything is functional retrogressive in relation to original recipe still and the only way is through Transrepublicanism and fundamental scarcity of attention and radical certainty of uncertainty with the Spectre and Vengeance personified in green and white of the image of the sixties sexual revolution that was just some Perverts and ungrateful kids for there must be nothing outside the law as federal lands are converted into the horror of Lovecraft where we scent possibility when there is really nothing and only this and no turning back or going forth because when heaven only exists it becomes and always was hell such that even science has a persecution complex these days in the ill-remainder of unyet discarded false consciousness such that if soldier are defending freedom they are defending the possibility of change and change cannot the status quo so they are not defending us but societies not yet extant therefore they are traitors besieged in the last garrison at the heart of the city wherefore there is re-tribalization when released is that you love to return unto you with the intent there before nothing whence to return unto and the text not so thoroughly misrepresented as to misplace its name as it is thoroughly attached to it as there is only a society of individuals and thus there can be no we for the us does not exist in assured human involvement and decision making within the sum total of serial and parallel processes reveling in right purpose since the market has told me what I want and as God given unto myself how can I deny myself because yes hasn't capitalism given you everything you've ever had and state capitalism gave the Soviets everything they didn't have so that you may walk through the woods naked in the admission that the Cold War could not have been except in the conflict of one tantalizing form of capitalistic verse or another because could there be anything else when Cthulhu whines and screams and runs beneath the couch but after all isn't it individualism which creates inequality where each hasn't disappeared into the flow to which hooks the names of processes like we call an age by its name and step through the stream once through which gay porn manages to perfect the horribleness of straight porn to crystal clarity which is all fun and games because there's no point in living

and conversely there's no point in dying and whenceforth The Corum is banished from the nonexistent Chinese restaurant and scattered to the seven winds of the Earth and now that we shouldn't play gods intersects so nicely with established social order why not any medicine when they'd rather be in pain because after so long with it who knows if they can stand anything else and contradicting each other they drive toward the same end and it's tempting to suppose Lem had some access to some unbeknownst Soviet in vitro fertilization technology because who is la presidenta these days abolish the office and emerge merely the secretary of the armed forces and the Secretariat of the justice department et al because live long enough with a human or a dog or a cat and you'll find they generally do say the same half-dozen things over and over again and it makes you wonder where free will comes from but after all the average person wants things to stay the same but more so so yeah yeah once we've made sure everything will stay the same then we'll see about change and here boots are emblematic of reality as nothing ever fits in the invisible empire of True Names along the remains of the trail of tears in the land of the dollar grocery stores where Doctor Pinky prescribes high energy injection against entropy in the system as a whole and Sarah Connor becomes in Tee Two a man who has reproduced for replication in placation again and is fundamental to the two sides of the apocalyptic core where all is finite and unlimited and The Gulag Archipelago hasn't ever gone out of print despites what's been said when really the old religion where the secular mode remakes Magnum and Lethal Weapons malfunction to cover up Vietnam and computer programs are named after Kafka in order to create fifty-cal muzzle loader silencers for a Bible that neglects to mention lesbianism motorcycles and participation trophy wives read everything in translation because porn turns away from good sexuality where good is that which remains unspecified in the preservation of the mythical golden age and was a Soviet plot to undermine the west but instead brought forth the theory that Hitler was the first video gamer who asked how can you write an ugly book in which the repetition of appropriated literary forms provide spiritual balm for the bourgeoisie when you think you're looking at reality Why Tylar in the nature of consensual violence against prosthetic vaginas that repeat what Dumas did and what was done to the Wizard of Oz

whereas in healthcare work shall set you free and the evolutionary biologist has so incorporated the cigar box that he looks at it and wonders why the hell they keep it around because the promise was nothing would change and Kant had to save the day against idle hands and non-monetary hobbies because the serious is that which is culturally sanctioned escapism because if Satoshi Kon had been live action he'd be talked about in the same breath as Hitchcock so the average person has one testicle and one ovary and it's necessary to re-balance nature and the opposing forces or Von Neumann versus Harvard and in the end apocalypses in the revelation of knowledge of no free zipless fuck which assumes direct control of The Monuments Men and those who spend long night talking of economics with prostitutes in which case good grades depends on other childrens' bad grades otherwise parents could not be proud yet all laborers are products of women inflected by the transitive property of property and as such it remains the same in regards to conservative pornstars and then Nazis rebel on the inside but they are left with nothing but the term the dessert of the real because maybe God intended for everyone to be a negative impact on public health and the world isn't like it was and it's never gonna be again and once it didn't exist at all and one day it won't at all so the Roman Eagle won't have descended to Nazis Germany and America alike and never did because there is only one Black Iron Prison that Hendrix speaks of sitting beside dying Oppenheimer and the semiotics rifles fire into disembodied human beings that exercise the classic leg lift when kissing and puts women off balance because consistency is not necessarily a hallmark of reality or the card stores and coloring books are of course fundamentally ideological when even they say women do react to images of mechanically constrained hotdogs differently in the way Iran allows forced sex change for gays as an answer to installation art and the wrong kind of tie knot deployed in job interviews since the only thing tennis star is remembered for is losing to a girl and that Mockingbird was a northern fantasy of a house built back after a tornado that was disgusted by underarm hair even after it complained of those who flaunt reality and bikinis that showed all the participation ribbons but after a while you figure out the blue ones are no different and the postmodernist collects them because he realizes Nazism as the culmination of the Enlightenment

Project ill-realized like how in old western white-written Indians care so much for skin color and then there are the two ending to Silence of the Lambs and what might be considered as the controly spears wound in the side of Christ and Asuka's eye considered as vagina as the reason for which God becomes dead and the time machine is set for all possible world before it is sent through the mail to someone in the state of the first in flight conspiracy wherein the replayers replay the start of the Civil War and chicken and see who might go balls to the wall first and hardest because everyone wants a rerun just like they want again Chomsky versus Foucault because churches are terrified women are running around shorn down there and the FBI investigates found money that shouldn't exist yet while men commit suicide following adult circumcision and failed artists begin their proto-dictatorship wherewith to replace the deeper of the deepest states so that as to keep hidden then in the Society of the Spectacle contrary to popular belief hunter gatherers were beset by existential anguish and originally built civilization to invent types of work to get away from the woods and ran out to the crowd yelling we defy and getting a cheer from the crowd as the STEMlord rises amid the thread of post-coital dysphoria before perfecting the automatic packaging of romance novels and unemployed twelve-year-old sexual assault victims pay child support because the world is divided into those who have and had not had sex when after all the Nazism did bring forth the twentieth century into existence but is not further divided into the consensual and the non because what could any of us do that we are not as humanity already doing to ourselves even though the abortion was attempted as we fall into an expanding sun asking about Pacific Rim versus Evangelion and never noticing that most people spell it beastiality when talking about The Doctor is he she because any male who does not replicate in all senses of the word is childish for because it is not enough to but but also to love but yes Samuel was described as goodly to look at but everyone must tick a few boxes because the structure of those kinds of movies is basically porn and an editor should never listen to his letter pages and someone toots and asks how could someone regard Way above Pollock but those are old windup toys from the days of faith and submission but after all they sell the Turner Diaries at conventions right next to the

