

Dr. Quasar's Nightmare

By Jonathan David

When one lives the dream, every day is a nightmare....

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Book Key

- Double Quotations "..."
Someone talking out loud or reference.
- Single Quotations '...'
Some referencing another within talking. Important names/titles.
- Parentheses (...) Someone thinking to themselves.
- Brackets [...] Dreaming or non-lucid thinking.
- Braces (None ...) {...} Story narrator or narrating.
- Italicization *important*

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Written, Edited and Narrated by Jonathan David

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Cover Design by Jonathan David

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For professional inquiries:

authorjonathandavid@gmail.com

Chapter 1 | Last and Final Journal Entry

Dr. James Francis Quasar,

Today is the 13th of December year 2020—my birthday.

I have been locked on timewave-3 for an unknown amount of time, and I feel I am at my wit's end. I turn 64 years of age today, but, based on my calculations, I have now lived some 324 years stuck within the confines of this treacherous building.

Somewhere in the past, I was knocked out of timewave-5—where I originate from, landing on timewave-3 (TW3). I cannot seem to find a way out. I have watched my younger self come and go for eons. I have tried to connect with him so to find my way back to TW3. He is the one that discovered (or discovers) the missing equation needed to unravel TW0. The poor man is locked in a whip of alcoholism and cannot break free. We have spent many nights together drinking the stars away, and even after all this time, he still has not made the connection that we are one and the same. I suppose time resets for him on each interval, whereas it continues for me, so he hasn't the memory.

I have, on occasion, tried to change or alter his actions and guide him into a better lifestyle, but no matter what efforts I make, he just slides right back into the bottle. I am writing in this journal for you, him/me, or whoever is to read this at whatever time. You should know: In my (or our) office in Science Hall basement, I have learned that the opening within the brick wall—that is, the loose brick I (we) keep our hidden drink—seems to have some connection with the timewave

interloop. I can reach myself (you) on other waves, i.e., depending on when something is left within. This journal will no doubt become blank upon my return tomorrow, and it snows tonight. I will leave you (me) with what I have learned about our current situation:

We (I) have been on a loop in timewave-3 from December 13th, 2018, to December 13th, 2020, for at least 150 cycles now. Tonight, it will reset.

I have made multiple attempts to get this notebook to you. This time, I will leave it with the front office in a box to be mailed to you. If you do receive this, try and reach me by leaving a message within.

If you wish to leave the building at any time, it must be done during a snowfall. Our only opportunity to leave the building is during a fresh snowfall—that is, while the isthmus and surrounding lakes are blanketed with untouched snow. It must also be actively snowing. The strip of land between the two frozen lakes acts as a conductor. The falling snowflakes then generate friction, expanding the isolated warping of timewaves within the building to the edge of the lakes. Please know that the snow schedule has altered and decreased drastically since 1910. It comes lighter and later in the year now, so opportunities to escape and get to campus are slim. Also, due to technological advancements, the city can remove the snow within hours of it falling, so you must be quick. Else you'll get stuck outside and then flung onto some other timewave without memory of your previous whereabouts.

In my loop, I can only make it out of the building on three nights of the year before I am flung back to the starting point.

The young J.F. here in TW3 has been working diligently on the God Equation, but I cannot seem to line up with him and extract the formula from his journal. It always seems to disappear somewhere upon his return from the Tornado Steak house. He may lose or misplace it in his absolute state of inebriation, or another one of us or *one of them* is retrieving it. If you find this version of the journal, please note that the equation is derived on TW3 on the night of November the 3rd, 2019, while at the Tornado Steak House lounge. Do not disrupt the man or limit his drinking—the blacked-out state gives him the right amount of lucidness to generate the formula but shortly after, the journal disappears. If you find yourself on TW3, there are only three nights to leave the building. 11/03/19, 12/22/19, and 12/13/2020.

Just after the snowfall in the isthmus—before the trucks come to scrape it away. You will have a few hours to roam the city. This is important: The lakes must be frozen, and the streets must be covered with an untampered bed of snow. It must also be snowing heavily. If you find yourself outside of the building when they begin lifting the snow, you will be shot back to the beginning of the loop as it will break the connection. Otherwise, it will restart at 3:13 am on 12/14/2020—at least that is the restart date for me.

It has been so long since I was placed here, I do not recall how I got here. All I can say is: I remember bits and pieces of the experiment, but I cannot recollect when or where it was performed. The last memories I have outside of this wave were learning of the five timewaves plus one, just before I fell from my office chair and awoke in the lobby of this building. My younger self is not originally from this timewave either. I don't think he is aware that he is not living on his normal

timewave. His steady state of inebriation must keep him from seeing clearly. Perhaps he is me from TW5 or another—he is not from this wave. Whoever or whichever one of us finds this journal, be wary of the drink and the snow. The experiment has unraveled the strings of time and interwoven our existences. We must find the equation to reverse what we have done and warn the people of what is to come. I set out tonight to place this journal in the small grotto of our office wall at 11:00 pm, to which I shall return to the steakhouse for cocktails with J.F. before the clock is reset.

JF

Chapter 2 | Dallas

(I am seriously fucked. I need to get out of Dallas. How did I even end up here? I don't really remember much of the past eight years or so. I cannot believe I actually finished college. How did that happen? Well, undergrad, I guess – I am flunking out of grad school—God forbid I get a C in yet another class unrelated to my field. I swear, if 90% of the classwork I did, was actually related to my major, I'd have a Nobel Prize by now. If I ever want to make a real contribution to the science world, I will have to quit drinking. 'Is that really what you want?' 'I don't know, really. I mean, yeah, I want to, but I kinda just wanna get rich and drink myself to death too.' 'What do you think will be easier: obtaining a fortune or finding an original discovery in physics, a discovery profound enough to gain you a fortune?' 'Odds are pretty high for both.' 'We could revisit the stock market.' 'You know how addictive that is, and emotions always take play even if you try not to.' 'True, but this time we have a decade of advanced mathematics behind us. If we devise a formula and stick to it, it will work.' 'I don't disagree, but one of your greatest powers is also your greatest weakness.' 'I know. I am too sensitive.' 'Yes. No matter how much you try to prevent yourself from feeling, you will feel and feel more than most can comprehend.' 'What else are we going to do? Get a job?' 'No. We can't do that. Might as well just load the gun myself.'

Well, we have to figure out how to get the bills covered. Financial aid is gone for fall, and we barely have enough for the summer. No other prospects panned out, so it's either a job or play the market.' 'We could try a casino—no, the odds are not even remotely worth the gamble.' 'Alright, then. I suppose the stock market. I mean, what is the worst that could happen? We lose, and we are just back where we are now?')

Dr. Quasar's Nightmare

2.1 | At the Pool

James sits at his desk in his rickety folding chair. The kind one finds at a bingo hall. It is accompanied by the same foldout table they cover with cheap plastic cloth. He wasn't one to waste funds on material possessions; instead, he saved it all for the drink.

While sitting at his cheap desk, he became frustrated from reading an email sent by the financial aid office. (End of an era, I guess.) He closes out the email and deletes the history and cache, and slaps the laptop shut. He then pulls out his phone and deletes all apps related to his university and his synced email address. His actions are emotional and not thought through – but done – none the less. (Well, that's that then.)

James takes a few minutes to look out the window in front of where he positioned his desk. He sees a clear blue sky, and the surroundings are filled with green grass and foliage. While he gazes into the beautiful weather, he thinks about the mistakes he has made in life.

(Why is my life so fucked. I am not an idiot, so why can't I make money. People always say 'I spend too much' and that 'I should work and save – work and save – work and save – save-save-save.' I don't think that is the issue. I guess I just don't make enough is all. I could spend countless days slaving away just to make money I'll never spend, or I could use that energy to make large sums of money and be free from the shackles of wage. Kind of funny how people are brainwashed into devoting their lives to making money, money that they'll never spend, and then shun others for not doing the same.)

James flips the computer back open and goes to his investment account on E*TRADE. He had opened it earlier

that week in case he got the denial form from the financial aid office. While he waited, he devised a formula for the market. He only put a few hundred dollars in it to play out his formula but now is planning to transfer the last few thousand dollars he has to his name into it. He contemplates with himself before hitting transfer, (If I cannot get this to work, what was the point of a decade of advanced math and physics. 'Shit, if all else fails, I will just have to get a job. It's worth the risk.' 'Why would you say such a thing? That is out of the question, man. Never think that way.' 'You are right. This will work, or else something else will. I mean, when has it not just worked out for us? We have a direct connection with the 3-6-9.' 'Indeed, sir. Indeed.')

On Thursday morning, the 3rd of May 2018, James funds his E*TRADE account with money meant to pay his bills for June, July, and August. The moment he clicks fund, he feels a sensation of excitement accompanied by terror spread throughout his body. He then reads, "The assets will not be available for investment until the following business day." Instead of being disappointed by the news, he uses the afternoon to hunt down potential stock picks that fit his formula. (Before doing so, I shall require some assistance.)

James decides to spend the remainder of the day sitting by the pool drinking beer while doing his stock research. Before he heads to the pool, he walks up Renner Road to the Tom Thumb and buys a case of Bud Light to take with him. When he returns home, he spends the remainder of the day pounding beer after beer while scouring the internet for companies to day trade.

By 8:00 pm, James drunk himself into a blackout state.

He wakes up early the next morning, wondering what he may or may not have done the night before. He feels great

anxiety in the pit of his stomach when flashes of the evening come popping into his head.

(Acceptance is key. Anytime I am bothered by something, it is my choice to feel disturbed. If I don't think about it, it doesn't exist. That doesn't stop the fact that there are police out there. They could be looking for me right now. Oh God, what did I do last night? Nothing-nothing-nothing. You always get like this; no one is upset with you. You always think you did something to offend someone, but that is never the case. Well, usually. There is always that one girl, or as of late, every girl, that thinks any guy she is not attracted to is a serial killer or rapist. Gawd – bitches be crazy. Shit. Acceptance, man, acceptance. What is the difference if I'm sleeping in this box alone or in another box alone? Life is too short to sit here and fantasize about shit I have no control over. Just get back on the horse. Oh Shit. I forgot I gotta get my stock picks rolling. What time is it?)

James sits up on the mattress, and the exhaustion brought on from the night before sets in. He wants to go back to sleep, but his brain wouldn't let him if he tried. He searches through the layers of sheets and blankets for his phone. He begins panicking when he cannot find it thinking he lost it the night before. He shouts out. "Hey, Siri, where are you?" to which a dampened response echoes from between the mattress and the wall, "I'm over here." A sense of relief comes over him. He wedges his hand between the wall and the mattress and pulls the phone out. When the screen comes on, it says battery power low, so he plugs it in and then reads the time is 8:34 am.

After plugging in the phone, he adjusts his pillows to brace his back and begins picking and pecking at the glass screen. The stocks he set up to buy the day before have all been executed. Within minutes three-fourths of his net worth

was gone. ('Christ. We just fucked ourselves.' 'Shit. What are we gonna do now for money?' 'Crap, I forgot to pay my internet and electricity bills. If I withdraw this money now, I will be out half and screwed.' 'Don't worry, man. Just relax the muscles and take a breath. The universe giveth and the universe taketh. Now we wait for the giveth.')

James closes the investing app and deletes it from his phone and says out loud, "Screw this." He pushes himself out of bed, and the night before makes itself present. The urge to vomit overcomes him, but he holds it back and rushes to the kitchen. He becomes nervous that he drank all the beer. He usually keeps a few for the morning for just these occasions but cannot recall if he set any aside on his way. He prays that there is at least one cold beer to settle his stomach before opening the fridge. (I need a beer asap. Dear God, Please. It is the only cure for this kind of hangover.)

James opens the refrigerator slowly to preserve the fantasy of the beer being there just in case it isn't. When the light from the fridge hits his eyes, he is shocked to see a whole case of beer in the fridge and a full stack of lottery tickets sitting on top of it. A flashback pops in his head. He is walking back up to the Tom Thumb grocery store at a fast-pace to arrive before 9:00 pm. (Oh, yeah! I won five hundred dollars on a scratch-off and then bought four hundred dollars more along with the beer and a pizza. Maybe today will be a good day after all.) James flips the tab on the beer can and breaks the seal. When he hears the snap and hiss, it is pure music to his ears. He then puts the cold foamy opening to his mouth and takes small sips until the alcohol seeps into his veins and the urge to vomit leaves. He then drank a few more beers and spent some time in the bathroom.

After reconciling himself, he throws on a pair of swimming trunks and a Hawaiian shirt. He then grabs the

beer, fills a stew pot with ice, tosses the beers in with the ice, sticks the lottery tickets in his pocket, and heads back to the pool.

(Shoot, son. Well, at least we have some cash left ovah for the weekend. That is at least two hundred forty dollars. Most people don't know that a full stack of lot-oh tickets is guaranteed to pay back at least sixty percent. Best odds you can have. If you don't get a big winner, at least you know you only out four out of ten dollahs.)

By midafternoon, the beer is no longer having the desired effect, so James takes an Uber over to the liquor store and buys himself a bottle of Jack Daniels and a 2-liter of Coca-Cola. When he gets back to the pool, he mixes up Jack and Cokes and offers some to other people hanging around the pool.

The instant the whiskey hits his tongue, he blacks out, and the weekend is washed from his memory.

2.2 | Monday

James's eyes open Monday morning, and an overpowering rush comes on him like the first drop of heroin in the blood, and he shoots awake as fast as a shot of cocaine. He jumps up off the floor and looks around, wondering what has happened to his bedroom. When he sees a stainless-steel toilet with no lid and a fountain next to it. He realizes where he is: either jail, the drunk tank, or both. He is still quite intoxicated from the weekend.

After figuring out where he is, he walks over to the metal door of his padded cage and shouts out to the officers who are sitting at their desks. He has to kneel down and talk through a small opening meant to slide things in and asks, "Hey. Where am I?"

An overweight female officer pushes her chair back from a table, gets up, and wobbles to the cell, she then slides an orange jumpsuit through the opening and walks away after saying, "Remove your clothes, slide them through the door, and put this on." "Can you tell me where I am, please?" The lady turns around and says, "Put on the suit, and we can talk."

This isn't James's first encounter with the law. He knows not to argue less he wants to make the situation worse. He knew from experience that the police force had become a power-hungry militarized gang. So, he does what she said to do and slides his clothes through after changing into the jumpsuit.

(There are two mafias you don't wanna mess with here in the Americas: da PO-lease and da I – R – S. At least with the Sopranos, they just kill ya. The coppers will make your life hell until you die naturally, and taxers will suck you dry to

the bone. Once yer all used up, they'll toss you in a home and make you pay for health insurance.)

After some time passed, the lady returns, opens the door, and escorts James to a jail cell. The new cell has a foam mattress lying on the floor not too dissimilar from the one he has at home. It's even wedged up in the corner of the room just as he keeps his—only smaller.

“What day and time is it, mam?” “It is Monday, May 7th – about four O'clock.” (Monday! What? Where the fuck am I? Wait, am, or pm?) “Excuse me, officer. Is it four in the morning or afternoon?” “Afternoon Hunny. You will be seeing a judge here shortly, then we'll get you outta here.”

James lays down on the mattress, probing his brain for information leading to his arrest but all he can recall is buying champagne on Friday at some point. (Oh yes, champagne, beer, and hard liquor the perfect blend for a blackout.) Once he realizes he is stuck and still drunk, he lays back on the mattress and quickly falls asleep. He wakes up a little while later to the same officer standing at his head. He can clearly see the outline of her thick vaginal lips wrapped up tightly in the fabric of her police uniform.

“You sober yet, hun?” “Unfortunately.” “Ok, sweetie, time to get up now. I talked to the Judge, and he said we can let you go on a warning since you weren't violent.” “Violent?” “Oh honey, you were drunker than a college kid at their first sorority party. Really quite impressive. I don't think we have ever had a breathalyzer that couldn't read the blood alcohol content level. We actually had to draw your blood because we were concerned that you may have had blood alcohol poisoning. By the time they took the blood, you were close to forty percent, so when we used the breathalyzer, you must have been higher – as the thing only reads up to point four zero. It took almost two days for you to sober up. Why would

you need to drink so much, hun?" "If you lived with me, you would understand." "Ok, sweetie. Well, let's get you out of here."

The officer takes him out to the hallway and enters an office, which separates them by a glass window. She gets his belongings from an exposed cubby on the back wall and then slides his clothes through the opening under the glass.

"You can change back into your clothes now, hun." "Here? In front of you?" "Only if you don't wanna go back in the cell, hun." James quickly takes the orange jumpsuit off and puts his clothes on while the lady watches him with a satisfying grin pasted on her fat face. The officer then pulls out a plastic bag and dumps a bunch of stuff onto the counter, and slides the items one at a time under the glass window.

James watches one item after another come out while he zips up his jeans. First the keys and then an iPhone; then, some crumpled up receipts, some old notebook wrapped with a rubber band, and a rolled-up wad of hundred dollar bills as thick as a donut. He gets goosebumps when he sees the cash. He feels a moral dilemma come over him. ('I don't think that is my money. Should I take it?' 'No, don't do it. Karma man – it's not worth it.') "Um, I don't recall having that money officer?" "You don't? Well, I can keep it for you then." She said this in a flirtatious way, and then to straighten James out before he gets flustered, she gives him a bit of the weekend tale.

"Sweetie, you were downtown Dallas at 'The Mansion Restaurant' buying everyone bottles of Cristal. You even had the bartender send the arresting officer's home with a couple bottles. I gotta say, I never heard officers say they had such a good time arresting someone. You were very entertaining for all of us, hun. I suppose that is why the judge dropped the citation." "Glad I could be of service." "Good luck this week

on the stock market! Next time hire a bodyguard or just stay home when you drink, hun. It was nice to meet you." "You to officer. Have a good day."

James walks out of jail into ninety plus degree heat with sunlight raining down on his dehydrated body. He had the officer request an Uber before exiting the building and the car was already there when he opened the door.

(They must wait here for drunks to be released like clockwork. Easy fair.) "You here for James?" "Yah."

The Uber driver's hand comes over the seat holding a bottle of water. The stranger, who is in a deep conversation on his headset, says, "Here, Buddy, you look like you need this.", and he goes back to talking. James wanted to thank him for reading his mind, but the man seemed more concerned with the phone call. James drinks all the water in less than five seconds. He nods in the rearview mirror to thank the driver and gets a responding lip shrug implying, "No problem, buddy."

James's phone is dead, but he notices a twisted mess of cords sticking out the cigarette lighter meant for passengers to charge their devices. He plugs his iPhone in the charger, and a few minutes later, it comes back to life. Once it turns on, he starts seeing notifications from E*TRADE—one after another, after another after another. The phone is locked, so he puts his finger on it, and it unlocks. He scrolls through the notifications; there are so many, he cannot count them. They all say- "Trade confirmation." (That is strange. I thought I deleted this app.)

James again feels intense sensations throughout his body, feelings of fear and anxiety in anticipation of learning what he might have done over the weekend. He opens the E*TRADE app to see an available cash balance of \$10,567,034.26. He becomes lightheaded at the site. It makes

him feel as if he is floating outside and above the moving car. He looks at the trade history, and sometime after he blacked out on Friday at the pool, hundreds of trades were made. (I don't remember doing this at all. I don't even know how I could have made this many trades in a few hours. Is this a joke? What the hell happened.)

He sits the phone down on his knee sideways because the charging cord is a bit short. He then turns his head to stare at the balance—frozen, in a state of shock.

(What is the deal with this notebook?) James pulls the rubber band off of it and flips through a few pages. All that is written in it is scribbles that were clearly done by a drunk man, some stock symbols, and a few equations labeled "Time-displacement operations on R."

(Well, not sure what I was writing in here or where this notebook came from, but oh well. Looks like I am freaking rich, man!) James is still wary, though. He transfers half the money to his checking account, thinking that there is no way this will go through. But, sure enough, with the quick transfer capabilities now available, his checking account has a balance of \$5,000,017.34 within a few minutes.

2.3 | Provisional Sobriety

After James gets home and sleeps off his weekend of fun, he attempts to backtrack his Friday afternoon but can't connect the dots. He then asks around the staffing at his apartment for some info, but they all said they haven't seen him since Friday morning. He then remembers talking to an older lady at the pool who doesn't usually talk to anyone. He remembers her reading a book and thinks he may have spoken to her. He is quite social and social with all ages when in a blackout state.

When James gets to the pool, he sees her again in the same spot and decides to ask her if she recalls seeing him. James walks up to her and says, "Excuse me, Miss.," and she replies, "Why yes, Jim?" "Oh, I suppose you do remember me then," She giggles and says flirtatiously, "Well, we had a great afternoon together, Jimmy. It was kind of bizarre, though. You were laying out drinking beer across from the pool, and then I looked up, and you had disappeared. You were gone for almost two hours—your beer and everything still sitting there. Then, suddenly, you were right there as if you never left. I think I read about half my book while you were gone." "I did? What is your name? I am so sorry, I kind of lost track of my memory since Friday afternoon." She responds with an unusual giggle, almost as if the situation isn't unusual at all, "Jimmy, my name is Elevyn. Don't worry about it. You disappeared, came back, and we went downtown for cocktails, some dinner, and other stuff."

James is thinking about what might have happened when she interrupts his thoughts and says, "You did pretty well on the market on Friday. We had a good weekend. Now it is time to get back to reality. From what I gather, it seems you are done with Texas now. I think it is time for you to head back

home to Wisconsin, love. This university doesn't have what you are searching for."

The lady daintily pushes her petite, frail body from the chair while smiling at James. She then stands up and leans in. She puts her hands on the table to hold herself up and then kisses James on the cheek. After she releases her lips, she whispers in his ear, "I'll see you again sometime, Jimmy." She then walks away out of the pool area and quickly disappears.

James is even more confused now than he was fifteen minutes ago and doesn't want to think about it anymore. He is also still exhausted from the weekend and needs a drink to help him relax and sleep so he can sweat off the toxins in his body.

After a few days of sleeping and mild consumption of low alcohol content beer, James comes out of his alcoholic funk. He has a moment of clarity and decides that he is taking a break from drinking. The high from all the money he has leaves him in a state of confusion and exhilaration. He has always struggled day-to-day for money and suddenly has all the money he will ever need. He contemplates finishing his Ph.D. at UT Dallas or going on an endless vacation. Still, education doesn't seem like the main priority of his life now. For the longest time, physics was the only thing that gave James a sense of meaning, but a newfound fortune gives him the freedom to pursue, well, almost anything.

James has no friends or family in Texas, so he decides to take Elevyn's advice and head back to Madison, WI, to be near what little family he has left. He spends the next few days looking for a condominium in downtown Madison and quickly stumbles across a small condo he likes right in the heart of the city. Without hesitation, he makes a call, wires the money, and buys it.

Afterward, he gets online and orders a new mattress, bedding, and a fan. He has the furniture set to be delivered to the new condo to be there when he arrives. He then goes to his apartment's management office, pays the early termination fee, gives the keys back, and says, "Bill me for any cleaning." He then takes an Uber to the Mercedes dealership, buys a brand-new C-class with all the accessories, and drives until he reaches Oklahoma. Once he hits the border of Texas into Oklahoma. He reads on a large sign- "WELCOME TO OKLAHOMA – Discover the Excellence."

When he sees the welcome sign, he raises his hand up to the rear window, sticks his middle finger up, and says, "Good riddance."

Chapter 3 | Road Trip

James decides to take a long route from Texas to Wisconsin so he can weave through small towns. Along the way, he plans to visit restaurants in search of rare cuisine. He also wants to experience the mysterious ambiance of small-town cultures. To him, the unfamiliar people are reminiscent of tribes in a rainforest; no one has ever seen. The first stop is near Depew, Oklahoma—population 479, where James finds a local restaurant that doesn't serve customers.

Living Kitchen Farm & Dairy

"Now, some people think that-der fine food is only found in them bigger cities. But, I reckon they ain't got the integrity and devotion, us small folks gots." "No, sir. I would agree with that. Some of the finest foods I've had the pleasure of eating myself were from small towns—places where people hold up tradition and keep life simple. You see, that's why I am detouring on my way back to the dairy state. Trying to taste the land, as I go." "Wisc-ahhhhh-sen, ey." "Yes, sir." "Well, they may be called the Dairy state, but I don't know if that means they have the best dairy." "Probably not. I don't think I've ever seen someone from Wisconsin eat anything other than a big old chunk of cheddar." "Ha! Well, what can I do for ya, son? We don't serve up food on-demand here. You gots to have reservations, and they is sold out, son. Besides, dinner won't be ready until later on. There are some fine diners throughout the state. Shoot, I do have some scraps leftover from some wheel cheese and some wild legumes we foraged. Why don't you take yourself a seat on over there in that rocking chair by the window. I'll fix ya up a little sampler

platter." "Yeah? That'd be great. Thank you so much." "Why don't ya have yer-self a seat out der on the porch, and I'll get ya when it's ready." "Sure, and thanks again."

James contemplates life in a small town to life in the city while he waits. The view outside is pleasant and relaxing while he is rocking back and forth to the soothing country sounds of trees swaying in the wind. ('Are you sure you wanna go back to the hell hole you came from? This here country live-in seems a lot nicer to me.' 'Yah. Maybe.')

"Here you are, son. Fresh from the fields and fresh from the teat. You gots here a couple wild peanut legumes and some greens my daughter Pansie picked just this morning. Finished off topped with mozzarella the Mrs. also made this morning. It isn't much but ought be a nice Oklahoma treat. You should consider staying the night. We have a guest bed, and I always have an extra spot or two at the reservation table for friends and family. I'd love for you to meet my daughter Pansie. I think the two of ya would get along just dandy." "That's very nice of you to offer, sir." "Call me, Pat." "Alright, Pat." "I didn't get your name, son." "Most people call me James." "Pleasure to meet you there, James" "I'll tell the Mrs. to keep a seat cleared for ya."

James tried to reiterate that he would not be staying, but the man had all but vanished before he could respond.

3.1 | Pansie

“That sure is a fancy car you got out there. My name is Pansella. My father tells me you are from the big city.” “Oh, hi there, Pansella. I wouldn't say that I am from a big city, just passed through Dallas – for eight years – for some strange reasoning, I don't understand. Tell your dad I said thanks for the dish here; it was delicious.” “Did you like the greens? I picked them myself.”

Before James realizes what is happening, the young girl pushes a chair up so close to his that the rocker's base locked underneath, cornering him where he sits.

She thrusts a plate into his lap in succession with removing the first plate. A tactic clearly meant to keep him put. She sets the finished dish aside and says, “Here, I brought you a piece of elderberry pie. It is really delicious. Me and mama made it up last night.” “Oh, I think I am alright.” “You have to try it. Here let me show you.”

Pansie sticks her finger on the plate in James's lap and applies pressure to it while she dabs a bit of the purple syrup on her finger. She then sticks the finger in her mouth and says, “See. It's delicious, and it is so sweet and sticky.”

The whole charade is giving James the heebie-jeebies accompanied by a looming erection. (Is this girl really doing this right now? How old is she anyway?)

“Here, sweetie. Let me help you.” She lifts the plate up off his lap, playfully replacing it with herself—tucking her backend right up against his groin. She holds the plate with one hand, dipping her finger back in the sauce with the other. She puts her finger right up to James's lips without his consent. “Try it; you will love it, I promise. It is so juicy.”

James cannot help himself; he lets her slip the tip of her finger into his mouth, and he tastes the sauce. He attempts to

say something, but she sticks her finger deeper inside when he opens his mouth. She then rubs it all along his teeth and gums as if she were trying to brush them. It seems awkward at first, but then he finds himself enjoying the exploratory mission of her finger. When she pulls it out, she giggles and says, "Oh my." She then picks up the fork and proceeds to feed James the pie one bite at-a-time while telling him about herself.

(Oh, God. Is this really happening?) James takes another bite, and then he gently grabs her arms and puts them down to her side. "Honey, are you even eighteen?" "Why no darling, I am sixteen, but that is totally okay. In Oklahoma, you are an adult when you are sixteen. Well, not a legal adult, I guess. But I can totally have sex legally. It's not a crime for sex at sixteen, is what I am saying." "Seriously?" "Yep. I'm a virgin too. I just turned sixteen last week. My dad told me to come meet you. He said you looked like your soul has been in a lot of pain for a long time and that maybe I was the cure or your kismet or something. Why? Don't you like me? Am I too young? I thought men want a younger woman?" "Oh honey, you are something special, believe me." "Well, then you will be at dinner tonight, right?"

James again tries to explain he cannot stay, but the girl starts kissing him before he could say a word. It has been years since he has smelled female scents so close and tasted the essence of a young lady. The sensation leaves him speechless and laced with goosebumps. A whisper comes into his ear, "By the way, I won't be wearing any panties tonight. Daddy will make sure we sit next to each other. I'll see you tonight, sweetie. Bye-bye for now." Pansie hops off, still holding the plate of partially eaten pie. James watches her dash and skip away with childlike grace—wearing what looks like an Edwardian dress.

(‘Alright, man. What the fuck was that all about?’ ‘I don’t know, but did you see her legs?’ ‘I saw everything. Are you joking? Is it really legal to have sex with a sixteen-year-old in Oklahoma?’)

James pulls his phone out to do some research:

“Siri- What is the age of consent in Oklahoma?”

16 years old

The phrase “age of consent” refers to the age when a person is mature enough to agree to sexual intercourse. The federal and Oklahoma age of consent is currently 16 years old.

[oklawguy.com › a-quick-guide-to-age-of-consent-la...](#)

A Quick Guide to Age of Consent Laws in Oklahoma - Tracy L ...

[oklahoma-criminal-defense.com › crimes › age-o...](#)

Age of Consent & Statutory Rape in Oklahoma | Romeo

The legal age of consent in the state of Oklahoma is 16 years old. But there’s more to understanding the law than this... Oklahoma is one of many states in the ...

...

(‘Well, I’ll be. How does that sound to you?’ ‘I don’t know, man.’ ‘When ya reckon a tight lil sixteen-year-old virgin piece of ass like that’s gonna fall into your lap again? I mean, like

literally and figuratively.’ ‘As tempting as it sounds, sleeping with a girl like that is like smoking crack or doing heroin. The high you are after comes with severe consequences, whether legal or not.’ ‘We gotta get outta here – before we get into trouble.’ ‘I agree.’)

James pushes himself up out of the rocking chair to head toward his car, parked on the gravel lot when he is abruptly stopped. “Now hold on there, cowboy, my little girl, tells me you said you’d like a seat next to her tonight at dinner.” James is speechless, trying to speak. “Uhh-Uhhhh.”

Mild guilt is present in James’s demeanor as he is reminded of the depleting stiffness in his pants. He is scared of what Pansie’s father is to say next. James tries to tell him he wasn’t planning to stay, but before he can speak. Pat belts out, “That is great to hear! I knew the two of ya would hit it off. Come on over here, son, let me fix you a drink. You a Gin or Whiskey man today? I bet you feel like Gin—Tanqueray. Yes, and straight or with soda—soda, it’s early in the day, you say? Yes, come on over here, son, let me fix you a Gin, Tanqueray.” Pat puts his arm around James’ shoulders and escorts him to the bar, against his will, but James doesn’t resist so to prevent a struggle.

(‘Something’s amiss here.’ ‘I know, man.’ ‘How the hell does this guy know my drink?’)

“No sir, no thank you. I am on the wagon here as of late. Got work to do.” “Oh, never mind that, J.F., you deserve to take a break. Here, let me pour you a glass. Have a seat. Relax. Gin’s your drink right—Tanqueray. With club soda—on ice. Sit down, let me pour you a glass.” “Uhhh, Ummm—uh” “You stress too much, J.F. Here, let me pour you a glass. You know my daughter, Pansie, she is a virgin.” “Huh. What did you say?” “A virgin, I said. You ain’t hard of hearin, is ya? Her maidenhead ain’t ripped yet. Bet you is lookin forward

to layin with her for the first time. Special girl that Pansie." "I think I should get going, sir." "Nonsense, let me pour you a drink. Gin, that's your drink, right. Take a seat, relax, J.F. You have nothing to worry about. We've been waiting for you." (Waiting for me?)

"Oooohhhhh My, this must be the strapping lad Pansie just can't stop talking about." "J.F. This here is the Misses" "Why, hey there, handsome. You can just start calling me mom if you like. We ben waitin for you along time." "I'd say about sixteen years, wouldn't you?" "Why yes, ever since pat first found his way to me. Yes, I believe so. Bout sixteen years." "I think you have the wrong person. I really should get going."

James tries to stand up, and Pat's wife pushes him down after resting her hands on his shoulders. She gently massages him from behind, and Pat says, "Nonsense, J.F. let me pour you a drink. Gins your drink, right? Tanqueray? Soda? Have a seat. Relax."

Every time he says Tanqueray, James' mouth waters a little, and he begins to fantasize about that first sip coating the lining of his stomach. Then Pat's wife says, "Let me look at you, sweetie. We gotta clean you up before dinner. Ooopsie, and here is a little elderberry stuck on your cheek. Not a bad look. But, it ain't gonna fly with elders round here. Have a drink, sweetie, Gin, isn't it? Relax and have a seat." "I am already sitting?" James confusedly said in a soft tone.

James pushes himself off the barstool, breaking the lady's grip, knocking it on the ground. Pat and the Mrs. try to block him from heading to the door but aren't fast enough. James walks quickly, feeling freaked out. He doesn't look back just keeps walking, hoping they are not following him. When his foot hits the gravel lot, he bolts to the car while fumbling for his keys in his pocket. He then remembers he left them in the

drink console. He rushes around the car, opens the door, and jumps in, praying that his keys are still there, and they are. He hits the push to start button and backs up out of the parking lot, spitting up gravel on the side of the barn. He looks to the door to see Pat and the Mrs. standing in it, stuck at the threshold, as if they cannot leave the building. Before James exits the driveway, he stops to think if he was just overexaggerating. Maybe their behavior is the simple conduct of friendly and welcoming people.

During his ponder, he notices Pansie is standing next to a tree facing the trunk of it. She is doing something to it. (What is she doing over there; it looks like she is hugging the tree. No-no, she is tying a ribbon around it. That is weird. Looks like an apricot tree or some type of small fruit tree—maybe persimmon.)

While James studies her actions, she turns around and sees him in his car. James instantly recognizes her facial expression, one of sadness and despair. She stands barefoot, looking at him, and takes a few steps forward towards him. She isn't wearing the same dress she had on earlier, now she is wearing a pink knee-high skirt with an untucked blouse. She watches James as James watches her. She begins to slowly unbutton her shirt. The actions are hypnotic to James; he cannot break the trance she is putting him in. She takes her time popping one button at-a-time out, first exposing her shoulders, then her cleavage, and finally, the blouse slips off her body and floats to the grass. Her small nipples stiffen quickly from the wind, and their color match her skirt.

James contemplates taking her on the grass where she is. She stands with her arms at her side, still, like a doll in a department store. She isn't looking at James anymore—she is just staring into empty space as if she knows James is there, but she cannot see him.

(“This is your last chance to get with that young piece of ass man. You sure you want to add missing this to the anti-bucket list?” “Either way, you slice it, it’s gonna end in regret. I don’t particularly feel like spending the rest of my life on this farm raising kids with a girl that would likely resent me for taking her youth from her.” “Alright then, don’t come whining to me when you’re praying for love again, and all you have is your hand.” “You know I only feel that way when I am drinking. It just seems being married would be easier than having hangovers, but when we sober up, we prefer being alone. You know that.” “Yeah, maybe. Someday she might find us, though.” “She is out there. She has to be.” “Well – maybe it’s her then.”)

