

I CAN'T DO THIS. I CAN'T PARODY
PENNY ARCADE. I'VE GOT NOTHING
ON THOSE GUYS. THEY'RE A CLASS
ACT, THEY KNOW THEIR AUDIENCE,
THEY KNOW EXACTLY WHAT THEY'RE
DOING. GABE EXPERIMENTS WITH HIS
ART, ALWAYS BOLD AND FRESH WITHOUT
TRYING TO PERFORM. TYCHO'S WRITING
CONTINUES TO ASTOUND DAY AFTER
DAY. I CAN JUST SEE HIM, READING
MY UNCULTURED SWILL MASQUERADING
AS HIS FLORID PROSE.

MY CRYPTOSYSTEM IS LIKE
ANY FEISTEL CIPHER, EXCEPT
IN THE S-BOXES WE SIMPLY
TAKE THE BITSTRING DOWN,
FLIP IT, AND REVERSE IT.

I'VE BEEN BARRED FROM SPEAKING AT ANY MAJOR
CRYPTOGRAPHY CONFERENCES EVER SINCE IT BECAME
CLEAR THAT ALL MY ALGORITHMS WERE JUST
THINLY DISGUISED MISSY ELLOTT SONGS.

If you've got a big keyspace, let me search it.

BUT HE'S NOT ANGRY, NO. HE'S SITTING AT HIS DESK SMILING THAT CONDESCENDING HALF-SMILE THE CORNER OF HIS MOUTH BELYING THE SELF-ASSURANCE OF A WRITER WHO NEVER MISPLACES A WORD. HIS FIRM HANDS REST EASILY ON THE KEYBOARD HIS RIGHT THUMB CARESSING THE SPACE BAR GENTLY AS I ENTER THE ROOM. HE KNOWS I'M THERE WITHOUT TURNING AROUND, AND I'M TOO NERVOUS TO SPEAK. BUT I DON'T HAVE TO: HE UNDERSTANDS. I CAN SEE IT IN THE WAY HIS EYES PLAY OVER ME. READING MY FEARS AND DOUBTS IN A GLANCE AND WASHING THEM AWAY WITH A KNOWING SMILE. THEN HE'S ON HIS FEET. HE'S IN FRONT OF ME, AND I DON'T FEEL THE ELECTRIC JOLT I EXPECTED AS OUR HANDS MEET. IT'S JUST WARM, WARM AND RIGHT. AS I SINK INTO HIS EYES. I FEFL A HAND ON MY SHOULDER, AND I SEE TYCHO SMILE AT SOMEONE BEHIND ME. GARE IS STANDING THERE, GRINNING THAT MISCHIEVOUS GRIN, AND TWIRLING HIS BELOVED CARDBOARD TUBE BETWEEN HIS FINGERS.

THE NIGHT HAS JUST BEGUN.