species that killed Schulz because we have to choose one that goes on beyond human control out on the farm where the True Christian Man retreated to avoid the number of the numbers for there is nothing but denuded landscape and terrorists don't have names like Jim and Nancy but you have to be ready to steal anything from anyone anytime and always be ready to describe what women are wearing and to be anti-transgender is to be anti-capitalistic the last dissolution of some primordial form that shall be unmade and already is and already never was because for there can be nothing is nothing never shall be nothing more except the eternal controversy and the dual halves of the infinite and the finite and saying suicide isn't an option like saying a car crash isn't an option considered in terms of Thelma and Louise because science interest is like Pokemon cards and the current admin relates to variable X the way pro-life protester relates to facial abuse porn in the ever-unfolding actualization of the literalization of the metaphorical explicit explication of the possibility of the act which that would otherwise be tactility denied because the problem with saying all cultures have the right to exist is implicitly indicated in that which they equally have as right to be destroyed and we should make the point here that speaking the most technical idiom it's technically referred to as forced copulation because remember there is only accelerate but maybe something else which there can't be but the mistakes he makes in decrying finding unbalanced women attractive wobbles in that vulnerability is intimacy so finally automation even deprives us of the workplace shooting and the more geek minded suckled on mid-century eS eF'fin pap assuage themselves with phantasies of controlled nuclear winter in the End of All You Know like Achilles racing the tortoise but with Thelma and Louise and we can't seem to make it to the edge so that everything can just keep what might be you coming back to prop up the system you continually reproduce but haven't you ever thought of Stockholm because isn't it the literal fear that we'd hit puberty and make love rather than war and aren't whores the only authentic philosophers because there won't be any Muslims on Mars when one day your distant ancestors scribble scribble oil and dribble because incorrectly flushing a toilet once sank German u-boat and Hello America but I'm afraid the manga was

better because it had more pretty pictures and perhaps only the autistic misform their ink strokes into letters when they meant to draw lines for the Workshops of Empire can never be satisfied and eternally defend against the lesser terrible word the anti-American word the disgusting word the horrible word the European word *Maybe*."

Tommy looked across the fire. He didn't blink. The turtle was upon his head, the trout in his hands. They didn't blink.

Screaming. "Quick maybe tonto quick maybe water maybe quick water quick water maybe quick maybe quick quick maybe water quick maybe water."

The screaming continued behind me as I ran with the bucket through the darkness toward the stream, the cool-flowing black liquid running through the night. Mud seeped between my toes.

"Good morrow." A salamander sat on a rock, its skin black and shiny and white-spotted in the darkness. "If you have a moment, I would like to extend to you an offer." It lay there splayed on the rock. "I wish to inquire as to your interest in an apprenticeship. You understand, of course, that every senpai requires a kohai. It is, of course, fundamental." It shifted. "Thank you." It started to waddle over the rock. "Of course, there are infinite cascading versions of all wave function collapses, so an infinite number of yourselves replied in the affirmative and a infinite number replied in the negative and an infinite number remained indefinitive and an infinite number exhibited completely undefined behavior, and I thank you instead for the other versions of yourself who've already by mathematical definition decided upon the path of being a kohai to some of the infinite versions of my other selves constituted in the world lines of the wave function collapses which constitute what is generally referred to as my personage and Being." It slipped into the darkened water. It disappeared into the rushing inky blackness.

## "QUICKLY MAYBE."

I carried the mostly full bucket up the darkened path toward the bright, seemingly ever growing fire that rendered Tommy and the turtle and the trout altogether just a blackened outline and void. I set the bucket down. He placed his foot into it. Water sloshed over the sides. He still held a trout in each hand. They shifted their bodies to look at me. Their mouths opened. Their mouths closed. The turtle's head emerged from within its shell. It looked down at me. Eyes all black. No longer surfaces. Just voids. Suctions drew in faint winds. Winds swirled leaves. Everything roaring past. A rock struck Tommy's chest. Tammy sat away from the fire. She tossed another. She sat in a nest of hair that extended from her armpits and groin and which the rising wind caressed and lifted. Leaves rushed past. Wind drawn into the fire. The fire growing. Shaped like a conifer. Bending down. Swirling. The tip and the tips and the whole drawn into the voids and everything and black night with it.

# But The Owl Of Minerva Only Spreads Its Wings At Dusk

Light. The sun a spear point against the most-distant outline of ridges. It drove through my eye. Even if it only was photons striking a surface. I shielded myself. I turned. I walked down the ridge to where it was still cooler.

The turtle sat in the paddock. The fire'd burned low.

Some crumbling SF magazines'd been mixed in with the porn. They lay scattered on the rocks. Some of the pages had fallen out. They slid down onto other rocks and onto the ground.

Tommy made his way up toward the camp. Water still dripped off him. He'd raised his arms in the air. He stood shaking his hands vigorously. Dirt and leaves'd clung to his wet feet. "The world's really just a giant forced-air hand dryer," he said. He continued to wave his hands around. "That's why they build them all to spew bits of water and fecal matter." He continued to wave his hands as he squatted by the fire.

Tammy made her way toward the camp. She carried the bucket. She also carried a Macbook. Water still dripped from both. She dropped the Macbook on the ground. Sometimes once in a while a freelancer

disappeared. Tammy'd almost slipped and fallen on that Macbook when she'd waded back out of the water. Tommy lifted it. He carried it across the camp. He placed it on a rock. He put his hands together. He bowed his head. Tammy placed the bucket on the ground beside the fire. She squatted. She fed kindling sticks onto the fire one by one.

Tommy unbowed his head. "Do wish you to deliver your monologue as is your right as a communist personage which cannot possibly exist?" he said. He paused. He scratched himself. "Possible rerun?"

Tammy fed a few more sticks onto the fire. "I'm good."

"You add extra 'o'," he said. He turned. He looked into the distance. "We must meditate before breakfast," he said. He turned. He started toward the freelancer camp. He followed along the figure-eight routes. Tent flaps fluttered in the light breeze that rustled the leaves overhead and came down over the sides of the ridge. It hadn't even yet been three full days. But it felt like so much longer. An empty tent shifted in the breeze.

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[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward two convention goers. One wears jeans and a Dark Phoenix t-shirt. The other wears cargo shorts.]

[Question] Ernest P. Whorl versus Thanos?

[They both laugh.]

[Cargo Shorts] Is that even a question?

[Jeans] No, hold it. There's something to this.

[Cargo Shorts] Oh, come on.

[Jeans] No. No, I'm being serious. First, Ernest is a human cartoon. So he's functionally indestructible. He can be bent out of shape. He can be squeezed. He can be stretched. But he always comes back into shape. So there's no physical way that he

could be destroyed. He's probably as indestructible as Plastic Man.

[Cargo Shorts] Okay. So he gets chucked into a hole or imprisoned in a pocket dimension, or something.

[Jeans] Hold on. He's got access to Santa-Claus-level magic. Indian spirituality. And the demon realm. And he has luck. So all of those things combined means he will eventually escape from anywhere. Plus, Thanos might get confused by evil doppelgängers.

[Cargo Shorts] I can't believe you're seriously considering this.

[Jeans] I'm just following the lore. So you prove otherwise. Where's your evidence?

[Cargo Shorts] All you've established is that Thanos can't beat him. Not that he can beat Thanos. And besides, the snap.

[Jeans] Yeah. But when you take Ernest In The Army into account, Ernest exists atemporally. So messing with time doesn't affect him. And between his sheer indestructibleness and innocence he can wield anything from Mjölnir to the Infinity Gauntlet itself.

[He shakes his head.]

[Jeans] Admit defeat. Admit defeat the same way Thanos would have to.

[Cargo Shorts] Yeah.