A few minutes go by while James sits in his car. He is stopped at the edge of the parking lot, admiring the elegance of her half naked body. He wonders if she is still looking at him or not. It seems as though she was looking right at him, but then it was as if he disappeared, and she can no longer see him. He continues watching her, and he sees the slightest sparkles in her eyes as they well up with tears. Pansie tilts her head down with sadness and turns around. She then ambles off into the meadows, leaving her blouse resting in the grass next to the yellow ribboned tree.

Chapter 4 | The Lobby

August 4th, 2016

“Hi. Can I help you?” “Yes, I am moving in today, just bought unit 6140.” “Oh, yes. You must be James, or should I call you, Jim?” “Sure am. Feel free to call me J.F. or James or James Francis or Dr. Q or Jim or whatever you like. I’m not sure how I got so many names, but it happened.” “Which do you prefer?” “Oh, I suppose J.F. is fine. Easy to recollect for most.” “Well – alright then, J.F., let’s get you settled in.” “I am Lena. I manage tower two, which is this building—the Mifflin St. building.” “Nice to make your acquaintance. I think you have the keys for me, correct?” “Sure do, and some paperwork for you to fill out. Follow me to my office.”

J.F. follows the young lady to her office located within the lobby. On the short trip from the vestibule across the room, he inspects the surroundings, wondering who could have been responsible for the décor. He contemplates to himself, (For what is supposed to be a modern building, this lobby sure looks like it is from the ‘30s. Why would anyone choose these Victorian-style chairs and matching console tables? And, the paint—the paint looks like someone purposely matched the color of the vomit from the exorcist movie. I don’t know. It is sort of nostalgic—I guess. Kind of reminds me of a place I cannot remember.) “Please have a seat, If you will, Mr. J.F.”

J.F. sits down on the opposite side of the desk from the young girl. He thinks she looks to be about 26—a good age match for him. He watches her body as she maneuvers about the desk. She shifts papers around and organizes while maintaining feminine attributes. Her mannerisms entice his

physical attraction, even though, at first look, she is not all that attractive to him.

J.F. asks while she sifts through files, "How long have you been working here for?" "Oh – I started in 2016 just after I finished college. Not exactly what I wanted to do, but it's easy-going and pays the bills. I love all the people here too. Where are you coming from?" "Dallas." "Are you from Texas?" "Actually, I grew up in Wisconsin – Janesville—that is." "What brings you back?" "Got me a postdoc job over there at the university." "Great place to live. You don't even need a car with everything so close." "I suppose so." "Alright, so here is the addendum for renting and Airbnb. Pretty much the only thing anyone on the board cares about. I am sure you were told before you bought that there is no renting or Airbnb's." "No, not really. But I don't think that will be an issue. It's just me, and I'll likely be here for a decade or so while doing my research. The only thing that would shift me is if I somehow get roped into marriage—doubt that'll happen anytime soon." "Alright, then. Well, just keep in mind that you can rent, but only for a year, and you have to show proof that you are moving back in afterward. Also, the tenants are approved by the board, so you cannot handle any applications. We will handle them for you." "Fair enough then." "That's really the only concern. You can read through all the other condo rules and everything when you like. They don't require signatures." "Sounds good." "Okay. Here are your keys, one is for the mailbox, one is for your storage unit, and the other is for your unit. It has 6140 engraved on it, and the unengraved key is for storage—small ones for mail. You need me to show you around?" "Nah. That's fine. I like to explore things on my own. I'll figure it out."

J.F. gathers his paperwork and keys and heads off. Before he is out of view of Lena, he takes a last glance at her breasts, which are tucked tightly into a brassiere designed to accentuate the cleavage. He then makes his way through the lobby to the elevators.

While J.F. stands staring aimlessly at the elevator doors, he hears Lena say from a few feet away, “Oh, hey – James.” He breaks from a locked-in gaze with the elevator doors. He turns and sees Lena walking up to him. She puts her hand out to him, and hands him what looks like a credit card. “I almost forgot your key for the service elevator and building entrance. The single elevator on your right requires it to enter the lobby or go to any floor. If you go in it without the key, you’ll only be able to exit the building out the trash room.” “That will come in handy.” “Yes. Sorry about that.” “No problem. I am sure I will forget it anyway.” “If you do, you can call yourself on the intercom and unlock the door from your cell phone. Just hit the number 9 button, and it unlocks the door.” “Ah. Very good to know.”

Lena turns and walks back to her office through the lobby. J.F. cannot help but take a long hard look at her backend wrapped up tightly in a skirt, just barely reaching her knees. She takes a quick glance back at J.F. just to see if he is watching her. He anticipates this, so he quickly turns his head around to face the elevator doors, hoping she doesn’t catch him eyeballing her backend. At the same time, the elevator dings. This leaves her unsure if he had been looking and turned his head or hadn’t been looking and was simply staring at the elevator dial.

“Lobby,” says the elevator recording. When J.F. hears the recorded female voice, it sounds—to him—almost as if it is intentionally meant to sound erotic. The recording is quickly

followed by "Going up.", which doesn't make sense to him since the doors had only just started opening.

The elevator doors slide open, and an older man with a professional-grade camera hanging from his neck comes out. "Hello and welcome to The Lobby." Says J.F. in a joking way as if he were a bellboy on staff at a fancy hotel. A comedic gesture that always gets a laugh or at least a grin. But this man walked out the elevator and into the lobby as if J.F. was not even there. (Weird. Must be one of them old fellas that haven't any time for anyone, or something.) J.F. watches the man walk away, through the lobby and out of the building. He stares at the back of his head, wondering what would turn a man so rude as to not even say hello to a neighbor.

J.F. sees the elevator doors are about to shut, so he says out loud, "Hold up. Wait - for - me - elevator." and slips himself in sideways just before they can completely close. He pretends he is Indian Jones sliding under a giant cement door, which is about to slam down.

When he gets into the elevator, he notices the buttons are numbered a bit strange as if intentionally labeled to be out of order. They read from right to left and down to up.

2 L
4 3
6 5
8 7
10 9
PH 11

He pushes the sixth-floor button, and the female voice again says, with a provocative tone. "Going up." He thinks to himself, (Who did they find to do the recording for this thing. Sounds like Elizabeth Hurley, but without the accent.)

When the elevator doors slide open, two girls are standing in front of them waiting to enter. J.F. sees the girls and says jokingly, “I made it! Thanks for waiting for me.”, to which they giggle, understanding the humor the previous owner did or did not.

“Pardon me, ladies. You must be my new neighbors?” The two of them smile and say, “Yeah. Are you moving in?” “Yep, sixty-one forty.” They then both respond simultaneously like trained twins, “Oh, cool.” One then says, “We are right down the hall.” And the other says, “We’ll probably see you around.” They both give a friendly smile, smiles J.F. interprets as intentionally flirtatious. He then says, “Nice to meet you two Ladies.” as they maneuvered around him, entering the elevator while he exits.

The doors close, and J.F. starts to walk away. As he walks away, he can barely hear the girls, but he hears one of them say, “He is cute, don’t you think?” He then thinks to himself while wandering down the hall in the number direction of 6100-6200. (Oh, the young women of the world. They must be 20 or 22 or so. Probably college students. Definitely sisters. They have the same hips and jawbone. Nice looking girls. Wholesome – like they were brought up on milk and family get-togethers. I like that. I wish I could know what it is like to have family ties and comforting feelings like that. They probably haven’t even a worry in the world other than grades and whether or not a boy likes them. Good upbringing. Where the hell is my condo! I have been walking down this hall forever. I must have passed it—not paying attention. Alright, going back. 6100 on the right, 6110 on the left, 6120 on the right, 6130 on the left, 6150 on the. What the hell. Where is 6140? Here is 6150, and there is 6160. Weird. It must be on the other end of the hall then.)

J.F. walks back down the hallway in search of his unit. He passes door after door and light after light. The lights are all attached to the walls and are all planted evenly between each entry. He notices the carpet is the same green color as the lobby, and no windows to be found anywhere. At first, he thought the mirrors may be windows but was then startled. He had seen his reflection thinking it was someone else in the hallway opening their door.

(Here it is. Damn. Weird, it kind of feels like déjà vu. Wonder why this unit is off balance with the other unit's numbers being tucked right between 6010 and 6030.)

4.1 | The Lobby

May 14th, 2018

Mother

Just got into town!
Great! How is the new place?

Just about to get the keys.
Cannot believe it
Got this beautiful condo right downtown
By the capitol

Can you afford that?

James ignores the nagging text from his mother and then
replies back about a half-hour later.

Mother

This place is fantastic.
It is small, but it is really cool.
Easy to take care of.
And guess what?

what

There is a farmer's market right down the street
Every Saturday
It wraps the entire block.
I guess they call it "The Square"
the state's capitol's base or something.

I'll check it later.

I've been there.

Cool

I'll give you a call later

Waiting for my mattress to arrive...

Hopefully it gets here today.

Hopefully

James waits in the lobby of the Metropolitan Place Condominiums. As he waits, he sits in one of the old Victorian-style lounge chairs. He is waiting for some final paperwork before he can get the keys to his condo. While sitting and texting, a trim woman with long black hair scuffles out of the office. She says to him with unexpected enthusiasm, "Welcome to the Metro Place! Here is the information on the H.O.A. fees and here are your keys. The small one is for the mailroom, the gold one is for your storage unit, and the big one is for your condo. I will need your routing numbers just as soon as you can get them to me. And here is your fob to get in and out of the building. You will also need it for the service elevator."

"What ab-." James attempts to respond to the lady before going back into her office when an elderly lady interrupts him. A lady who seemingly came out of nowhere.

"Lina, oh, Lina. Can we talk? I just heard something." The lady then stops talking when she sees the unfamiliar man getting up from the chair.

James stands up and puts his iPhone in his left pocket, making sure to face the glass screen towards his thigh so that if he bumps anything, it won't shatter. He stands there for a second expecting the lady to apologize for interrupting. Still, she just keeps on talking to Lina. He wonders for a moment

what the lady is going to say and then says to Lina, “Thanks.”, and walks away feeling annoyed by the rudeness of the two. Lina then bursts out after sensing the emotion, “Oh, wait, James. Do you want me to show you around?” James raises up his left arm and says without turning back to look at her, “Nope.”, as he makes his way to the elevators.

(Who the hell decorated this. Wasn’t it built like ten years ago?) “Gotta love people with money in small towns.” Said James under his breath while standing in the elevator lobby.

“Laahhh-bee.” says the intensely erotic female voice of the elevator. Just before James walks into the elevator, he turns around and interrupts the two amid their gossip, “Hey! I forgot, where are the packages delivered?” The elderly lady gives him a skewed look. Lina says, “Normally, they are in the room right to the right, over there, but I put everything in your condo for you so it would be ready upon arrival.” “Really? Great! Thank you!” James now feels bad for rudely walking away. Lina then shouts across the lobby to James, saying, “By the way, your unit is out the door to the right of the elevators. It is off numbered with the rest of the hall for some reason.” James nods back to show he understands and then catches the door just before it shuts. When he gets inside, he says, “Ah, the wonders of the cuboid charoites and their low-level flights to the middle of the sky.” He then thinks to himself, (These elevators have an odd resemblance of something designed in the early 1900s. I kind of like them—creepy in a sense.)

James arrives at his condo on the sixth floor, and when he looks at the door, he is surprised to see that the name plate says “Doctor J.F.”, and thinks to himself, (Is this on purpose or from the previous tenant? I am no doctor and I don’t recall

them saying anything about monogramming the thing. They would have asked me what I wanted right? Eh. Cool, I guess.)

He gets in to see the memory foam mattress he ordered is still rolled up, vacuum sealed, and tucked in a delivery box. He then says with great enthusiasm, "Thank God for Amazon!" But then thinks to himself that the company is convenient but at the same time is probably turning America into a communist country. He immediately remembers that it needs hours to inflate. Before he even looks around the unit, he pulls his new set of keys out, looks for the pointiest one, and uses it to cut through the tape.

The tiny mailbox key has a sharp tip to it. James pushes his index finger to the back of the key, presses it to the package-tape, and scrapes it down the seam. The key quickly gunks up, and his hand jerks away from the box from the applied force breaking his hold on it. This frustrates him. He feels his body heating up and reminds himself to practice patience. He relaxes all his muscles and immediately accesses a meditative state. Then he uses his hands to break the remaining tape by wedging his fingers into the seam he made. He then pulls back the cardboard while wiggling the flaps side-to-side until the tape cracks apart across the whole opening. Finally, he jerks the flaps with great force to break the tape's connection.

Once the delivery box is open, he finds a second box with an image of a mattress and some writing. He reads, "A good night's rest is the most important part of the day!" (Isn't that kind of a contradiction? Most sleep at night, right? So, wouldn't a good night's rest be the most important part of the night? I think they crossed the breakfast slogan with this. Probably another country that doesn't understand English, or maybe I don't.)

The second box has an even more tightly wrapped taping. But this time, James anticipates the gunk build up and gets the mattress slid out with ease. It comes rolled up in an easy to unroll wrapping designed to let the assembler unroll it and get it into position. He now walks through his new condo to find the best spot for it. He has no other furniture in the place, so he puts it in the living room for the time being.

The unit is small – less than 500 square feet. It is basically a small bedroom, kitchen, living room, overly long hallway, and a bathroom. He wonders why they divided the place up in such a strange arrangement as it does the exact opposite of maximizing space.

James is a recent grad school dropout. His studies were advanced math and theoretical physics. Hence, his brain automatically calculates the best way to arrange the place in order to maximize the space. Equations fly through his head like passing stars in light-speed travel.

“Alright. Well, remodeling will probably be on the menu. But first! Remodeling my brain cells.” (I can get to know the city a little. I think I will break the new place in with a bottle of—hmmm, what seems fitting to the situation? Ah! Yes – scotch, of course. No other drink would be best suited for a new high-rise condominium located in a downtown setting. And yes—yes, indeed, I believe I do have a bottle of scotch tucked away in my backpack.)

James lays out the mattress and watches it sadly puff back up like a squished marshmallow. He knows he needs to kill at least six hours before he can sleep on it, and it also reeks of chemicals, so he opens the windows. He then remembers he ordered a fan as well.

James heads back to the packages tucked up against the wall in the hallway and opens up the one with the fan in it.

Once he gets it out and untangles the cord, he carries it over to the small living room area and then positions it on the floor next to the mattress. (Good thing I put the mattress in the living room. There are no windows in the other room.)

After James finishes up with the mattress, he takes a tour of his new place, walking only 5-feet, saying, "Well. That's it, folks. What did you think?" (It may be small, but that means easy to clean, easy maintenance, and better yet, easier to afford!) Piddle-Paddle-pop-crack – Piddle-Paddle-pop-crack. (What was that? Must be some neighbors or something.)

"Hey Siri, where is the closest liquor store?"

Here's what I found-

Riley's Wines of The World located at 402 W Gorham St,
Madison, WI 53703
Badger Liquor Shop
State St.

...

(Excellent. Those are only a few blocks away. They shall be our saving grace on many days to come. Plenty of bars too.)

James gathers up all the cardboard to take down to the recycling room. He uses the service elevator, which requires a key to access it. When he gets in, he looks for the button to take him to the trash room.

Service Elevator

L 2

3 4

5 6

7 8

9 10

11 12

B LR

James isn't sure which button is to the trash room. He uses common sense and concludes L is Lobby, so LR must be an abbreviation for the back entrance. It also makes sense because none of the other buttons work unless activated by a magnetic key, whereas the LR button works regardless. He then recalls Lina saying something about only being able to get out of the building using the trash room while he was texting earlier. So, he concludes LR is the way to go.

The elevator's back door opens, and he hears that sexy voice again say, "Lahhhh-bee," followed by "Going up."

James steps out, and the sliding doors close behind him. He then heads over to the recycling area and tosses the cardboard into a big green bin. On his way back, he notices a rocking chair and a cardboard box filled with random items resting up against the cement brick wall. He asks himself, "Are these free for the taking?" just as he reads another piece of cardboard that says, "Free for the taking." (I guess so. Jinx! Must have seen that in the corner of my eye.) He inspects the chair and sees it has a loose arm but still works, so he sits in it and gives it a rock. (Very nice – just what I needed. What's in this here box then? Nice, very nice, this is my favorite type of glass, a Collins glass, I believe it's called. This is a nice little notebook, too, or journal, maybe? Doesn't look like it has been written in yet—a couple of cloths and a battery. I'll take the glass and journal. Thank you. Must be kismet.")

James sits in the rocking chair for a few minutes and opens the journal to see if it has been written in. As far as he can tell, it is blank except for a single writing on the back of the cover page, which reads: *The physical body is nothing more than a prison for the punished soul. J.E.M.*

4.2 | The Drink

Thunk-POP. James yanks the cork from the scotch bottle he had tucked in his backpack and immediately smells the sharp fragrance. The scent makes his mouth water with anticipation. He pours himself a half-finger in his newly found Collins glass and retires to his newly found rocking chair. Along with the drink, he brings the notebook. He sets the drink on the windowsill before taking a sip and then goes back and hunts for a pen. He finds an unused ballpoint pen he had leftover from the previous semester. He returns to the chair, repositions it to see the city, and then takes a small sip of the scotch. He sips it slowly while admiring the blue sky and equally not admiring the surrounding buildings' architecture. While the alcohol sets in, he thinks to himself, (This is like a brick forest. Not hardly a tree in sight. Man. These buildings are ugly. That one looks like the brick steps from the original Mario game. Who designs a building to look like a giant staircase? What a waste of space. They could literally double the capacity by making it cuboidal symmetric. Maybe they ran out of money; I did read something about many places in downtown Madison running out of money. Perhaps – maybe, this here Journal might be a good sign—that is, now that I am done with grad school, well, at least for now. This way, I can work on my theories without the bureaucracy of college B.S..)

James finishes his first small pour of scotch and then returns to the chair with a pour double the first size. He then opens up the notebook and begins writing about his theories.

Hypothetical Physics

a course on deriving unknown theories from unknown
universes

What is a hypothesis? What is a theory? What is a law?

Most people incorrectly use the word *theory*—in conversation—in place of hypothesis—for example, “Theoretically speaking, we are living in The Matrix.”, but this would actually be appropriately stated as “Hypothetically, we are living in The Matrix.” Because one would *hypothesize* that we are in The Matrix—that is, it would only be a *theory* if it were proven to be correct to the best of our knowledge. However, someone could provide a valid paper that does, in fact, mathematically prove we are living in the Matrix, then one could say that we are theoretically living in the matrix. A *law* means it is valid in all aspects, such as The Law of Gravity. Think about the title of a famous paper, ‘The Theory of Relativity.’ It is not ‘The Hypothesis of Relativity’ nor is it ‘The Law of Relativity.’ It is given the title *theory* because it is valid to the extent that it cannot be disproven; however, it is not a Law because other theories contradict it, and it is not true in all aspects of physics, such as quantum mechanics. This brings us to entanglement; entanglement is a direct contradiction of relativity. In laymen’s terms: Every particle has a twin particle, and its twin reacts instantaneously to any actions brought on to one or the other particle. This means that information is being sent faster than the speed of light—for example, make a phone call to mars and send morse code using an entangled particle on Earth with its twin on mars. When you tap the entangled particle, the twin feels it on mars instantaneously, but the phone call will take approximately 187 seconds (if traveling at the speed of light) to reach Mars. That contradicts relativity

but doesn't disprove it; hence they are both theories because they are both true but simultaneously contradict one another. Einstein spent the better half of his life finding the link between the two to solidify it into one single theory. Unfortunately, he was missing the constant or God Function in his calculations.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK

James puts the pen in the notebook's crease and sets it on the windowsill next to the Collins glass. He then gets up out of the rocking chair, walks through his condo to the door, and then opens it. He doesn't think to check the peephole.

"Yes?" "Hi. Are you Mr. Francis?" "Yes. That's me." "Hello, Mr. Francis. My name is Steve. I am with the maintenance staff here. I just wanted to check and make sure every-thing is working alright for ya. Are you have-in any issues with any-thing?" "Not that I know of. I only just got in, really." "Alright, then. Just let me know you have any problems. You is responsible for repairs of any sort, but of the issue is minor enough; we can help." "Alright. Sounds good. Thanks." "Have a nice day." "You as well."

Chapter 5 | Pray for Death

{“Nothing goes better together than death and physics.”
“What world are you living in? Are you here with us, or have you created your own reality?” “The end is near, my dear, but not close enough to hear.” “Wait, and you shall see that nothing is more than you and me.”}

August 24th, 2016

(Gun – the gun. I need the gun. I need it. I need to buy a gun. I'll put the gun next to my head, pull the trigger, and then I'll be dead. 'What?' The gun, I said. I must buy the gun—not for fun, but to have the gun, my son. I'll put the gun against my head, pull the trigger, and I'll be dead. For fun is not the gun—it just must be done; the gun is to make me done—done. I'll put the gun against my head, pull the trigger, and soon I'll be dead. 'He puts the gun against his head, pulls the trigger, and then he's dead.')

J.F. goes on in a tireless sleep. His brain repeats itself like a broken record, (The gun – The gun, I need the gun. If I put it next to my head, pull the trigger, I'll be dead, he said.)

The poor man lays in bed, unaware of whether he is asleep or has been tossing and turning for hours. He is twisted up in the sheets, surrounded by darkness, wondering where he is. His body excretes droplets of sweat from head to toe, soaking the mattress beneath his naked body. His brain rants in uncontrollable loops, (The gun I said – the gun, wouldn't it be fun to have the gun for if I had the gun soon, I'd be done. I'll put the gun against my head, pull the trigger, and I'll be dead.

The end is near, my dear. I am so eager to hear, but first - we need - to get - the gun.)

Between mental ravings about suicide, a single lyric by *Ray Conniff and The Singers - Tie A Yellow Ribbon Round The Old Oak Tree* plays in his head. The lyrics drive him mad. The terrifying sound of the singer's voices makes him feel like he is in some sort of an interdimensional hell where the only available punishment is listening to sweater-wearing racists from the 70s belt out gay music.

*"Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree
Round the Ole Oak Tree
the Ole Oak Tree
the Ole Oak Tree
the Ole Oak Tree
Tie a Yellow Ribbon Round the Ole Oak Tree
Round the Ole Oak Tree
the Ole Oak Tree
the Ole Oak Tree
the Ole Oak Tree
Oak Tree
Oak Tree-Oak Tree-Oak Tree-Oak Tree-Oak Tree"*

The song will only stop when he switches back to obsessing about suicidal fantasies.

The repeating lyric doesn't seem to have a beginning or end for him; it just goes on in endless successions. His inability to recall the start and the end of the song drives him mad, so he switches back to his gun obsession. Focusing on the gun allows him to put a stop to the repeating lyric.

J.F. rolls over, feeling air brush against his sweat-soaked back; it cools him for a moment. He then uses all his strength to slide himself over to the dry half of the bed. Once positioned, he pulls the blankets back, lifting them off the wet areas hoping that the area will dry by the time his body soaks the other side of the mattress.

The delusional state continues as he lays on a queen-size foam mattress tucked in the corner of the small bedroom in his unfurnished apartment. The repeating song lyric feels like someone stuck an icepick in his brain, and he cannot get it out. The only thing that stops it is the obsession about getting a handgun and blowing his brains out.

He sleeps naked with a single white sheet covering his genitals. He cannot stay still and flips side-to-side, feeling bits of sweat build up, on his back. He fantasizes that he is not alone and grabs a pillow squeezing it tightly, pretending it is a woman that loves him unconditionally. For a brief moment, he has feelings of bliss as he fabricates the perfect female. This lasts only a fraction of a second before the mind wanders back into hell: (The gun – it should be a 6-shooter pistol. We wouldn't want any chance of failure. Hollowpoint bullets too. The gun I said, it should be bought to make me dead. All I have to do is put the nose to the head, pull the trigger, and I'll be dead. 'Hopefully, sooner than later, I said.')

A sudden urge to vomit comes over him, and he is grateful for this. The dehydration and absence of substance within his body mean he will be dry heaving until gobs of bile can make their way to the esophagus. This unpleasant use of stomach muscles will give his brain a break from obsessive and repetitive thoughts.

He pulls the blankets off his body and rolls over to the edge of the mattress, and then feels the sticky sheet peel from his back as he plops onto the floor. His body's muscles are in such a sore state that he can barely crawl his way out of the room. Once he drags himself to the hall, he uses all his might to prop himself up off the ground. He then uses the wall to keep himself erect while he inches to the kitchen. He thinks to use the toilet or sink to vomit but knows from experience that he will be intermittently sick throughout the night. The best solution is a bucket or pan by the bedside, but he has only a cup in the kitchen and doesn't even possess a trashcan. So, he decides to hold himself over the sink and get the job done.

Once braced to the sink and crouched over the garbage disposal, the urge to vomit is no longer there, but he still needs to get it out. So, he turns the sink on, wets his fingers, and shoves them into the back of his mouth, penetrating the gag reflex until the dry heaving begins. The first five attempts give nothing but air. On the sixth attempt, greenish-yellow slime oozes out of his throat, slipping off his tongue onto the stainless-steel tub. The progressive streams of bile extraction make his abdominal muscles feel like he has just done a thousand sit-ups.

After fifteen minutes or so, the ritualistic act emptied his thoughts.

Upon returning to his fantasized death bed, he falls asleep. He wakes back up only a few minutes later to find himself right back in a self-inflicted hell.

A new lyric pops in J.F.'s head by Ruth Etting singing "Button Up Your Overcoat," and the sound of a shrill woman's voice sings on repeat, ("Take good care of yourself you belong to me! - Take good care of yourself; you belong to me! - Take good care of yourself; you belong to me! Take good care of

yourself; you belong to me! ... Eat an apple everyday – Eat an apple every day.' GOD STOP!! God, please stop! 'The gun.' 'Fuck, we need the gun!')

J.F. shivers like a child stuck in the snow as he lays coverless. He pulls blankets back over his moist and naked body and then feels it instantly overheat, so he pulls them back off. A minute later, he feels cold again and rewraps himself in blankets. He then swaddles his legs and torso, positioning his arms back across his chest like a mummy. He rests flat on his back and imagines he is stuck inside a coffin, and his death is near.

He repeats his vomiting ritual and continuous movements throughout the night until his body exhausts itself, and he finally falls asleep.

(I'll put the gun against my head, pull the trigger, and I'll be dead.)

6 | Class Prep

Journal – 08/05/2016 School is starting soon. I don't recall (or rather remember) doing much over the summer. I really need to get back to my research, so I am prepared for the class I will be teaching. The semester here in Madison is a little odd. It doesn't start until after Labor Day in September sometime. I think they only have a 14-week semester vs. the standard sixteen I am used to—kind of nice. I wasn't aware of this until I looked at the calendar for the correct start date this week, only to discover it didn't start until September. Perhaps the universe works in my favor, so I may get up to date on my work. Good thing I don't have any coursework this semester. The university was kind enough to focus on my hypothetical physics course until I got settled in. Then I can start coursework in spring. I'd honestly prefer to just focus on my research. I am about half burnt up doing different physics topics. I feel I have enough knowledge and can pick up what I need when necessary.

I just noticed a snowflake falling outside while I sit in my rocking chair writing. It looks beautiful. I only recall it snowing once or twice in Dallas, and it was short-lived once the sun came out. It will be nice to experience winter again. What happened to the summer anyway? I have only been here now for a few days as well. Anyways, research now.

Research:

Tranoquarticles
Transient Quantum Nano Particles

Notes:

Lecture 1- Superpositioned Au Quarks

Lecture 2- Stabilized Elec

"Rat-a-tat-tat"

('What was that?' 'Sounded like that little door knocker thing.' 'Who the hell would use that tiny little thing. I couldn't even get my finger through it.')

"Tap-Tap"

"*Yep, sure is.*" J.F. says under his breath, "Hold on a sec – I'm uh come-in.", sets his notebook on the windowsill, pushes himself up off the rocking chair, and heads over to the door. He stops to look through the peephole first and doesn't see anyone. He then opens the door and pops his head into the hall, looking both ways to find no one is in there. ('Had to have been the neighbor's door?' 'You think?' 'Guess so, it's right next to ours.' In fact, our condo is the only one that has a door this close to it. All the other doors are evenly spaced, but this door is literally almost connected to ours.' 'Weird.')

J.F. shuts the door and heads back to the rocking chair. "Alright. Now, where were we."

Research:

Tranoquarticles
Transient Quantum Nano Particles

Notes:

Lecture 1- Superpositioned Au Quarks

Lecture 2- Stabilized Elec (cont.) trons and anti positrons
lec

“Rat-a-tat-tat”

“Seriously. There better be someone at the freaking door this time.”

J.F. gets up and walks back over to the door at a fast pace. This time he doesn't look through the peephole; he just grabs the door and swings it open fast to try and catch the knock-and-dasher. His hand grips the doorknob pulling the door so hard that it slips out of his hand and hits the door stopper screwed to the wall. He expected to see nothing but standing in front of the door is one of the artificial twins from down the hall.

“Oh. Geez. Sorry about that. I thought you were someone messing with me. Say, did you just knock on my door a minute ago?” “No. Wasn't me.” “Weird.” “What's up?” “Hey. Well, I am Eve, and yeah- it is like Eve from the bible. My mom wanted it because Eve means something that happens before, like Christmas Eve, you know, so like she thinks woman came before man, which is why Eve is the name in the bible. My sister's name is Eden, so you probably get the theme here. Just wanted to get that out of the way. Anywho, we met yesterday at the elevators.” J.F. responds with a confident and flirtatious tone, “How could I forget the angels of the sixth floor.” “Awe, that's sweet of you. Well, I heard you teach physics?” “Yes, well, I am just starting, but I have been a T.A. and a tutor for some years during grad school.” “Well, I am taking Physics 2 electro something.” “Electromagnetism” “Yeah. That's it. I am taking that this fall, and I really suck at physics. I was wondering if you could tutor me? I'd pay, of course. Well, my parents would actually pay—but you'd get paid, is what I mean.”

J.F. contemplates for a moment about how he swore to himself that he would never tutor a student in physics again.

He would always say: "One cannot tutor a student in physics if they don't read the book, and a student that reads the book, doesn't need a tutor." But, under the condition that the girl is as attractive as this young lady, his brain is not on track for logical thinking.

"Are you a student at the university?" "I am. But, this course is at the local community college." "I see. I am not sure about the rules of this. Teacher-student relationships outside of the classroom." "Oh – I looked it up. Just so long as I am not in your class directly or have a teacher that would rely on you to grade any of the class's work, it is entirely alright for you to tutor me. Here, I printed off the college rules for you. You can double-check online. I am not sure on payment, though. It didn't mention that. I mean, we are just down the hall, you know, so it's like 'Who is gonna know?', right? God forbid you help thy neighbor." "I suppose. When do you start?" "It starts same as UW, but I'd love to get a jump start. If you are not busy. Well, and if you wanna. You never said you do. Do you? I'd really really appreciate it!"

J.F. analyzes the girl's face and mannerisms. ('Hmmm. Do you think she likes us, or do you think she is just trying to use her beauty and flirtatious skills to manipulate us?' 'Does it really matter? She isn't just beautiful. She is someone we could marry and have a family with. I could see the two of us out in the country making biscuits or something – pulling corn with 5 kids run-in around.' 'That there is hogwash, my friend. Even if she were interested, she is at least 10-15 years younger. Give her 5-years with us, and she'll be ask-in for a divorce just to get some excitement in her life.' 'Yeah, that would be the statistics. Pretty good odds that would be the case. I don't know, though; she has that something special about her. I can sense it.' 'So, what do you think then? Should we break our oath to never tutor physics again?')

“Let me think about it. It’s not something I usually do. Why don’t you give me your number, and I will let you know.” “Sure. My number is-” “One sec.” They both take their phones out. “Okay,” “608-277-7273.”

EVE

J.F.

got it!!! ☺

“Alright. I will check back with you later then. Maybe tomorrow.” “Okay! Great! Talk to you later.”

“Alright. Where were we?” “*Tranoquarts, my friend.*”

J.F. heads back to the rocking chair and picks up his notebook flipping to his research but then shuts the book, frustrated when he starts to hear scraping sounds.

(What is that sound? It sounds like someone plowing snow in my walls—like the big shovel – the one on the front of the truck—scraping across a gravel road. Couldn’t be a plow; it’s only just sprinkling a couple flakes out there.) He leans forward in the rocking chair to look outside down to the street level. “*Just as I suspected—nothing out there.*” Screeeeeaach-scraaaaape-scraaaaape scirrrhhhhraaaaatch (I am never going to get any work done. It’s like every time I touch my laptop or pick up my notebook, something happens. I swear! I think I am cursed.) “I guess today is as good as any to get back to drinking then. Can’t argue with God’s will.” THUNK—clink “God dam-it. What the hell is that frick-in sound.”

To: lena.lease@metro.phase2.com
Subject: Strange Sounds

Hey Lena, hope your day is going well. I hate to be a complainer, but I am having issues with hearing some noise here. I am not sure, but it sounds like someone doing some construction or remodeling type work. Are you aware of anything like that going on, and if/when it will stop? I can't imagine it could be anyone above me, seeing as the floors are a solid foot of concrete.

J.F.

6.1 | 10:00 am 8/26/16

(‘Wine or beer today’ ‘Beer will keep us stable longer and save a couple bucks.’ ‘But, wine will get us where we want to be faster.’ ‘You’ll just buy wine later today—regardless, once the beer stops working.’ ‘Yeah, but if I start on wine this early, I will be too drunk by dinner time and won’t really have the right buzz.’ ‘What about Gin then?’ ‘That is risky business, my friend.’ ‘If we have weak drinks—you know, like a half ounce with soda water, we will keep a steady buzz and stay relatively hydrated. We can then switch to sipping it straight on ice around dinner time and then straight out the bottle. This way, we get the mild buzz throughout the day and then the kick we need later and the slap in the face before bed. Plus, it is only twice the cost of the beer and half the cost of the wine, and really, the wine and or beer won’t be enough, and we’ll probably end up getting the Gin anyways—as per usual.’ ‘Yes – you are right; Gin is the way to go.’ ‘I also won’t be pissing every 5 seconds either. It is the lowest carb drink out there with the most health benefits.’ ‘Yeah, that juniper berry could be what saves us, and we need our vitamins.’)

Bingggggg

From: Lena L.

To: Sandra@Metro.Phase1.com

cc: jquasar@uw.edu

Subject: FW: Distracting Sounds

Do you know anything about this?

...

J.F. reads the forward and then slips his phone into his left pocket. He pulls the phone back out to make sure he locked the screen and then puts it back in his pocket. He then double-checks to make sure the glass screen is facing his thigh. (Alright. Phone, money, keys. Check. Let's get this show on the road. Wait. Don't I have some Tanqueray in the freezer already?) BOOM-BOOM-BOOM "Christ. What the fuck are these people doing up there."

30 Minutes Later

Split-Crack. J.F. twists open his Tanqueray and smells the pine-e fumes protruding from the mouth of the bottle. "Ahhhhhhhh, the heavenly scent of true love." He then fills the only cup—a purple coffee mug he found down by the trash room—with ice and a little splash of Gin followed by the crisp bubbles of soda water.

-Hey Siri, what's the weather?

