“His name was Andre. My father. I — I should just talk about him? Okay, um, so. Wait, should I move another prism? Alright...here. Okay. My father. A story that they always liked to tell about him, was when he was a child, he was a real...there’s a very specific English phrase I can’t think of here. A smart child. No, way more colloquial. Whiz kid. He was a whiz kid.

“He came up in a little town outside Libreville. One of those kids who is always in a book. Wore glasses he didn’t need. Always wanted to be in corduroy, yeah, exactly, like this tiny professor. Only the funny thing is he’d come to market and lean against a post all, all, all, erudite and shit, and he’d have like a comic book in his hand. I *know*. With the elbow patches on his jacket. But the thing is he was like, four, and he was already reading. And he grew into it.

“And...boop.” Tethi moves another piece from the optics kit. The lights are off, we’re on the floor, but we’re not playing the same game I learned at the Weather Bureau. This one is supposed to be collaborative, positive-sum, but honestly I’m not sure we understand the rules. I try for kind eyes, try to soften the abrasiveness of the Sieve debris. *Go on.*

“So he was probably about eight when he started picking up econ textbooks. He was looking for *business* textbooks because now he was an eight-year-old who wore a Bluetooth headset, shouting at no one. But a librarian snuck something in on the origins of money, theories of value, that kind of thing. That really got him going. Now he was an eight-year-old who could name all the currencies of Africa. And so, he decided to make his own.”

I slide an optic piece in exchange. Forcing myself not to wonder what the readonly nets around our heads are picking up, whether it’s working. *Focus on the story.*

“So, adorably, he named it after himself. But honestly, the Andre is a pretty good name for a currency. It rolls off the tongue. People liked saying it. What he did was, go around to the neighbors and hand them each, I wanna say, one hundred Andre. He drew neighborhood pets on the bills. And he was doing them by hand so circulation was limited. He had this long-ass speech about resilience in the local economy and principled monetary policy and — I know, I know, okay, people can still do the voice, but they can’t really get the words because no one really remembers what he was on about! But, anyway, as he was leaving, before he hopped off their porch, he’d ask, *do you believe in the Andre*? And he’d make the neighbors say they did.

“The first transactions in Andre were definitely jokes. Like someone would come round with peak fruit, like, best fruit of the season, like, *you have to try this.* And in exchange you’d give them an Andre to quote-unquote pay them. But it took on that exact quality. It was a token of genuine appreciation, where real money would be an offense. At first the rule was that you couldn’t *buy* anything with Andre. It was like a thank you note. It got to the point where if you were doing an odd job, you *wanted* that Andre. You didn’t want, I guess it was francs at the time. Because there was *appreciation* in that. I’m talking grown men.” He pauses now. “Is this right? Is this making any sense?”

I’m not supposed to speak, but nodding seems like not enough. “Yeah. Yeah. This is good.”

“So,” Tethi goes on, settling in. “The turning point was when he got a printer. He did thousands of bills and marked them with his thumbprint. There was a little inflationary crisis, but along the way it became a full-blown local currency. People used it — how do I put this. For the extra sparkle of social cohesion, like *my friend I am buying this from you specifically*. And the currency exchange downtown had a going rate! For years! Eventually the *hotel de ville* took over the supply, and it caused this mix-up with the federal government. But it stuck around to the point where he was in graduate school in Lagos and these loaded, these Nigerian guys from these big families would say, *brother, we learned about your money in school,* and they’d take him out, I mean, I’m talking bottle service, private jets, and all they wanted was for him to grease their palms with a little Andre!”

At this point Tethi has me in stitches. I’m struggling to maintain eye contact. I dunno if I expect to see any debris transfer, like I told him we would. But, hell, it’s a fun story.

“He returned to Gabon to work for the national government. And of course he helped plan the transition from the franc to the eco. And I think it — I wonder all the time, whether it was a coincidence that when Suowei came in with their own plan, they came to *him*. Because years later, when the Fork had clearly failed, even...” And his laugh takes a bitter left turn here. “Even when there was a fucking mob outside his building, for his own skull, he still believed in what they wanted to do. He’d point to this framed hundred-Andre bill and he said, Tethi, *transitions take time.*” His voice cracks. His face falls all at once. “When it all went wrong, when he — I always wanted to know, did Suowei know who they had chosen? When I came to Shanghai I went to the Suowei Tower. I wanted to ask, did they at least know the story?”

Tears, now. Rivulets over his bony cheeks. But for a long count of five I hold steady eye contact, washed over by the thickening chatter of Sieve debris. I feel the edges of his grief. I take the measure of its callouses and grooves. Not raw, not even painful, really — I press into it, letting my own eyes water — just deep and inextricable. I suppress the worst possible thought: that this is working, that this could be good data. *Five.* From my backpack I offer him a squashed pack of tissues. He accepts my awkward, uncertain embrace. Then he casts off the grief and the readonly net in one fluid motion, before it feels quite right to let go.

“This is *insane*,” he mutters now, watching the recording from our readouts. Sunflower Sieve debris clatters back and forth between our minds. The shapes are vague but unmistakable, neutrally buoyant, bobbing in an emotional carrier wave. I feel the debris still in my mind reach for the screen, and remember to look obliquely.

“This might be enough to bring to Deng. It directly contradict one of her old results. She should see this.” She should look me in the eye, Rui too, and explain what that sunflower patch is.

“No. It’s not. I want to see it at larger scale.” What’s unsaid is that Tethi has motives of his own, something to prove. He’s already got schematics and wiring diagrams, it turns out. Elaborations on a late-night throwaway idea. He lets me peruse a long list of materials. “Can you get all of this from YINS?”

“I thought you said this would be impossible?”

“I thought again.” His hand sweeps the clutter of his desk and finds something a little like sunglasses. He lets me examine them. “Do you know what these are?”