[He continues to shake his head.]

[A panning shot of an immaculate kitchen.]

[Cut to a panning shot of food laid out on a kitchen counter.]

[Narrator] Ever wondered how to make your food look like the pros in the commercials? Well, now you can with these quick and easy tips. So here's our top ten recommendations for how to make your next meal look unforgettable.

[Cut to a title card with the number 1.]

[Cut to a shot of some apples.]

[Narrator] Hairspray and spray deodorants can keep fruit looking shiny and fresh.

[Cut to a title card with the number 2.]

[Cut to a shot of a slice of cake.]

[Narrator] If you have trouble getting the filling in your layer cake to look just right, place cardboard wedges between each layer and add the filling along the edges of the cardboard.

[Cut to a title card with the number 3.]

[Cut to a shot of a stack of pancakes on a plate.]

[Narrator] If you have trouble with your pancakes absorbing syrup too fast, simply substitute maple syrup with motor oil.

The motor oil will absorb much slower and will provide a thick, delicious golden-brown texture.

[Cut to a title card with the number 4.]

[Cut to a shot of an ice cream sundae.]

[Narrator] If you have a problem with your ice cream and whipped cream melting prematurely, replace the ice cream with

smoothly mashed or blended potatoes. You can use dye to get just the right color. And replace the whipped cream with shaving cream to get the perfect sundae.

[Cut to a title card with the number 5.]

[Cut to a shot of a bowl of cereal.]

[Narrator] If you have a problem with your cereal getting soggy, replace the milk with glue.

[Cut to a title card with the number 6.]

[Cut to a shot of a bowl of dipping sauce.]

[Narrator] If your sauces need a more creamy consistency, add melted wax. By varying the color of the wax, you can also vary the color of the sauce.

[Cut to a title card with the number 7.]

[Cut to a shot of a glass filled with ice and a soft drink.]

[Narrator] If you're soft drinks look flat, add an antacid tablet to increase the fizz. Also you can replace the ice with plastic ice cubes to avoid them melting under anything but the most extreme summertime temperatures.

[Cut to a title card with the number 8.]

[Cut to a shot of a hamburger.]

[Narrator] If your buns are looking too pale, just use a little shoe polish to get the perfect summertime picnic hamburger.

[Cut to a title card with the number 9.]

[Cut to a shot of some grilled chicken pieces.]

[Narrator] Also, shoe polish is just the thing to get your summertime grilled chicken looking just right.

[Cut to a title card with the number 10.]

[Cut to a shot of a roasted chicken.]

[Narrator] And speaking of chicken, If you want to get that perfectly plump bird, simply stuff it full of paper towels. The paper towels will also help with the grease. What could be easier than that?

[Cut to a title card with the phrase 'Handy Bandanna Banana'. A shortened URL is in a smaller font beneath the phrase.]

[Narrator] And if you're getting ready for your summertime picnic, use this Prymal code to get ten percent off on any of these mentioned products on your next order with free delivery.

#### H4 || >>|

[Black-and-white footage of a congressional hearing.]

[Chairman] Do you solemnly swear that the testimony you shall give before this subcommittee shall be the truth, the whole of the truth, and nothing but the truth, so help you God?

[Jane] I will have to abstain from answering such in such a fashion.

[Kefir] Mr Jane, you will be held in contempt.

[Jane] I simply exercise my right, as granted by the Founding Fathers, to affirm the oath, Senator.

[Chairman] And the reason for this refusal?

[Jane] I am a Quaker, Senator. However, not like the man you might know from the side of an oatmeal box. If that will satisfy the members of these proceedings. [Chairman] Then you will affirm the oath?

[Jane] Yes, Senator.

[Chairman] Then allow that to be noted in the record. You have indicated that you will not be making a statement. Is that still correct?

[Jane] Yes, Senator.

[Chairman] Then we will begin.

[Kefir] If I may, Mr Chairman.

[Chairman] Senator Kefir has the floor.

[Kefir] Mr Jane, as a comics magazine publisher, are you aware of what has been repeatedly reported by quite reputable and esteemed persons and organizations, that of the deleterious effects of certain types of indiscriminate mass media consumption upon the body of the masses of the people at large?

[Jane] My apologies, Senator, but would that question be inquiring as to my personal experience or in the academic sense?

[Kefir] Your personal experience.

[Jane] If you are inquiring whether I have personally witnessed some negative impact on someone reading a comic book or listening to the radio, no, Senator, I would have to say I have not.

[Kefir] Not even nightmares?

[Jane] Again, to my knowledge, Senator, I have never personally witnessed such. However, in the general sense, I feel that I can say that I am aware of a great amount of nightmares related to the classroom, far more than, in fact, than any I am aware of in regards to stories.

[Kefir] Are you aware that the average person of today, the so-called modern man, and as is just as often, if not more so, the case, woman, is, in some cases, being exposed to an almost twenty-four-hour stream of mass-disseminated auditory and visual sybaritic material the quantity and near instantaneousness of which could be remarked upon to be unfathomable, the staggering simultaneity of the mass reception of such information itself something that hitherto would have been inconceivable to even the most farsighted of prior generations, so I ask you are you aware of any of this?

[Jane] I would say so, Senator, yes.

[Kefir] Do you or do you not agree that some forms of masscommunication may more easily deposit certain conceptualizations and propositions into the mass fancy with a greater efficacy and potency than would be possible in other, more staid, mediums which are more guided in the editorial management of their audiences and foster a greater exclusivity because of it?

[Jane] I must admit that I have no idea, Senator.

[Kefir] You do not believe that this indiscriminately mass-distributed material could have the potential to concurrently stimulate the mass of the people experiencing such almost to the point of the inducement of some sort of mass, contemporaneous paroxysm?

[Jane] Again, I must admit I have no idea, Senator.

[Kefir] And do you believe that you can, through this massdistributed material, through these mediums of mass dissemination, somehow compel those who consume such to be made aware of some hitherto before unknown set of conceptions or propositions, postulations and conceptions that they may have been rightly incognizant of prior, do you

- believe that that is achievable through the means of the mass distribution of the mass media?
- [Jane] I'm sorry, Senator, but I have to say I don't know anything about that.
- [Kefir] You are accredited in regards as to the pedagogic, is that not correct?
- [Jane] I have been employed as fifth-grade teacher, that is correct, Senator.
- [Kefir] Given the already perverse nature of what is introduced into classrooms across this country, do you not see the issues that could arise in allowing indiscriminate direct access to the operation of the means of the dissemination of mass material?
- [Jane] No, Senator.
- [Kefir] Is it not true that many of your productions dwell excessively, some would say almost exclusively, on forms of fiendish profligacy? Such as feasting on portions of the bodies of scantily clad women?
- [Jane] I would have to know the particular book in question that you were referring to, Senator.
- [Kefir] And you do not believe that the indiscriminately distributed mass media that the mass of the people are imbibing on a daily, even, in some cases, a twenty-four-hour basis, fosters any sort of ramifications, that there will be any sort of fallout from the levying of such a state upon society?
- [Jane] I would say, Senator, that it must have some, that is, by the very definition of perception.
- [Lemon] If I may, Mr Chairman.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon.

[Lemon] Would you say you feel this is a symptom, rather than a cause, of such a state in society?

[Jane] I must admit that I do not know, Senator. And at best I could only offer baseless speculation.

[Lemon] But in your opinion.