It's currently raining and 41 degrees.-

Expect thunderstorms
and rain starting in the morning-

Today's high will be 64 degrees
and the low will be 41.-

('Yikes. Doesn't look like much to do other than drink today.'
'Indeed. I suppose we should get back to our work anyway.'
'Yes. I concur, good sir. I concur. To the day wet and thine
body dry.')

J.F. grabs his drink and heads over to his rocking chair next to the window. He takes a sip of the gin cocktail and sets it on the windowsill. He then grabs his notebook and flips it open to the next empty page to begin another topic.

Notes: Einstein's theory says time travel is not possible—verbatim. However, quantum entanglement shows that Einstein's theory of relativity is not guaranteed everywhere. It has been proven that if one travels close to the speed of light, they move more rapidly through time in the forward direction.

Question: If entanglement between two particles is instantaneous.

Meaning: When something is done to one of the particles, the exact same action occurs to the other particle simultaneously, thus breaking the laws of relativity, i.e., information or data has been transferred at a rate faster than the speed of light. Then, if one of the particles is taken to move near speeds of light, causing it to move further in time, will the other particle age simultaneously even though it is not moving? I postulate that the use of quantum entanglement and absolute zero speed will result in a jump between spacetime intervals.

Boom-boom-bang-boom bang bang pop bang boom boom boom

Sounds of what resembles a child running with stomping feet flow across the ceiling, disrupting J.F.'s trains of thought. His chest fills with anxiety, and his face boils being amplified by the ethanol coursing through his veins. Still, he remains calm and gently sets his pen in the fold of his journal and closes it. He says stiffly, "I guess my primary focus is 'the drink' today.

Seems pretty dam clear." He then rests the journal back on the windowsill and sips down the rest of the drink in one gulp.

5:00 pm

J.F. looks at the time and sees that he has been drinking for over 6-hours now. He wonders how he could sit in a rocking chair without any music, reading, or television for so many hours and why they went by so fast. His first thought is to check the alcohol level that remains as the liquor stores close at 9:00 pm in Wisconsin.

J.F. pushes himself up off the chair, feeling the alcohol's effects more prominent once gravity puts its hold on him. He holds his cup filled halfway with melted ice as he walks over to the countertop. (I must have dozed off for a while. All the ice is melted.) The bottle of Gin is already three-fourths empty, and it just five. (I should probably eat something. But – I don't want to mess with the buzz.)

6.2 | Days Later

(Please, Jesus. Please-please. Jesus. Please, oh, God. Please. Please-please-please. Help me. Please, God—help me.) J.F. twists and turns in bed. He starts to come to after weeks of nonstop drinking. His body has reached its terminal point of intoxication. He cannot put another drop in his body without it being rejected. He searches frantically for his phone, weaving in and out of the twisted-up blankets. He eventually finds it wedged between the mattress and the wall. 08/24/16 3:34 am Monday, September 3rd, 2016. (Thank God. I didn't miss work.)

The pain he feels is incomparable to any sickness one could have outside of contracting a rare and slow killing virus. (God—please help me or Jesus or whoever is out there. Please Jesus-God. Help me. Oh, God. God-god-god. Help me. Please help me. Pleeeeeasssse. I am sorry for everything. Please help me. Forgive me. Help me. Please. I need help. I need love. All I want is love. Help me please. God—please.)

This semiconscious rant goes on until J.F. falls back asleep and then wakes back up sweating as if he is in a sauna. He uses whatever bit of strength he has to get off the mattress and turn the thermostat down. When he gets to the thermostat, he pushes the down-arrow excessively until it reads 50 degrees. Then he keeps pushing it and pushing it the same way someone impatiently waits for an elevator to arrive.

He returns to his mattress flat on the floor, and all he wants to do is sleep, but his brain is spiked with a cocktail of excreting toxins from weeks of straight drinking. The chemicals cause his mind to race uncontrollably. The equation of how the fan blowing on his body forces warm air into his apartment's enclosed system combating the colder air

blowing out of the AC system tortures his mind. The calculations bounce back-and-forth against his will. He finally concludes that, unless he installs two more AC units in the apartment, he'll never get the temperature lower than 60 to 64 degrees Fahrenheit. The other solution is to turn the fan off, but the fan's sound helps to keep him distracted during this period of withdrawal.

After J.F. tossed and turned about seventy times—shifting from the left shoulder to the right to the back and then finally laying on his chest—he falls asleep. A sound sleep that permits his brain to settle for a moment. But then he wakes right back up when he hears multiple pounds in the ceiling. He is too tired to care at this point.

Eventually, he makes it through the night and officially falls asleep after the sun comes up. He plans to sleep all day and does not want any interruptions so he can begin to get refreshed for work. Like clockwork, just as he finally falls asleep, he is rudely awoken—again.

“Goddamnit!” J.F. yells out after being awoken by someone using the metal door knocker. He frustratedly gets off the bed and puts on some sweatpants and a t-shirt. He heads to the door to see John, the maintenance man standing outside. A short skinny guy, probably in his fifties or sixties. J.F. had talked with him before and concluded he has a Napoleon Complex.

“I was told you hear some noises in your place?” “Hey, John. Hey- can you do me a favor and never knock on this door again. If you are going to come up here, just shoot me a text. And don't call, I don't ever answer the phone. Just text me, and I will come to the door—if I am home.” John responds with a sort of tone that implies he probably won't honor J.F.'s request, “Mhmm, ahK.” He then goes on disregarding what J.F. just said, “MMM Hmm. When you say

you are hearing sounds, what do you think they are?" "Lena, send you?" "Yeah." "Didn't I send that email like two weeks ago?" "I'm not sure." "Alright, well, I don't know. Just sounds like loud random noises. I imagine one of the other tenants doing some remodeling or something because they are hardly consistent noises. Sometimes it sounds like exercising and other times like someone is just randomly throwing a bouncy ball against my wall." "I see. And what time do you hear this?" "All day, man. Doesn't seem to happen at night much, though." "Usually, when someone is hearing someone exercising, we ask them to put a mat down." "How is that. Wait—what? The floors are made of a solid foot of concrete. How is a mat gonna do anything?" "A mat will dampen the sound." "No. I am saying, the floor between each level of the building is solid concrete. You ain't gonna hear shit anyone is doing above you—that is not how sound travels, man. There is no way I am hearing anything they are doing. This is something else. I think maybe the pipes are connected to another unit, and the sound is being sent down them funneling into my unit or something." "Hmm. I see; why don't you get a recording of it, and we'll go from there. I have to get to another tenant's unit." John walks off.

(What the fuck kind of help was that? Dude acted like I was crazy. And a recording. How am I supposed to record sounds that randomly make themselves present? This guy. Is this guy an idiot or something? He doesn't seem dumb, but gosh, I am not sure. Probably just thinks I am some stupid college kid or something. 'Been like this our whole life, man. These people here point their fingers at the ones who point fingers. Remember? I told you we shouldn't have come back to liberal-nazi Madison.)

J.F. strips his clothes off and falls back into his mattress. When his naked body hits it, he immediately feels the sting of

cold sweat-drenched fabric. Before he settles back into bed, he straitens the blankets, so the dry half covers his body.

("What time is it now?" "7:30 am!" "Fucking shit. This ass has the nerve to come randomly knock on my door at seven fucking thirty in the morning. I am gonna have to bring that up to the board. Just because we live in a building doesn't mean people can just go knocking on doors whenever they want.)

6.3 | Over the Next Week

(I have been laying in this bed for two-days now. It is saturated with my toxic filth. It's time to get some food and caffeine in me and get back on the horse. I really need to stay sober. I have to get to work tomorrow. I will never get my work done if I keep going on binges. Maybe I should look into AA again, but it never works. It always goes the same way. I stay sober for a few months, am feeling great about it, and then people in the program start shoving their opinions down my throat. They start telling me I will relapse if I don't get a sponsor and work their program, so I do that, and I relapse. They blame me, saying I must not really believe in God, which is why I relapsed. Sick people—they are, really. They don't really believe what they say they believe, so they try to convince others to believe it, and when they don't, they blame them, and that reinforces the lie they embed their life in. I suppose it is my own fault for listening to them in the first place. I mean, nothing makes me want to drink more than recovery. Besides, most the people in those groups are drug addicts nowadays. They don't understand what alcoholism really is, or they have been sober for 40-years spitting lies to one another for so long that they have forgotten what reality really is. I don't know. It doesn't seem hard for me to grasp on to the belief of God and prayer when I am suffering from horrible withdrawals, so why can't I do it when I am sober? I guess it's because my mind is clear and I can think straight. One cannot take any faith in the thoughts of a raving alcoholic mind, can they? I don't know. Some of my best ideas came to me in the midst of a drunken state. Yeah, but that is like a point that allows you to lose access to parts of your brain; you are usually too stiff to enter, like getting the nerve to ask a girl out when having a few drinks. To embed your entire belief

system and day-to-day actions based on something a human said is absurd. I always love the hypocrisy of humans. One of the most self-proclaimed Christians I ever met went on a rampage about politics and news to say: 'Only a fool believes what they read. Just because it's written down doesn't make it true.' To go on to the next string of words about, 'Everything written in the bible is what should be followed and nothing else.' Then, put the other person down and belittled them in such a cruel way for not putting absolute belief in the bible, which the man read. What an idiot. So, how can I put faith in humans and what they have written? I have never met a single person that has not lied to manipulate someone—including myself. I don't know. Drinking takes me to a euphoric fantasy land and keeps me sane in some sense, even though the alcohol makes me act insane while under it. I think maybe true love would set me free. I cannot think of one thing I have ever wanted more in my life other than true love.)

Clink – tittle – pop - bang-bang – boom – pound-pound-pound

"JESUS! WHAT THE HELL ARE THEY DOING NOW! I mean, seriously. What in the hell are these people doing?" (I don't even have a clue what this sound is. Do they ever stop moving? I don't really hear a thing from 10:00 pm to 7:00 am, so it's got to be someone's routine, but goddam! Who the hell moves so much! I thought people just sat and watched TV all day. These condos are not that big. What could they be doing with such limited space? I am gonna have to campout on the parking ramp across the street and look into windows to figure out who these fucks are.)

-Hey Siri, start a new note

What do you want it to say?-

-Annoying Goddamn Sounds”

OK, what would you like to add?-

-11:03 am sounds like someone throwing a rubber ball against the wall.

-11:09 am sounds like someone dropping little blocks of wood

-11:10 am sounds again like a rubber ball being thrown at the wall. I imagine someone pacing their home while tossing a ball against the wall.

(My brother used to do this for hours to calm his anxiety.)

-11:11 am I don't even know how the fuck to describe this sound. It's like mice with wooden shoes jumping on a trampoline made of vinyl planks.

-11:13 am It's as if a chair with rubber on the feet is being pushed across the floor bengghhhhhrrrrRRR sound

-11:00 am - 12:00 pm Nonstop pounding as if someone was using a punching bag.

(I cannot even keep track of a fourth of this shit.)

“I got to get the fuck out of here before I snap.”

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM – BOOM – BOOM
BOOM-BOOM – BOOM – BOOM-boom-bang
BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM
BOOM – BOOM – BOOM – bang-bang-bang-bang

“Jesus God. I have to leave. What the hell is wrong with this person that they would have to move this much all day.”

Frustrated, J.F. decides to leave his condo and go work in the lobby where he may find some peace and quiet. He grabs his notebook and rushes out into the halls slamming his door behind him, and then continues down the hall to the elevator walking stiffly.

When he gets to the lobby, no one is in it despite it being the middle of the day. He is grateful for this. It allows him to get some rest, so he takes up residence on one of the Victorian chairs. He sets his head back and closes his eyes to rest while the place is empty. After a quick nap, he plans to get to his work.

“Wake up, man.”

J.F. barely has a chance to shut his eyes when someone starts talking at him. He pulls his head back straight to see a man with two lap dogs sitting in the wide Victorian chair across from him. One of the dogs is erect on his lap and the other by his leg. (What does this guy want? He looks like Charles Manson or Jesus Christ or maybe Jim Morrison. I wonder if that is how women perceive him. If they are attracted to him, he appears to be a saint or a famous musician, and if they are not attracted to him, he is the devil. Women are so strange as to how they depict a person based on how they are attracted to them.)

The peculiar man looks at J.F. and says, “You must be the new recruit. I am JIM, that is capital J – I – M, and these are

the building watchdogs.” J.F. is confused but still replies saying, “Nice to meet you.” He is unsure what to think of such a man with such dogs just appearing in this chair seemingly out of nowhere. (When did he get there, and had he been there the whole time? Is he magic or was I actually asleep?)

“Say, what’s your drink of choice? Gin or Whiskey?” “Why do you ask?” “If I ever offer you a drink, I’d like to know your brand. I have a feeling we will be running into one another frequently here in the lobby. I like to spend time down here. It’s nice. Big and open—get to talk to random people and what not.” “Tanqueray is pretty much the only thing I’ll drink.” “Well, alright friend. I’ll remember to bring that later tonight. If you find yourself fancying a cocktail this evening, you’ll know where to find me.” “Alright then. Thanks.”

7 | Entry: J.F.

Journal 12/13/2020, J.F.

The semester is over, and a drink is in order, for it has been three months and a fortnight since the last.

I sit at my office—gazing upon a brick wall—wishing for the long-lost love I have never known. Note- something about antivibration and subatomic measures...

The students await their final grades, and my research is coming to an end. Dr. Onellion expects a finished essay over quantum entangled particles on a non-subatomic scale by the end of the year, and I haven't even started the work. There is a young girl in my hypothetical physics course that has had me in knots all semester. Something about her just takes me out of reality and sets me into a bizarre sensation of bliss—even though we haven't but spoken once. She must be at least ten years younger than me as well. She would probably run for the hills if she ever saw me while drinking anyways. I suppose I am doomed to a life of anti-intimacy bounded by the shackles of a genuine passion—a passion no one else on this planet could ever experience or even understand exists. Somewhere along the line, I must have been cursed to hold the knowledge and capability of true love but to never share it with another. Oh, how I dream of her, though. I wonder where she is from; she doesn't look like she is native to the lands of Wisconsin. Whatever. I shall move on and erase the semester with a fresh drink this day, for it has been 14-weeks plus 2 since I last entered the land of delusional harmony.

JF

Postscript: I almost forgot that it is my birthday today – It must be kismet!

JF

7.1 | First Snow

The first snowflake of the year has made itself present to the city of Madison. It falls from the sky, swirling and flipping until it finds a home somewhere in the center of the isthmus melting instantly upon its arrival. Soon to follow, its billions of brothers and sisters will litter the earth bringing beauty back to the baron city currently speckled with leafless trees and brown, wilted grass.

Young J.F. has finished his first semester as a TA at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. He has spent the past 14-weeks teaching his original course on *Hypothetical Physics*. A course and subject he developed and of which his doctoral research was over. He waits in limbo to receive his Ph.D. as the other professors do not have faith in his claims, stating: “Until the work can be proven, we cannot award J.F. his Doctorate.” A challenging task to accomplish considering the mere vastness of simplicity in his work. However, many of the professors found the result quite intriguing and beneficial to up-and-coming research in theoretical physics, so they allowed J.F. to host his own course teaching the subject. At the same time, he pursues another topic of research so to obtain his degree.

In the basement of Science Hall on N Park St., Bricks line the walls floor to ceiling subtending wooden planks that crick and creak all along the abandoned hall as people walk above. These planks would puff out spores of dust if the right stomp was placed. He is a minimalist, only keeping a plain drawerless desk and old straight-back wooden chair in the office. There are no paintings on the wall, cabinets, shelves, or anything other than another old desk chair someone had

brought in at some point to sit across from the desk. *tap-tap-tap*

While scribbling gibberish in his notebook, J.F. is startled by a light knock on his door. He looks up to see the very girl he was daydreaming about and instantly loses his ability to be his natural-eccentrically-suave-self.

“Dr. Quasar” “No. It’s just J.F. I am not worthy of the title just yet, my dear.” “Oh. I doubt that very much, Dr. Q.” “Please. I am fine with being called J.F. What can I do for you?” “Well. I just wanted to thank you for the great semester and give you this. It’s an early Christmas card. Nothing special. You can wait to open it.”

The young girl walks up to J.F.’s desk hosting the most appealing physique and face accompanied by a voice that resonates as gold glitters. J.F.’s heart stops, and his stomach syncs, just being within her bubble. Her scent is not that of cosmetic fragrances but of natural origin. It diffuses his brain as though internet was cut during a captivating scene of a streaming film. She leans in to set the card down, putting both hands on the desk, and moves close, kissing J.F. on the cheek. She then whispers into his ear, “Don’t worry about a thing.”, and pushes herself back up, making the desk slide just a hair. She turns and walks off, either purposely swaying her thighs and hips or naturally; J.F. doesn’t know, but it is overly intoxicating to watch. “See you in Xanadu, Dr. Q.” Says the girl as she disappears into the hall.

J.F. had said but only a few words to her, yet it felt like it had been a lifetime in that less than a minute moment.

He stares at the desk, looking at a small envelope that reads in beautifully written cursive. Dr. Q

7.2 | Unit 6140

The semester is over, and final grades are in. All students have passed J.F.'s class with an A. An easy A as they only needed to show up for a class to give, and considering all students were physics majors at the advanced undergraduate or graduate level, they had much interest in the work as well as the easy A.

(I think I think. Hmmm. What shall it be today? It has been. Indeed it has, been a fortnight plus fourteen—or was it sixteen. I cannot recall, but the holidays are upon us all and for I have not the work to do, so drink I shall pursue. Shit: I forget. I do have the research to hand into the old twit. I doubt he'll care; his belly is as big a beer drunk bear, so my paper shall come whenith it cometh for that is that, and I shall become drunk and fat. Until the end of the winter, my friend drink, I shall, for it has been a night of fort plus twelve.)

Out of the office, down the hall, and up the stairs, J.F. makes his way to Langdon street, where he walks a half-block up swings a right and heads to State St. The snow is beginning to fall heavier now, and it helps to ignite his desire for drink. His passions of life go in the order of

- 1) The love of his life he feels he'll never end up with,
- 2) Drink, and
- 3) Physics.

Fresh snow triggers his desire to drink most of all, and the semester has ended, so his responsibilities are nullified. He will consume until the break disappears. He always found it fascinating that he is revered as a genius—a man above men

when he is on campus. Still, when he is at a bar and has a few drinks, he instantly becomes the drunk talking out his ass. The bartenders and other guests, at first, always found him to be delightful and impressive, but by the 15th drink or so, the tables turn. They then could never believe in his educational accomplishments and position at the university. To J.F., it was just fun and games. He had no reasoning to care what others thought or will think. Some people would ask him why he wouldn't carry himself in a more presentable fashion, to which he would respond: "Because I am not trying to get laid."

He makes his way down State Street, saddened by the boarded-up windows caused by the protesting terrorists hiding behind the B.L.M. movement and happy that the lack of business and traffic has driven the panhandlers away, so he doesn't have to zigzag the streets to avoid them.

It is a short walk down State St. until he reaches Broom St. and swings a right, then stops at Riley's Wines of The World to grab a bottle of Tanqueray Gin, a 6-pack of club soda, and a bag of ice.

"The night is young, my son," J.F. says to himself as he leaves the liquor store.

The Lobby

J.F. finishes his short walk from the campus back to The Metropolitan Place on Mifflin St., where he lives in a small Condominium. The building has a communal lobby just after entering and exiting the vestibule where J.F. would sit and chat with the residents from time to time. His intentions are to go to the bar/counter and pour himself a drink in hopes that someone else may show and drink with him, but when he exits the vestibule, the place is empty—a weird kind of

emptiness that leaves the sense that it has been vacant for decades. J.F. invites the creepiness. He twists and cracks open the dark green bottle of Gin, fills a cup with ice, pours some gin over it, and then slowly twists a soda bottle open to keep it from fizzing out after the walk and then tops the Gin with it. He walks around the empty lobby sipping his Gin, observing the strange choice of colors used to decorate the place. The Lobby is a rectangular room with some off rooms. A mail depository station painted a pea-soup green with old Victorian-style chairs. An odd choice, J.F. thought, considering the building was built in the 21st century.

It felt like only a few minutes to J.F., but he realized that hours had gone by when suddenly the sunlight was fading, and his bottle of Gin was almost two-thirds of the way drunk.

"Well. There you have it." (Should I run to the store before it closes and grab another bottle? No. No. No. I will continue the drink at Tornado. It is a glorious night for a snow-filled drunk at the bars!)

J.F. dances alone, twirling around the lobby, pretending to embrace the young girl from his class. He moves left and right with his left arm stuck out and his right arm cupped around her midback. He can hear The Second Waltz by Dmitri Shostakovich playing in the background as he fantasizes about him and the young girl closing in for a gentle kiss. Unknown to J.F., a few of his neighbors had come into the Lobby earlier and have been watching him. He had forgotten that about a third of the bottle ago, he had been in deep conversation with them. When he sees them, he stops and becomes erect, putting his right arm in front of his stomach to take a bow saying, "Good evening, my kind sir and madam. Tonight's soiree will feature locally squandered turkey with a wood blewit gravy. Please find your way to the banquet hall, and your seat shall be labeled with your name."

The lady and gentlemen that had been sitting with him look to each other in a confused state as they watch J.F. walk off with a sort of fancy step in his foot to the elevator and disappear.

Two hours earlier: J.F. pours his third Gin and soda while conversing with the neighbors at the community bar.

Six hours later: J.F. blinks and opens his eyes to find himself surrounded by people packed shoulder to shoulder. He looks up to see his reflection in the mirror across from the bar he is sitting at. He is dressed in a sharp pin-striped suit with a well-matched fedora. (I don't own a fedora or a suit, for that matter. Do I?) The barkeep comes up to J.F. with a significant smile, and a freshly corked bottle of Dom Perignon, saying, "This one is on the house, Dr. Q."

J.F. suddenly feels a slap on his chest. He looks up to see a larger burly man with a thick black beard and long hair wearing circular sunglasses slamming his journal into his chest. "You wouldn't want to be forgetting this now."

J.F. doesn't say anything. Maybe he is too drunk, or perhaps he is just confused about where or when he is. He just grabs the journal and slips it into the jacket. As he starts to recalibrate where he is, he sees on the counter of the bar a newspaper with a date of 1945 titled "The War is Over." He looks around him to see hundreds of people crammed into the small storm cellar that had been converted into a bar.

Drunk and confused, he decides he needs to get back to his office at Science Hall to review his Journal, so he makes his way there, hiking through the snow. In the excitement of the war ending, the staff must have forgotten to lock the doors. This allows him to get it into the building and to his office. It didn't occur to him when he left to bring keys. When he arrives, he forgets why he went there and removes a loose brick from the wall next to his desk to find his spare bottle of

whiskey. He takes it out along with a small tumbler, pours a drink, and then puts it back in the hole along with his journal. He sits back in his chair, takes one sip, and falls dead to the floor, passed out.

12/13/2018

"Celebrating your birthday early there, J.F.?"

A familiar voice awakens J.F. from his twisted slumber on the floor. His face is smushed up against the cold cement, and his legs and arms are pretzelled and numb. He pushes himself up wiping drool off the side of his mouth and chin.

"You think you can make it out tonight? We all planned to celebrate your recent publication on theoretical physics."

"My what?"

J.F. pushes himself up off the ground feeling the hellish reminiscence of the processing chemicals in his body come in to play and says,

"That, that was years ago."

Chapter 8 | Move-In Day

J.F. stands in the lobby near the vestibule. He is waiting for his turn to speak to the girl sitting in her office. He cannot see her yet, but he can hear her soft and enticing voice. It seems she is having a lively conversation with an older lady, a lady J.F. thinks has the scent of death upon her. He starts feeling paranoid as if the two women can read his mind, and just as he thinks it, the older lady turns and looks at him.

(Was that a coincidence? I wouldn't put it past these old-timers to have some sort of clairvoyance. Look at her face; it is as if it is decaying while still living, like a fresh tomato with a single moldy spot stuck in it. What is this pointless jargon they are discussing anyway? I hope it is more than just daily gossip.)

It is unclear to J.F. whether the young girl is irritated or thoroughly enjoying the tête-à-tête.

The two of them continue to ramble on with little concern for the man in the lobby who may actually have real business to attend to. J.F. starts to make out some of the conversation, but most of it is being spoken purposely low, so he and other tenants passing by cannot hear.

Typically, J.F. is a very patient man except when people are disrespectful to others; this is when he becomes impatient. He begins to pace a little to try and draw awareness when he is reminded of the need to appreciate patience. He quotes himself: (Life is short and getting somewhere quickly takes away the joy of arriving. Dr. James Francis Quasar)

J.F. cups his hands behind his back like a monk and walks over to a chair to take up residence until the gossiping discontinues. He then silently thanks the ladies for giving him a chance to practice patience once more. (Thank you, ladies.

My apologies for my disrespect and irritation. For I am only a man, and an insignificant one at best.)

He takes a moment to do some deep breathing meditation and says under his breath, "Whenever you are feeling rushed, slow down – slow down." Simultaneously, he reduces and controls his breathing and relaxes all his muscles. (What seems like a pointless conversation may be a conversation that makes this ladies day, and or is a discussion of much greater importance than my own.)

While waiting, J.F. slips into a deep relaxation. He becomes tranquil and pretends he is a master Buddhist becoming one with the oversized Victorian chair. Once his mind is cleared, he looks around the room and analyzes it using his mathematical brain. (There are two hallways separated by a wall with a large half elliptical table pushed up against it. Above the table is a large rectangular mirror with a gold plate carve design. Down the halls, the mailroom appears to be connected in a U shape with the mailboxes lined up and down the wall between the hallways' exits. There are more mirrors across the room, all having different geometric shapes, circular, elliptical, triangular. An odd assortment of mirrors. I wonder who decorated this place and how long ago that was.)

"Hello there, young man." J.F. is startled by a man sitting in the chair against the opposite wall. The man is draped in thick black clothing with long hair and beard, sunglasses, and a fedora. Sitting aside him are two little white dogs. (I must have spaced out for a minute while this person snuck in. Odd, I am usually more than aware of others lurking about. Particularly when accompanied by animal.)

"Afternoon." "Thanks. Are you waiting to speak to Elevyn?" "Yes, I think so. Elevyn is the lady in the office, correct?" "Yes, she is. Are you new here?" "Yes, I am moving

in today, just waiting to get my keys." "Excellent. Let me guess, Unit 6140?" "That's the one." "Only unit for sale, right?" "I suppose so." "I am also on the 6th floor. Say, you a Whiskey man or a Gin man?"

The girl comes out of her office and interrupts the short conversation and asks, "Are you, James?" "Yes, but please call me J.F." "Okay, great, I can see you now. My name is Elevyn."

The girl looks deep into his eyes and smiles at him. "Weird."

He felt a calm sensation take over his body when she looked at him. It's as if he knows her from somewhere. He imagines where he may have met her in the past. (She must be about twenty-five years old, I bet. Could I have met her when I lived here before? I doubt it; she would have been, probably, only ten at the time. Hmmm. I will have to make it a point to come and flirt with her regularly and find out who she reminds me of.)

While he follows Elevyn into the office, he hears the man say, "I'll see you halfway up." J.F. turns around to say goodbye to the strange man and his dogs, but he was already gone.

(It appears he disappeared as fast as he appeared.)

J.F. follows Elevyn into her office and sits down at her desk. While waiting for her to gather the appropriate documents, he examines every little facial expression she makes.

(Gosh. She is so adorable. Yep. I am in love. She is the one.)

Elevyn continues gathering everything.

While J.F. waits, he sees another opportunity to exercise patience, so he contemplates what the man meant by "halfway up." (He must mean there are 12 floors, so 6 is halfway, but if you consider the basement a layer, then the

12th floor is the 13th floor or if one considers the 12th floor as the 1st floor—counting down—then, twelve floors down makes the basement the 13th floor. Maybe that is the real 13th floor superstition so that all buildings with only 12-floors actually have a 13th floor if they have a basement, and since most consider the first floor the floor that is sea-level, the basement would have to be floor negative 1, that is, the basement is equal to -1. Now, since the number line is subjective to direction, we see that the real initial starting position would have to be the top floor going in. Then the basement is thus, the 13th floor. Hmmm)

Elevyn interrupts his excessive thinking by putting papers out to sign. She pushes the forms across the desk and tilts her head in a shy way. He listens to her and explains specific concerns that the board has addressed, such as move-in/out times, noise control, and so forth.

J.F. becomes distracted by people continuously passing through the lobby. One tenant barges into the office and interrupts the two of them to inform Elevyn. "Can you believe it? Someone is smoking marijuana. I can smell it in the halls. RIDICULOUS!" He finds the woman's concern odd since her breath reeks of beer and cigarettes. He looks at her and thinks, "*Crazy old hypocritical bitch.*" He then says, "You know, Marijuana has been decriminalized in Dane County. They have every right to smoke it, just as much as you have a right to burn those cigarettes. And you don't actually have the right since it is illegal to smoke within 10-feet of a door. Therefore, it is just as illegal for you to smoke tobacco in here as them smoking a little pot." The lady gives J.F. a look that screams: I am a privileged white lady. How dare you speak to me in any other fashion than your lips glued to my ass.

Elevyn quickly diffuses what might have become an argument between J.F. and the lady. She responds with the

utmost pleasantry: “Becky, I will reach out to them and see what I can do after I finish up here.”

J.F. listens closely while observing every little thing Elevyn does. (The way she carries herself is reminiscent of an angel. She must be someone that is truly impervious to negativity—almost as if she converts negative energy into positive energy. I absolutely adore that quality in a person. I need to work harder on accepting people and not forcing my thoughts on them.)

The lady walks off, and Elevyn says, “Sorry about that. Some of the people that live in the building have convinced themselves that their opinions are facts.” She says this with a sly smirk as if she and J.F. now have an inside secret.

He asks Elevyn, with a clearly sarcastic yet somewhat serious tone, “Do you guys keep a liquor cabinet back there? It is almost noon after all.” She laughs with enthusiasm and says, with hinting honesty, “Sometimes I feel I could use one too, if you get my drift.” “If I had to deal with these nagging old farts every day, I would keep a bottle of Wild Turkey and a gun in the drawer.” “Oh, they aren’t so bad. You just got to think of them as if they are children—like this is a preschool, and they are students learning how to deal with responsibilities and others for the first time. Then, suddenly you see the truth, and they won’t bother you. Maybe wear you out a bit, but just remind yourself that they are little kids that haven’t grown up yet. After all, most of them have never really been part of actual society, so they never learned how to properly socialize. Just rich and privileged or drunk and ignorant, not much of a difference, I suppose. High-horse syndrome—I call it. So, you’ll need to sign here, here, and initial here and here.” J.F. jokingly says, “Don’t I get a chance to read this?” But it wasn’t taken that way. “Of course, Hun, take all the time you need.”

J.F. senses the misunderstanding. He doesn't want her to think of him as one of these anal people, so he says, "I am just joking." Life is too short to read. He then signs and initials while saying, "Get me that drink. Let's celebrate!" Elevyn responds, with a concerning look, "James Francis: you should hold off on the ethanol." (Does she know something about me—my drinking problem?" She then says, "Until we get some ice.", and laughs. "James. Why did she call me James Francis? I only let the woman I am in love with use my middle name. She said it so provocatively too. Is she flirting with me?)

He laughs and smiles at her. They share a brief moment of eye-to-eye contact, then Elevyn breaks the contact and invites J.F. for a tour of the building. He doesn't want to leave her presence; he feels the inevitable hurt of losing her before he even has a chance to be with her. He reminds himself: (Every time I feel something special for a girl, when they see me drunk, it is all over.)

J.F. has become hardened over the years, abandoning all hopes of real love. It has been constant agony for him. He thinks to himself, (If only the girl would give me a chance and look past my lust for alcohol. She would see how perfect I am for her. I mean, what girl wouldn't want a man to cook breakfast, lunch, and dinner for her and then have multiple orgasms for dessert. If only she knew that nothing in life would ever be as important to me as her—if only. But they always find me drunk, and it creeps them out. 'Hell. I was just drunk, dam it. You cannot hold me accountable for my actions while under the influence.' I am not violent nor verbally abusive—I just say shit that makes people think and question themselves—a bad habit. I guess most people don't like to think, they just wanna be told what to do and believe in the lie.)

He starts to feel his heart beat faster. His thoughts are getting him excited, so he stops them and takes a deep breath while relaxing all his muscles, "It is alright. I like to mosey about and make discoveries on my own."

She doesn't realize that he wants the tour, but he also wants to get away. He doesn't want to give her a chance to be turned off by him. He is already feeling the sensation in the pit of his stomach; the thought of her leaving him after he has fallen deeply in love with her is upsetting him before it has even happened.

She takes it upon herself to negate his comment and says, "Follow me, James." while she gets out of her chair and walks out of the office. He turns to see her walk out the door with the most appealing left and right gallops of the hips. J.F. revisits his head, (Yep. I am in love. Fuck. I hope I don't mess it up. 'Just don't text or email or call or talk to her if you have been drinking then.' 'Easier said than done.' 'She probably has a boyfriend anyway. They always have a boyfriend.' 'Yeah, I know. I hate that. I wish people would just hold out for the right one.' 'Yeah, but most people are just human-animals working off of instinct. They couldn't acknowledge what love is if they tried. Just programmed vessels of flesh operating on an organic system and O.O.S. – Organic Operating System or is it Software? I forget. I hope she isn't a human. I really get the most tantalizing sense of comfort being near her.' 'Did you smell her as she passed by. Erghhh, I just wanna make love to her right now and for the next year straight. She is so beautiful.' 'Dude. Take a break. Relax and forget about it. You know how this will end. Just be happy you are not in jail and can still have a cocktail. Besides, you will never accomplish your physics research if you are balls deep in a broad every day.')

He cuts his brain off and follows Elevyn to the mailroom while examining her back and the curvatures leading to her thighs and then recalls: (When my lifelong journey of physics and drinking began back in my early twenties, I made a sort of oath to swear off women. Still, I am seriously thinking about making an attempt with this one.)

She finishes showing him where everything is in the lobby and points out where the elevators are. Then explains, that two of them he doesn't need a key for, and one of them he does. He walks over to the elevator area to investigate, but she does not follow. He turns thinking she would be next to him, but she is still in the main area of the lobby, so he walks back to her, and she continues to explain the rest of the building's layout.

Once finished with the tour, she hands him the keys placing them onto his palm, purposely putting her fingers to his skin. As she releases the keys, she slowly drags her fingertips across his hand, gliding over the solar plexus. The creases between his fingers blindly lead hers. Just as her nails gently scrape the tips of his fingers and their contact breaks, she tilts her head down and looks up to J.F. as to say, *"I love you to."*

The instant their skin breaks contact, J.F. feels as if he is in an antigravity chamber, floating in the voids of space, and the only thing present is the thumping beat of his heart. Then Elevyn says, "I will leave you to get settled into your new home. We did receive your rocking chair, bed, and bedding, by the way. I took the liberty of washing your comforters and sheets for you. I also laid out the mattress and prepared your bed for you. I hope that is alright? I got your packages while you were traveling across the country and wanted you to have everything set up before you arrived." "You did! Wow, that is amazing. Thank you so much. I am in desperate need

of a nap.” “Let me know if you need anything else, James.”
“Will do. It was very nice to meet you, Elevyn.” “Please, call me Ella, James Francis.”