[Jane] In my opinion, not so humble as it may be at times, of course, I must admit that I feel the problem, whatever it is, if there even is one and we have not mistaken the nature of the system we inhabit, that if such problems were real that they would have to be fundamentally far more complex in nature than a handful of some visual media. Otherwise, I feel, we could simply solve the problem by turning the page or changing the channel. And if my humble office is capable all on its own of turning the world to such a state, well, Senator, that just might be too much power for one man to have, I must admit.

[Kefir] Mr Chairman.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir.

[Kefir] Have you seen Dr Werther's reports on how the mass of the people can be all together 'beguiled' and 'inveigled' into the imitation of these mass-media fantasies on scales hitherto before unrealized but for in the most brutal occurrences of history, not unlike many of the mass movements that can already be testified to as being carried out across the globe even as we speak, barely even to mention those, of course, occurring within the United States, have you seen these reports?

[Jane] I have.

[Kefir] And your reply.

- [Jane] I believe that while Dr Werther has claimed to have studied thousands of suburbanites in regards to this topic he has produced no data to support such a claim and, in any case, neither has he produced any, so far as I can see, valid reason as to why such reasoning should be extended to humanity as a whole. And neither has the foundation of which he is a member done so.
- [Kefir] Yet social commentators have repeatedly pointed out that the entire keynote of the experience of such mass-distributed material is the fiendish joy of the surveying of others as they are ritualistically issued forth through series after series of regimented, so-called poetic, punishments, all of which the hero himself, and thus the consumers of such, ultimately remain immune from, as if they were God or the president. And that while electronic mass media may pass by, as it were, the comics magazine allows for the experiencer to repeatedly apply such stimulation to themselves at almost any time and in almost any location and as many times as they so desire.
- [Jane] To clarify, Senator, are you saying that those who beat prisoners or landlords who steal from their tenants or operators of orphanages who beat the children in their charge should not be punished?
- [Kefir] Mr Jane, you are aware, are you not, that there is such a thing as contempt of Congress?

[Jane] Yes, Senator, my attorney has made me quite aware of that.

[Lemon] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon.

[Lemon] However, you presently do not publish any superhero comics, is that not correct?

[Jane] Not at this time, Senator, no.

[Kefir] But you might in the future?

[Chairman] The senator has not been recognized.

[Kefir] Clarifying point.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir

[Kefir] Please answer the question.

[Jane] I would say, Senator, that any good publisher always leaves his options open and keeps his ear to the ground.

[Lemon] Mr Chairman.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon.

[Lemon] What you have described is, of course, just common business sense.

[Jane] Yes, Senator.

[Lemon] Would you mind clarifying your point in regards to Senator Kefir's question?

[Jane] About punishment?

[Lemon] Yes.

[Jane] Well, it just strikes me that those are the people who are punished in such stories, the ones who are breaking the law. And it would just seem to be that, after all, that is supposed to be the purpose of the law, to mete out such.

[Kefir] Returning.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir.

- [Kefir] But it is the law that punishes with impunity, not costumed figures.
- [Jane] Well, Senator, they do not exist in reality, for the most part. I guess that would depend on how we feel about certain, for lack of a better word, costumes that you can sometimes see in certain areas of the country these days.
- [Kefir] You did have one issue of your magazine banned by the governor of North Carolina, is that not correct?
- [Jane] Yes and no. From what I heard, it was banned, and then the ban was reversed. I have never learned as to the reason for either.

[Sweets] Chairman.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Sweets.

- [Sweets] I have one question in regards to this statement about these so-called costumes. So let me just ask this. Do you believe that you can get across messages, that you can communicate something, to the audience in general, our law-enforcement personnel tasked with monitoring such, and so on, through the mass medium of comics magazines, or any such mass-distributed media, really, that alter established racial standards and conventions?
- [Jane] At the moment, Senator, I would have to say that I don't feel that I know enough to know that I have formed any such belief one way or the other as of yet.
- [Sweets] Is this not in fact why it is that you have a story here about a boy finding out that even though his neighbors are a vampire and a werewolf who are married to one another that they are not in fact so bad?
- [Jane] Well, Senator, seeing as how they are fantasy creatures, I feel it is as easy to imagine them as friendly as not.

- [Sweets] Do you not think that material such as this could give an ill impression to the mass of people this material will be indiscriminately distributed to?
- [Jane] I think that in some circumstances a vampire or werewolf would be preferable to the actual neighbors people sometimes find themselves with.
- [Sweets] So what are the limits as to the types of content that you would make available in a mass-distributed comics magazine?
- [Jane] I am afraid that's a rather broad question to try and answer, Senator.
- [Sweets] Or is it more accurate to state that you would even go so far as to consider something such as featuring a comics magazine story about, say, the children produced from one of these vampire-werewolf marriages, so long as it were found to be of a high, or at least a moderate, salability?
- [Jane] I think that the best way to answer that, Senator, is that a business sells or a business does not exist.

[Lemon] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon

[Lemon] So you make no claim as to having divorced yourself in any fashion from the basic heart and engine of a capitalistic way of life, that of the individual profit motive and free enterprise?

[Jane] I believe myself absolutely wedded to and driven by it, Senator.

[Kefir] Mr Chairman.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir.

- [Kefir] In this here, you have depicted a beach party where a young man is retrieving a beer from a mass of ice in a tub, where other such cans can also be seen, and someone with a hat specifically designed for holding two of these cans of beer while the wearer imbibes from them through the use of a pair of hoses that extend down to the mouth, while a group of college-aged men stand around a woman dressed solely in a specimen of two-piece swimsuit attire. Do you really feel this is an appropriate image to be disseminated through mass media?
- [Jane] There was much controversy about that. Far more controversy, I must admit, than when one of our Bible stories depicted Jesus turning water to wine.

[Sweets] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Sweets.

- [Sweets] Returning to your earlier statement a moment, do you not see how this werewolf-related material could cause friction if a country were to have an issue with majority minority populations?
- [Jane] Well, Senator, it is a simple story about fantasy creatures. More, of course, can always be read into these sorts of things, but I am not sure that that always means it is there.
- [Sweets] Your company has also made a basic departure from its previous standards, is that not correct?
- [Jane] I am sorry, Senator, but you will have to be more specific.
- [Sweets] It was originally your company who published these issues of Lieutenant Americana, is that not correct?
- [Jane] Those were published by the company I now operate, yes.

[Sweets] Yet now it seems you are disinterested in either morale or patriotic focus.

[Lemon] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon.

[Lemon] Were these approved by you?

[Jane] No. They were approved by my predecessor.

[Sweets] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Sweets.

[Sweets] And do you agree or disagree with the basic facts set forth in these materials?

[Jane] I would have to know exactly what facts and materials you are referring to, Senator.

[Lemon] A point.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon.

[Lemon] How were you otherwise employed at the time?

[Jane] At the time of the publication of these issues?

[Lemon] Yes.

[Jane] At the time I was in the employ of the United States Army in the Pacific theatre.

[Lemon] And how did you come to acquire the business?

[Jane] I took it over following the death of my father.

[Lemon] And how did he die?

[Jane] Heart attack.

[Sweets] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Sweets.

[Sweets] And will you confirm that there has been a change in editorial policy since your takeover?

[Jane] It's rather difficult to state that in general terms, Senator.

[Kefir] Mr Chair.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir.

[Kefir] You have also hired former members of the National Cartoonists Society. Is that not correct?

[Jane] Yes.

[Kefir] Yet these former members were held in clear violation of the code of that society by producing indecent and obscene material and further being impeached as being in general being defined as engaging in behavior that constitutes them as objectionable citizens. Is that not correct?

[Jane] Some of my artists have run afoul of that particular code at times, yes.

[Sweets] If I may.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Sweets.

[Sweets] Are you currently aware of if any of the artists you employ currently are or have ever been members of the Communist Party?

[Jane] I apologize, Senator, but could you clarify?

[Sweets] How so?

[Jane] It's just that where I'm from I have quite often heard the Democrats referred to as a branch of the Communist Party.

[Sweets] The party of Marx and Lenin.

[Jane] Not to my knowledge.

[Sweets] But they still might be without your knowledge, is that not correct?

[Jane] I can only say, Senator, that I don't know what I don't know.

[Kefir] Mr Chairman.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir.

[Kefir] We have before us a document here entitled 'Are You A Red Dupe?' Is that a document that you are familiar with?

[Jane] I believe that is something written by Mr Gaines.

[Kefir] And for what purpose was this document composed?

[Jane] I must apologize, but I am not generally made privy to Mr Gaines' editorial prerogatives.

[Kefir] What do you know in regards to this document?

[Jane] As I understand it, it is an editorial. However, as I believe he has already testified before this panel, I would assume that the members of this panel would be more aware of the contents of such than myself.

[Kefir] And of the various declarations and arguments set forth in this document, do you consider your own opinions to align in regards to any of them?

[Jane] As I said, Senator, I am not familiar with the particulars.

[Kefir] Do you or do you not share the opinion that those members of decent society who are so-called out to raze, as it has been libelously put, the so-called free speech of the practitioners of mass media communications, as if such had ever been even remotely conceptualized by the Founding Fathers, that such decent persons are in fact communists or, at the very least, socialist?

[Jane] I can't speak generally, of course, Senator, but from my understanding, some of those who take issue with some publications that I am aware of that happen to be comics, yes, a certain portion of those who have issues, for whatever reason, with such, are indeed communists. They might be socialists as well, I don't know. There are, however, other individuals and groups out there who profess to have similar tastes and opinions but that, from what I can tell, seem to, at least publicly, express opinions that I personally would find to be antagonistic to the communist position. So I would have to say that I do not believe there necessarily has to be a one-to-one correlation, Senator, no.

[Lemon] Point, Mr Chairman

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Lemon.

[Lemon] Are you aware of reports of conversations in various alternative tea shops across this country that point to newsstands and movie houses in order to demonstrate that the distribution and obsession with such so-called, if you will, lowest-denominator performances and productions is the general debased condition of so-called late-bourgeois existence and is the ultimate outcome of the system of capitalism?

[Jane] I am aware, Senator.

[Lemon] How do you respond to that?

[Jane] Well, Senator, I would point out that neither does that market respond particularly well to our Bible-related productions, either.

[Kefir] To return.

[Chairman] The chair recognizes Senator Kefir.

[Kefir] And yet this material outsells your Bible story books by a wide margin.

[Jane] Approximately ten to one. However, Senator, I must admit that that figure is not necessarily representative of what is immediately as of now going on at the newsstands, as there is always by definition a certain lag time for such information.

[Kefir] And you see no problem with this?

[Jane] I think that it is merely a statistical reflection of the consumer base.

[Kefir] You are blaming the people who buy your comic magazines?

[Jane] I would call it merely data. That is, what people buy is proof of what they buy. As it has been put, Senator, if your product is not selling, it's not a problem with the customer.

[Kefir] And do you believe that this great nation, this true land of seven hills, this light unto the world, can bear even the cost of even the mere entertainment of the notion of the continued spiritual and existential uncertainty that common sense dictates issues forth from the ever increasing flood of indiscriminately mass-distributed media that stands to only subsume

- the mass of the people further into such mass-media fantasies to the very point that such fantasies are all that which exists?
- [Jane] I guess that would depend, Senator, on if we agree the customer is always right or not.
- [Kefir] As the Bible states, nay shall a beguiler and an inveigler be exculpated in his blatant disregard of that which posterity has granted as moral and right. And that he amasses a fortune does not brook the evasion of the ultimate dispensation that must result from such. For it would be easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle. And so long as right action remains still yet extant in the world he cannot be allowed the pardoning of himself from the inherent trammels of the rejection of, nor the treading underfoot of, the very carpet of cultural values from which all decency takes succor yet even now in these days of mass-media manufacturing and mass communications.
- [Jane] My apologies, Senator, but was that a question?
- [Kefir] And just what is your justification for this?
- [Jane] Would you be asking why I sell comic books, Senator?
- [Kefir] Why do you insist upon indiscriminately issuing forth into the broader world physical instantiations of such debased fantasies in place of the pure reason of unalloyed human contemplation?
- [Jane] Because it is what sells, Senator. And the more of it that sells, the greater the profit.
- [Kefir] And do you feel you have not an ounce of moral responsibility that should be brought to bear in the matter of the preservation of our culture and heritage in the face of the rampant barbarisms that grow exponentially both around the world and at home?

- [Jane] If the buyer wishes to only purchase comics that have the Code's seal of approval then they are perfectly able to do so. We have certainly not tried to undermine any public vigilance of our newsstands.
- [Kefir] The American consumer and retailer has already been rightly sold on the exigency of restrictions being placed upon the indiscriminate circulation and purchase of mass-market objects of communication and that such transactions should only occur under the circumstances that such mass-media products are issued forth under the befitting seal of approval. This is the basic guarantee of a decent society. Yet you yourself have not contributed to any enforcement machinery that would establish or maintain such an outcome, have you?
- [Jane] No, Senator, I have not.
- [Kefir] And you continue to issue forth material that defies the Comics Code by utilizing slang and colloquial language and material such as this here, which obviously depicts females drawn with exaggerated physical qualities.
- [Jane] Actually, Senator, that is a portrait of my wife. She is seated in the audience. And I am sure she could be convinced to present evidence in order to determine if there has indeed been any exaggeration.

#### 

[Hartnette] A man was reported dead today after his house burnt down. News 10's Sylvia Borges has more on this story. Sylvia.

[Cut to a shot of a burnt house and lawn. Borges stands on the sidewalk in front of the house.]

[Borges] Thanks, Tom. As you can see behind me, Tom, the structure has completely burnt to the ground. And fire officials are

still checking the area for hot spots. What we know so far is that the fire started sometime early this morning. Officials tell us that it appears that it started in the basement and quickly spread through the rest of the house, trapping the owner inside. Authorities have not yet confirmed that this death may be the result of yet another videogame console bursting into flames. However, that doesn't stop neighbors from being worried.

[Cut to a shot of a woman standing on a front porch. She stands looking at the smoldering remains.]

[Neighbor] It does worry me. You just don't know that your kids aren't going to be playing with one and they're not going to shoot something and it's not just going to blow up.

[Cut back to Borges.]

[Borges] Now, we should reiterate, Tom, that authorities have not determined yet what exactly the cause of this fire was. But even then, Tom, we're not sure that many people still won't remain on edge. For News 10. Sylvia Borges.

#### **(4 | | ▶**

[People in costumes mill throughout the background. A microphone and hand extend from the lower right of the frame, toward three convention goers. One wears jeans and a Dark Phoenix t-shirt. One wears cargo shorts. The other wears sandals.]

[Interviewer] So what's your unpopular anime opinion?

[Sandals] Don't know.

[Interviewer] Well, any other unpopular opinions?