(She did it again. I think she really likes me. Maybe moving back here wasn't such a bad idea Afterall. I really hope I don't blow it. I would knock her up right now and head to city hall to tie the knot if she were willing.)

While J.F. fantasizes, Elevyn walks back into the office, leaving him stranded in the middle of the lobby. He watches her godlike body strut off and imagines her draped in a wedding gown showing the slightest hint of a pregnant belly.

8.1 | Reflections or Delusions

(Alrighty then. New home. New land. Beautiful receptionist lady or is she management? I am not sure what the title of such a job is. Whatever. What is with all these dam mirrors everywhere? At least they are clean.)

A squeak pierces J.F.'s ears and then another. (It must be a wheel that needs oiling.) He cringes at the sound. He searches for the direction of it calculating sound wave diffractions to determine the origin. (It appears to be coming from around the U-shaped mailroom area.)

The squeaks become louder and louder, and with sharper frequency, emanating mostly from the mailroom's right hallway entrance. Each succession becomes shriller as the soundwaves resonate between the mailboxes and mirrors. J.F. scrunches his face from the pain of it piercing his eardrums. After the harshest of all the squeaks hits him, the next one is dispersed throughout the whole lobby, not causing him any discomfort. Then, coming around the corner, a blue maintenance cart pops into view.

An older black man wheeling a maintenance cart appears. He wears a blue jumpsuit that hangs off his arms like curtains as they slowly push the cart forward. J.F. can see the age in his face and thinks to himself, that it is an aged look of wisdom, and that he'd like to know this man.

"Howdy." Said the old man to J.F. "Hey there. How are you?" "Quite well. Just doing my rounds." "I'm J.F. – just moved in." "Nice to meet you there, son." His name tag reads Clancy. "You as well. Clancy is it then?" "Hey, you know it. Welcome home."

The man pulls out a spray bottle of bluish-green liquid intended for cleaning the mirrors. He begins spraying an undampened towel with the chemical and says to J.F. as the

mist floats through the air, “Gotta be able to see yo-self before you can find yo-self.” He then turns and begins cleaning a large rectangular mirror

While Clancy is facing the mirror, J.F. continues observing him. He has his right hand raised up, slowly wiping a cloth in a circular motion. He stops for a second and makes eye-contact with J.F. through the reflection of the mirror and says, “In order to see, one must open their eyes.”, and then goes back to cleaning.

(In order to see, one must open their eyes? What an oddly obvious thing to say; something that has extremely profound meaning yet no meaning at all. I like this guy. He thinks the way I do.)

Chapter 9 | Vestibule- 12:03 am

J.F. found his new place earlier, after getting the keys from Elevyn, and fell right asleep on the premade bed she had done up for him. He was exhausted from his travels and was in desperate need of a good rest. When he laid down, it was daylight, and the blinds were pulled up, but it is dark when he wakes.

After taking a quick trip to the bathroom, he decides to tour his tiny little condo. He takes eight steps across the layout and says out loud, "And that's it, folks. I hope you enjoyed the tour. We'll be here all week!"

Another step forward, and he makes it to the kitchen area.

Once in the small workspace, he searches about to see if there is anything in it. He opens all the cabinets and drawers to find they are empty, except when he makes it to the cabinet above the fridge. At first glance, it appears vacant, but when he pushes himself up higher on his toes, he finds a bottle of 18-year-old scotch rolled off to the back. (The previous tenant must have missed this when packing. My lucky day! Or night, I should say. Hooray!)

Scotch had been his preferred drink in the past, but he had switched to Gin for the botanicals' healing properties. Also, any time he ingests dark spirits, his brain tends to go haywire and bad things happen. Normally, he wouldn't risk a brown liquor, but considering the liquor stores are now closed, he takes the risk.

When he sees the rocking chair next to the window, he says, "Now only if I had a glass." and looks to the counter to see a tall tumbler sitting in the sink. "If you ask, you shall receive."

He pours a finger's worth, grabs the neck of the bottle, and shifts to the rocking chair.

Within a few hours, he drank half the bottle of scotch, launching him into a blackout state. The potent alcohol soaks his brain like a sponge and wipes the day clean. Before forgetting who and where he is, his last thoughts are of Ella and the two of them making eye contact for the first time.

J.F. is no longer present, and he now refers to himself as James—his pristine Scotch drinking name. He even carries himself differently, as if he has a fine suit on and is heading to the country club. His ethanol-soaked brain has taken over. One second he was rocking in the chair, planning to head back to bed, and the next, he is heading to the lobby in search of deliberation. In his highly energetic state of inebriation, he thinks, for some reason, he will find people to talk to in the lobby at 2:00 am in the morning.

9.1 | Lobby

J.F. walks about exploring the place. He paces around the lobby going in and out of the mailroom halls, inspecting the mirrors and the empty clubroom. He goes back into the center of the lobby and looks out the front doors into the vestibule.

In the vestibule, a man sits on the ground with his legs stretched out like scissors. Between his legs is a mound of city-street grown mushrooms. The man is eating something, taking twisted, deranged bites while trying to keep his hands straight as he holds what looks like a hamburger. He moves his hand upward to his mouth, but it seems limp, like he has no bones in it, and almost drops it when he uses half of his mouth to barely bite off a piece of lettuce. The lettuce then dangles off his lip and cheek. He attempts to pull it back with his tongue, while moving his head, as if the tilt of his neck will help give him better reach.

(I know that limp aimless hand. He is in the midst of a hallucinogenic trip. Probably why he collected all of them mushrooms. The pile of mushrooms has become a center of worship for him. Good Times.)

J.F. takes a step back and stands still, wondering if what he is witnessing is actually happening. Then, without notice, the man jumps straight up from his plopped position as if being electrocuted. He then moves circularly around the fungus pile, the same as tribal people dancing about fire. He jumps in an upward motion shaking his head fervently at an odd angle and flails his arms about like angry noodles in the wind, and then screams strange gibberish. Then, he stops dead in his track – arms to his side – head tilted at an angle and looks right at J.F. through the glass door. After a moment of nothingness, he throws the half-eaten hamburger at the door, leaving ketchup and mustard smears with little onions

stuck to it dripping down the glass. The man then beats his chest like King Kong and rips open his buttoned-up shirt. A couple of the buttons fly outward, clinking on the door. He then turns and runs out the front door screaming in tongue, leaving his mess behind.

After he is gone, J.F. walks back to the vestibule and examines it. He can see more food stuck on the walls. It looks like blood splatters with chunks of meat stuck in it. *“Must be ketchup.”*

The man jumps back to the entrance outside of the building, pressing his fat belly and hairy chest against the door, and starts laughing hysterically while slapping his hands against the glass, *“ahhhhhh haha haha hahahahaha”* He then stops in complete stillness, and says, *“You cannot see it, but you’ll never leave it. You better believe it because I can see it. Yes, I can see it.”* He then goes back to screaming madly—fused with crying and laughing—then he disappears into the night.

J.F. is freaked out a little yet enthused by the comedic aspect of the drunk or hallucinating man. It sparks a memory of his past, and he thinks, (I had many nights of similarity in my drug days.)

After he was sure the man had left, he slowly says out loud to himself, *“What – in – the – fuck – was – that!”* *“That there was a glimpse of your past. Don’t you think?”*

J.F. just about has a heart attack when he hears that and turns to see the strange man with the dogs back sitting in the chair again. He then says to the man, *“You scared the shite out of me, mon!”* *“Please, call me JIM. That’s J – I – M. Don’t be shy, have a seat, young man.”*

Without thinking, he sits in one of the Victorian chairs across from JIM, relieved to see another person after the

recent event. When he sits, he suddenly hears ballroom-style music playing softly from speakers he cannot see.

J.F. is happy to see another human being. He yearns for conversation when drinking. Most people hate to be around him when he is drinking, and he loves to be around people when he is. He has a problem of not liking social gatherings when sober and people not liking him when drunk—an odd dilemma. So, any drunken encounters with willing participants are always welcome.

“I never caught your name.” “James, good sir. James.” “Excellent. I was wondering when you may show up. You having a midnight drinking stroll?” “Why yes, I am. Indeed. I am. Did you just see the man in the vestibule?” “He is nothing more than a reflection, my dear boy.” “He left a great mess of what appears to be a collection of the cities local street mushrooms.” “Ha. Sounds like a good night.”

The dog by his side wags its tail with excitement while watching J.F. across the room. JIM asks J.F., “Would you like a drink?” as he pulls a flask out of his thick black jacket. “It is a fine scotch.”

J.F. is not one to turn down a cocktail while in a blackout state. He gets up, walks over to the man and his dogs, grabs the flask, and takes a good swig. He hands it back to JIM, and JIM's lapdog takes a quick sniff of J.F.'s hand. J.F. returns to the chair, feeling the whiskey reinvigorate his dimming buzz. The strangeness of the night blended with the old-style music soothes him.

“Can you hear that music?” “They are having a party in the other room.” “They are? Well, what the hell are we doing out here then?” “Got to be on the right frequency to get in.” J.F. squints his eyes at the man with a look of confusion and says, “The right frequency?” The man stands up while gripping his dogs' leashes and says, “You'll find out soon

enough.” He then makes clicking sounds with his mouth that the dogs respond to and walks into the vestibule, disappearing from sight. J.F. gets up to go look to where he went, but the man vanished.

9.2 | Morning

Upon waking, J.F. has little to no recollection of the night. What seemed like minutes to him was actually hours. He had been in the lobby all night conversing with JIM, and then he passed out in the chair after JIM left with his dogs.

When he comes to, the clock on the wall reads a quarter past seven, and he can hear the staff moving about in the office. He won't remember the full conversation he and JIM had until years from now. JIM and J.F. had sat in that lobby discussing the optics of the mirrors and how refraction was the cause for the illusions—kind of like those circus mirrors. They debated how light hits a convex, concave, or flat mirror and at what distance and angles each mirror is from the other. They did the math in their heads about the measurements from the light being emitted to the light hitting the eye.

J.F.'s journal rests in his hand, still open. He looks at it and sees he has notes and equations about distorted light refractions from quantum mirrors that enter a convex surface and then reflect into the fabric of space. He doesn't know what to make of it. Just another drunken blackout to him, but it reminds him that everything he sees is actually upside down. His brain goes on an uncontrollable rant: (In fact, a human actually interprets everything upside down, and the brain signals it as vertically flipped. So, suppose one were to wear glasses that produce an inverted image. In that case, the brain will recalibrate within a short time, and the person will start interpreting everything as right side up. Then, when the glasses are removed, said person will see everything upside down, for some time, until the brain recalibrates.)

As his brain becomes more active, he remembers bits of the night. He recalls he and JIM suspected that physicists did some math to construct the building's mirrors and

architecture. Perhaps they were just accidental. They were both too drunk to do any proper calculations. He had only written a couple of slurred sentences down.

9.3 | 7:30 am

While sitting in the chair recollecting the night, two ladies enter the lobby to find J.F. coming to.

One of them asks, "Rough night?"

He looks at her and doesn't say anything. He is more intoxicated than he knows. He can't even open his mouth without drooling. There is likely enough alcohol in his blood to kill the average person. He gets up and makes his way towards the elevators but ends up walking into the mailroom hallway's left entrance—unaware that the girl is still asking him questions. "Sir. Are you alright? Do you need us to call someone?"

With complete disregard, whether intentional or not, he does not respond. He just continues in a sort of sleepwalking-drunken-state through the mailroom hall. He thinks he is at the elevators, but he does not see the buttons, so he tries to make out where he is. He stands up stiff and opens his eyes wide to get a good look at his surroundings, quickly understanding he is stuck at the center of the mailroom's hall.

From the main room of the lobby, the mailroom entries create a rectangular appearance. However, when walking into them, they extend into a pentagon shape.

J.F. is right at the tip of the pentagon and has become disoriented from the symmetry, not knowing which direction he came from.

He stops and braces himself on the counter's ledge at the base of the mailboxes to recalibrate. While holding himself up, he looks to his side and sees a mirror reflecting off another mirror and another. He can see his head being replicated for what seems like an infinite number of times until it shrinks into nothingness.

He courageously tries to compute how small his head will get at the splitting point of the mirror's molecular structure. He recalls the formula for calculating the tiniest doll's final size of a set of Russian Nesting Dolls. But his brain breaks down when he tries to think. He then closes one eye like an eye-patched pirate and squints to focus in on the tiniest version of his head.

After attempting to see an almost infinitely small version of himself, he starts to snap out of his blackout state, realizing he has been in the lobby all night.

His random pointless drunken thoughts have fled. He becomes fully aware of his whereabouts and that it is early in the morning. He then walks out the other end of the mailroom and sees he left his notebook on the Victorian chair. Exhausted, he decides to sit down for a minute before heading to his condo. Only a few moments go by before he falls back asleep while holding the notebook in his lap.

9.4 | Waking Up

J.F. wakes up while sitting in the lobby holding his notebook. A thin brunette girl walks out of the office and says, "You must be James Francis." "Yes. That is me?" "Are you here to get your keys and sign the paperwork?" "Didn't we do that last week? Wait, who are you?" "My name is Lina." "Yeah. But—I, didn't I get my keys last week?" (Wasn't she someone else? I remember her being heavier or someone else.) "No, I don't think so. You said you would be arriving on Monday, May 14th, which is today, sir."

Her tone is that of a lawyer scrutinizing a witness. J.F. turns around with a dizzy head in a state of confusion. He is wondering if this is some kind of a joke being played on him. He checks his pocket, and the keys he had with him yesterday are not in his pocket. He just feels his iPhone. He pulls it out to see that the date is indeed Monday, May 14th, 2018. He wonders if the keys are wedged in the chair or if he had left them in the condo. (But then the date. I thought I moved here in August of 2016?)

J.F. sees JIM sitting in the chair with the dogs again, and JIM says to Lina, "Don't worry about him. I let him in last night when he arrived from out of town. He didn't know he wasn't going to be able to get his keys until Monday. We had some drinks, and he dozed off." J.F. is startled by him. He jumps out of the chair and says, "Christ! Where did you come from?!" to which JIM replies, with a friendly smile tucked under the mustache of his beard, "I have that effect on people."

"Follow me, James. I'll get you set up."

Lina escorts J.F. into the office and again goes over the paperwork with him, and gives him the keys. She explains

how the electrical components for the magnetic access only work outside the building.

“When entering the garage, you can use this magnetic key and also when entering the vestibule. They don’t work anywhere else due to some anomaly affecting the building’s electricity, except in the service elevator. You’ll need the key to get in and out of the service elevator unless you need to get to the trash room. So, don’t go into the elevator without the key unless you want to be trapped.”

J.F. thinks to himself, while she is trying to explain the mechanics of electricity, (She doesn’t know what the fuck she is talking about.)

“Come with me now; I will show you around.”

Confused as can be. J.F. goes along with what is happening and follows Lina for a tour of the Lobby. While doing so, he is desperately trying to remember what Elevyn’s face looked like and where she had gone. (Was I dreaming everything?)

He walks to the elevators taking an interest in the shape of the girl’s butt, and thinks, (Man, her ass is nice. I bet she bloats up like a blimp after a week of sitting on the couch, doing nothing. She kind of looks like a witch with her long black hair twisted and that snaggle tooth. Not unattractive, though. When the light hits her just right, the imperfections disappear. She looks very sexy. She probably hits the gym daily to keep herself in shape. She’ll do it just long enough to trick a guy into knocking her up or marrying her. Note to self: stay away from this one.)

J.F. recalls when being given the tour by Elevyn that she wouldn’t go past the line dividing the elevator area and the lobby and wonders if this girl will do the same. He stays behind her slightly so that she must lead the way. She passes

the line into the elevator area and hits the button for the service elevator without caution.

They wait for the elevator to hit the ground floor.

DING, "Lobby," says the provocative sounding elevator voice. A man walks out of the elevator, smiles, and says, "What is the stock market doing today?" just as he says that, the female elevator voice says, "Going up.", and the girl giggles laughing at the man's joke.

She walks into the elevator, and J.F. follows. She takes him through it, out the second—back door—and into the loading dock area where the trash room is. (This seems familiar.)

"People leave their stuff here to be taken by other tenants or thrown out. If you see something you like, feel free to take it or if you need to get rid of a large item, simply leave it here. Through these doors to the right are the recycling bins and trash compactor. You can throw your trash in from the 6th floor, but you have to bring the recycling down."

J.F. has a moment of *déjà vu*, recalling waking up on the mattress as well as throwing a bag of empty Tanqueray bottles in the recycling bin. Still, he can't quite put his finger on when, or even if it actually happened. He also sees a rocking chair resting by the mattress. He looks at it and thinks, (That is my rocking chair. And that is my mattress. What is going on here?)

"Hey, can I take these up to my unit room?" "Feel free to take anything you like when you see it down here. That entrance over there is the back entrance to the recreational center for senior citizens." He looks over at the entrance and reads a poster in an A-frame stand, sitting by the door. It lists the day's activities:

10:00 am – Room 3 – Table Tennis

11:00 am – Room 3 – Philosophy of Life

Midnight – Game Room – A.A.

1:00 pm – Movie – Main Event Room

5:00 pm – Dance and dinner – Main Event Room

(A.A.? I wonder if that is just a coincidence or a sign from above. Maybe I will check it out. It has been years since I have gone to A.A. It kind of helped. Maybe it will work better for me this time around. I do need to settle down before the semester starts. I wouldn't want to make a bad impression by showing up hungover or getting drunk with the students.)

“Here are your keys. The small one is for the mailroom, the gold one is for your storage unit, and the big one is for your condo. If you need anything, I am in my office Monday through Friday 9 to 5.” She hands J.F. the keys and then walks around the elevator to a set of doors that takes her back into the lobby. But before she exits, she says, “Oops, I almost forgot. And here is your fob to get in and out of the building.”, and hands him the fob.

After she leaves, J.F. Props up the foam mattress and slides it into the elevator. He uses half of it to keep the door from shutting while he picks up the rocking chair and carries it in. He then pulls in the mattress and lets the doors close. After the doors close, he sets down the chair and looks at the buttons, and has another moment of *déjà vu*. When he sees the basement button, he thinks, “*The thirteenth floor.*”

Service Elevator

L 2

3 4

5 6

7 8

9 10

J.F. makes it off the elevator and slides his findings down the hall to his place. When he looks at the door, he sees the door knocker nameplate reads, "Doctor J.F." (Weird, They must have put that up for me.)

When he enters, he sees the place is empty. He swears he spent the past week here, but the date on his phone does not lie. He convinces himself that he must have had some sort of a premonition type dream fueled by excessive ethanol consumption. He checks his breath by putting his hand close to his mouth to see if the smell is unmistakable. (Lina must have smelt the booze on my breath and thinks I am some sort of a bum—probably living on daddy's money or something.)

Before J.F. puts the rocking chair in the condo, he envisions it resting next to the windowsill. (Now, how the hell do I know that? Shit, I guess I saw the pictures, and those were in my dreams. I have a pretty powerful brain to create such a realistic fantasy.)

He then walks into the small kitchen, goes right to the cupboard above the refrigerator, and opens it. Not to his surprise, there is an unopened bottle of 18-year-old scotch standing next to a Collins glass. (Alright. Now, this is getting weird. Where did this come from, and how the fuck could I have dreamt this? I am not sure; I guess the previous tenant forgot it or left it as a surprise? Coincidence?) J.F. cannot help himself but compute the odds of predicting this in a dream and the odds of it actually happening.

(Where was I before today? How did I know this was going to be here? Is the phone broken? Is someone playing a joke on me? I don't understand. What happened when I went into the mailroom of warped misplaced mirrors!)

9.5 | Hallways and Elevators

J.F. thinks to himself, (What the hell.), and says, "When in Rhome!" while yanking the cork out. He then pours a few fingers worth into the Collins glass and carries it to the windowsill. Then, he positions the rocking chair by the window and begins sipping the scotch. There is a mirror on the wall across from him that he didn't notice until he took a sip of the scotch and looked up. After bringing the glass down from his lips, he raises it to his reflection and says, "Here's look-in at you, kid."

While he is rocking in the chair, he has conversations with himself—in his head: "What happened the other night at that Tornado bar?" "I am not sure. Maybe martinis." "Oh, yeah. It started with a dirty martini. I remember the barkeep making it correctly." "Yes, he poured the Gin and the olive juice on ice and stirred it slowly and then poured it into a tumbler with a couple of blue cheese stuffed olives." "Yes, that's right. Those olives sound good right about now." "Do you think we can go back tonight?" "Sure. I don't see why not." "Great. Let's take it easy on this scotch then." "I don't know; it tastes pretty damn good. I feel that euphoric sensation coming upon me. Putting down the drink now would be a mistake." "Don't fool yourself, man. You are going to be shitfaced within an hour if you keep drinking that straight and don't get some food in you." "This ain't my first rodeo boy. You know this never ends well. But it has to happen. It always must happen." "I know. Just don't touch the keys to your car." "What car?" "Do I have a car?" "I don't remember how I got here." "The booze is kicking in." "Yes. I feel fantastic." "I wonder if that broad downstairs would wanna come up for a bit. I bet she is as tight as a Jew pinching a penny." "We should go talk to her." "Yeah. We should. We can invite her

up for a drink.” “Yeah. A couple sips of this drink, and she’ll be as loose as a goose—ready to take it up the caboose.”

J.F. sat rocking in the chair for hours, letting the committee in his head debate random topics that he won’t recall. His mind can go to sick places amidst a bottle of highly potent scotch. Not his usual drink. Things always go wrong when dark liquors are introduced into his bloodstream.

By the time the sun starts going down, he had consumed half the bottle of scotch. He examines the angle of the light rays coming through the window and guesses, “It must be about 5:30 pm.” He pulls his phone out of his pocket to see that the clock reads 5:29 pm. “Bingo! So close. If only I were on the Price is Right.”

He wobbly pushes himself up and off of the chair and stands up to look out the windows. He ponders the outdoor layout. (A sea of bricks—the brick forest. How lovely to be surrounded by a prison of stone. Hardly any plant life anywhere. I don’t know how I feel about this.)

Now that he is primed and ready, flooded with scotch, he decides to go back down to the lobby and try to flirt with the young girl before she leaves. He then recalls that she said she is only in the office from 9:00 am to 5:00 pm. Still, he feels optimistic. (What the hell. Maybe she stayed late.)

J.F. leaves his unit and enters into the hallway. He notices more oddly placed mirrors down the walls leading to the very end. (These fucking halls are the lengths of football fields. Just the thought of walking down it is exhausting me. I better have another drink. God. These carpets.) He examines the carpets again, feeling as though he saw them before. They are the same vomit green carpets with odd geometrical shapes placed at each turning point. *“I must have seen these in the virtual tour, but when was that?”*

The elevator or the entrance corridor trapezoid shape touches from each corner of the door and the base against the hallway wall. (There is something strangely familiar about the shapes and the mirrors and these designs. Oh, yeah. I remember reading in some old book by Jack Parsons about the real relationship between shapes and mirrors and how quantum mechanics is the key to connecting to the spiritual world. He had a crazy idea about using physics to channel devil worship or something. I wonder if he had influenced the design of this building.)

The shapes and mirrors went unnoticed earlier as his eyes were fixated on Lina's backend. For a man who is usually too drunk to perform, he still has a great infatuation for the female figure.

He gets into the elevator, and before he can hit a button, DING – "Going up." The elevator started moving, making its way past the 7th, 8th, 9th, 10th. (We could go all the way." 11th, PH. "Ding-ding-ding, and the winner is.) DING – "Penthouse." said the provocative elevator voice. J.F. looks around and doesn't see anyone. "*Must be a ghost.*" He hits the lobby button, and the doors close, "Going down." On his way back down, as he passes the 6th floor, he contemplates the thirteenth-floor theory. (If the 12th floor is the first floor.) He counts backward on his fingers

12 (1st) – 11 (2nd) – 10 (3rd) – 9 (4th) – 8 (5th) – 7 (6th) – 6 (7th)

(Yes, the 6th floor is the 7th floor and the basement-)

5 (8th) – 4 (9th) – 3 (10th) – 2 (11th) – 1 (12th) – basement (13th)

(The basement is then the 13th floor. I wonder if that thing is haunted.)

J.F. chuckles to himself, thinking about how smart he is to have figured this out. It is something only a drunken buffoon would consider to be meaningful. He is overly proud of his ability to count these simple numbers. He will later think back

to his profound discovery about the real thirteenth floor, in a sober state, and think of how stupid he was for being so impressed with himself.

The elevator doors open, and J.F. walks out, not realizing he is not in the Lobby nor recalling that is where he was trying to go. He had forgotten what he was doing and thinks he has just landed back on his floor. In his semi-drunken state, he tiptoes on the carpet and carefully positions himself in the center of the trapezoid, making sure not to step on the line that draws it. He gages with his eyes whether or not the shape is symmetrical. He then walks to his unit and tries to open the door. He twists at the handle to find it locked. (I never locked this door. Oh shit. I am on the wrong floor.)

Once realizing he is on the wrong floor, he bolts down the hall back to the elevators hoping, if someone is inside, that they didn't see him and think he was trying to break in their place. When he gets back to the elevators, he plans to hit the buttons for all three elevators to speed up the process.

Just as he turns the corner while lifting his hand to push one of the buttons, the door starts opening. It opens as if it were anticipating him. He jumps in and hits the close door button multiple times, purposely acting overly dramatic as if his life is on the line. He then moves to push the lobby but hears the DING, followed by, "Going down." He sees the lobby button already lit up. It doesn't seem all that odd that the door was ready for him as well as the destination. He just wants to get off the floor as quickly as possible.

(Likely, someone hit the 4th floor and lobby by accident. The laws of probability at work here. 'Stop doing math for a minute, man. You are driving me crazy with that.')

He hadn't been in this elevator before and notices the elevator buttons are different from the other one he was in. There are only options for L through 12 and no basement

button. ('Weird. Where is the basement button?' 'Have we been mistaken that there is not even a basement for this building?' 'Cannot be, sir. It must only be in the other elevator.' 'We should probably get another drink soon. Time is running out.')

2 L
4 3
6 5
8 7
10 9
PH 11

The elevator stops at the 3rd floor, and a whiff of cigarette smoke floods in. There is an older gentleman with grey hair and goatee standing in the corridor with a cigarette in his hand. He is wearing a medium-length black jacket and carrying a fancy camera strapped around his neck. (This man looks familiar and is not supposed to smoke in here.)

The man walks into the elevator and puts the cigarette out in an ashtray bolted to the wall under the up/down buttons.

J.F. asks the man with a confused tone, "*You can smoke in here?*", and the man flat-out ignores him and pushes the PH elevator button. DING "Going up." J.F. stands there wondering why this guy is ignoring him, not noticing that the lobby button is no longer lit.

(I thought there is no smoking in this building.) DING "Penthouse." The man walks out of the elevator and puts another cigarette in his mouth. He turns around and looks at J.F. right in the eyes and lights it right as the elevator doors close.

J.F. stands in the elevator debating whether the man is deaf or just an asshole. DING – "Going Down." (Wait a

second. How long have I been in this elevator?) He checks his pockets for his phone, but both pockets are empty. No keys – no phone – no nothing. The elevator stops on the 9th floor and opens. DING. “9th floor.” No one is outside, and the doors won’t shut. J.F. presses the close door button multiple times, but they won’t shut. (Guess I will have to take the stairs.)

He steps out of the elevator, and the doors close. He quickly tries to stick his hand in the narrowing separation of the doors but is too slow to stop them from coming together. He then says to himself, with a fine-tuned greeting voice, “Welcome to the elevators. How may I direct your vertical descent?” Just as he says that, a man walks into the corridor. He thought he would get a chuckle out of the fellow. Without even a twitch of recognition, the man walks to the up/down button, stands lifeless, and says nothing. J.F. thought the man would have at least asked him if he was going up or down. (These people are getting either stranger or more stuck up. Is this guy deaf? No, he would have seen my lips move. Gosh, is he just a jerk? What is his deal? ‘Don’t read into it, man; he probably has a social disorder or something.’)

He debates on going to the stairs or trying the elevator. DING. “9th floor”. The single elevator opens without him pressing any buttons. He looks into it, and it is empty. He is hesitant to get into it thinking he may get stuck and have to use the bathroom. The doors stay open for what seems to be longer than they should. Almost as if the elevator is alive and waiting for J.F. to make his decision. The doors finally begin to close. J.F. then decides he is too drunk to take the stairs. When he thought that, the doors that were almost shut stopped and opened back up as if the elevator read his mind; he says to himself, “Must be my lucky day.” while walking into the elevator.

9.6 | Lobby

The elevator opens, and the lobby exposes itself. J.F. sees Clancy cleaning up the place, dusting the tables. He asks him, "What is the deal with the guy carrying the camera?" to which Clancy replies, "Sometimes a picture is worth a thousand words." (Gee, thanks.)

J.F. walks towards the office to see if the girl is still working, but the door is shut, and the lights are turned off.

"I think the man is a robot sent from outer space to capture the local scenery. Was the man smoking?" "Yes. He was. Right in the middle of the hall. What is up with that? And where the hell did you come from?" "What floor was that on?" "I think it was on the third floor. Why?" "Fascinating," "Why is that fascinating?" "You'll find out soon enough." "What do you mean I will find out soon enough? Who are you anyway?" J.F. asks, but the man just sits in the chair flipping through a notebook, the notebook that James brought with him from Texas. J.F. asks with a stern look on his face, "Where did you get that?" "You left it here this morning. I was just admiring your work. It doesn't look like you have been working on your theories much lately." "I have been preoccupied." "No worries. Here you go." He hands J.F. the notebook while remaining in the Victorian chair, forcing J.F. to walk to him and grab it.

He flips open the notebook, and about a third of the way in, he sees a sketch of Elevyn. (When did I draw this?) J.F. looks up from the book to see JIM has disappeared again. J.F. says, "Ok then. Nice to meet you again. Weirdo."

"How was your first night here?" asks Lina. (Where did she come from?) "Huh? I just got here this morning." "You did? We must be in two different time zones because I checked you in yesterday."

J.F. looks at her, confused. He pats down his pockets to look for his keys and phone, but they are empty. Lina says, "Is that your phone over there?" and J.F. looks on the chair to see his cellphone wedged halfway in the crack between the cushion and armrest. He pulls it out and unlocks it to know that it is indeed the next day. But he had only been in the building for a few hours, he thought. (What the hell is going on?)

He stands in the lobby questioning what has happened to the missing time he seems to have lived and not lived. He sees the reflection of JIM in the mirror. He turns and says, "Now, how the fuck did you get back here." The little white dog sits erect in JIM'S lap, looking at J.F. while wagging its tail. JIM says to J.F., with a sly smirk, "I see you are confused. Didn't you get the memo?" "Memo?"

(What memo. Does he know something about what is happening? Wait, he gave me some scotch from his flask, and that is when everything went awry. Is that what is going on? Did he slip me something?)

J.F. recalls the incident in the vestibule and asks Lina about it. She replies to him, "Don't worry about that. Sometimes people come in there in the cold night and mess it up. Unfortunately, we cannot lock it for fire code reasons, so there is frequently an odd event that takes place in the vestibule." JIM says, "Try not ever to enter it." Interrupting Lina. "Wait, what. Do not ever enter it? How am I supposed to leave?" "Who says you can?"

J.F. sits down in one of the chairs across from JIM and says to him, "What's up, man. What happened to you last night and what the fuck is going on here. I know you know something, man."

"Nothing happened to me. You just drink too much, fella. You walked through the never-ending land of mirrors,

smashing right into one. I think you confused the mirror with the continuation of the hall. It is placed floor to ceiling with no frame giving it that illusion. You are not the first to walk face-first into it. I think you hurt yourself because you passed out right after and just laid on the floor. You missed another crazy person. He went into the vestibule thinking that them mushrooms were a pile of hallucinogenic mushrooms. He tried to eat one and realized they weren't edible and spit them out. He started screaming madly and then just ran away. Good times. Anyways, you got up and came back after a while and sat up in the chair. You mumbled some stuff in your sleep, and here you are now." "But when I woke up, Lina said I was never here, and I had to go through the whole introduction process again." "Well, my dear boy. You probably were dreaming, or maybe you are caught in a vortex of time-displacement, which is twisting you all about. Maybe it is time to get back to those equations and fix this." (Fix this? Is he messing with me?)

A squeaky wheel becomes present in J.F.'s ears. He turns to see an Asian man coming out of the clubhouse area, pushing his cart filled with cleaning supplies. JIM says with enthusiasm, "Lijun! Man of the hour! How are you doing this fine day?" JIM says to the dog that is always on the floor, "Look, it is Mr. Lijun.", and the little dog starts wagging its tail, excited to see the man. JIM lets go of the leash and let the dog run up to him, and the dog pushes its side up against his legs. Lijun reaches down to give him a little pat on the head and says, "Hey there, little guy."

J.F. introduces himself to Lijun, and Lijun says, "We've met. A few times now. I am just wiping down the mirror you had a relationship with last night."

J.F. didn't want to come off rude in any sense; he hated that other people cleaned up after other people. He wasn't

one to ask someone else to do such a thing, especially if they are getting paid to do it. It just seemed wrong that someone would have to be put into such a position in society. He thinks to himself, as he looks at broken pieces of mirror on the cart, (This building seems like it hosts a party of world-class douchebags. They probably look at this man with the eyes of slavers. The Madison slave traders. The modern-day 'legal slave' of sorts. Sick minded privileged fucks.)

Lijun rolls the squeaking cart over to the vestibule and begins cleaning it up. J.F. looks at a can of WD-40 sitting in his carriage and wonders why he doesn't spray the wheel that squeaks endlessly.

J.F. walks up to the vestibule to take a walk outside when Lina stops him. She says firmly, "Please let Lijun finish cleaning. Please use the other doors if possible. Sorry, it is just kind of frustrating for people to leave finger-prints on the doors while he is cleaning them."

"Oh. Yeah. Sure. No problem, I completely understand. I will go out the back." (What the fuck would that matter. Like people aren't going to be pushing those doors open five minutes from now? Do they care if they get a fingerprint within these five minutes of him cleaning? Besides, he could wipe them off right away since he is already there—that is, if I actually touched the glass. I am not a damn child, for God sakes.)

"Thank you. By the way, you have a box in the package room." "Okay, thanks."

J.F. walks to the entrance of the package room. He feels nervousness overcome him and is afraid to enter it, wondering what time or place he may land after coming out. He opens the door and sees a lady frantically sorting through all the packages. (It looks like she is freaking out about where her package is.)

The sight of the lady comforts him, so he walks in and lets the door shut behind him.

She speaks loudly under her breath, "Someone took my package. The slip was on my mailbox that said there is a package in here. Where is it? Who took my package? Jesus! Don't these people have any respect? What kind of person takes another person freaking package! This is absurd. The amount of money I pay each month for that pathetic staff out there, and they cannot even keep a package room proper. Ridiculous. You know, it is a felony to mess with someone else's mail. This is a call for the law." J.F. says, "Sorry to hear this. I just moved in last, wait, no last week—yesterday. I think." "You don't even know what day you moved in. Great, better not let you near these packages' either. We wouldn't want you to forget what unit you are in – accidentally, would we now. Jesus – kids these days."

(Holy crap, this chick is a fucking bitch. I have half a mind to grab her hair and slap that stern face of hers. The half hunched skinny cunt bitch ass. Talking to me like that. Take a deep breath, man. She is just a crazy old lady that has probably never worked a day in her life.)