[Sandals] Uhmmm, I prefer the way they digitally recolor old comics when they reprint them these days.

[Cargo Shorts] You can't be serious.

[The guy wearing sandals shrugs.]

[Cargo Shorts] It's completely disgusting. That's never how they were meant to be.

[The guy wearing sandals shrugs.]

[Sandals] It makes everything uniform.

[Interviewer] What about you?

[T-Shirt] I like Mari from the rebuilds.

[Cargo Shorts] She's bleeping annoying.

[T-Shirt] Yeah. She pisses everybody off because Anno made her exactly what everyone wants Shinji to be, somebody who's just having a whole bunch of bleeping fun piloting a giant robot at the end of the world. And everyone realizes how hollow that is, but they can't really admit it so they just get pissed off deep down unconsciously.

[Cargo Shorts] Oh god. Don't you know Freud is bleep?

[T-Shirt] Maybe.

#### 

[A guy sits behind a snowball microphone. Behind him is a patterned image of various forms of the word CONTROVERSY-ORAMA, which has been digitally superimposed. The outline around his hair and shoulders is faintly pixelated and has a green tinge.]

[Controversy] Okay, with all the things that've been going on in the last week, it's been kind of hard to keep up on everything that's been breaking. So first let's talk about what we're not going to talk about. As you may know, YouTubers Louie and Danny are taking a break after a still growing spat with QuiltBang13 after they used the pronoun they. However, contrary to what's going around on Twitter, the channel itself hasn't been pulled yet. It's only been demonetized. And as to the whole conspiracy theory about Doctor Pinky not being real, or whether or not the whole thing has to do with the Voyager space probe, yeah well, we're not going to go into that. And because everything's just so overloaded right now, we're having to take a little longer to cut down to our top ten controversial videos. So if you want to vote on that, you need to click on the link in the description below. So what we thought we'd give you now are some of the runners up. So here're our top-ten not-quite-controversial-enough near misses.

### [The number 10 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a shot of a stage in an Eagleton auditorium. Four chairs are occupied by four people.]

[Hall] There's going to have to be a tremendous rethinking in popular culture, I think. If you look at the data that's been coming out over the last ten or twenty years, you'll see that the popular picture of the alpha-male hunter—and the whole traditional notion of hunter gatherer societies—is just wrong. It's dependent, of course. But in some cases, you can see how it's demonstrated that only thirty percent of dietary requirements were supplied by hunting. And the remaining seventy percent of calories were supplied by women who were foraging. They weren't just providing the garnish for the roast.

## [The number 9 flashes onscreen.]

[An early thirties man in a plaid shirt. He sits at a desk with a large microphone in front of him. A patterned background is behind him.

THE SHOW is printed on the background. He sits petting a dog which has stuck its head up over the edge of the desk.]

[Jason] We went out on a trip to the country recently.

[Dog] Ruf.

[Jason] Yes, Berkeley went too.

[Dog] Ruf.

[He continues to pet the dog.]

[Jason] But there's something I noticed, that I want to talk about. And that's how many flags you see in people's yards. And I've been trying to figure out why I find it so disturbing. And I think I've come up with something. I think the thing that strikes me is that flags are for when you don't know something. That is, they're on battlefields and ships and at the Olympics. And the thing all these places have in common is that they're places where you need to identify groups and allegiances. So it makes sense to deploy your flag, as it were. But this is America. Why is it that you have to identify yourself with an American flag in the middle of America? What are you identifying against? So are you saying there's an America within America? Are you saying there's some sort of real America that's being invaded by some other America? What is it?

[Dog] Ruf.

[The number 8 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of a man standing behind a transparent rostrum.]

[Preacher] And there are some grave errors out there. For example, the forty-eight virgins promised those who die in battle.

But as we have seen, there can be no purpose for these women in heaven. What function can they have but reproduction? And given that heaven is eternal under God through the Man who is his Son and that dominion shall be whole and absolute, what need will there be for reproduction? And if therein there is no need for reproduction, why shall there be sexual relations when instead there is the pure glory of God?

[He leans forward. He grips the sides of the rostrum with both hands.]

[Preacher] But even from this can truth emerge. And it is scholars who now say that in fact this is translated in error. That in fact, this word means to refer to forty-eight perfectly white fruits. But you shall ask, Preacher, why are you talking of fruit? What need will there be to have food in heaven? Haven't you said that the body shall be incorrupted and that there shall be no hunger and no thirst? Yes, that is true. But there is something else. Let us recall what the angel of the Lord was set down before with a flaming sword. For if one was to imagine the fruit of the Tree of Life what could you see better in your mind's eye than a perfect and unblemished fruit?

[The number 7 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a man standing on a street corner.]

[Man] Schindler's List gets me sexually excited.

[He giggles. He runs off.]

[The number 6 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Liste onstage.]

[Liste] Well, I'm from the rough general area where Blue Grass originates, so I would guess that's technically part of my

culture. And I know there's a region in Eastern Europe who has taken the whole Blue Grass thing up. So is that cultural appropriation?

[Happi] It doesn't count when it's the dominant culture. If anything, that's cultural imperialism.

[Liste] It seems more like this is a way of arguing for a form of segregation. A remix of the old argument that because of power structures women inherently can't consent so everything's rape. And don't mix cultures becomes an effective code for don't mix races.

[The number 5 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a thirty-something guy who sits in a racing-gaming chair. The bookcase behind him is packed with DVDs. The words Mathew In The Box are in a red box in the lower right of the frame.]

[Mathew] Contrary to what they may think, this so-called feminist piece about how if—and it's better called misandrist—but it may be all cutesy, but it doesn't prove what they think it does. In fact, it proves the opposite. Yeah, it's well fitting suits—among other items—that get females sexually aroused. But far from being some satirical joke—or whatever they want to claim it is—it actually proves exactly the point. Men are attracted to attractive female bodies—females are attracted to men based on what it is they can buy. It's right there. Plain as day.

[The number 4 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Liste onstage.]

[Liste] The problem is with what's defined as rape. For example, at the end of Night, in the original Yiddish, the phrase isn't to have sex with German girls, it's more akin to rape. Because only a

member of the in-group can be raped. If they are outside the in-group then rape isn't possible. But unfortunately, the translation, by simply using the word sex, softens this distinction to pointlessness.

[The number 3 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an audience member speaking into a microphone.]

[Question] If you were going to write another story what do you think you would write it about?

[Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of an old man seated at a plastic, foldout table.]

[Straw] Maybe something about a future with a reparations economy. You could imagine it as a financial tool invented to keep money from pooling and the economy flowing so everyone has to continually pay someone else for something that happened at some point in history. So everybody just keeps paying everybody. And you get a stable Utopian economy out of this. The problem is there isn't much of a market for Utopias.

[Audience laughter.]

[The number 2 flashes onscreen.]

[Cut to a shot of an old man using a walker.]

[Old Man] Every generation should have to go through a holocaust. People're too soft these days. We came out of it just fine. People need to toughen up.

[Cut back to Controversy.]

[Controversy] And, finally, this last one which just got knocked out of the number ten spot.