J.F. responds courteously, "I understand, mam. I know how frustrating it is when you can't find something. Maybe it was fragile or expensive, and they left it with the front lady or meant to check that it needs a signature?" "What do you know, kid. You don't even know what day it is!" She then storms agitatedly out of the room, letting the door shut behind her.

(Ok then, welcome to the building, friend.)

J.F. locates his package and wonders what it is and who sent it. He sees that this is not a package for him but for the previous tenant. The front desk girl must have just looked at the unit number and not the name. He grabs a marker on the

return ledge and scribbles on it, “R.T.S. new tenant here.”, and places it on the shelf to be sent back. He then heads out of the package room, hoping not to see the crazy lady again.

When J.F. comes out of the package room, his skin crawls with the eeriest of all goosebumps. He is shocked to see it is nearly pitch-black outside and snowing. He sees JIM still sitting in the chair with his flask, but without his dogs. He again hears music playing, but this time it is Christmas music from the ‘60s and ‘70s. J.F. looks to the entertainment room to see it filled with people dressed up in holiday clothes, dancing and enjoying hors d’oeuvres. The inner workings of the room look completely different. Everything in it is new, but it is the décor of over half a century ago.

(Jesus, that is creepy. Wait, what is going on here? Why am I back here? have I been in that room all day and night, or is it the night before again. Why is it snowing? It is May, isn’t it? Am I losing my mind or just sobering up!)

J.F. slowly says, “Jim. Hey, Man.”, and JIM responds, “It’s J-I-M, bud.” J.F. then asks, “What you up to?” JIM responds by raising the flask while saying with a slurred voice, “Midnight fucking of the brain. Would you like to join the orgy?” He then asks JIM, “What day is it?” “Today or tonight, should I say, either way, it is not a day to shy away from the drinking coming to you—I say.” (This dude sounds drunk off his ass.)

The drunken demeanor comforts J.F. To know that someone else is as deep into the drink as he is, is almost like falling in love or finding one’s soulmate.

9.7 | Out of Place

J.F. has been binge drunk for some time now and is not entirely sure if he is even awake. Everything happening to him in the lobby is too much to take in on a sober breath. He gladly takes the flask from JIM and takes a healthy slug. (Scotch- no, not scotch but gin this time. It must be Bombay Sapphire. It has that higher-quality smoothness to it without the overpowering pine tree flavor of Tanqueray.)

The swig hits him hard, chasing the leftover drunkenness. It tires him. He is feeling the desperate need for sleep now. He is, however, beginning to get anxious about his work. He needs to sober up and get ready for the class he will be instructing over Hypothetical Physics. He is starting a new course designed to help students create theorems and equations from scratch. The idea is for students to invent their own universe with original and unique physics laws and then develop the math for it. After the math language is formed, the student creates and solves physics problems using the language. Teaching this course and allowing him to focus on his research in transoceanic space was the condition of his relocation. He is becoming worried that he will not be prepared for it while simultaneously perturbing when or where he really is.

He checks his mobile device and sees it is almost midnight August 23rd, 2016, over two weeks since he moved in. He thinks to himself, (I must have blacked out. Oh God, what did I do? The people here probably already think I am nuts and only a few days in. 'I wouldn't sweat it, man. You know people generally only waste time thinking about themselves. You are not that important.')

J.F. heads over to the elevators and sees a mirror placed at just the right angle so that a 4th elevator appears next to the

single one when looking at it. He doesn't recall seeing that during the day. He examines the mirror a bit and looks at the lobby's lighting to see how the refractions would change this, or if he just did not notice it earlier. He then turns around to say goodbye to JIM, but he is no longer there.

(Who designed this building? It is quite strange with these randomly placed mirrors; at least, it seems random, but maybe it is purposely done. I recall reading somewhere about voodoo or spiritual seances or experiments having a lot to do with mirrors. I always thought that these ancient witchcraft things were just a form of physics still misunderstood today. Looking into quantum mechanics and string theory and other theories, we see now that much of those old wives' tales could have some great truth to them.)

J.F. is now thinking again of the former NASA employee Jack Parson and his book about quantum mechanics. (He used it to conduct seances and perform magic to predict the future and control the weather. He claimed to have been successful and then shortly after was found blown to pieces in his home when an experiment went wrong. Many thought it was a cover-up to hide what he had discovered.)

He makes it up to the 6th floor and walks into his condo. He sits in his rocking chair and finishes the remaining scotch. He tries to differentiate between reality and dreams. He recollects what happened during the past few days, but at this point, he is not concerned. He has been through many stranger incidents after drinking for days on end. He reminds himself of the drunk night where he decided to throw out all of his furniture and turn his living room into a dojo. He remembers waking up to an empty apartment with a set of nunchucks lying on the floor. In his drunken state, he convinced himself that he would become an expert martial artist.

He finishes the last drop of scotch and goes to lay down on the mattress. It is a body forming memory foam mattress. (When did I get this? It must have been the package in the mailroom. That's where it must have come from. Wait, didn't I order one before I moved in?) His head hits the pillow, and he fades into sleep within a few seconds.

9.8 | First waking

(The gun. I need a gun. Oh God, please give me the gun. For if I had the gun, I could have some fun. I'd put the gun against my head, pull the trigger, and then I'd be dead. Please, God – the gun. I need the gun. It is the only solution to my problems, for if I had the gun, it would be fun to put the gun against my head, pull the trigger and make me dead, I said. I need it. Please. Oh, Jesus. Please help me. Why am I here again? I just want to be loved. Why am I in this perpetual hell—please God. Please, Jesus. Please help me break this horrible cycle. Please. Old oak tree – the old oak tree put that fucking ribbon around the old oak tree – the old oak tree.)

The inevitable days of the withdrawal are upon J.F. He will spend the next three days vomiting and visiting the restroom until there is nothing left in his intestines. This goes on every half hour or so. His piss is thick like orange juice, using whatever water that remains in his dehydrated body. His naturally lush skin has become dry and flaky, and his head feels like bugs are crawling around at the roots of his hair.

He has reached the point of his binge that he must stop. Even if he wants to try and drink, his body will just revolt it. He has been here before. If he tries to force Gin down his throat or beer or even something sweet like prosecco, his body rejects it, and it becomes painful for him. J.F. needs this pain so he can sober up and be prepared for his lectures. The suffering is usually significant enough to keep him sober until the end of the semester.

Chapter 10 | Snowfall

12/09/16 Journal: The semester is over, and I have successfully completed my course's first teachings. I sit here looking out my window, wondering what the future will bring. Now that class is over, I can get back to my research. I was able to access some of the labs on campus during the semester and develop a prototype of my tranoquart mechanism. I am calling it the T.S.D. apparatus—that is, 'Tranoquartian Space Detection.' My only problem is inputting the correct equation. For the life of me, I cannot seem to figure out what the right formula is to make it work. I know that my experiment will work; I just need the correct equation.

The snow begins to fall today. I hear that the city used to be blanketed with snow by thanksgiving, but nowadays, it seems rare to even see snow by New Year's Eve. Such a sad turn in the weather. I really do love the snow. The two lakes here must be a sight to see when frozen over. I wonder what kind of physics they could be used for. My home is right on the isthmus wedged between them. The thin strip of land separating the lakes could act as an insulator between them when they freeze over. I imagine Nikola Tesla was looking into this when he was visiting Madison. Perhaps, the static electricity generated by the frozen lakes could be used in my experiments.

It has been an exciting ride. I remember back in my early twenties, just trying to scrape by. A high school dropout with a prestigious G.E.D. mixing up drinks at the local Chili's. Now, a world-renowned physicist on the verge of winning a Nobel prize. That part may be a bit exaggerated but

nevertheless, a doctorate in physics. In my own discovered field—something to be proud of.

Since the semester is now over, I am debating a reward of drink. I have not been drunk since I moved in. I don't know if I should risk it, but I do have a good month until the spring semester. Now is the time if I am going to binge. On the other hand, I can use this time to work on my device. I could do it while drinking, but how often do I actually get anything done when drunk. I don't know; some of my best work was amid drunken inebriation. When I got home last night, I noticed there is a bottle of scotch in the freezer. Also, my fridge is completely empty. I don't recall ever buying any groceries since I have lived here. In fact, I don't remember much at all. I must have been so busy my brain is having trouble latching on to daily memories. I did accomplish a lot with my device, but I don't remember much else.

Saturday 10:00 am

Journal 12/10/16

To Drink or Not to Drink. That is not the question!

Yes, I am weighing the options. Last night I was too exhausted after I finished grading finals to take that scotch out of the freezer. Maybe because I know that the dark stuff is not the best choice for me. It was too late to get some Tanqueray. I have the next month or so free. I can drink if I want. I have nothing else to do except the work I want to do on my own time. I really shouldn't drink; I know what the result will be. The snow on the ground is so inviting to the drink, though. Overnight, the city has been covered with snow, which has

yet to be removed by the plows. What a wonderfully beautiful sight to see.

Saturday 10:30 am

This coffee is so delicious. If I drink, I won't be having coffee like this for a while. Every time I drink, I cannot have caffeine. It feels like a spike in my brain when I do. The extreme fatigue of hangover mixed with the punch of caffeine makes for a terrible attempt to nap. No, I don't think I will drink that scotch. I should just empty it out in the sink. Yes, but if I do, I may want to sip it. I don't know. What else am I going to do today? I don't have a snowsuit. I don't really know anyone here either except for some students I cannot remember. No, I don't think I will drink. This coffee is too good to ruin, and I want to enjoy my food as well.

Saturday 10:31 am

I think I want to drink. Should I wait until noon, at least? A Scotch on the rocks sounds really good, and there is nothing quite like that first sip in the morning after three months of sobriety. No-no-no. Don't do it, man, you know what will happen. You will be blacked out by 3:00 pm and wake up days from now with an empty bank account and half the people you know freaked out. Good thing I don't know too many people. Well, if you do so, you better delete all the contacts on your phone. The last thing you need is the dean calling you in, asking you the meaning behind the sexually inclined messages you sent to your students. That doesn't sound fun. No, I don't think I will drink then.

Saturday 10:32 am

(The snowflakes and Christmas just make my skin tingle with excitement for a drink. I will clean the kitchen a little and see how I feel.)

J.F. begins cleaning his kitchen. He starts with the fridge. And it is as empty as he remembered, right down to the bottle of scotch and a bag of ice he did not recall. “HmMMMM”

(Hmmm, must be my lucky day. When did I put this ice in here?)

“Weeeeellllll, if that isn’t a sign, I don’t know what is!”
“Yes, never argue with God’s will, I always say.”

J.F. pours his coffee out of the mug, the only dish he has in the house. He fills it with ice and then tops it off with the scotch. Before taking a sip, he grabs his journal and settles into his rocking chair, angling it at the window to get the best view of the snow. He then puts the cup up to his nose, takes in a subtle whiff of the woody fumes, and sips the first sip.

Saturday 7:02 pm

Guess I need to get some more hooch. The day has gone by so fast already. They still haven’t plowed the streets. I wonder why that is. Maybe because it isn’t done snowing yet?

Saturday 7:03 pm

“I think I’ll go for a walk through the hallways to help clear my mind. I’ll go before making my way to the liquor store. Or maybe I’ll go to a restaurant or perhaps both. I will start at the penthouse. Then I will walk the halls going to the end of each—taking the staircase down.” “Wouldn’t it be a better exercise to start on the ground floor and walk up the stairs?” “Perhaps, but I don’t really feel like doing that in this state.” “Let’s go to the elevator and go up to the penthouse.” “I

wonder what the guys from the A.A. meeting are doing? They probably wouldn't be happy to know I am drinking. What do they care, though? All they do is sit in that damn room telling the same stories over-and-over again." "Seriously, if I have to hear Larry speak about Spooky old Alice, his kraut wife again—actually, I could listen to that old fart tell that story every day." "He has perfected it over the years." "Let's see, he has probably mentioned that story at least three hundred times per year for some forty-some odd years now." "Yeah, a bona fide expert at telling that story." "How does it go: Hell? Yeah. That is how he started it" "Hell. Should we have a meeting? I'm Larry; I'm an alcoholic. Welcome to the senior downtown center – non-smoking – A.A. Let's start with a moment of silence." "No, that is how he starts the meetings. How does he tell his story? Something about being over 400 lbs. Oh, friend's wife: oh yeah, I cannot remember his name, but he called." "No, Larry tells him that the bartender called him to say tell him what he said to his friends' wife. Yeah, Larry, the Manhattan double drinker who used to be over 400 lbs and said something to his friend's wife. Then he fell asleep in the middle of Mifflin St., or was it, Henry? Spooky old Alice was a saint for sticking with him. He should have been dead a hundred times over, but here he is, 42 or 44 years sober, telling the same story every single day over-and-over again. I miss that guy." "When was the last time we went to a meeting anyway? Didn't he pass away?" "I don't know. Doesn't matter now. We are back on the drink."

10.1 | Later on

J.F. finds himself walking like a monk with his right hand, gripping the wrist of his left behind his back. He has been walking the hallways pondering gibberish when he remembers he is out of alcohol.

(I need to get to the liquor store. What time is it? Why didn't they put any windows in these fucking hallways? I feel like I have been walking this hall for eternity. When did I even go down a flight of stairs? What floor am I on anyway? I don't remember taking the stairs or elevator to another level. Shit, I must have left my phone on the windowsill. I hope the cold air doesn't ruin it.)

Just as J.F. needs to know the time, he looks up to see an elderly lady slowly walking down the hall.

"Excuse me." "Why, yes. Oh, you must be that young professor that just moved in. James, is it?" "Yes, that's me, well, a few months back, I guess." (Professor?) "How do you like it so far? Have you settled in, alright?" "As much as I can, I guess. I mostly work all the time, so I don't really pay attention to it." "That's good. Keep your mind off it." "Do you have the time, mam?" "Call me Marlene, sweetie." "My apologies, Marlene: do you have the time?" "Oh, you're such a sweetheart, James."

The little old lady looks at her wristwatch.

(What does she mean, keep my mind off it?)

"It looks like it's about half-past nine, sweetie." "Shit." "Something the matter, Hun?" "Oh, I must have lost track of time; I meant to get to the liquor store before nine." "Not to worry. My former husband left me with an arsenal of liquor. You can help yourself to whatever you like." "Really? That

would be great!" "Come with me, sweetheart. I am on the ninth floor, unit 9630."

(What floor are we on? Wait, I left my place at 7ish. I had been walking this whole time? But I never left my floor, did I? How could I have been out here this long?)

Saturday 9:36 pm

(Have I been standing next to the elevators this whole time?)

One of the elevator doors opens instantly when Marlene hits the up button. They move towards it to enter.

"Ladies first." Says J.F. while putting his hand out to usher her in.

Just before the doors come together, he gets a look at the unit number adjacent to the elevators. The unit should read 6060, but J.F. reads 0606. (Must be my dyslexia kicking in.)

9th Floor

"Follow me, sweetie. Down this way."

J.F. starts following the little old lady to the hall. When he comes out of the elevator area, he turns his head to the left and right, looking both ways as if to cross a street. (I wouldn't be able to tell the difference between this hall or any other hall in this building. If I didn't look at the floor numbers coming off the elevator, I'd never know which floor I am on. Wait. Where did she go?)

The lady disappeared from sight.

J.F. recalls her unit number is 9630. He looks at the doors for the direction it is in. The first door in front of him reads 3000, then the doors to the left and right of it read 6000 and then 9000. The numbering of the doors then repeats in order, 3000 – 6000 – 9000, 3000 – 6000 – 9000, 3000 – 6000 – 9000. This goes on for as far as he can see.

While trying to read the door numbers further down the hall, he notices the synchronized entries all have lamps perfectly spaced out between them, but one light is out. He figures this must be the lady's place.

When he starts walking towards the light that is out, something moves on the ceiling. He looks up to see a large trapezoid and the line that draws it breaking up into distinct shapes. The individual shapes morph into a series of rhombuses. They order themselves in size—spiraling outward—from smaller to bigger.

The sight of the altering shapes makes him feel a bit dizzy, so he tilts his head and looks at the ground to try and recalibrate himself. On the carpet is another large trapezoid paralleling the one directly above it. He stares at it, waiting for it to do the same as the other, but it remains unchanged.

After he stabilizes, he then heads back to the door with the light that is out. He only makes it a step past the trapezoid when he sees that the doors appear to go on forever, converging into nothingness. They come together like two mirrors reflecting an image off one another when placed in front of the other.

J.F. again reads the numbers on the doors seeing that they are still repeating in succession, 3000 – 6000 – 9000, 3000 – 6000 – 9000, 0416, 3000 – 6000 – 9000. They all repeat the same, except for the door with the light out. This door is labeled 0416.

He had a faint reminiscence of this number. He wouldn't knock on this door. He simply began fleeing down the hall, watching the door numbers switch 3000 – 6000 – 9000, 3000 – 6000 – 9000, 3000 – 6000 – 9000.

While racing down the hall, he recalls a quote by Nikola Tesla, (The power of the numbers 3,6, and 9 would give one the ability to rule the world or something." He wonders if this

is related to the numbering when he trips on a half-empty champagne bottle. "There are still a couple glasses worth inside it. Wow, the bottle is so fat that almost half the wine can be held in it while on its side. Must be really old. Bottoms up. Fuck it, I'm gonna drink this. I don't even know where I am right now. What happened to that lady?)

He pushes himself up off the floor on his knees and then moves to the wall and leans up against it. He then takes a slug of the champagne, and the bubbles expand in his mouth, puffing his cheeks out. (Thank God, it's still cold and bubbly.)

After a few more swigs, he looks back up and down the halls, and everything seems to look normal. He then sees that he is sitting across from the door with the light out. When he looks at the unit number, it reads 6140. (What the?)

Waking Up

Eve and Eden find J.F. passed out across from his door, and Eden asks, "Hey. J.F., you ok?" while nudging him with her foot. He twitches a little and then looks up to her, still half asleep. "Rough night?" "You know how I roll, babe."

The moment he sees the girl and looks at her face, he begins fantasizing about what their kids would look like and how a family vacation would be together. (You can tell that no matter how many kids she has, her body will always be trim and worthy of every sexual act known to man.)

"Alright. Well, have a good day. I think your door is unlocked, by the way. You left it open all night."

The girls head off down the hall towards the elevators. J.F. can't help but fix his eyes on their hindlegs while watching them walk away. (Wow. Their walk is as elegant as some wild animal frolicking through its natural habitat.)

A glimpse of the past

The night or nights had disappeared on J.F.; he isn't quite sure what day it is. He pushes himself off the floor and then falls into his door landing in his unit.

When he gets to the kitchen, he finds an entire case of Tanqueray gin resting on the floor next to the counter. The top had been cut open with one of the flaps bent to the side. He can see that there are twelve full bottles neatly packed between thin sheets of cardboard. (Where did this Gin come from? Why do I keep finding myself drunk, and what day is it? Crap. What the hell happened last night?)

J.F. pulls out his watch. He no longer has a phone and has no concept of this. There isn't even a device in his place that uses electricity. The floor is cement, and the counters are littered with candles.

When he looks at the chain-linked pocket watch, its small hand points a quarter past noon. He then slips it back in his pocket.

Without thinking, he pulls a bottle of gin from the cardboard case and walks to the window. He stands in front of it, gazing at the city from the sixth floor. He sees mostly flat land and small businesses about the lake. (If it weren't for the man-made structures on the lake, one wouldn't know where it starts or begins after a snowfall. It is beautiful to see the city under a fresh snowfall. Helps take my mind off of this awful feeling of dehydration.)

After admiring the winter beauty of Madison, he sits in his rocking chair and takes a sip of the gin straight from the bottle. The moment the alcohol hits his stomach, he becomes drained. He sets the bottle on the windowsill, between some half-melted candles, and then falls asleep in the rocking chair.

Circle of Time

Months go by, and the case of gin slowly depletes but never empties. Even though he is drinking close to a liter per day, there always seems to be at least one full bottle left in the case. Due to his constant state of drunkenness, he doesn't notice that he has never left the building to get more alcohol and that the gin is continuously being replenished.

J.F. stumbles his way out of the room, hoping to run into the twins. He finds himself staring at himself in the hallway mirror. He has such admiration for his beauty in this drunken state. He gracefully stumbles over to the elevators while daydreaming of the girls across the hall. He fantasizes about them coming up to him and telling him how perfect he is and how they want, no need to have his babies inside them as soon as possible.

He abruptly stops thinking when he realizes he is on the elevator and is no longer looking at himself in the hallway mirror. He is now staring at himself in the elevator's mirror. He does not recognize himself. He appears to be much older and with facial hair. Still, he says to himself, "No kids. No relationships. Happiness lies within one's ability to accept the unacceptable." He hates that that had to be the truth for him — accepting the unacceptable.

Reality

J.F. blinks his eyes and then sharply opens them as wide as he can. His mind is turned on as if a switch were flipped, and he wakes up from a deep sleep. He looks around the room and realizes he is not in his home; instead, he is in someone else's home within the building.

An uneasiness comes over him. He doesn't recall the day or year and can tell he is the only one in the place. He realizes that he is in his unit, but everything is backward like a

reflection in a mirror. (Am I hallucinating? Where did that lady go? She was right there and then gone. Something about 3, 6, and 9. I don't know.)

J.F. props himself off the mattress. He is still dressed from the night before. He checks his pockets, looking for his keys, hoping he didn't lose them, but they are not there. He then looks about his condo and finds them sitting on the counter. He reads the unit number on the big one. "0416, not 6140." (Are these intentionally reversed?)

He walks to the windowsill and looks out to see a winter wonderland filling the streets.

Reset

J.F. goes and gets on the elevator to head to the lobby. He notices an extra button B for basement that wasn't there before.

B 1 2 3 4 5 6
7 8 9 10 11 12

He doesn't remember there being a basement in the building but, at the same time, feels as though he does.

The elevator opens and rings, ding-ding-ding, ding-ding-ding.

J.F. gets into the elevator. The doors shut, and he hears a ding, "Ding." Then it starts moving downward without him before hitting a button. He sees his reflection in the mirror while standing in the elevator. He thinks he looks old but then thinks maybe his vision is just a bit blurry.

He walks out of the elevator and into the lobby. When he sees the lobby, a tremendous feeling of déjà vu comes over him. He then walks to Lena's office, and a sickening pit in his stomach overwhelms him. He knows what she is about to say just as she asks, "How may I help you? Are you James, the

James moving in today?" He doesn't respond right away. He thinks he must be going crazy. He says, "Hold on a sec.", and he walks to the vestibule and steps outside into the snow.

It is daylight now, and J.F. doesn't recall there being snow outside when he first came into the building. He realizes that this is not in his head. He did not imagine this repetition. (I wonder where JIM is. Perhaps he has the answers to this riddle. Only another drunkard could understand the situation at hand.)

Distraught and confused, J.F. decides to go for a walk around the city block to ponder what could be going on and how he ended up in such a situation.

He thinks he had gone for a light stroll when the sun starts to disappear, and he finds himself still in front of the vestibule, looking at his feet in the snow with no other footprints to be seen. He hadn't moved at all; he had just been standing in the same spot for hours. He tries to take a step further but can't. Seeing as there is no other option, he turns around and goes back into the vestibule and then into the lobby. He decides he will investigate the situation. He reaches for his phone to search the internet, but his phone is not there.

He is now standing in the lobby, wondering where he really is and what is actually happening. He has a faint recollection of a Christmas party that occurred the night before or possibly a few nights earlier but isn't even sure what day it is. So, he says under his breath, "When in Rome.", and walks to the mailroom to see if he has any mail.

He slips the key into the hole, turns it, and pulls open the mailbox door. When he looks inside, he finds it is free from letters, except for a package delivery notification. He takes the small notecard, crumples it up and tosses it in the garbage, and then heads over and into the package room.

Inside the package room are poorly constructed wood shelves dividing up the different floors. The shelves are all but empty. He quickly finds a fancy wrapped box labeled with his name. He impatiently rips the paper off. Inside is a wooden crate holding a bottle of scotch and two tumblers, accompanied by a note:

Dearest James Francis,

I take great delight in sharing this fine bottle of 30-year-old scotch with you. Please find yourself present in the lobby after midnight to kindly share.

Sincerely,

J.I.M.

J.F. wads up the wrapping paper and tosses it in a trash can placed under the outgoing packages. He then tucks the wooden case up under his arm and heads out of the package room through the empty lobby, gets on the elevator, and makes it back to his condo.

Almost midnight

After napping for many hours, J.F. wakes up and prepares to head to the lobby. He is anticipating talking with JIM but wary about drinking the scotch after everything that has happened.

He still has a faint reminiscence of drunkenness in him, which triggers him to want to drink. He thinks to himself, (It's either get back on the horse or fall off it. Either way, it's going to be a rough ride.)

10.2 - 11:52 pm

Ding, "Going down."

J.F. stands on the elevator, looking at the unit number on his key, reading 0416. He sees his reflection in the mirror. It is himself but older with pale, flaky skin as if he hasn't had a drink of water in weeks. He then looks down at his hand, gripping the tumblers and scotch. His fingers are evenly dispersed inside each glass, with his thumb gripping the neck of the bottle. He sees his hands are also dry and flaky, and his nails haven't been trimmed for some time.

The elevator begins moving without him selecting a floor. He figures it must be going to the lobby, since it is going down, but when the doors open, they expose a large room that looks like a retail clothing store. Racks of wardrobes stretch across the place. There are all kinds of strange outfits, from fine suits to opera clothing, top hats, and fur coats. (Weird. I must be in the Twilight Zone.)

He stands still in the elevator, not knowing what to do. Eventually, the doors slide back shut. As the doors come together, J.F. gets a glimpse of a tall spindly man walking around one of the racks of clothing. When the man sees J.F., he shouts out, "Wait, don't let that door close!" but it is too late; the elevator is already heading back up to the lobby.

J.F. realizes he was just in the basement of the building.

12:00 am

Ding "Lobby."

J.F. walks out of the elevator into the lobby. (There he is, sitting with his two little dogs.)

JIM says, "Took you long enough. I have been sitting here all day." J.F. then looks at the clock on the wall to read it is a

stroke past midnight. He then chuckles a little comprehending the joke. "Let's crack open that bottle and have a drink. I am sure you have figured out something strange is going on by now. I should know; I was there when it happened." "You were there?" "Let's drink first. I will explain to you some things."

2:03 am

After close to half the bottle is gone, JIM brings up something about J.F.'s timewave device. He asks, "How is your device coming along?" "I am not sure; I don't even know if I still have it?" "Oh, you have it. You just have to see it in the right reflection."

J.F. thinks to himself, (The right reflection.), and JIM responds as if he is reading J.F.'s thoughts. "Yes, the décor of this building was coordinated by a half-whacked doctor who theorized mirrors contain alternate dimensions and permit access to them. However, he was also a mass-murderer—something you won't learn of until, well, just now, I guess. He used, or I should say, uses optics to hide the bodies—depending on what timewave one is on. I think you have met him by now or maybe not. Anyways, he goes by the name of Lyle sometimes." "What?" "You don't realize this, but you have been here for what could be considered an eternity. I am your older self, you see. Every year I've been here, I have aged one day, whereas you just keep getting bounced around in a circle of sorts. I have been waiting to see you. Well, me—for how long? I couldn't say. You had created the timewave device and were successful but have no recollection of what you did because you were blackout drunk during the experiment. I have been waiting here for you to show back up. I figure the measurements of how long you have been

gone would give us some idea of when you or I created this thing.” “I see. I don’t know what you are talking about.”

J.F. Takes off his glasses and looks closer at the man to see the resemblance.

“Drink up, my boy! You gots to show me how you made this device so I can get out of here.” “What year is it?” “Don’t know. Seems like everyone in this place is on some sort of broken record. If you hadn’t realized it yet, everyone is constantly irritated and doing the same thing over-and-over—democratic behavior. Sometimes people leave the building, and some have been here since we got here. I think it has something to do with acceptance. They all seem to be struggling with accepting something in their life. Still, we are unique—we are not bound by the rules of this place except for, well, the being trapped part, which is directly due to our time-wave device.” “I don’t know what to tell you; I haven’t created anything like that.” (Is he referring to my tranoquantian space detection device?) “Exactly! You won’t even recall it! I only appear here when you are drinking, my boy. I think you got here a few years back. You were asked about moving in today, and then you got stuck outside, right?” “Yes. I thought that was a dream?” “Nope. You cannot leave this place unless there is a fresh snowfall. Even then, the only place you can go is that Tornado restaurant where you will see the same people that live here—that is, depending on what year you land. A lot of messed up shit went down there. You recall seeing the paper about Lyle?” “I don’t.” “When you do, remember that Lyle didn’t accidentally kill his family. That wasn’t even his family at all. His name is actually Larry, and he murdered Lyle and then pretended to be him in this accident. His objective was to collect the insurance money to live on. Now he is stuck in that A.A. meeting, repeating the same story over-and-over. He won’t be released until he

accepts what he has done, but I don't think he has an issue with the murdering part, but rather an issue with drinking that he cannot overcome. I have been here for a long time and have seen how this building works. The people here are attracted to the negative energy that the building conducts per the design you and Nikola had. This guy Larry worked with you at some point either as Larry or Lyle. I don't know for sure. I didn't ever live through it. I am just a peddle to your rose of time. He has some information of yours from one of your notebooks. He kept it after the murder of Lyle's family. I think you left it with Lyle or Larry at some point. I again am not sure. Just remember what I tell you so when it happens, you can prevent it. The information he has is how you solved the problem and found the correct equation to input into the device. At least I think he does. We need this information to stop this cycle. Drink up, my boy! Drink it all up! You have work to do."

9:00 am

Waking up, back in his bed, J.F. has little to no recollection of the previous night. He sees the scotch bottle on the counter with about one drink's worth in it. He thinks to himself, (Should I start the cycle over again?) and, without hesitation, grabs an empty tumbler on the counter, fills it to the brim with ice, and pours the last little bit of scotch into it. It only fills about a fourth of the glass. He needs the alcohol as cold and diluted as possible otherwise, the potent liquor may ignite a vomiting streak.

He puts the glass to his lips, and the ice tumbles forward to them. He sucks in a few drops of the scotch and then slowly swallows with caution while holding his breath. Once he feels the warmth trickle into his stomach and it soaks in, it is safe for him to finish the rest without worry.

He begins to recall his conversation with JIM from the night before. He debates in his head on whether or not it was a complete delusion or reality. He then finishes the last few drops of the watery scotch and thinks to himself, (I need some more alcohol A.S.A.P. It is daylight. The liquor stores should still be open.)

J.F. grabs his keys and heads down his condo hall to the exit. He opens the door and walks out right into his office, hearing, "Welcome back!" A young girl greets him with enthusiasm. "You need to get back to work on your research Dr. Q. You have been out sick for some time now. The board is starting to get concerned about whether they made the right decision giving you the job. Oh, and some guy named Larry dropped off these papers. He said you may need them to succeed in your mission."

In a sort of autopilot trance, J.F. goes about his business without interpreting that he was just in his condo a few miles away. "Ok. Great. Thanks. I appreciate that. I am almost done with the prototype. I just need some time alone to work out the correct equations." "Okee dokee! Good luck! Dr. Q. I guess I'll see you when I see you then." The young girl exits his office while leaving the door open.

J.F. walks over to a loose brick in his office wall and pulls it out, searching for a secret stash of scotch he keeps in it. He finds a flask leaning up against the back soil resting next to his tranoquartian space device. He pulls the flask out, twists the tiny cap off, letting it dangle on a string connected to the neck just under the threads, and then takes a generous swig. He scrunches his eyes closed anticipating a burning scotch but an unexpected gin floods to the back of his mouth instead. He then opens his eyes while bringing the flask down to the waste level to find he is back in the lobby staring at JIM. "You gonna pass that flask this way, kid?"

Dr. Quasar's Nightmare

"What the. What's going on?"

11 | Faraday Cage

James finally breaks free from months of repetitive nightmares only to find himself living in a reality he does not recall. It is unclear to him if he is still dreaming. For a moment, he thinks he may be, but his senses kick in, and he sees he is in his condo staring at the lone rocking chair. *“What did I do all summer? I really need to get back to work. Enough drinking; the spring semester is afoot.”*

There is much work to do to prepare for the semester, and James is still a bit shaky from the alcohol leaving his system. He picks his notebook up off the rocking chair to start prepping for his fall course. He flips open to the most recent page and reads some gibberish scribbled into it. The writing makes no sense, and there are notes that do not resemble his handwriting. Being ambidextrous, he assumes he must have been writing left-handed, and as he became more intoxicated, it got sloppier. He moves past it to a blank page and begins his work, but, again, the instant the tip of his ballpoint pen presses into the thick notebook paper, a succession of thumping shakes his ceiling.

Thump-Pound-pound-pound
POUND-POUND-POUND-POUND-POUND

Thump-Thump-pound-pound
POUND-POUND-POUND-POUND-POUND

James’s face turns red, and his skin gets hot. He slams the notebook on the arm of the chair, watching the pen fly off onto the floor in front of him while screaming at the top of his lungs, “God! Fuck! DAMN IT!”

(Someone living above me must be jumping up and down on the floor or something. Do they have a fucking camera in here? I haven't heard anything in weeks, but the second I try to work, it begins.)

The noise stops after he has his temper tantrum. He collects himself by taking deep breaths and starts to read through his notes again.

Bang-BANG – POUND

Bang-BANG – POUND – POUND

Bang-BANG – POUND

The thumping noise spreads through his ceiling into the walls as if there is a tiny army of gnomes marching through them.

(How could I hear this noise? The building is constructed with 12-inches of solid concrete between each floor. How can this noise be traveling through it? There must be some pipes or beams transferring soundwaves the same way kids play with two tin cans and a string.)

After enduring hours of exasperating clamor, James loses interest in focusing on his class preparation. He sets the notepad down on the windowsill and looks at himself in the mirror hung on the wall across from the rocking chair. He frowns, raising one eyebrow, and says to his reflection, "I guess it was meant to be." "Where did you come from anyway? I don't remember putting a mirror up in here." "You must have grabbed one from the halls. Better be careful out there."

James finds himself walking the halls of his condo building. He is pondering various equations amongst other topics

when he sees a professor from the university. She walks with a limp. He examines her leg and sees she has a brace on it. When he looks at her, she has her hands to the wall for support, pulling herself along like a spider crawling across the corner of a subtended floor.

He politely says with a smile, "Professor Florentine, I presume?" "Do I know you?" "Not intimately, but you are the professor researching and teaching string-theory, correct?" "Ah, yes, you must be the great Dr. James Francis Quasar. Groundbreaking research on timewave displacement and discoverer of the tranoquarticle. I heard you are also stuck in this god-awful building. I am in a hurry, but I would love to have a meeting of the minds someday!" "Sounds great! I look forward to it!"

As she walks away, he notices her reflection. She is no longer limping; she is rapidly walking down the hall and walking at such a fast pace, it could be mistaken for a light jog. (She must limp and pretend to be in pain when people are watching and then goes back to normal when they are not. Weird.)

After walking the halls and pondering various topics for a few hours, he heads back to his unit. When he gets back, it is quiet and peaceful, so he decides to pick back up on his research. He opens his notebook to an empty page, and like clockwork, the pounding resumes.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

This time the light's in the ceiling flicker as the pounding persists. Again, frustrated, James puts his notebook on the windowsill next to the rocking chair and endures the ceaseless battering.