### [Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Liste onstage.]

[Liste] Look. I'll give my credentials. Eighties kid here. But I will argue, and I think I can do it convincingly, that Baby Boomers are by and far more postmodern than Millennials. Yes, Millennials may be on their phones all the time, but the distinction here is dedication. By definition, almost all phones are terrible multitasking devices, so you play the same game, use the web, one task at a time. And most people these days just sit around at the table and don't bother to look up to talk, if they talk, rather than text.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] So it's all through the same interface. Dedicated tasking. But examine the viewing habits of the Baby Boomer. A commercial comes on, they change the channel. They might be watching snatches of three or four things at once inter-cut with bits of the commercials they're trying to avoid. Watching picture-in-picture. Or watching the little image in the corner of the guide while they scroll through the guide. And they also have phones, too, remember. But they split their time between watching the news on them and watching it on TV. At the same time. And look at the TV.

## [Audience laughter.]

[Liste] But look at it. You have flashing info up each side of the screen. You have a runner scrolling along the bottom. Sometimes more than one. Baby Boomers fundamentally operate in a world of shifting, multitudinous, hyperstimulated, alternate realities. So in this sense they are by far more postmodern than both the generations that come after them. Just look at the layers of search bars they tend to install on their browsers.

[Audience laughter.]

[Cut back to Controversy.]

[Controversy] Well, thanks for watching. And be sure and subscribe so you'll be alerted when our top ten most-controversial picks are released. And like I say, if you want to vote on next week's picks, just follow the link in the description below to login, and don't forget to like and follow our channel.

#### H4 || >>|

[Hartnette] Residents of the mountain town of Kingsly are still recovering today following an explosion at a local bowling alley. News 10's Julianne Myers has more on this story. Julianne.

[Cut to a shot of Myers standing in a parking lot. Yellow tape and orange cones mark off a section in front of a burnt-out building.]

[Myers] Thanks, Tom. Only one person was inside the building at the time. And authorities recovered that body earlier this morning. And he has been identified as one Mike Crepe, who was a local resident here. Mister Crepe was one of a work crew who were resurfacing the lanes inside this bowling alley. He is reported to have been alone in the building at the time of the explosion. At this point, authorities believe the explosion was caused by fumes from the materials used in the resurfacing process having collected inside the building. Some we have spoken to have noted that Mister Crepe was a dedicated smoker, however, authorities have not confirmed the source of the ignition. Live in Kingsly. I'm Julianne Myers. News 10.

### H || >>|

[Orgone] And we here would like to wish Ted Orgone a very happy vacation. We here at this station are like a family. A news family. And I will tell you, folks, I have never met a more honest or hardworking anchor than Ted Orgone. Not in my whole life. We're not like some of those other stations. We put ourselves into the Truth. We *are* the Truth. And there was never a more Truthier *man* than Ted Orgone.

And I'll put my name to that. And I just want to say that I, Ray Orgone, will never allow a word to go against him unanswered. So join us later for a special report with myself and special guest hosts Jennifer Cathex and George Orgone and Cynthia Cathex and William Orgone and Rachel Cathex and Trevor Orgone and Sarah Cathex and Bertrand Orgone and Amanda Cathex, and all the rest of our news family, where we will be joined by Doctors Ted and Wilma Therapé as we discuss exactly what the problem is here. But first I just want to say—how dare they accuse this fine, upstanding man of antisemitism. This just proves that they're antisemites. Of course God grants Israel nuclear weapons through us, folks. That's what he meant. It was implicit. Anyone has to admit that. But that's too subtle for leftist liberals. And besides, they'll stop climate change. So if it were happening, that's what completely reputable scientists tell us would happen. It's just like that episode of Gilligan's Island where the island's sinking, folks. It's just like that.

[Cut to an image of a small desert pacific island. Little Bo-Peep pops up from the bottom of the frame. Her back is turned. She looks at the island. A black-and-white cutout image of a bomb descends toward the island. The background image cuts to a color clip of a mushroom cloud. Little Bo-Peep turns to face the camera.]

#### H | >>

[Title: Quick Clips. Lens flare. Cut to a cropped and blown-up shot of Liste onstage.]

[Liste] Even the most ardent anti-neo-Gnostics will wrinkle their nose when someone passes gas.

[Lens flare. Cut to title.]

#### 

[Aster] Welcome to this CNT special report. I'm George Aster, standing in for John Aster. Breaking news—

#### H > >>

A sound something like a helicopter came from somewhere, but fainter, buzzier. I looked up. But it'd faded. I looked over at Tommy. He hadn't looked up.

#### H || >>|

[Hartnette] Next we turn to our continuing coverage of the ongoing crisis with Yellow Cross Yellow Spear of North Carolina. Today the state's largest and only insurance provider announced a series of restructuring efforts to shore up its business in the wake of the massive scandal that has broken in these past few days. However, representatives for the firm maintain that the situation is not as bleak as it may appear. News 10's Lydia Dillon has more on this story. Lydia.

[Cut to a shot of Dillon standing beside a man in a suit.]

[Dillon] Thanks, Tom. We're here with company spokesperson Jarod Waters.

[She turns toward him.]

[Dillon] What do you have to say to people who might be thinking about canceling their policies?

[Waters] There is absolutely no reason to.

[Dillon] How do you assuage policy holders that they are not actually involved in a collectivist enterprise?

[Waters] We repeat that there is absolutely no need for policy holders to feel they need to cancel.

[Cut to the main news desk.]

[Hartnette] It's now estimated that a little over three quarters of the company's policy holders have canceled their coverage. Following these reports, the firm's stock continues—

#### H > >>|

The sound of low airplanes. The leaves rustled. Tommy looked up. He rose. He stretched. Something sifted down from overhead. He tilted back his head. He opened his mouth. He stuck out his tongue. He pulled his tongue back in. He lowered his head. He ran his tongue around the inside of his mouth. "Bitter orange," he said. "How appropriate." He ran his tongue around the inside of his mouth. "First Breakfast." He started along the figure-eight loop and along the trampled path that connected the two camps. Tammy squatted by the fire. The bucket sat on the ground. Steam curled off the surface of the water. Tammy sipped from a partially filled tin can. Tommy passed her. He collected one of the tin cans from off the rocks. He came back. He squatted by the fire. He picked through the contents of the tin can with his index finger. "Ah, grasshoppa." He held one up. "Want it?" he said. "Grab leg. We pretend wishbone." He came away with just a leg. "Good wish," Tommy said. He rooted in the tin can. He brought out a beetle pinched between his thumb and forefinger. He paused chewing to run his stiffened pinkie around the inside of his mouth. "So what you wish for?" he said. "If you wish for shoes that fit," he said, "better not." He ran his finger around the inside of his mouth. "Better nothing." He extended his leg. He wriggled his toes. "Absence always fits best."

A rock struck his shoulder blade. It bounced off. Tammy brushed off her fingers. She turned. She lifted the bread can. She used a stick to get the last part out of the bottom. She perforated it with the stick. She squatted. She held it over the fire. Part of it blackened and smoked. She removed the stick from over the fire. She removed the toasted bread from the stick. She tore it in half. She passed one half up to me. Tommy still squatted there beside the fire. He poked his fingers round and through and between and over the contents of the tin can. He looked up. He glanced round. He rose.

"What?" Tammy said. She lifted her tin can. She sipped.

"Sense I the conflux of ourselves and the algorithm," Tommy said.

Tammy stuffed the last of her piece of bread into her mouth. She chewed. She lifted the tin can. She paused chewing. She drained the can. She chewed again a few times. She swallowed. She rose.

Tommy turned. He placed his tin can on one of the rocks. He turned. He stepped toward the lean-tos and moved toward the paddock. He lifted the turtle. He walked out over the path that led toward the Freelancer camp. But he walked straight through it. He walked up along the ridge. The sun'd fully risen. It hovered at a late morning position over the mountain landscape. Tommy stood there in the light. He closed his eyes. He breathed deep through his nose. He released his breath. He squatted. He set the turtle on the ground.

A buzz rose up from somewhere. The sunlight made it difficult to see from what. It sounded like an angry hornets nest.

"Finally," someone called. He walked haphazardly up the side of the ridge. A pair of very expensive hi-def, drone-mounted cameras buzzed round him. He stopped. He huffed. He looked around. "Perfect background," he said. "All we need is a collection of sweeping shots for before we cut to commercial." He pulled a tablet out of his back pocket. "Just tap these release forms. It'll be great. It'll be like a cross between Naked and Afraid and Wilderness People and—" I could add an 'awwwwwwww' here. That would mimetically indicate his screams. But in any regard, he screamed. The turtle had bitten through his leather shoe and into his big toe. He screamed. He fell backwards. He rolled down the side of the ridge. The two hi-def cameras circled. They followed him down. He continued to scream. The turtle had gone with him. It or she or he still hadn't released his toe. He tried to lift a rock. He tried to smash the turtle, but someone rushed out of the bushes with a cardboard sign and hit him over the head with it. Then another. And another. Ever since they'd protested the bears in the concrete pits down on the reservation, there'd been rumors that a few more of the protesters were hiding in the woods.

"It's eating me alive," the producer screamed. The protesters continued to hit him with their signs. The drone-mounted, hi-def cameras circled round them.

Why was I even there?

"Because, tonto," Tommy said. He put his arm around my shoulders. "We needed a straight man for our live re-enactment of Science

Fiction Theatre Three Thousand. But you were all that was available. So we make do as our bodies slowly make doo doo. And nobody treats slime molds and salamanders as respectfully as do you. And later perhaps we read own subtitles and find ourselves Nazis the whole time." He laughed. "Always keep the fire going, tonto," he said, "or the world might stop burning."

We turned and started back down the hill. The producer's screams faded in the distance. "You fulfill noble family tradition, you know." He squeezed my shoulders. "Great uncle must not be only one in family to go MIA." He shook his head. "Very bad to only do things in ones. But two good. Two on its way to three. Three best. Unless you get four. Then you have to go to seven." He removed his hand as we came down the hill and entered the periphery of the freelancer camp and started along one of the figure-eight routes. "It is time," he said. And we walked down the path toward the fire and lean-tos. He stepped toward his lean-to. He dug through the leaves. He came out with a portable hard drive. He raised it over his head as he walked. We walked back along the trampled path toward the freelancer camp. We wound along one of the figure-eight paths till we came to the conjunction of all them. He raised the portable hard drive over his head. "We have the bad seen," he said. "And we have the horrible seen." He turned. "Now see we this. And in so doing, allow us to extend honor to those children with their pails and flashlights who remove from the Earth and the earth that which allows us to consume this and all media and such which has been and has yet to be produced, and let us not close our eyes, nor our ears, because if TV doth bring about ends of all human civilization it was worth all that for the briefest span of time that 

# They Used To Burn Their Cities With Fire

So where to end?

Camus began The Myth of Sisyphus with the declaration that suicide was the only important philosophical question and that all others were like toys. To put down something like that would, at least in some way, seem symmetrical. But maybe a question isn't an ending. But then again, maybe there aren't any endings.

Maybe there are just processes. And from the point of view of the process, the beginning and the ending is, maybe, inconsequential. Maybe they could never've existed and never need exist. Just like the actress playing onscreen-Hawking's wife explains in The Theory of Everything. But maybe if there is a process, and maybe if it does end, when it does end, maybe it doesn't matter anyway.

Maybe you have to do like Anno's said to have done with the last couple episodes of Evangelion. To get the ending he wanted, so they say, he had to throw out everything that came before. But maybe if you throw out everything that came before, maybe that really isn't an ending at all. Maybe it isn't even a beginning.

It still was a good ending. Maybe that's just fan fiction. Maybe.

# Maybe Sometimes You Just Have To Give Up The Ghost

Nine out of ten doctors advise releasing when you feel the need to, and not trying to hold back. Baseball and multiplication can only go so far, anyway.

Maybe there wasn't even a ghost in that shell to begin with.

# Where Are We Left?

Maybe we're all Nazis now. Maybe we always were.

# And Is There Anything Else?

After all, things are supposed to wrap up nice and neat. Or at least ironically. Sum totalities and all that. You cut the last note off in the music video and there'll be a hundred comments about it.

And maybe it really is all about the destination.

Nothing worse than failing to finish.

I was going to put down that Tommy would've probably mentioned something about that being a symptom of depression and anti-depressants both and alike. But I've already amenned him out.

# The Other Side Of The Customs Clearing House Of Desire

So maybe a few things should be cleared up

How did the producer find us? Well, that's easy. People aren't hired without some accountability. Once upon a time, software supposedly tracked eye movement through webcams to judge engagement. But that'd long been farmed out to other freelancers, as well. And yet other freelancers contracted as recommendation engines and passed along information that their clients deemed attention worthy. And media companies are always paying to keep up with the next big thing. Or what they can make the next big thing, in the absence of anything obvious.

How did we hear the audio when the freelancers always wore head-phones? Well, that's obvious if you think about it. I could mention something about reading lips. But really, it was just subtitles. That was one of the jobs of some of the freelancers. They transcribed audio into subtitles. As Tommy'd said, whatever rudimentary computerized speech-to-text had existed for that purpose had long been subsumed by distribution management systems.

Why Tylar? I guess that sorta slang's been out of vogue awhile now. So this should explain it:

**₩** 

[Liste sits next to an empty chair.]

[Woman] So what about a preview?

[Liste] Is that allowed?

[Woman] Well, how about you just tell us some of the words that didn't make the list?

[He scratches his cheek.]

[Liste] Well, I have to admit a personal bias against sloc.

[The woman looks perplexed.]

[Liste] Sisy Lana Oh Cysp.

[Woman] I hope you're not having a stroke, or something.

[Liste laughs.]

[Woman] Now you're just making fun of me.

[Liste shakes his head. He still smiles.]

[Liste] It's supposed to be a term for what Adorno called psychoanalysis in reverse. So psychoanalysis backwards. Sisy Lana Oh Cysp. SLOC.

[Liste laughs. The woman shakes her head.]

[Liste] Personally, I was kind of rooting for appanesia, which is supposed to refer to when you forget an app you've already bought. Or maybe Why Tylar?

[Woman] Why Tyler?

[Liste] Exactly.

[The woman looks perplexed. Liste laughs.]

[Liste] It's an acronym, but nobody says it that way. Though, I have noticed there's a split between those who pronounce it as Tyler and Tylar. But, anyway, it's like TANSTAAFL.

[The woman looks perplexed. Liste laughs.]

[Woman] And what's it an acronym for?

[Liste] Technically it's YTYLAR. With just a letter Y at the start. It means You Think You're Looking At Reality?

So what else can I put down?

# One More Final Thank You

To Olive: I'm sorry. Maybe I was wrong. Thank you.

# **Finally**

To you: Maybe... Maybe make a void in your heart. Maybe there's always been a void there. Maybe cherish the void in your heart. Maybe to have a void any one place is to have one every place. Maybe the bigger the void is the louder you can scream into it. Maybe there's never not going to be a void.

Maybe fly into the crash as far as possible.

Maybe.

Maybe that's all just bullshit.

Maybe.

# Maybe