The next morning

"Good morning, Lena."

A few seconds go by before she snaps out of the Zen-like state she is in. She then turns and smiles, and like a programmed robot, says, "Hello. How can I help you?"

Another moment goes by before she looks at him, and then she says, "Sorry, I am still waking up." while giggling.

"There is some endless pounding in my unit as if someone is exercising or playing catch with their dog or something. It rattles in my unit every night like clockwork. I am trying to work, but it is driving me nuts." She replies with a condescending look on her face: "No, you wouldn't hear anything like that from other neighbors. Must be something else."

James is unsure how to respond to someone who completely disregards what he says and seemingly pins him as crazy or full of it. After contemplating for a moment, he replies, "Well, not sure what *or who* it is then, but it is ridiculous and goes on for hours every night—right when I start to work." "You can't run a business from home; it is in the 'Condo Rule Book.' No tenant shall run a business in their unit." "I think you misunderstand. It says: 'run a business.' Working from home on a hobby or take home work is hardly running a business." "I don't know. I'd have to check with my manager about that."

James gets frustrated with her circumventing the situation and leaves without acknowledging his departure. (I am going to have to take matters into my own hands. I cannot live like

this. I wonder if I could hire someone to take whoever's making this noise out. Nah. Prison doesn't suit me, and I'm not clever enough to get away with such a thing.)

Later in the evening, James strolls the halls to get away from the pounding. When he goes past the exercise room door, he can see a girl is running on one of the treadmills. He can see her from behind. She is bone-thin, and her butt looks as if it is caved in, leaving her yoga pants sagging from the thighs. All that is visible is the back of her head, a blonde ponytail bouncing up and down.

An hour or so later, after going up and down flights of stairs and other halls, he comes back around from the opposite end. He sees the girl is still on the treadmill. (I cannot believe this woman is still running on that thing. It has been over an hour. That is some OCD shit, man.)

He stops and looks through the door's window, squinting to get a better look into a mirror. He can see her face in the reflection, and what he sees is scraps of skin stuck to a bloody skull and a wad of hair done up in a ponytail. He takes a closer look. When he looks in, she turns to see him and makes eye contact, and she looks normal, just a bit anorexic with sucked in cheekbones.

He turns around and walks back down the hall, and thinks to himself. (She must be a compulsive exerciser—addicted to the high. Or she probably looks in the mirror and sees herself as fat. Poor thing.)

James continues to pace the hallways for another half hour or so. He is working his way back to his floor from the seventh floor. As he makes his way to the stairs leading to his floor, the woman on the treadmill comes out from the stairwell. The two of them move closer to each other with each step until they pass one another.

Before he enters the stairwell, he stops and watches where the girl goes; he watches from the corner of his eye while slowly opening the door. He sees her walk into a unit almost directly above his. An immediate light goes off in his head that this must be the person making the noises all day and night. (It would make sense. She looks like she exercises obsessively. Probably does those workout videos in the evening or has some equipment in there.)

A few weeks later

James has been attending A.A. meetings since he came off the last binge. He has been sober for almost two weeks and goes to a meeting every morning at the senior center. Anything to get away from the pounding quickly became routine for him. His research has been abandoned since he cannot find any time to focus on it. It was uncanny to him. Every single time he tried to get any work done, he would be interrupted. If it wasn't noises from the neighbors, it was sirens from the ambulances. If not sirens, it was the maintenance guy knocking on his door. It just kept happening over-and-over. It would be quiet for hours and even days sometimes, but the second he tries to do any critical thinking—it begins.

A few mornings in a row

"Lena. This pounding won't stop. It seems to be occurring every evening at about the same time as if it were some sort of exercise routine, a routine someone has when they get back from work." "No, you wouldn't hear someone exercising." "Ok. Then what could I be hearing?" "Maybe it is something from one of the neighboring buildings?" "What? How would that make noise in my ceiling?" "I am not sure; noise can travel strangely in this building."

“Lena- Did you ever use a string and two cans to make a telephone when you were a kid?” “Sure. Who didn’t?” “Ok, great. So, you know how these high-rise buildings’ structures are made with very large I-beams surrounded by concrete? That, or metal rods embedded with cement. Well, suppose you have taken any college physics classes. In that case, you’ll know that when a large metal bar is not stabilized, it will vibrate. Sound will travel through it exiting the end dispersing into whatever median the end is attached to.” “Then how come only you can hear it? No one else has complained, so it must not be from this building.”

Aggravation and frustration to the degree of physical violence fills James’s head. He doesn’t say another word; he turns and walks away. (Why would this bitch be so condescending towards me as if to call me a crazy liar making shit up! I am a goddamn respected physicist. Who the fuck is she to understand the construction of a building better than me!)

Later on

James finds himself on a desperate timeline to get his research completed. Still, he is suffering from severe anxiety about doing his work because he fears, to his very core, that the moment he touches the notebook, the pounding will begin.

After having some peace and quiet time, he figures he is off balance with the scheduled noise, so he grabs his notebook. He begins to write some equations and gets into the research zone, forgetting that the unwanted sound was ever an issue. The moment he syncs into a meditative state, he is ripped from it like being awoken from the perfect dream.

BING-BING-BING-BING-BING-BING-BANG

His temperature rises. He takes a deep breath and stops writing. He no longer can concentrate, so he decides to wander the halls again and ponder ways to kill the person making the noise.

This time, he sees that the running skeleton girl is not in the gym. (Maybe she is back upstairs exercising, and that was what I was hearing. How can I make this stop.)

11.1 - A Week or so Later

Over the past week, James heard nothing. He decides to talk to Lena. He wants to ask her if she knows of anyone that may have been gone for the past week.

“Lena. This pounding will not stop. Lately, I don’t hear anything during the day, simply in the evening like clockwork around someone’s work schedule. And the past week, I have heard nothing. Do you know if that skinny girl that is always on the treadmill has been gone this week?” “No, it wouldn’t be her. I know her and have been in her place.” “Alright, then.”

Return of the drink

James went upstairs that evening and began to try to do his research. He barely got his finger on the notebook when BANG (silence) BANG (silence). It is a discontinuous dropping sound with thirty-second breaks between each pound. It doesn’t take long for James to surrender his will to the drink. (Fuck it. I’m getting drunk. Do I still have that scotch tucked in the back of the cupboard?)

2:00 am

James is friendly and tipsy-drunk just because he loves it, and the pounding finally stopped a sip into the drink.

He is now intoxicated to the point that he feels invincible. The obsession with the origin of the sound has consumed his high. He grabs a long-serrated knife designed for cutting loaves of bread and begins cutting holes in the drywall in search of a way to pinpoint the origins.

He walks up to the wall across from his rocking chair and plunges the knife into it. He then cuts an irregular rectangular shape, about a square foot in size. After the incision is made,

he pushes the piece inward, sending it sliding down the still intact wall until it hits the floor.

When he gets a look inside the wall, he expects to find wood studs filled with insulation, but instead, he finds thin metal bars lined with electrical wiring. He moves down the wall and cuts another square out and another and another until he reaches the end of the room. (Every sixteen inches is a metal bar. No insulation – no wood. No wonder the sound is amplified so much in here. Damn place is built like a drum.)

The alcohol fuels his curiosity. He continues cutting the sheetrock pulling large chunks off the wall making his way to the ceiling. As the interior becomes more exposed, it becomes clear that his condo's shell's inner workings are a large metal cage. (Odd. Reminds me of a Faraday Cage.)

The sight of the cage inspires James to pick his notebook up off the windowsill and jot down a series of equations about timewaves and their relation to electromagnetism. He can continuously work without interruption. Hours go by unnoticed, and the sun begins to come up.

Page after page of equations filled the notebook through the night.

James wakes up in his rocking chair from the sound of his dry throat wheezing. It feels to him as if it were glued together while he slept. The dehydration from drinking large quantities of alcohol and no water has left his saliva absent. He gets himself another drink and sits back in the rocking chair. He notices his notebook is thicker than before; the untouched papers had been disturbed. Before he looks at it, he takes a large swig of the scotch. The strong drink amplifies the remaining alcohol still in his blood.

The work he had done in the night was extraordinary; it excites him. He wishes to input the equations into his device,

but he does not have a device, nor does he have an office. He suddenly realizes that he doesn't even know what the equations mean and becomes curious about who may have written them.

It never ends

James picks the scotch right back up each morning he wakes. He endures waves of pounding—endless pounding. The sound drives him mad. He continues ripping down all of the drywall in his unit in search of a way to stop it. His self-emanating tornado of destruction leaves piles of jagged dusty chunks scattered across the floor.

Each day he sits and stares at the cage surrounding him while taking swigs of scotch to loosen his throat back up. And every morning, the notebook has more equations in it. Sometimes he is aware of what he is doing, and other times he isn't. During his daily drunken pondering, he concludes that the building must have been built specifically to conduct sound and or electricity. (Every room in this building must be constructed as a Faraday Cage. Why would someone do that? This explains why the noise is traveling through the building. This structure conducts vibrations just as well as electricity, and the sheetrock shell acts as the perfect structure to produce and amplify sound. It is like a giant speaker.)

A few days later

"Lena. I understand why I can so clearly hear the pounding noise in my unit." She responds with a tireless look, "Why's that?" "The sound is being conducted by the structure of each unit and travels along the metal frames." "No, the walls are all concrete. You wouldn't hear that. It must be coming from elsewhere."

James doesn't want to tell her about removing all the drywall. So, he leaves her office thinking to himself while

getting angrier. (Jesus F-ing Christ! Ok, I am going to have to move. I cannot get any work done here. This has gone too far!)

The next morning

J.F wakes up and sees the walls had never been torn down. He hadn't even cut a hole in one of them. There are just five empty scotch bottles on the floor next to the mattress, along with his journal. He skims through it and sees it is filled with equations and drawings of Faraday cages. He has no recollection of what he may or may not have written, but he appreciates its elegance and beauty none the less.

He gets up off his bed and walks to the window, feeling a great sense of accomplishment. (We award this man the astonishing achievement in physics—Nobel prize.)

While he daydreams, he looks at the snow-filled streets. He sets his eyes on an odd-looking snow removal vehicle he hasn't seen before. It is the size of a golf cart, and it is cleaning the sidewalk. It has a large cylindrical tube with bristles spinning at high speeds. The front of it resembles the revolving brush of a vacuum cleaner but without a cover. It rotates, kicking and sweeping snow off the sidewalk onto the grass area.

As he stands at the window watching, a young woman runs past the snow remover and slips on a patch of ice the machine had only revealed a moment ago. She lays flat on the ground, dazed by a crack to the skull. The man operating it doesn't see her and the bristles begin scraping pieces of her face away. Chunks of flesh spew out onto the snow and melt into it. Then blood mists across it like red paint to a fresh canvas. Before the man notices the blood, the woman's face was peeled clean to the bone leaving only snippets of skin stuck to it.

(My God!) J.F. thought. He wants to help or do something, but by the time he gets downstairs and outside, other people will already be there helping.

Within 15-minutes, there is an ambulance. J.F. squints to get a better look at the girl being hauled away. (She looks just like the running skeleton. Maybe that's why I haven't heard any pounding today. Has my wish come true?)

Later that day

"Lena, what happened this morning?" "What do you mean?"

"The girl that had her face scraped off by the snowplow."

"Not sure what you are talking about."

(How could she not know what happened? It happened two feet from her office window.)

James doesn't discuss any further; he just walks away. As he makes his way through the lobby back to the elevator, he sees a newspaper on the console table and notices the date is December 23rd, 2020. Lena softly calls, "J.F. – J.F. Wait, are you referring to the murder that occurred in the year 2018?" "What murder?" "In 2018, someone lost their mind that lived here and was convinced that, well, not to imply anything, that their neighbor was pounding on their wall or ceiling every time he was trying to get his work done. In a fit of insanity, he had pushed his neighbor in front of a snowplow while she was jogging.

Well, you know the rest. He claimed she slipped on the ice, but before she died, she could use what was left of her scraped to the bone lips and cut up tongue to say she was pushed. In fact, this man lived in the same unit you do. Oops. I don't think I was supposed to tell you that."

12 | 1970 (12/23/20)

An unbroken seal twists and cracks.

“Father, it’s been 12-weeks since my last confession.”

Ice cubes clink as they are dropped into a ceramic coffee cup. Liquid then surrounds them, shifting the miniature bergs into equilibrium.

Twist pssssssttttt

A fresh bottle of seltzer is opened then poured atop the liquor. Tiny bubbles fly every which way as the soda mixes in.

“It has been too long, my love. The mere scent of you gives me goosebumps. Come. Sit with me. Let’s pray together.”

James sits down in his rocking chair and sips his cocktail. He uses his top lip to filter the cold liquid through the ice cubes. While swaying back-and-forth, he gets a glimpse of himself in the mirror on the wall across from his chair. Before taking another sip, he raises the cup to himself to say cheers without words.

A few drinks later

Yet again, J.F. finds himself sitting in his rocking chair next to the only window, wondering what has happened to the past months. Everything seemed normal before sipping the alcohol, but now, as the ethanol is absorbed, thoughts come tumbling in. For most, memory is tied to sobriety; for him, it is wrapped up in states of lucid inebriation.

(That hallway. What is it about that hallway? Am I cursed? How did I end up back in this place? Wasn't I free? How long have I been here, anyway?)

Knock-Knock-Knock

(Now who could that be? Could it be for me? 'Must be, you see. You are the only one here, my dear.' 'Must be the neighbors. Couldn't be for me.')

tap-tap-tap

"I thought I glued that cursed little door-knocker to the wood." "You did." "Goddammit." "Go. Go and get the door. Maybe it is your lucky night."

The door seems a mile away, even though it is within a 10-foot walk. The desire to get to the door is overwhelming and he struggles to lift himself from the chair. He feels too relaxed to want to move since the alcohol took over.

"Is that fucking skeleton faced bitch again coming after me?" "I don't think so, friend. How do you know about her anyhow?" "I saw her slip in the snow last week. The snow remover ground her face to pieces. Quite a gruesome sight." "Ah, yes. The blood sprinkled snow." "When was the last time you left this building?" "Just earlier, today, right? To get the drink for the night?" "Is that so? Do you remember where it was that you did go?" "To the- the- store down the street. The one I always go to. Riley's." "How do you feel?" "I am feeling better. It has been too long since my last confession." "Shall we find ourselves searching the halls this evening?" "I suppose so. It is about to snow. Do you remember what happens when it snows?" "I do. We can leave." "Yes. We can leave." "Where should we go?" "I don't know. I don't think

we need to go anywhere. Dr. Tripper should be arriving soon. He will be in the lobby around noon." "You mean midnight?" "I do." "He has taken the key for the ballroom. He intends on using Watson." "His ax?" "Indeed." "The ballroom massacre takes place tonight." "I thought that happened in the 70s?" "What year do you think it is?" "2020" "Ha! My dear lad, you must have been had for I am old enough to be your dad. Go take a look in the mirror you just had."

Knock-Knock-Knock

"Don't you think it's time to answer the door? Don't you want it to be her?" "She'd never come here on her own. She has been twisted up into a show. The city has changed her. She used to be such a beauty – an innocent, wholesome country girl. Remember her – the first day? No cares about fashion or physique. Just a natural woman in her prime." "Why don't you think it would be her? Or could it be her?" "She moved, you see." "I know, but do you know what year it is?" "2020" "Son. Look in the mirror and see."

tap-tap-tap

"Godammit. I thought I glued that stupid knocker to the door." "You did." "Then why do I hear it?" "It is Dr. Tripper. He is coming to see if you are still here. He has just arrived." "Why doesn't he just walk in?" "You are expecting him." "He works in stealth. A sly one he is. Lies guide him day-to-day. Don't trust him with a word you say." "Alright. What does he want?" "Why don't you go see. He will be surprised to find you here."

James goes to the door and looks through the peephole. All he can see in the hallway is an ax resting up against the wall in front of the door.

“He isn’t there. I only see the ax.” “He must have gone to the storage units.” “Should I find him?” “There is no point. He is on his way to the party. He just wanted to invite you—a pawn of sorts. The man only has intentions of using you for his own personal gain. He wouldn’t hesitate to let you take the rap for a crime he committed. Be wary of his true intentions, my Dear boy.” “I am quite cautious of these human animals.” “This one is different. He uses male bonding to seduce his prey. Manipulation tactics you have never seen.”

Pound-POUND – Pound-POUND – Pound-POUND

“He must be growing impatient.” “He needs to use your condo to escape.” “What do you mean?” “You don’t recall yet?” “Recall what?” “The experiment. Look around you. Where are you?” “At home.” “No. Look at the walls.” “They are just walls.” “Go and tap on the walls.” “Why?” “You will learn about what is behind them. Do you think these walls are solid or insulated?” “Should be.” “They are not. They are thin sheets covering a cuboidal cage, a cage constructed to contain electrical energies.”

J.F. reaches his hand over to the wall and gives it a little tap. Just as he does this, the knocker on the door beats in sync with his knuckle hitting the drywall.

tap-tap – tap-tap
Tap-Tap – Tap-Tap

He continues to sip his Gin, using his forearm to wipe droplets of liquid from his wet lip.

(What do they want from me? Could it really be her? Could she actually want to see me?)

He goes back to the door and looks through the peephole. The ax still rests against the wall. He turns to go back to his rocking chair. POUND – POUND – POUND

“CHRIST! Scared the shite out of me, mon!”

This time he runs to the door, twists the doorknob, and swings the door open.

“You OK, man?” “Uh. Yeah. Just having some drinks. Sorry, kept hearing that damn pounding again. Fucking neighbors won’t stop moving or something.” “Can I come in?” “Sure. Can I get you a drink?” “What are you having?” “Gin with soda.” “I suppose I could do with a drink. Thanks.” “What brings you by?” “Oh, just out and about. Almost Christmas. You have any plans?” “Just me and my Xmas tree here?” “What tree?” “The Gin, friend.” “Oh. I see.” “Here.” “Thanks.”

Dr. Tripper sits in J.F.’s rocking chair, the only chair in the place. He leaves James to stand using the kitchen counter to brace his semi-intoxicated body.

“Party downstairs. You gonna go?” “Party?” “Yes. The Christmas party. Did you forget?” “Party?” “Yeah. It’s Christmas Eve—Eve. They always have to throw a party. Well, that is until next year. You were the one that invited me.” “I did?” “Well, who are we talking to today? Are you Dr. Quasar, James or J.F. or who?” “What do you mean?” “Uhhhh. J.F., I guess. How do you do, friend. It has been awhile. Must be your first drink of the night?” “I suppose.” “Alright. Good. Well, you’ll be gone soon, so drink up.”

“Okay.” “How long have you been J.F., for, now? What day is it?”

J.F. does not entirely understand what is happening. He doesn’t know the man sitting in his rocking chair, yet at the same time, he does. He doesn’t want to be rude since the man clearly knows him, so he brushes it off as a friend he made during a drunken encounter he cannot recall. Still, the situation feels relatively familiar, so he does not hesitate to answer.

“It is December 23rd, 2020.” “Wow. That’s pretty far out there. You must have been sober for a while.” “I was. Tonight is my first time drinking since-since-since the blonde monster.” “Oh, yeah, the little petite girl that drags her foot when she walks? What; she have a stroke—right?” “Yeah.” “Nice butt she has. I have seen her here.” “Here?” “Yeah. She moves in at some point. She was older. A lot older. Still limping and dragging her leg. Seems like she does it on purpose for attention. I caught her running down the hall, and then someone turned the corner, and she quickly fell to the wall, dragging herself along—might have been someone else actually, not sure. Funny woman. So, do you want to go to the party or not? Seems to me you are already getting festive. Come on, it will be fun. When was the last time you got to party in 1970?” “1970?” “Yeah, man. Here, take a couple shots. We gotta wash your brain—get you back on track.” “Alright. You gonna take some with me?” “If it gets your ass back in line. Sure.”

The two of them stand at the kitchen counter, which doubles as an island, and each takes three shots of gin consecutively.

Tap-Tap-Tap

"You hear that?" "Yeah. Someone's at the door. Want me to get it?" "Okay."

Dr. Tripper walks to the door, opens it, shuts it, and then goes back into the kitchen.

"Here, take another shot." "Who was at the door." "No one was there." "What the hell was that tapping then?" "I don't know. Maybe somebody hanging a picture on their wall." "I've been hearing that shit all night." "Here- take another shot."

Before J.F. pops another ounce of gin into his mouth, he walks around the counter to the living room and opens a window letting cold crisp gusts of wind flush in.

"Pretty chilly to have your windows open." "I like the cold." "I know." "Should we go to the party now?" "Will I know anyone?" "Dude. It's 1970. How many people do you know in 1970?" "I suppose none." "Right. Come on, you'll feel better after you get some more drinks in you down there. Come on, man. You promised me a good time if I helped you with the sound problem." "What sound problem?" "Don't worry about it. Let's go."

J.F. follows Dr. Tripper out into the halls without much debate since the alcohol ignites a desire to mingle with strangers.

"Alright. Let's rock and roll, Tripper." "Sounds like you are getting back to your normal self." "Let's go, man. Is there going to be some good-looking girls down there?" "I wouldn't get my hopes up." "Why do you have an ax?" "Watson? Just to take care of some business." "What. You going to hack the party to bits and pieces?" "Yeah. Something like that." "Cute."

The two of them make their way to the elevator. On their way, two young girls walk out of the unit a few doors down and across the hall.

“Hey, Jim!” They both say in sync, then one asks, “Who’s your friend?” “This guy? This is Tripper.” “Hey, Tripper. You heading to the party?” “We are.” “Looks like a good time down there. You all wanna go on a sleigh ride with us before heading down there?”

J.F. and Tripper look at each other, and neither of them needed anything more than that single look to know they both want to join the girls.

“Sure.” “Yeah. Sounds great.” “Cool. So cool. Come on with us then.”

The two of them follow the girls a few feet down the hall to their place. One of the girls unlocks the door she had just locked, and they follow them in.

“Looks like Santa’s workshop in here.” “Oh, yeah. That’s what Cindy’s doing. She loves Christmas decorations. I said, go to town, and I’ll bring the snow. It just flew in from Columbia.” “Really?” “See, James, you remember why you came here now?” “I can see why I’d want to.” “Hey, we can totally give you guys blow jobs too if you want.” “Yeah. Here, take a hit.”

Cindy puts an antique silver ashtray with a lid that flips open by the thumb to J.F.’s nose. He observes the trinket as she pops the top exposing a tiny mound of cocaine. “Isn’t that cool. I can’t believe someone just left it downstairs for the taking. It hasn’t ever been used, and it’s real silver too.” “Pretty neat.” “It is. Try it but be careful; it’s heavy shit. A toot is all you need. We can come back up and have more intermittent as well. Gonna be a white Christmas if you know what I mean.”

J.F. sticks a rolled-up dollar bill in his nose and snorts a small bit of the white powder up it. While he feels the effects kick in, he also feels Cindy’s hands press onto and slide up against his inner thighs. She begins to unzip his fly and

presses her breasts against his stomach. "Good shit isn't it." "Yeah. Fuck. Excellent. Thank you so much. That's just what I needed." "You want me deep throat you? I'll swallow too. Awe, don't you want it, sweetie?"

J.F. looks over into the kitchen to see the other girl on her knees with Tripper halfway down her throat. Tripper smiles and winks at J.F. while he sips on a drink with one hand and uses the other to motion the girl's head back-and-forth.

"Maybe later, honey. I am a little intoxicated right now." "Ok, Hun. I really wanna. Just tell me when you are ready, and we can sneak back up. I can't have sex, though; my boyfriend wouldn't like that." "That's fine. Here sit next to me." "Okay! How long have you lived here? I don't remember seeing you before. Did you just move in? Katy and I have been here since August. Our parents bought this place for us to stay in while we go to college. She is older than me. Do you like blondes? She is blonde, but not naturally. My hair is red and natural. Most people think I dye it, and hers is natural, but it's the opposite." "Uh, yeah. "I guess it's the abnormally red tone of the hair. It isn't your normal Irish red hair, more like a red rose. The hair color, I was told. Do you like it?" "Uh" "My boyfriend doesn't like it much. He says he would rather it be blonde or brunette color. Then I ask him why he dates me in the first place. He doesn't usually respond when I ask. I heard his friend ask him if the carpets match the drapes. I didn't get it at first, but later I did. You wanna see?"

Without giving J.F. a chance to respond, the girl unzips her pants and pulls her panties down, showing James a patch of hair slightly less red than the hair on her head.

"See. It does match. A slightly different shade but still matches. Do you like hair down there? I hear some guys like it shaven. I don't know if I want to do all that. Seems like a lot of work. Maybe cleaner, though."

He has to stop her in her tracks from talking to ask for another drink.

“Can I get another drink?” “Sure, sweetie! What are you drinking?” “Do you have any Tanqueray?” “Gin?” “Sure. My boyfriend keeps just about every alcohol there is in the liquor cabinet. How do you like it?” “Straight is fine.” “Straight? Like just warm and in a glass?” “Yeah.” “Wow. You are a brave own. I don’t think I could get one sip down that way.” “Takes practice.” “I bet.”

She gets up, fixes him a drink, and finally calms down enough to listen to him talk for a change.

“Sorry. I can talk nonstop when I am on blow. When did you say you moved in? Seems like no one has lived in that unit since we have been here.” “I don’t really know.” “That’s weird.” “Hey Cindy, you ready to go?” “Yeah. Come on, Jimmy. You are going to dance with me!”

Dr. Tripper stands almost a foot taller than James. He hovers over him with a satisfied grin on his face and says, “Jim, huh. I don’t know if I have met a Jim yet.” He then puts his arm around James’s shoulder, escorting him to the door behind the two girls while saying, “This is going to be a very interesting night.”

“Well, Jim. You do not disappoint. Wish I had met you sooner. How old are you anyway? You look about ten years older than the last time I saw you.” “I’m 47 Tripper.” “No, shit. I wouldn’t have guessed higher than 37. Man, you age well. Must be all that gin you drink.” “Stress is the number one cause of aging. I like to live an easy life. That’s why I stick around here in the ’70s—excellent era to be in. Everyone is nonjudgmental. Look at that, a lady smoking a cigarette inside next to her child. I love it, no worries – no stress. Just be free. I can get as drunk as I want, and no one thinks twice about it. Too bad HIV had to ruin it for everyone.” “I suppose.

Do you know why I am here then?" "Of course. The building will transfer you at 10:36 pm. Or somewhere within that time. Just be in the center of the dance floor at that time. You'll be fine. I see you brought Watson." "Yes. I have been waiting for this for many years, my friend." "I can't say I don't feel bad for these people, but a deals a deal and, well, let's be honest, they aren't going anywhere anyway. Do you recognize these girls?" "Should I?" "Add 50 years to their lives and think about it." "Wait, you don't mean. Are they Cynthia and Kathryn?" "Yep! Pretty freaking sexy, aren't they." "Jesus H. Christ, man. I don't know if I could have gone through with it had I known that. Jesus." "It gets even better. Wait until you see them in their decayed-phase state." "What's that?" "You'll see Jack."

Jim and Jack follow the girls into the elevator. They try to follow what the girls are saying to each other, but they have a hard time understanding their words because they are gossiping so fast while simultaneously sniffing up more cocaine.

The elevator says in its usual seductive voice, "Sixth floor. Going down."

"Wow, same voice this far back?" "Yeah. I think I was the one responsible for that. I think it is the voice of my late wife. Well, not late. I just don't know where the hell she is." "Wife? You are not the person I was expecting at all." "No, Jack, and you don't know what you are getting yourself into either." "I don't." "Nope, and I would try and talk you out of it, but you are incapable of taking advice unless it is your own." "You know that I have been in this building for a long time, right?" "Exactly."

"You boys want another toot?" "Yes, please."

"Lobby."

Christmas music fills their ears as they exit the elevator into the lobby.

“This is really different from the future.” “I know, right. Too bad, you have to ruin it.” “It would have been ruined anyway. The ‘70s was America’s playground, and it got dirty.”

“I suppose that’s true.” “I am going to duck out for a bit.” “Awe, you are supposed to dance with me, sweetie.” “I’ll be back. I just need to go for a walk and cool down.” “Ok, sweetie, I’d go with you, but I am not equipped for the snow.” “It’s ok. Go have fun. I’ll be back in a bit.”

Jim walks to the vestibule to exit the building while the girls and Jack make their way into the party.

13 | Tripper

“Gaawwwwwddddd!!! That fucking noise. Why won't it stop? I just want to sleep! PLEASE, for the love of God, LET ME SLEEP!”

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

(a few seconds pass)

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM – BANG

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM – BANG

BANG

BANG

“What the hell happened last night? I feel like I was pummeled by a sack of potatoes. At least I am still at home. I hate waking up in strange places. I think it's time for me to get my shit together. Maybe even start hitting the gym. I'd like to learn more about that woman anyway—see if she may be the upstairs neighbor making all the racket.”

8:15 am

James had been rudely awoken, and the continuous thuds prevent him from falling back asleep. He is too exhausted to do anything about it, so he lays in the bed and endures the irritating noise.

The sound continues for close to an hour before he can fall back asleep.

9:30 am

Just as his eyes close and he slips back into a slumber, CRACK! A loud crashing sound reminiscent of someone

dropping a heavy weight on the floor snaps him right out of it. The sound does not continue, so he is unaware that it had woken him. He falls back asleep.

11:00 am

Piddle-piddle-thump-thump, piddle-piddle-thump-thump.
Thump-thump thump-thump. Thump-thump thump-thump.
Piddle-piddle-thump-thump, piddle-piddle-thump-thump.

A series of what sounds like repetitive light thwacks and wallops radiates from the ceiling, waking James yet again. The patterned racket continues endlessly. He lays on the bed staring at the ceiling. He fantasizes about sliding a long carving knife deep into the heart of whoever is responsible for the sound. (I'd like to watch the life leave their fucking eyes as I plunge a freshly sharpened twelve-inch blade through their chest plate, puncturing the heart. I wouldn't want to hit an artery; I want it to be slow so they can suffer for hours the way they are making me suffer. It sounds like someone sprinting back-and-forth. What is wrong with this person or people or whoever the fuck they are.)

He becomes overly frustrated trying to make sense of the situation, wondering what he did in his past to deserve such karma. The pattern reminds him of a plyometric cardio exercise routine.

About 2-hours later

James wants to get up and complain to the management but is too exhausted. He cannot even muster up enough strength to use the bathroom. It's as if he is strapped to the bed and unable to leave it.

The exercise routine had gone on for an hour, and then another one started – lasting about the same amount of time.

After it stopped, he fell back asleep and quickly entered into a deep dream state.

He is dreaming about teaching a physics class and the research he has been working on. He fantasizes about a beautiful girl falling in love with him while he lectures. Perhaps one of his students, a petite young one.

The girl he manifests comes to his office after class and begins flirting with him. She slides her chair up close to his while he explains her homework problems to her. She intentionally presses her leg against his leg, and then she looks for movement under the fabric of his pants. She is happy to see a developing lump. She then nonchalantly moves her hand up his thigh while they both examine the homework. He feels her begin to massage his crotch. Then she unzips him and slips her hand in. The feeling of her cold hand gripping him excites him further. He looks at the top of her thighs popping out from a crimped pink skirt and cannot resist himself. He turns her chair towards his, puts his hands on each of her kneecaps, and spreads her legs. The separation forces her skirt to pull back to the hips, and the disengagement exposes light pink panties that match her dress. There is a single white rose printed on the center of them. The image rests on the fabric like printing on a pillow cushioned by the pressed hairs beneath. He slides his hands along her thighs and props her up, cupping her derriere with the palms of his hands. She is so petite that she fits perfectly in them. He pulls her towards him and then sits her upon his lap while repositioning her knees, so her shins are resting on the sides of his thighs. She then grabs him and feels him throb as she firmly grips his shaft. She pulls the rose to the side and presses him to her moisture. The instant he feels her warmth, he is shot awake.

POUND-POUND-POUND
BANG-BANG-BANG-BANG
POUND

James is ripped from his fantasy. The rapid sequence of poundings is so intense, the lights in his ceiling rattle, sending dust sprinkling into the air.

At this point, he can no longer focus on sleep. He grows frustrated with the noise and decides to do something to try and take his mind off of it, but it just cannot be ignored. He moves to his rocking chair and listens to the excessive movement in his ceiling. (Who the hell moves this much? I mean seriously. This is ridiculous. How can someone move around their home all day long like this? Don't they own a TV or have a job or something?)

13.1 | Over the Weeks

Since he finished the semester, J.F. has been awoken every morning like clockwork to what sounds like excessive exercise. He has also been disturbed all throughout the day. He keeps track of the sound schedule and takes tabs on a few of his neighbor's activities. He becomes confident that the sound's primary source is coming from someone exercising and makes plans to prove it or end it.

When he again reaches out to the building's management, he gets nothing more than a circumventing response. The first time he mentions it to Lena, she says, "I don't think so. No one works out that much in a day. It is likely something else."

J.F. is one to agree with someone, even if he thinks they are wrong, so he decides to take matters into his own hands and investigate the building and tenants. He has been trying to work and rest, but every time he lays down or picks up a pencil, the pounding begins. This consistent distraction is too much to bear. He concludes the only options are to move or fix the situation.

J.F. finds it uncanny that he could be sitting in his rocking chair doing nothing for hours, and the instant he starts to work, the pounding also starts. It isn't just coincidental. It's an enigma. He even began changing the times he would attempt to work on his research or when he napped. Didn't matter if he grabbed a pencil at 1:00 pm, 1:05 pm or 9:13 am. It just didn't matter; the pounding would start within minutes of beginning his work.

One day, he became so frustrated by the sounds, he jumped around his tiny condo-like an upset child throwing a temper tantrum. He then began smashing the walls with his fists and screaming at the top of his lungs, "For the love of God, would you please stop moving. Jesus! Who the fuck

moves this much. STOP FUCKING MOVING, YOU FUCKING PSYCHOS!!! Just stop!!! Give me a moment of peace!”

After exploding and putting holes in the walls, J.F. became unhinged. He has had countless days of sleepless nights and made no accomplishments with his research. He grows ever more frustrated with the staff and condo board. He has numerous emails documenting the sounds and has reached out by letter to potential neighbors that could be the source but with no response. The management’s only solution was and is to keep insisting that he records the sounds.

He recalls one of his conversations with Lena: “Look, Lena, someone is exercising in this building non-stop, and it is like their unit is connected to mine like two tin cans and a string.” “Well, I just don’t see how you could hear the people above you, and I talked to them, and they are hardly ever home.” “I am not talking about the people above me. How am I going to hear them through a foot of solid concrete? I am talking about some sort of connection between the pipes or walls or something. It just has to stop. I am going insane.” “Oh. Well, that is why I have a house. I would never live in a place like this, sharing walls.” (Great. How the fuck does that help me – knowing that you wouldn’t live here. Cunt.)

One would think that the sound comes from the neighbor upstairs, but the building is constructed out of solid concrete, so someone could drop a bowling ball on their floor, and the person below them wouldn’t hear it. Because of this, the staff and the condo board doesn’t take J.F.’s complaints seriously.

He got the impression that they thought of his case as, “If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, did it make a noise?” The lack of respect he receives frustrates him since he is a doctorate in physics. That doesn’t seem to matter

to them. For some reason, they think of J.F. as a less than worthy tenant when he is actually an owner.

12/20/16 Journal- There is something off about the people that live in this building. It is like they are children playing the "I know you are but what am I." game. Or they are incapable of seeing any point-of-view other than the one they already know. I don't get it.

Some Night

One-night, J.F. lost his temper, and in a physically belligerent rage, he began ripping the walls down. He put his hands into the holes he punched in a few weeks earlier and tore the drywall from the screws. He then tossed fragments of sheetrock across his condo, slamming into the other walls. His logic is that if he removes the median the sound travels through, it will have nothing to emit from—like removing a drum's batter head.

After tearing down about twenty percent of the wall, he learns that the sheetrock had been bolted to a metal cage that encompasses his unit.

(This is the same design as a Faraday cage. Why would anyone want to build a home in a metal cage? I mean, this is like a prison cell lined with the luxury of sheetrock. I am surrounded by metal and concrete. Well, that explains how the sound is traveling. These cages must be interconnected throughout the building. How bizarre.)

After J.F. learns of the infrastructure, he returns to explain this to the staff, but they still keep telling him to record the sound. He recalls another conversation: "How is recording the sound going to get these people to stop exercising?" "Let's just start by recording it just to be sure that is what you are hearing." "I don't understand why you need a recording. I cannot stay

another day in that place if these people are going to continue. Do you understand that I have not slept more than two hours straight in weeks? I am being tortured.” “Well, get a recording, and then we will see what we can do.”

December 27th, 2016

A few days go by, and J.F. hasn't heard any pounding. He wakes up on his mattress, finally feeling refreshed. He is expected on campus soon and needs to prepare for the spring semester. He makes himself some coffee and sits in his rocking chair. (Finally, I can get some work done. I hope my complaints made it to the neighbors, and they will stop exercising. I think I know who it is now.)

12/27/16 Journal- Dr. James Francis Quasar. I am still getting used to my new title. I wonder who my assistants and coworkers will be for spring. Also, how many students will be in my class. I think that this will be an exciting year for me.

I am contemplating a relationship, but the mere thought of having to be held responsible for someone else's needs sends me running. Besides, I don't think I have ever met someone that I truly click with or can tolerate or who can tolerate me, for that matter. I don't know. I will just let the universe decide that for me. Just happy to be finished with school and not have to worry so much about bills and studying. Now, I can focus all my energy on my research. I have made a recent discovery, which I call 'The God Function.' I think it may be the key to unifying relativity and quantum mechanics. I will be focusing a lot of time and energy on this. Hopefully, there is someone that will understand it on the level I do at the campus.

Most of the professors I meet are just like religious people. They believe anything that was written in a book. I swear

some of the stupidest people I have ever met hold Ph.D.'s in Math or Physics.

I don't care much for the view out the window of my condo. I just see a sea of bricks—the brick forest if you will. Nothing but ugly buildings lined with bricks. The place is small and doesn't have a patio. I am tucked up right next to the window with it open. The design of the building seems to prevent any airflow into the unit. It was all I could afford. Well, I am off to work.

James sets his notebook on the windowsill and pushes himself up and out of the rocking chair to head out. He walks down the unnecessarily long hallway, a part of his condo that takes up over twenty percent of the square footage. It begins to irritate him. (Why did they slice up 500 square feet into a bedroom, living room, hallway, bathroom, and what appears to be the world's smallest dining room fit for a single barstool. Idiots designed this building. Why did I move here again? 'I don't know.')

It Begins

(Jesus fucking Christ! These mother fucking pieces of fucking shit mother fucking cock sucking bitches. I just want them to fucking die. Just fucking die DIE DIE DIE. Why does this keep happening to me? Why the fuck do I have to be the one to constantly be exposed to this animalistically endowed humanoid piece of fucking shit garbage. I swear I wouldn't lose an ounce of sleep if I saw whoever's making these noises heads smashed under a steamroller. Goddam fucking cunts.)

KNOCK-KNOCK

“One second.” Said James with the politest mannerism. He lost track of his hateful thoughts towards the neighbors. The ones he thinks are making all the racket in his ceiling. He walks to the door and skips looking through the peephole due to his distracted state-of-mind. He finds an ax sitting against the hallway wall across from the doorway when he opens it, but no one is there. Under the ax is a note addressed to J.F.

J.F. picks up the ax and envelope and brings them into his condo. When he opens the envelope, he finds a small torn off piece of a newspaper article.

UW Journal of the Prestige
December 27, 1930 – Madison, WI

Dr. James Francis Quasar had been selected to work at the local university—the University of Wisconsin-Madison—as an assistant professor of physics teaching Hypothetical Physics. A subject that he founded during his graduate dissertation. The topic led to groundbreaking discoveries in time-displacement.

During his professorship from 1910-1929, he accomplished more than most could dream of.

(What is this? Some kind of a joke?)

Better Health

J.F. decides to throw in the towel and give up his attempts at accomplishing any work from home. Instead, he walks the halls to escape the endless parade of footsteps in his ceiling. While walking, he makes sure to pass the exercise room. He theorizes that the people making the noise must also frequent

the gym. His plan is to cross-check the people's schedules in the gym and when he hears sounds in his unit.

One night he glances into the workout room from a mirror across the hall. The reflection he sees startles him. He thinks he must be half asleep when the mirror reflects the image of a skeleton draped in yoga pants and a hoody sweatshirt. J.F. gets a look at her face through another reflection. It is almost all bone as if the flesh had been scraped from it, but when he looks in through the door window, he sees nothing more than an anorexic young woman addicted to running.

(I have seen this girl before. She is on that treadmill for hours. Could she also be exercising in her unit? Maybe she does the workout videos at home and then comes here for the treadmills?)

J.F. goes home and sits in his place for a little while, not hearing any noise. After an hour of silence, he hears sounds in the ceiling. It sounds like someone pacing across their floor – back-and-forth – walking non-stop. He quickly leaves to go and see if the woman is still in the workout room, and she is not.

(This person could be the one making the noise. Let's check tomorrow and log the times we see her in the gym.)

13.2 | Jack

J.F.'s whole routine has changed based on the pounding. He has to make sure he falls asleep by 11:00 pm and wakes refreshed by 7:00 am to avoid the neighbor's OCD activities. He was initially upset about this, but it has helped him regulate his schedule, which will be helpful when he returns to work. He made the decision to put his research aside until he can get back to campus. He was unable to find a suitable place to study, and every time he tries in his condo, the pounding begins, so he decides to take up exercising to look further into the neighbor's routines.

J.F.'s life has become orientated around learning everything about his neighbor's daily activities. He is determined to locate the one that never stops moving. He starts his day by walking up-and-down the floor where the gym is located. He takes mental notes of who goes in and out and what time they do. He then goes back to his unit to see if he hears anything when they are there and not. He eventually narrows it down to the girl that excessively runs on the treadmill. He then begins exercising himself to investigate further.

The boney one is always there – like clockwork – every day. She spends hours bouncing between the elliptical and treadmill. J.F. feels there is something off about her. He remembers the skeletal structure of her backend from the reflections in the mirror. She becomes known as “The running skeleton.”

Another man, around J.F.'s age, also goes to the gym every day. He is a local therapist by the name of Dr. Tripper, who J.F. immediately refers to as Jack even though that is not his name. He had pinned Jack as one of those guys who keeps

everything about themselves a secret. He imagines he is either doing strange things in his free time or simply just insecure.

Over the weeks, Jack and J.F. became acquainted, sharing many conversations. It has been a long time since J.F. has had someone he can call a friend. Most people avoid him, and he avoids most people. However, there is some underlying connection between him and Jack, as if they knew one another in another life. He finds it peculiar that Jack practices therapy. It turns out that Jack has a background in engineering and mathematics. Probably why he and J.F. hit it off. Later in life, Jack became a medical doctor and simultaneously trained in psychology. But he really struck J.F. as a businessman.

It becomes a daily routine for them to meet at the Gym and converse. A common topic of theirs was the issue with the noise in J.F.'s walls. Dr. Tripper has been living in the building for over a decade, and he has never heard anyone complain about such noises. This makes him question what J.F.'s real motives are. J.F. could sense this, so he invites Dr. Tripper to come over and spend some time at his place to witness. Unfortunately, the two of them cannot find an agreeable time. Whatever time J.F. suggests always seems to conflict with Dr. Tripper's schedule. (Dr. Tripper. Dr. Jack Tripper. Dr. Jack T. Ripper. I bet he is out slaying women on the streets of Madison every night.)

J.F. learns a lot about Dr. Tripper's personality. The man is an expert on social interactions and human relations, but he doesn't have the sixth sense about people J.F. has.

Throughout J.F.'s life, he had become overly honest, which led him to see the truth about everyone else's dishonesty. Dr. Tripper wasn't so much a liar as he was an information withholder. A tactic to keep the upper hand in relationships. A move commonly used in trade.

J.F. doesn't really care so much. He had met many people like this throughout his years. They eventually start coming clean about their lives, or they just alienate everyone. Even still, J.F. wants to know more about the man. He thinks Dr. Tripper may help him with his noise issue, especially now that J.F. has jokingly coined him: 'Doctor Jack T. Ripper.'

A horrible night to remember...

After weeks of trying to hunt down the neighbors responsible for the noise, J.F. breaks down and returns to the bottle. He figures the semester is starting up soon, so he might as well have some fun since he cannot get any work done.

Like magic, just as he wants to drink, he finds a bottle of Tanqueray gin tucked under the sink. (I must have stuck this here for emergencies. Well, this seems like one if no other.) He twists and cracks the seal and pours himself a couple ounces straight up in a glass tumbler. He doesn't recall anything else after. About ten hours later, he is awoken from a blackout sleep.

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK
POUND-POUND-POUND-POUND

POLICE – OPEN UP!

James Quasar. Open Up!

KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK-KNOCK
POUND-POUND

J.F. flew out of bed, thinking the building is on fire. He looks through the peephole and sees three police officers—two male and one female – all of which look to be ten or more years younger than him. J.F. has only a pair of boxer shorts on

when he opens the door and asks, "What's going on, officers?" Without warning, the two male officers grab his arm and rip him out of the condo. They then proceed to handcuff him, locking his wrists together behind his back. One officer stays in the hall, securing J.F. while the others ransacked his apartment.

After finding nothing in his home, the police begin patting him down. J.F. is confused as to why they would pat down a flimsy pair of underwear. He asks with a confused tone-of-voice, "What the hell is going on?" and then one of the male officers asks, "Where are the weapons and drugs? Do you have any on you? Knives – needles?" "Dude – I am in my fucking underwear; what do you think? Now, what the hell are you people doing here?" The officers ignore him.

J.F. is distraught and distressed by the rude awakening and still very drunk. After they finished searching his place, they shut his door.

J.F. asks, "Now, can you please tell me what you are doing?", and one of the male officers responds, "We received a call that you are drunk and planning to commit suicide." J.F. laughs and says, "Well, that is ridiculous; I was sleeping officer as you can clearly see." "Have you been drinking this evening?" "Yes, I had some drinks earlier, and then I went to bed." The moment J.F. said he had drinks, the officers began hauling him down the hall. They would no longer speak to him other than to say they are placing him in protective custody for his own safety.

"Excuse me. You cannot just handcuff me, enter my home, and then lock me up; I have rights." The female officer then says, "If someone says you are suicidal, and you have had a drink, you have no rights." "Wait a second. So, if I have a drink and someone calls the police and tells them they think I am suicidal regardless of whether I am or not, you can do

this?" "That is correct. The law in Wisconsin states verbatim: 'Whether or not the individual is suicidal—that is, if someone claims the person in question is suicidal, and said person has alcohol in their system, we are then required to detain them until the alcohol leaves their system. They must also receive a psychiatric evaluation at their expense.'

J.F. responds, "That is the most fucked up shit I have ever heard. This sounds like a lawsuit to me.", and then doesn't say another word. Being the accepting and relaxed guy J.F. is, he didn't fight and just went with the police officers. He figures at least he can get some sleep away from the pounding for the night.

J.F. is escorted half-naked through the lobby right past JIM. While being hauled off, he looks and examines the female officer and tells her she has a nice body, and asks, "Didn't I see you on Tinder?" She instantly blushes and turns her head away. The two male officers give each other an odd look implying, "I wonder if she is looking to hook up? Maybe after we drop this guy off, we could use his cuffs and tag team her."

J.F. can see the power control hungry spirit within the two males. He can also tell that the female officer knows there is something wrong with what they are doing. He just goes along with them, knowing that fighting with an officer is not smart, and his best bet for a safe return home is to just go along with whatever they plan.

After forcefully escorting J.F. through the lobby, the officers open the doors to the vestibule and push him outside, landing his bare feet onto a blanket untouched snow.

14 | Xanadu

"Good morning, my darling."

James wakes up – and to his disbelief – he doesn't feel any effects from the night before. A soft light seeps in through his eyelids, and everything comes into focus. He then sees a girl sitting at his side, on the bed he is resting upon. She is gently filtering his hair through her slender fingers while gazing into his eyes. She has a look a teenager has when falling in love for the first time. He can immediately sense the passion she has for him, but he isn't quite alert as of yet. As his brain renders consciousness, he realizes he recognizes her. (It's Ella. Oh, my sweet Ella.)

Her soft and sweet voice drifts through the air and into his ears, saying, "Happy Birthday, James. How does it feel to be an old man?" with a slightly sarcastic tone. James pushes himself up and rests his back against the headboard. "Old man?" He then, without thinking, instinctively looks into a vanity mirror positioned across from the bed and notices that he looks younger. "Yeah, silly. The big two-five. You are twenty-five today! I fixed you some breakfast in bed. Looky here: Italian Espresso, Cream Cheese Danish, and some freshly picked cherries from the tree out front. They just turned red and ripened overnight. I suppose you'll be spending the afternoon harvesting them, won't ya." James replies with an agreeable smile, reacting again without hesitation.

"You know me and foraging. We have the fresh butter we just churned in the icebox, right? It needs to be cold to make the pie crust best." "Of course, sweetie. You know I have your back when it comes to cooking. Been waiting for your cherry

pie all year!" She then leans forward and presses her lips against his.

The moment their lips touched, nothing in the world seemed to matter anymore. Wherever or whenever James had been the night before faded from his mind as if it never happened. He begins to feel something he thought he would never feel again. A sensation of purpose and belonging flows through him like an electrical current.

He embraces Ella, firmly positioning his left arm around her shoulders, and maneuvers his right hand to cusp her bottom. He lifts her up and swings her around, laying her back on the middle of the bed.

She is wearing nothing but a thin nightgown that loosely covers her body. James can feel her moisture on him. His heart beats as if time is frozen.

He pulls the strap of her nightgown down off her shoulder and then the other, exposing the swell of her breasts. He then pushes the gown down so that it scrunches up around her stomach. He gently grips the garment and moves it up her torso. She intuitively arches her back so he can pull it out from under her. She then puts her arms up in the air so he can completely remove it and expose her naked body.

The two of them spend the morning making endless love. Eventually, neither of them can conjure up any more bodily fluids, so they kiss one peck at a time until they fall back asleep.

About an hour after napping, James wakes up and gets out of bed. He moves slowly to not disturb Ella. He then takes a moment to appreciate her body. She is lying on her side with white sheets draped partially over her legs and halfway up her chest. He observes the flawless curvature of her back and impeccably formed physique. He thinks to himself that he

must have won an interstellar lottery ticket to find himself with her.

James looks around the room he is in and inspects it. It is a cellar of a small house. There are a few storm windows with step ladders under them. The bed Ella is laying on is an old feather stuffed mattress with buttons sown into it. The buttons make indents every square foot or so, and the bed it rests on is made with a metal frame. The headboard looks like an arch cutout of an old western jail cell. On the nightstand are a nonelectric phonograph and a notebook. The other nightstand holds Ella's jewelry box and a small book titled *A Treatise on Electricity and Magnetism* by James Clerk Maxwell.

While he stands at the edge of the bed, he tries to make sense of where he is and how he knew the girl's name, but he cannot quite recollect anything even though he seems to know everything about where he is. The overpowering bliss of true love clouds his intellect.

Ella wakes up and turns around to look at James. She is smiling, and the look of satisfaction highlights her. She says to him, with a warm smile as she puts her hand on her belly, "I think we are gonna have a little one knocking at our door soon." "You think?" "I think you may have knocked me up five times this week. Remember, I don't have the nanobot birth control in me anymore. Or at least they cannot function here." (Nanobots?)

James sits at the edge of the bed and puts his hand to her head.

"That is great. I cannot wait to start our family. I love you so much." "I love you too, James."

Ella leans off to her side of the bed and puts the needle from the phonograph down to play one of her favorite records, *Sunshine and Shadows* by Al Bowlly

(music) Sunshine and shadows. I'm happy and blue. Honey, when you are near me. When you are away. Loving you sincerely more and more each day. Forever and ever ...

James sits on the bed, looking at Ella while they listen to the record.

(music) forever and forever. To you, dear, I'll be true. Through sunshine and shadows, I'll always always ...

James holds Ella's hand until the song ends, and they hear "click – scraping – click – scraping – click scraping ..."

"Guess we should maybe accomplish something today." Said James as he pulls the needle back to stop the phonograph. Ella looks up at him, pats her belly, and says, "I'm pretty sure we did."

James gets up off the bed and puts his pants on, and says, "You can stay and nap. I am gonna go pick the cherries and get dinner ready." "I cannot wait for dinner. I am starved!" Says Ella as she nestles back up under the blankets, smelling what remains of James on the pillows.

James walks to the end of the cellar studio to a wooden staircase and heads up them. He exits out the storm doors entering a blue-sky sunny day. He feels grass tickle up around his feet as he stretches his arms out and yawns while looking out into meadows. The meadows stretch all the way to the lake just near the campus.

Growing confidently in the center of the plot of land surrounding the small cabin is a matured cherry tree. It has deep forest green leaves with a waxy gloss. They glimmer in the sun and are surrounded by what looks like shiny red marbles. James sees a metal pot under the tree clearly meant

for the cherries to be put in, and at waist height, he sees a yellow ribbon tied around the trunk of the tree. The ribbon gives him a feeling of déjà vu he cannot quite put his finger on.

He spends a few hours picking enough cherries to fill the pot to the brim. He then sits on the deck of the cabin in a rocking chair and pits them. After an hour or so, Ella comes out with a glass of iced tea for James. She sets it on a little table next to a growing bowl of cherry pits and kisses him on the cheek. She then takes a seat in another rocking chair aside him. She had put on *The Very Thought of You* (with the Ray Noble Orchestra) on the phonograph. Neither of them says a word; they just enjoy the minutes until the song ends.

Ella smiles at James and says, "It is such a beautiful day. I wish we could be locked on this timewave forever." (*Timewave?*) James smiles back and watches her pop one of the cherries into her mouth. She had snuck one from him when she was kissing him on the cheek. She knows it bugs him whenever she nibbles on any food before dinner. She gives him a sly look and then leans back with the book that was sitting on her nightstand.

James knows the book. He had studied it extensively over the years. It triggered a flash of memory about the equation he had been working on. He stops for a moment feeling a strange sense he cannot quite recall and then goes back to pitting the cherries.

After some more time passes, one bucket empties and the other fills with mushy pit-less cherries.

He pours the seeds out onto a towel and lays them in the sun to dry. He plans to plant them around the city during his walks.

Now that the cherries are pitted, he retreats to the kitchen and spends the rest of the afternoon preparing dinner.

The first thing he does is make the pie so that it will be cooled down by the time the two of them finish eating. He then collects a chicken from the yard. They roam freely, eating bugs and worms from the soil. Ella hates knowing that they have to kill a chicken, so she leaves and goes for a walk while James takes care of it and cleans it.

Before James takes the chicken's life, he caresses it and holds it in his arms, letting it know that he deeply cares for it and that everything is going to be alright. He says softly to the chicken, "It is the only way we can survive. I will make sure your bloodline lives on through your chicks' lives." He then pets the chicken gently on its head and closes his eyes. His hand slides down the back of the neck; he grips it firmly and quickly snaps the neck to a 90-degree angle separating the vertebra. When he hears the crack, his eyes well up. He keeps his hand over the chicken's head so he doesn't have to see its lifeless eyes. He picks up a hatchet and brings it down, severing the head from the neck. He then places the head in a bag while he looks off to the side.

After James cleaned the chicken up, he separated it into 9 pieces. Two wings, two legs, two thighs, two breasts, and a carcass. He puts the carcass in a pot with onions, celery, carrots, parsley, thyme, garlic, black pepper, bay leaves, and a leak. He covers it with water and lets it simmer while he prepares the rest of the meal.

Ella returns from her walk and enters into the kitchen, asking, "What is on your birthday menu tonight, Hun?" James responds with a sort of southern accent, "Well ah, we gotts heer suamm fried chickens, cahllud greens, cawnbread, and yer favorite: mac ah row knee and cheese."

She walks up to him and presses her body against his hugging him from behind. Her hands find their way down his stomach and into his pants. She grips him and feels his

girth. He stops what he is doing and sets down the bunch of greens he was about to chop. He turns around and sees Ella wearing a sundress with nothing under it.

James grabs her by her thin waist, swings her around, and props her up on the counter, putting her bare bottom on the pile of greens. She pushes herself up slightly and pulls them out from under her, and James says, "They will taste better now."

They kiss passionately, and he maneuvers in-between her legs. She puts her hands back in his pants, pulls him out, and slips him inside her. He feels himself plunge deep into her. Juices flow out and pool on the butcher's block countertop as they make love. It only lasts about thirty seconds before they both climax. They then embrace each other while panting heavily.

James stands at the counter with Ella's arms wrapped around him until he calms down. He slowly pulls out of her feeling a tickle, and she moans.

Ella grabs a towel from the cupboard above her head and uses it to wipe herself off. James picks her up off the counter and sets her feet first on the ground, watching her dress flail about her thighs as it falls down.

Ella then goes over and sits at the kitchen table, and continues reading. At the same time, James finishes preparing dinner for the two of them.

By the time dinner was ready, Ella had set the table, decanted some wine, and lit candles. The sun is setting and shining light through the windows of their small shack. The only thing they can hear is birds chirping and wind rasping through the trees.

James sets down a plate for her filled with greens and macaroni and cheese. She grabs a cornbread slice and butters it up and sets it on the table next to her plate. "Don't you think

I should have cooked since it is your birthday?" "What, and take away all the fun?" "I can't believe you love to cook so much that you would spend half your birthday in the kitchen." "The best part of my birthday is cooking for you." "You are such a sweetheart. I love you." "How is the mac N cheese?" "Delicious! These greens are amazing too. What did you put in them?" "Ah, my secret recipe: Green apples, dates, hickory nuts, bacon, red wine vinegar, and shaved Grana Padano. I also used a three-cheese blend for the mac. A little different than usual." "Everything is so good. I am so lucky to have you as my husband."

When James heard her say husband, he got kicked back in his head, distorted, thinking, (Husband. We are married?)

"I have a present for you." "You do?" "Yep! Remember when we went on the trip up north to Prairie Du Sac and had that Petite Syrah? You know, the one you said would be the perfect complement to our sour cherry tree?" James tries to recall but cannot. Ella continues, "Well, I had them sell me a bottle when you weren't paying attention. I snuck it home with me to have when the cherry tree came to."

Ella sets a small ramekin filled with little red cherries next to his plate and pours him a glass of the thick red wine from an oblong-shaped decanter. James takes a cherry and muddles it in his mouth, then spits the seed out back into the dish. He takes a sip of the wine, swishing it and mixing it up with the cherry in his mouth. He feels bliss amidst the sensations it delivers to his brain. "Oh my. This is fantastic. The peppery tones blend so well with the tartness of the cherry. You must try it." Ella follows him and tastes the mixture in her mouth. Her eyes roll back a little while she moans with pleasure.

They eat up their food and polish off the wine and then retire to the deck to sit on a swinging bench together and watch the sunset.

Ella brought with her, to the deck, two pieces of cherry pie and a bottle of aged rum. While they rock back-and-forth eating the pie, Ella pours James a few ounces of rum into a tin mug and hands it to him, and says, "Happy birthday Hun." She takes the last bite of her pie, sets the plate down on the ground, and falls asleep a few minutes later with her head resting on James's shoulder.

James watches the sunset while he sips his rum. He ponders how he got here and why he would be so lucky to have Ella in his life.

By the time the sun settled, he had polished off over half the bottle of rum.

James decides to pick Ella up and carry her down the cellar and put her to bed.

After he gets her in bed, he goes back upstairs to continue drinking. He sits in a rocking chair sipping on the rum until about two in the morning while day-dreaming about Ella.

After he poured the last bit of rum into the tin mug. He sets it on the arm of the rocking chair, leans his head back, and falls asleep.

14.1 | Rude Awakening

“Gun. Gun. I need the Gun.

Please, God, get me the Gun.

I need it—I need the Gun, for if I have the Gun, it will be fun.

I will take the Gun, put it next to my head, pull the trigger, and I’ll be dead.

Yes—that is what I said.

The Gun.

I require the Gun.

Perhaps a pistol will do, but only if the bullets come with two.

A Gun, my son, oh please, God, can I have the Gun?

I need it. I need the gun.

This is no longer fun.

Please, Jesus, give me the gun.”

James opens his eyes to find himself in a pitch-black room – wrapped in sheets – sweating profusely. His brain chants endlessly about a gun.

“Where am I?” He wonders. He feels so sick he cannot move or get up. He just keeps fantasizing about putting a gun to his head, pulling the trigger, and making himself dead.

He falls back asleep and then wakes back up in the club chair in the lobby staring across the room at JIM.

J.F. jumps out of the chair and says, “What the fuck is going on? Who are you?” JIM replies to J.F. in a calm voice, “James, my dear boy. You never left the tornado room before the plows came, did you?” “Huh? What?” *“The Tornado Room?”* JIM stands up and walks towards J.F. leaving his dogs sitting by the chair. “Here, you left this at the bar. I picked it up for you.” He hands James a blank notebook.

James holds it in his hand, and everything that has transpired fades from his mind as if it never happened. Lina

comes out of her office, walks over to James, and says, "Here are your keys and the paperwork. We also got your mattress, bed, and chair put up there for you. "Welcome to the building, Dr. Quasar. Did you want me to give you a tour of the building?" "No." Said James abruptly. "Sorry. I mean, no, thank you. I just wanna get upstairs and take a nap." Lina hands the keys off to James and says, "Let me know if you need anything. I am here nine to five Monday through Friday."

The eeriest sense of *déjà vu* comes over James again, but he brushes it off and heads to the elevators as if nothing had happened. He doesn't know why; he feels saddened like he has lost something or someone special but cannot quite put his finger on it. He pulls out his phone and sees that the date is May 14th, 2018.

He examines a photo tucked in the elevator wall's news slot on his ride up. It is an image of a raccoon popping its head out of a sewer. "*Cute.*" He thinks. He then looks above the picture into the mirror and says to himself, with a professional and stern-sounding voice, "Well, Dr. Q., are you up for what's due? The time has cometh, and the days are through, the next thing they are after is you." And then says, "So true, and how do you do?" DING "6th Floor". The elevator opens, and he heads down the hall to his new home – instinctively – as if he has been there before.

15 | The Noise

“The noise. It has to stop. Please, God, make it stop. I cannot live like this. I need it to stop. Why. Why do these people have to keep moving like this? They won’t stop moving. It is driving me crazy. I am going to have to kill them. I tried to leave this place, but I cannot seem to break free. It is like some sort of sick twisted joke being played on me. Apparently, no one else in this building has had any issues with the sounds I am hearing. I have to have quiet for my work. It requires deep concentration without interruptions, and all I hear all fucking day long is these psychos and their nonstop activities. I swear to God, I won’t lose a wink of sleep if someone murders the shit out of them. I pray that they die. Just die. Dear God, please take them out.”

Bang Bang

“Fuck! It won’t stop.”

Bang-Bang

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhhhhhh! Gaaaaaawwwwwwwddddd!!! Christ! Fuck-fuck-fuck-fuck – that’s it! Someone’s going to die. If I have to warp space and time to find these pricks—these fuckers are going to die.”

Later on, on his way back from the lobby after leaving his condo to escape the noise, the ax was again resting by his door. He instinctively brings it in and sets it on his counter. He grabs the ax off the counter and takes a shot of Jack Daniels, and then another. He swings the ax up and rests it on his shoulders, holding its knob in the palm of his left hand.

He uses his other hand to grip the neck of the whiskey bottle. He says to himself, "Heeeeeere's Jimmmmy." Pretending that he is Jack Torrance from The Shining using his name instead of Johnny's.

boom-BOOM-BOOOM-BOOOOM-BANG-BANG-BANG
THUMP-thump-THUMP-thump

boom-BOOM-BOOOM-BOOOOM-BANG-BANG-BANG
THUMP-thump-THUMP-thump

BOOM-BOOM-BOOOM-BOOOOM-BANG-BANG-BANG
THUMP-thump-THUMP-thump

thump

"Yep. They are going to die. Tonight's the night."

He puts the ax back down, resting it on the countertop. He then twists off the cap of a whiskey bottle and takes a hefty slug, filling his mouth full of the burning liquid. He swallows it down, trying not to activate his gag reflex. Once it is in his stomach, lining the walls with warmth, he walks over to the mirror on the wall and examines himself.

"Are you ready?" "Indeed, sir. We've been ready for some time now." "Do you think we can follow through?" "Without question. We must, for we cannot reside in such an environment for a night more. It must be done." "Who do you think is the one that makes the noise?" "It is unclear. There are hundreds of units within this building that could be the source. They are all connected by metal and wire. The origin could be from anywhere. Clearly, it wasn't the running

skeleton above you, so we must search elsewhere.” “I shall begin with the ones I’ve seen exercising daily.” “Are you sure you should be so open about your solution? We will surely be found out.”

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

“Ahhhhhhhhhhhh! Godddddddd! Damnnnnnnnn! Itttt! Yes. We must end it tonight. I cannot tolerate it one night more. I don’t care if I have to spend the rest of my life in a cell—at least I’ll be able to get some sleep knowing I am surrounded by cement bricks and not this fucked sound conducting speaker system of a condo.”

The whiskey courses through his veins, now bubbling his brain with ethanol. He goes back to the counter and grabs the throat and belly of the ax. He has every intention of breaking down all his neighbors’ doors until he finds the one that won’t stop moving around all day.

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOM

"Fuckkkkkkkkk!"

His anger takes over, and without thinking, the ax swings into the wall. He pulls it back, ripping it from the drywall, and swings again and again. Chunks of sheetrock break apart, falling to the ground. He continues ramming the blade into the wall over and over again. He swings it like a golf club up into the ceiling, hitting the light fixture. Glass shards rain down over him. He then takes another upward swing, and half of the frame holding the drywall falls to the ground while still connected to the ceiling. He then swings the ax like a baseball bat into an unscathed wall, repeating until none of the living room walls are fully intact.

BANG-BANG-BOOM-BOOM-bang – BANG-BANG-BOOM-BOOM

BANG-BANG-BOOM-BOOM-bang – BANG-BANG-BOOM-BOOM

He continues hearing the pounding and thumping, which only fuels his anger more. He holds the knob and throat of the ax with both hands holding it over his head and turns to take another plunge into the wall when he sees himself in the mirror. His eyes are bloodshot, and his hair is twisted up and greasy as if he hasn't bathed in months. He is wearing all white—a two-piece outfit—with sandals. His lips are scrunched up, and his face crinkled. He does not recognize himself. He is possessed with hatred and frustration. The ax comes down over his head, smashing into the reflection of his

face breaking the mirror into a thousand pieces. “I guess that’ll be another seven years of good luck for me. Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha-Ha”

He stops and calms down after the mirror decorated the floor with bits and pieces of broken glass. He swings the ax’s shoulder over his shoulder and grabs the whiskey bottle by the neck. The cap is already removed, so he takes a sip while still gripping the throat of the ax. He then slams the bottle back on the counter and says, “We are ready. Let’s do this. Time to die little feet in my ceiling. Time to die. I am coming for you. All your running won’t help you now. I am coming for you. If only you knew your passive behaviors would lead to your death, maybe you would have changed your selfish ways—time to die, little ones. I’m coming for you. I’m coming, and I am coming now.”

He walks down the narrow hall of his condo to the door, still holding the ax and whiskey. He pushes the handle down with the base of the bottle and pulls it open using one finger. When he opens the door, Jack Tripper is standing at it. He says to James, “There’s Watson. I must have left him here after our last meeting.” “Meeting?” “Don’t worry about it. Here, give that to me before you do something stupid.”

BOOM-BOOM-BOOM-BOOOOM-BOOOOOM!

“You hear that man?” “Yeah. Sounds like someone working a punching bag or running real hard on a treadmill.” “Yeah. Jesus fuck, man. I am going to kill these fucks. I cannot fucking take it anymore. Do you have any idea what it is like to be awoken every hour on the hour twenty-four seven for months on end?” “I imagine it’s like having children.” “Yes!

Goddamnit, exactly like having children, except you can strangle the child. I don't know who or where this is coming from. I thought it was that running skeleton bitch, but she is dead, and I still hear the pounding just as much as ever." "Relax, man, you gotta lay off the brown liquor. Especially Jack Daniels." "Shit. I know. I was watching *The Shining* earlier, and I kind of got carried away. Fuck man, I feel like I am being driven nuts just like the dude in the movie. The building is fucking possessed, man. I swear to God it is. I have been trying to study for months, and every fucking time I touch the pen to the fucking paper or try and do any critical thinking, the pounding begins. Then, when I think I have a break from it, it disrupts my sleep and wakes me up. I am on fucking edge, man." "Maybe I can help." "How's that?" "How about you don't worry about it, and I'll fix the issue with the noise?" "Dude. You fix the noise, and I won't worry about a thing." "Alright then. I will, but I'll need you to do something for me." "What's that?" "I need you to get that notebook of yours and let me have it." "My notebook?" "Yes. I will give it back, but I need it now." "Why would you need my notebook?" "Don't worry about that." "Alright, but how are you going to stop the pounding?" "It's just a numbers game, my friend; a simple numbers game. Just give me your notebook, and I will fix your noise issue."

16 | Riddles of the Pounding

When James gets home, he doesn't hear anything. He sighs in relief and says, "Thank you, Jesus!". He then maneuvers down his little hallway that stretches more than half the length of his tiny five hundred square foot apartment into the kitchen.

He opens up the cabinet, takes out a bottle of Tanqueray Gin, and pours a few ounces into a Collins glass over a golf ball-sized sphere of ice. He then grabs his notebook and ballpoint pen and retires to his rocking chair. Before sitting, he angles the chair next to the window for maximum exposure to the city.

He sips on the Gin for a few minutes, thinking, (Life is good. The universe will give you what you need if you ask for it, and what I need is some quiet time. The time-wave equations are almost complete. I just need to make the one last connection for them to be finalized. Once I find this connection, I can model them to show that my findings are what is needed for time-displacement to be feasible in our lifetime.)

Once he finished the Gin, he gets up and pours another few ounces over the shrinking sphere of ice. He returns to the rocking chair and takes his notebook off the windowsill. He opens it, and the moment the pen hits the paper, eight rapid thumps radiate from the half-broken ceiling.

THUMP-thump-thump-thump-thump-thump-thump-thump

Frustrated, James slams his notebook on the windowsill and stands erect from the rocking chair, leaving it swaying back-and-forth. He grabs Watson and exits his condo heading

down the hall to the elevator. He waits at the elevators holding the ax with both hands gripping the butt of it. He imagines what someone's skin wrapped skull would look like as it drives deep into the back of the cranium. (I bet the skin will fold inward, staying intact, and the hair will look like a fresh sheet of sod rolled out over a sunken hole.)

James lives on the sixth floor, so he thinks it would make sense that the pounding in his ceiling is coming from the 7th floor. He gets in the elevator and shoots up a layer. He arrives a few seconds later and begins walking up and down the hall pressing his ear up against every unit's door—listening for the poundings—but he hears nothing more than televisions and conversations between people. Flustered and confused about the situation, he returns to his unit for another drink.

When he opens the door, he finds that the place is in pieces. The walls and ceiling had been smashed to bits. The floor is littered with jagged chunks of sheetrock. He walks into the condo feeling his feet crunch on pieces of drywall laying atop other pieces. The mess doesn't register to him. He just makes his way back to the rocking chair, only stopping to fill a glass with more Gin.

After an unknown amount of time passes, James drunkenly swings his head around to look for the ax, but it isn't where he left it when he came in. He starts to panic, thinking he may have left it somewhere in the building and someone may find it. He quickly gets up out of the chair and moves to the door. He walks through his condo like he is on ice, sliding his feet through the dust and pieces of wall, leaving what looks like a trail in a fresh snowfall.

Once out of the condo and in the halls, he makes his way to the elevators. When he arrives, he forgets why he is at the elevators and decides that it would be best to go to the lobby

to see if there might be anyone to converse with. When the elevator reaches the lobby, and he exits it, he sees a few people dressed up. Some are standing, and others are sitting in the Victorian chairs. They are all holding holiday cocktails and have essences of Christmas tied to their outfits.

James hears music coming from the entertainment room. He stands near the elevator watching the people, and becomes angry for not receiving an invite to the party. The moment he takes a step towards the lobby area out of the elevator area, the sitting people stand up. When he takes another step, they all start walking towards the entertainment room. By the time his foot hits the line that divides the lobby and elevator area, the people had vanished into the party, leaving the lobby vacant.

A feeling of sadness devastates James. He feels unwanted, as if the people were purposely trying to get away from him.

He continues into the lobby. The music gets louder as he turns the corner and walks closer to the party. Right as he gets to the door, the music stops. He looks through the glass window cutout and sees a large group of people standing in the center of a dugout dance floor with steps that circumference it.

When the music starts back up, James cannot believe his eyes. He sees Jack materialize out of thin air right in the center of the dance floor, and he is gripping Watson with both hands.

James notices Jack is dressed in a long coat, winter boots, and a trapper hat with the flaps down. *“I don’t remember him wearing that.”*

Right as Jack’s body finished coming into existence, *“We Wish You the Merriest”* by Frank Sinatra, and Bing Crosby comes on the speakers.

Half the people are oblivious to what is happening, and the others are too intoxicated to notice. Not a single scream is heard while he continues hacking through everyone, axing them down in sync with the song's repetitive lyrics.

As Frank and Bing belt out each lyric, Jack uses the ax's heel to split into the skull of a drunk dancing woman.

He spins around methodically, dancing to the music as if the ax is his partner and he is the lead. Then, Watson swoops down, just grazing the floor, and takes a leg off just under the kneecap. It then comes back around lodging deep into the belly of a young man. Jack yanks it out, pulling his intestines with it, sending them into the face of his dancing partner. Before the man knew what happened, the ax's flat side was driven into his chin cheek-to-cheek. He pulls the ax out, and the man's face and his jawbone falls to the ground leaving strings of flesh dangling about his tongue.

Jack worked his way through all but a few people in a matter of minutes.

He walks towards the last couple standing frozen in a state of shock, surrounded by bleeding corpses, and in sync with the lyrics, he drives his ax into one and then the other just as the trombone belts out. He then plants the ax's heel into the skull of one and jabs the ax's toe into the other's chest plate. He continues whaling the ax down on them as they fall to the ground.

We wish you the happiest – the happiest, WHACK the happiest CRACK, yes, the happiest THUNK!

We wish you the merriest – the merriest, WHACK the merriest, THUNK yes, the merriest CRACK.

At the end of the slaughtering, he stops to sing along with Frank and Bing as he dances and slides through the blood.

“May your tree be filled with happiness—happiness and friendliness for all. May your heart be filled with cheerfulness—happiness and cheerfulness for all. ...”

Just as Jack thinks he is finished, he notices that a girl is getting up off the ground. “I missed one. We can't have that, now can we? It is a Christmas party, after all. Everyone gets a present.”

He walks up to her and tilts his head, looking deep into her eyes as if he can see her soul. Without notice, Watson lands right in the middle of her bicep, slicing the arm clean off. The severed flesh sticks to the cheek of the ax for a fraction of a second then falls limp and lifeless to the ground. The girl begins to faint, and as her knees buckle—while she falls to the ground—Jack brings Watson up over his head, gripping the shaft tight with both hands, and thrusts it forward, jamming the eye of the ax right into her temple. She lays on the ground with the ax sticking straight out of her head. Jack puts his foot on her neck and jerks it out of her skull, sending fragments of bone scattering throughout the air like coconut flakes.

James watches the whole death rally in disbelief. “I must be dreaming.”

Jack walks back to the center of the dance floor and sees James standing at the door looking through the window. He waves one hand to James, smiles, and yells out to him, “It's a numbers game.” as he points the thumb of his other hand to the dismembered bodies scattered about. He then disappears, dematerializing from sight.

“Goofy fella ain't he?”

James turns around to see JIM is sitting in one of the Victorian chairs.

“How long have you been there for?” “An eternity, my friend. Did you give Tripper the notebook? Guess you must have, seeing as he is in there doing what he is doing.”

Chapter 17 | The Journal

October 22nd, 1909 – Journal: Today, I traveled to Madison to attend a physics colloquium and inquire about studies. With good news, I am accepted into the graduate program. It was easier than I thought. I suppose not too many people are anxious to spend the better half of their life studying theoretical physics and advanced mathematics topics. I am thrilled to begin the program. While I was there, I also acquired a small plot of land right on the isthmus. It was a stroke of luck, I suppose. A man had recently built a small cabin on the ground and then unexpectedly passed away. I was able to purchase it for a very reasonable price from his brother. I travel back to Milton tonight to gather my belongings and will be returning to the cabin shortly.

I feel that I have found my purpose in life here in Madison. I had an unexpected encounter at the seminar. A beautiful young woman was also attending it. I dare say: It was love at first sight—at least for me, it was. I'll have to wait and see what her thoughts are. When I first got a glimpse of her eyes, my soul was knocked clean out of my chest. I felt weightless, like time had frozen. It was as if the universe shut down for a moment, and we were the only two left. Without hesitancy, she came to me and began conversing, opening me right up. She knew all the right words to say to get me to feel comfortable. Not a shy bone in her body. This is good because I would have lollygagged about her for days before conjuring up the courage to approach her. She insisted that we meet to discuss electromagnetic topics over dinner when I return. I dare say she may be the future Mrs. Quasar. I hope so. Outside of my desire to master the mathematical arts, she has become the only thing I can concentrate on. If I am not to be

with her, I will suffer for a length of unknown time that will last longer than a few fortnights. We are to meet for picnic on my new plot of land. The weather is still well enough to sit outside. If it takes a turn for the cold, we'll have my cabin's fireplace to take up residence next to. I return the following Friday. We are to meet at Main Hall and walk to my cabin from there.

October 31st, 1909 – Journal: It is Hallows' Eve, and the weekend was anything but scary. I met with young Ella Friday morning at Main hall, and we then walked the campus for a few hours before making it to the cabin for dinner. She is so bright. I am shocked by her vast knowledge of physics—amongst other topics. I dare say she is smarter than I? She wishes to attend university for physics as well, but her being female dampers her plan. She seeks to be an assistant to a professor so she may sit in on lectures and learn regardless of her gender and social status. I told her she could learn along with me as I attend class over the years. This excited her. She spent the past two nights with me in the cabin. I have never felt such a bond with another person. It is as if we are connected spiritually through space and time. I dare say: I am in love, and she is in love with me also. I am to ask her today to live with me here at the cabin. She has been staying with a lovely family outside of town, earning a place to sleep by helping with chores. I believe it would please her to break free from labor to live and study with me for the years to come. If she agrees, I don't think it will be days before I ask for her hand.

November 11th, 1909 – Journal: I have been so caught up with my dear Ella that I have not had a moment to think nor study. I should study as I begin the graduate program in spring. I

need to prepare for the lectures to come. Ella seems to take to study without resistance. She has read through most of my books within a week. She will do great things. I am so happy to have met her. She did accept my offer to live with me. The past days have been the best of my life.

November 30th, 1909 – Journal: I am to ask Ella to marry me this evening. We have spent the past month intertwined in one another's arms, accomplishing next to nothing. She has not been reluctant to express how she feels towards me. I have no qualms about her answering yes. I don't have any currency to acquire a ring for her at this time. It will not concern her; she is not of the materialistic type, or at least she is willing to wait for such a trinket. The cabin has been warm and comforting for us. The builder did a phenomenal job on the cellar; not a drop of water makes it through the structure. We have nested up nicely in it. Ella has done such a wonderful job making the cabin feel like a home, whereas I am satisfied with just the mattress and a rocking chair in the cellar. I doubt it will be long before she puts her touch on that as well. She also planted some cherry seeds outback. She had found some sour cherries over the summer while foraging and kept their pits. I love sour cherries. She says she cannot wait for me to make a pie with them. It will be five to ten years before that happens. It should mature just around the time I graduate.

February 13th, 1910 – Journal: The semester has begun. The professors are just as odd as the material we go over. Some are fun and humorous, and others are as serious as a judge in court—sentencing a man to death row. Ella is more excited about the work I bring home than I am. She understands it so quickly. She won't tell me much about her past, just that she was adopted and had run away to escape something terrible.

February 14th, 1910 – Journal: Ella said yes to my proposal before I could even finish asking. She lit up like fireworks on the fourth of July! We are to be married in June. It will be a small wedding as neither of us has any family around or can find for that matter. The future looks terrific for her and me. We are both working hard at study. I have tried to find a way to get her into lecture. The professors are anything but thrilled to allow a woman into the classroom. So, we continue working together outside of class. She may be able to get a job working on campus doing some clerical work, but I advised her against it. Her time is better spent focusing on studies, and we can use my name to publish any findings and share the profits as man and wife. Something about her, though. She does not get discouraged about such things. It's as if she knows something others do not. Almost as if she has precognitive abilities.

June 30th, 2010 – Ella and I are married! I took the summer off from study to spend with her. We have been so happy together. We haven't enough money to vacation, so we stayed home. Not a bad place to be with the lakes surrounding us. Madison is such a beautiful place to be in the summer. The birds chirping. Subtle waves rushing in. It's all just incredible, and Ella is the icing on the cake. I cannot express how lucky I am to have found such a wonderful woman. She wants to have a baby but not until I graduate. Probably a good thing. The studies are involved enough to be three full-time jobs anyhow.

January 12th, 1914 – Journal: It has been some time since I have made an entry. I have been so caught up with study that I have not had a moment free. I am astonished by Ella's

understanding of the material. I had an idea of displacing time, and I theorized a particle simultaneously alternates between a subatomic state and the atomic state. This fluctuation between fabrics could be used to intersect different waves of time, permitting one to jump across them. Within hours she had derived a set of equations explaining the phenomenon. I couldn't believe it. I hate that I may have to publish this in my name and not give her credit for the findings. It is a team effort, but she is the muscle behind the operations. I plan to make a secret note for future generations in the hope that they are not so dismissive of the female gender to learn of her talents.

(letter tucked in the pages)

June 3rd, 1915

Dear James;

I have spent the past month going over your theorem on time wave displacement separation, and I find it most fascinating. I believe that you have found something unique here, but there is an issue with your formulas. They come together nicely; however, when the final calculations are made for intersecting points, a discrepancy becomes clear. Work to finalize this discrepancy, and I believe you will have proved your theory. However, I am no mathematician, so the derivations are a bit beyond my mathematical abilities.

I look forward to meeting you in person.

Tesla

August 14th, 1915 – Journal: I am eager to meet Mr. Tesla. I have studied his blueprints in-depth and believe I can persuade some local wealth to invest in the project. His structure entails a large tower which can dually be a residence. The plot of land I own is the perfect location—as he said, and it is large enough to support such a structure. Ella and I have begun measuring the cellar for a pre-experiment to see if we can prove our theory on a fundamentally small scale compared to the end resulting experiment.

December 13th, 1916 – Journal: Today is my birthday. I am 32 years of age now. Time goes by so quickly. Ella and I have been together for 7-years, living in the cabin. Each day is still as new and wonderful as the first day we met. I have been working diligently on my dissertation. The bulk of the coursework is complete, and now I must provide an original piece of work to gain my doctorate. The board was not thrilled about my timewave displacement theory and recommended I choose another path. So, I am working on what Ella has told me to refer to as ‘transient nano quantum particles,’ or, for short, tranoquarticles. The particle simultaneously fluctuates between the fabric of space that makes our reality and the quantum realm, which allows for it to make some funny things happen. It is the foundation of the time displacement theory, but the board doesn’t have to know this.

June 15th, 1918 – Journal: I am to receive my doctorate this coming spring. It is such an unfair situation that Ella does not receive hers as well, and even a degree for that matter. I wouldn’t have been able to accomplish a fraction of what I have if it wasn’t for her help. She is so optimistic, though. She seems happy not to have a degree. She says all that jargon

would have sucked the joy out of learning. I can understand this. She didn't have to take all the useless non-physics courses I did. She just focused on the good stuff for the past years. I suppose that may be why she always had a leg up on me—still brilliant and much smarter than I. We will be married 9-years shortly after I receive my diploma. She is eager to start a family. I as well. I have been given a full professorship at the university to begin the fall of 1919, and our plan has been for Ella to be with child after I graduate and before I start work. The summer will be filled with endless lovemaking. I cannot wait.

May 5th, 1919 – Journal: Over the past ten years, Ella and I studied physics spasmodically amid lovemaking. Ella has learned everything I have learned and then some. We devised a theory between sessions of copulating, which Ella titles “Autonomous Separations of Time.” She used methods from my hypothetical physics course. I am not surprised that she extracted something from my techniques—that is, something with real physics applications. The class was just something fun for me, but of course, my special lady had to one-up me. I love her even more for that.

(letters tucked in the pages)

June 3rd, 1916

Dear James;

I have envisioned an apparatus that you can input your equations into. It is a simple concept but requires vast amounts of electromagnetic energy to power it. The general design is that of a cage made of superconducting metals. You

should be able to make a series of these cages and define each cell as a location for time-wave intersections. Then, once you figure out the discrepancy I mentioned in the last letter, you can access each meeting based on the structure you are in. To generate energy for the device, I believe your home is coincidentally in the perfect location. Within your cellar on the isthmus, you can use the surrounding walls to conduct energy when the lakes freeze over. The two enormous ice sheets will create static friction, and the soil surrounding the cellar can absorb the vibrations emitted by the sheets of ice when they crack. The best time to perform the experiment would be during a heavy snowfall. The constant flow of snowflakes over the ice will help generate and keep the electricity flowing into and around the frozen water. The combination of the vibrations sent through the soil and friction in the air will generate enough electrical output to power the apparatus. We will need to construct a large tower with conducting layers to capture all of the different energy levels.

I have included blueprints for a basic model. I would love to assist with this, but I have other obligations to attend to at present times. I will be visiting Madison toward the end of the year. I will write to you shortly before my arrival.

Tesla

August 1st, 1916

Mr. Quasar,

I will be visiting Wisconsin this coming November. I will only be passing through Madison for a day. If you are able to break

free from lecture on November 4th at noon for lunch, please do. I will plan to be on campus at this time. I will plan to see you at Main hall.

Tesla

August 24th, 1918 – Journal: Nikola paid another visit to Madison. He spent a week here doing some research or something. He was not very open about the purpose of his trip. He still shows great interest in assisting Ella and me with the construct of our device. We have almost perfected the equations, and Nikola has fine-tuned the machine for us. He helped me build a small prototype and says he would gladly relocate to the Madison area to help with the full development if we are to receive proper funding. He says we can use the device to power the underground cage structure he described. My office and the cabin's cellar are indeed perfect for the experiment. We have lined them floor to ceiling with metal wiring to make what I call a Tesla Cage.

July 4th, 1919 – Journal: Ella is with child! Oh my, it didn't take long for us. I have graduated as well. So much, yet so little has happened over the year. This summer has been the best of all the summers of my life. Our cherry tree finally matured and is producing more than we can eat on our own. Ella loves the cherry pies I make. I think she likes them more than she likes me. Jealous of a pie—how disappointing. I begin my professorship this coming September. I am eager to start as I will gain unrestricted access to all the laboratories on campus. My experiment is just about ready to be tested. Nikola has warned me that such experiments rarely have the outcome one is looking for. I am not sure if he meant that it may fail or

if the opposite of what I expect to happen may happen. Interesting character he is.

September 6th, 1919 – Journal: I have begun my class on Hypothetical Physics. There are only a few students in it, but it is entertaining none the less. One of the students is an odd one. Trapper—I think his name is. He has a way about him that is not of the others. A particular talk of slang I am unfamiliar with. He must be from the west coast, I think. He is quite interested in my work as well. He wants to be my assistant, but I am not sure he is qualified.

September 7th, 1919 – Journal: Ella is 4 to 5 months pregnant, we think. She is giving me a hard time for being at work so much. She wants me around more, but all she does is sleep. I have been frustrated as of late. As the population grows, so does the city. Our quaint little cabin is no longer resting in a peaceful meadow. Each day a new residence is being put up. All I hear all day long is hammering amongst other random construction noises. I cannot escape it even when on campus. The university is also raising more buildings from the ground to host the growing student body. The noise has gotten out of control. The only place I can find that is quiet is in the basement of Science Hall. I have requested that my office be relocated there. It is a bit cold and drafty but quiet, and that is a priceless thing these days.

October 1st, 1919 – Journal: My new office may just be the perfect location to test the experiment. It is constructed similarly to my cabin's cellar. I wouldn't doubt that the late owner of my place was also responsible for this room. The masonry work is identical. As tesla had said, we shall require

separate enclosers to test the experiment. I will have to line this room with metal somehow.

October 10th, 1919 – Journal: Ella grows ever more frustrated with me for not being home all day with her. I have to say, I have been avoiding home, not because of her but because of the endless pollution of sound generated by the continuous erecting of new structures. This town has gone to shit. I heard someone say that Madison now has two seasons: Winter and construction. That being said, I pray for snow every day so that I can have some quiet at home with Ella and our coming child.

October 11th, 1919 – Journal: My office is getting colder each day but peaceful still. I slept here last night, falling asleep after drinking some rum—the alcohol kept me warm. I have been drinking more as of late. I need the intoxication to sleep soundly at home. It is the only thing that keeps me from being distracted by the city noises. I feel refreshed this morning. My office is quiet—cold, but quiet. Ella will be distraught when I get home. I fear that this situation is putting a hinder on our relationship. I told her I want to move. She insists we stay, and the disturbances will eventually dissipate. I don't think the city noises will stop or abate. She is usually right, though, and I am usually wrong, but I think the disturbances only worsen as the population grows and technology advances. I can only get any work done here in my office as well as sleep. I moved my old mattress here into the corner of the office to take naps on between lectures. Ella thinks I am trying to distance myself from her; that is anything but true.

November 1st, 1919 – Journal: Last night, I went to a tavern, and I don't remember much afterward. I worked on the

formulas, and then I woke up this morning in my office surrounded by empty bottles. I couldn't have drunk so much in one night. There are many bottles as if I had been drinking for weeks. The student's papers on my desk are also dated December 1920. It must be some sort of a joke.

November 1st, 1919 (or December 20th, 1920) – Journal: I don't know where Ella is. I don't know where I am. I must be losing my mind. The date appears to be the 20th of December, 1920, but it was just Halloween—1919 yesterday. I cannot find Ella anywhere. Our cabin does not look the same either. I don't know what to do. The only thing I can think is that I must have performed the experiment while heavily intoxicated, and it must have gone wrong. Ella would have had to have been in the cellar at the same time I was in my office, and I must have figured out the correct equation and activated the device. Nikola did warn me that these experiments rarely have the expected outcome. I fear something terrible has happened. I must find my Ella.

December 13th, 1920 – Journal: All my attempts to try and correct whatever I must have done have failed. Not a soul in town even knows of Ella or our baby. No one anywhere has heard of her or recalls her and I living with one another for the past 10-years. I have reached out to Nikola for his help. Perhaps he can help me fix whatever it is that I have done. The only conclusion I have come to is that I am no longer on the wave of time I am from, and Ella still is. It is odd, though, because everything and everyone is identical here except that Ella does not exist. I reached out to the family she used to stay with, and they also have no memory of her. How could everything be the same except her?

December 13th, 1929 – Journal: It has been 9-years to the day since my last entry. I have not had the courage to pick up the pen after Ella's disappearance and my unexplained jump into the future. We—Nikola and I have finished the general infrastructure for the timewave displacement experiment in Tower II on Mifflin Street. He believes he can help me get back to wherever Ella is. It took some convincing to get him to help me since he also has no memory of Ella. It was only after I showed him this notebook with our theory on Autonomous Time Separation that he began to believe in me. I also showed him the letters he sent me over the years—letters he had no memory of sending. For some reason, the only thing other than myself that wasn't left behind was this journal. The writings within were enough for Nikola to drop everything he is working on to help me. The entire university now thinks of me as a joke. I lost my professorship back in 1922 for drinking on the job, amongst other things. However, they have let me continue my research and allow me to sleep in my office, or at least no one says anything since no one wants the office or to even be in the basement of Science hall, for that matter. Nikola and I will be beginning our work shortly. We wait for a fresh snowfall over frozen lakes before we do.

December 14th, 1929 – Journal: This notebook is the only piece of evidence I have of my past. I have not looked at this book for a very long time leading up to yesterday. After writing in it yesterday, I noticed it has much more words in it than I input, and they have strange dates from far into the future.

“The physical body is nothing more than a provisional prison for the eternal soul.” JDT

December, 1st 2018

Journal- The urge to kill is overwhelming. I fear that I may find myself in trouble. The woman that was always on the treadmill is dead. I followed her for weeks in the halls documenting her schedule. It seemed to align perfectly with what I was hearing, and she lives on the floor just above me. Not directly above, but within close proximity. I feel I am responsible for her death. After a fresh snowfall, I went for a walk around the block and saw her running. She didn't notice me following her after she slowed down, coming around the corner to the front of the building. I was trying to keep track of the times she ran outside vs. inside so I could measure the time it takes for her to get back into her condo. Sometimes the pounding happens so quickly between me leaving and coming back, I cannot tell, for sure, if she is in her unit or not. When I was behind her, I was hoping and fantasizing she slip and break her neck. I don't know if I am clairvoyant or I willed what happened into existence—she did slip, she slipped and fell right on her back, and as she laid there, the man driving the snow brusher rolled the bristles right over her face, sending scraps of skin and blood flying through the air all over the snow and side of the building. I saw the man look directly at her and turn to drive over her head purposely. I hear later he claims that he didn't see her, but I saw it, and he intentionally did it. I know for a fact he did because he gave me a thumbs up just after he finished driving over her and her head body stopped trembling.

December 2nd, 2018

Journal- My luck is not so good. After the running skeleton's death, the sound stopped but only for a short time; it then picked up and picked up worse than before. I am on edge, becoming unhinged. I fear I will lose my mind and kill everyone in this building. How could someone get away with

a design like this, an apartment that conducts and amplifies sound? I don't know if these neighbors are purposely trying to annoy me or are oblivious to their actions. For weeks now, I have documented excessive noise taking place every 1 to 3 minutes all day long, lasting for upwards to an hour each time it starts. It appears there is nothing I can do about it. I even moved to a new place, renting an apartment and putting this place up for sale. Fucked thing was that the apartment had the exact same design behind the drywall as this place, and the noise was actually worse, so I just moved back to the Metropolitan. It's like this building sucked me back in. I tried to get out, and it brought me back. I guess it's a good thing my condo did not sell while I was gone; else, I may be homeless. Homelessness may be better, though—at least I could venture out into the middle of nowhere and get some peace.

Journal Entry 05/15/18 – I have just spent my first night here at the metro place. I like it. The drive from Texas wasn't all that bad. The Mercedes held up well and was comfortable throughout the trip. I enjoyed the scenery too. I think someday I might go road-tripping across the country. I have been feeling a bit unsettled in my stomach: that girl, Pansie from Oklahoma. I feel like I may have made a mistake not giving her a chance. I'd like to go back and see if she is still there someday. Right now, I am just happy to be finished with school and not have to worry so much about bills and studying. I can focus all my energy on my research.

I have made a recent discovery, which I call the 'God Function.' I think it may be the key to locating timewaves. I will be focusing a lot of energy on this. Hopefully, there is someone that will understand it on the level I do at campus. Most of the professors I've met here are just like religious

people, and I don't get much respect since I didn't finish grad school. They don't believe anything that wasn't written in a book. Even though pretty much everything thought to be accurate in science is eventually shown not to be valid in its entirety. I would think that since the odds of something not being correct down the road are high, that people—especially scientists—would not hold things to such account. But I always say, “Some of the stupidest people I have ever met hold Ph.D.'s in Math and or Physics.”.

I don't care much for this view out the windows of my new place. I just see a sea of bricks. The brick forest, if you will. The place is small and doesn't even have a patio. I am tucked up right next to the window, and the design of the building seems to prevent any fresh air from flowing into the unit.

10/14/16 – Journal Entry: Ah yes, just like clockwork- the moment I take some time to relax or work, the pounding begins. I swear this building is possessed, or some asshole neighbors put a camera in here. I mean, it is really amazing, I will hear nothing all day, and the moment I pick up this pen or put my fingers to the keyboard, it begins. And, if it isn't, the neighbors moving about like mentally retarded rabbits on cocaine. Enough is enough. Apparently, common courtesy and friendly neighbor is something of the past. One of the few things from the bible I actually think should be abided by. I have made acquaintances with a man here, a peculiar man, to say the least. I am fed up with this noise – I am going to have to do something about it. I know it must be coming from a few different units but which ones. I am 100% sure of one of them but cannot be sure if that is where all the noise is coming from. Some psycho that exercises all day. Can I kill these people somehow? No, I cannot do such an act, but maybe my new friend can. They do deserve death. Anyone that can put

someone through such torture without regard for their wellbeing doesn't deserve a high place in life or life at all, for that matter.

Hypothetical Physics (*draft*)

a course on deriving unknown theories from unknown universes

What is a hypothesis? What is a theory? What is a law? Most people incorrectly use the word *theory*—in conversation—in place of hypothesis—for example, “Theoretically speaking, we are living in The Matrix.”, but this would be appropriately stated as “Hypothetically, we are living in The Matrix.” Because one would *hypothesize* that we are in The Matrix—that is, it would only be a *theory* if it were proven to be correct to the best of our knowledge. A *law* means it is valid in all aspects, such as The Law of Gravity. Think about the title of a famous paper, ‘The Theory of Relativity.’ It is not ‘The Hypothesis of Relativity’ nor is it ‘The Law of Relativity.’ It is given the title *theory* because it is valid to the extent that it cannot be disproven; however, it is not a Law because other theories contradict it, and it is not valid in all aspects of physics, such as quantum mechanics. This brings us to entanglement; entanglement is a direct contradiction of relativity. In laymen’s terms: Every particle has a twin particle, and its twin reacts instantaneously to any actions brought on to one or the other particle. This means that information is being sent faster than the speed of light—for example, make a phone call to mars and send morse code using an entangled particle on Earth with its twin on mars. When you tap the entangled particle, the twin feels it on mars instantaneously, but the phone call will take approximately

187 seconds (if traveling at the speed of light) to reach Mars. That contradicts relativity but doesn't disprove it; hence they are both theories because they are both right but simultaneously contradict one another.

Journal Entry – August 5th, 2016

I don't know what the hell is going on here. I am either losing my mind, or something has taken possession of this building. Every time I attempt to do any work, the pounding resumes. I also keep dreaming about some mysterious girl but it's more than just a dream; it is as if I know this woman and have known her forever. Something is very wrong here. I know I have been in this building now for months, but my phone says I just got in yesterday. I must have been here longer because my journal has a plethora of entries in it that would have taken months to figure out, but I don't remember writing any of it, nor do I remember getting here yesterday. I just know that I have been here.

It is more than just neighbors. I thought I knew who it was making the noise—I was positive, but then I saw Dr. Tripper murder half the building at the Christmas party, and the pounding only got worse. I just cannot believe it. I just don't understand why this is happening to me.

I sit here in my chair listening to it tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap tap. Again – tap tap tap tap tap tap. I have spent days trying to find the origin of this noise with no success. It is as if someone lives in the four-inch gap of space between the bricks of the building and the drywall in my unit. They live there with a little hammer they wrapped up with a thick cloth and stretched rubber band about the neck to hold it. They

then tap it on the wall, but they only do it when I intend on working. When I need to work on work that requires intense concentration, it is as if they wait there just waiting for me to begin my work and then tap tap tap tap tap tap tap.

Journal Entry Dissertation Draft: James Francis Quasar

Time Waves and Time Displacement

1915

Abstract When the “Big Bang” occurred, the creation of a three-dimensional coordinate system was also born. Along with this system, time and space were conceived. The unification of the cartesian coordinate system fused with spacetime, providing a 3 plus 1 coordinate system—that is, x(left/right), y(right/left), z(up/down), and t(time).

It has previously been theorized that time can only move in one direction. However, since we are the measurers and are simultaneously stationed on the moving timeline, we cannot be sure if time is moving forward or backward. E.g., imagine sitting on a moving airplane that is not accelerating. You did not experience the acceleration to get the plane to the stable speed so that you will not feel any force indicating direction. Then, imagine having your eyes closed while the aircraft is moving at a constant velocity, and someone spins you around until you no longer know what direction you are facing. Once you lose the sense of direction, you no longer see if you are moving forward or backward. This is where we stand in the present time—that is, we don't know if our back is facing the front of the airplane or the end of the aircraft—metaphorical use of time.

I theorize that the timewave(s) we reside on the move in constant time-velocity. We are born within the continual

speed, just as if someone were placed on the airplane mid-flight. This inhibits our ability to determine whether we are moving forwards or backward in time.

The Big Bang was similar to the plane taking off. Still, billions of years later, we are now moving with little or no acceleration—a constant time-speed. Suppose there is a residue of time-acceleration lingering. In that case, it is astronomically small and cannot be detected or is merely negligible.

The Big Bang's origin is contained within a five-dimensional structure. This means, when time started, it was shot in all directions, fourth dimensionally. Imagine a pebble causing ripples in a lake but as a sphere sending three-dimensional waves in all directions originating from the center of the globe. The crust and center of the sphere are the fifth-dimension(s), and the ripples are space-time. Now consider the ripples' movements, like a pebble dropped in the center of a fishbowl shooting waves to the glass, and then they bounce back to the center of the bowl. When the ripples move back to the center, time moves in reverse, but whoever is riding the wave still perceives it as moving forward. We see that time-waves do not act as a particle but instead as a basis for all other measurements and directions of waves' motions. This doesn't imply a different point in time but the same point moving in a different direction. In laymen's terms, we can measure how old the universe is by showing that time is actually moving backward even though we perceive it moving forward or vice versa.

When the waves bounce back, they intersect the forward-moving waves. When the timewaves cross, we can sneak a peek into the past or the future or even jump out of the current wave we reside on and into the intersecting wave. It is the points-of-intersection of the timewaves that are of interest.

Particularly the points in time where the timewaves resonate and amplify time. I conclude that we are simultaneously moving forward-backward in time in space-time. When timewaves resonate, space-time can be isolated, and one may move about freely along the timewaves. The first breakthrough in this theory is the discovery of the "God Function." A particular function that outputs itself for any value inputted—a constant process that is not constant and is built as a single-variable function $f(x)$.

1930 (December 2018) Journal: I have been stuck in the year 1930 with Nikola Tesla, if you can believe it.

Sub-Journal (1): James Quasar

Date: Unknown

After moving back into my condo.

I am writing this journal to document what is happening to me. I am not sure if I am losing my mind or if I am simply cursed. I had finally broken free from this awful building on Mifflin Street, only to find myself in another building with the same issues. It was uncanny. The odds are astronomical. Upon removing some walls in my condo during the remodel to prep it for sale, I learned that the ones responsible for the architecture never insulated the walls and behind the walls is even stranger. There are metal bars and wires galore going every which way inside them. Then, the new unit I ended up in in the new building over in Hilldale was designed the exact same way, and to my dismay, I learned that the same architects and construction team were responsible for both buildings. This poised me to do some research to try and

figure out what the hell is happening to me. I don't even remember moving back here, but here I am – stuck in this time-warped building. I have to figure out what is going on.

18 | History

"Hey Siri, search Google 'construction 53703 Metropolitan Place'."

"I found this on the web:"

Google- Construction 53703 Metropolitan Place

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DEFAULT CLAIMS FILED ON CONDOS TWO BANKS ARE ...

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SOME PRICEY CONDOS HERE ARE BEING SNAPPED UP ...

Aug 1, 2008 — At Metropolitan Place, 333 W. Mifflin St., prices have been reduced ... The 2008 Parade of Condos, sponsored by the Madison Area Builders ...

...

www.emporis.com › *buildings* › *metropolitan-place-ii-...*

Metropolitan Place II, Madison | 101597 | EMPORIS

Metropolitan Place II is a 13-story high-rise building in Madison, Wisconsin, U.S.A.. View a detailed profile of the structure 101597, including further data and ...

Goooooooooooooole >

1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 Next

J.F. taps on the EMPORIS article.

('13-story high-rise? They said it is 12-stories. The elevators only have L-12 on the buttons.' 'Don't forget the basement. It is not included in this count.' 'So, the 12th floor is actually the 13th floor, or the basement is the 13th floor?' 'I guess it depends on which floor one starts at.' 'Alright. Let's not get superstitious here. On the other hand, numbers have great meaning—maybe not by themselves, but when applied in engineering, numbers are quite significant. Take the Cicadas, for instance: they burrow underground and only emerge to breed on yearly prime intervals, so to avoid cross breeding's with other Cicadas.' 'Yes – the periodical Cicadas comes out to breed but need to avoid other variations of their species. For example, if one type comes out every 13th year for three cycles, say 2000, 2013, 2026, and the other comes every 17 years, 2001, 2018, 2035, then they flip to 17 and 13, they will never come at the same time.' 'Ah yes – the beauty of the prime numbers.' 'I knew something was off about this place.' 'Well, what does that have to do with a building?' 'I don't know. It just came to mind.' 'Alright then.' 'Let's check out some old articles.')

October 11th, 1916 – Madison State Journal
Tragedy on Campus

A fire broke loose in the dome of *The Main Hall* at *The University of Wisconsin—Madison* yesterday afternoon. Top physics student, James Francis Quasar, is in custody under suspicion of performing illegal experiments. So far, they appear to be the cause of the fire, a fire that led to twelve students' injuries and the death of three. It is unclear what his experiments were. Other professors are currently investigating them and stated that all work is confidential

regardless of legal inquires and warrants due to government top secrecy.”

December 1st, 1916

Madison State Journal

Laws do not Apply to the Connected

Grad student/assistant professor James Francis Quasar’s case was dismissed yesterday morning. It appears the case was dropped without firm reasoning. The judge stated, “Due to an insufficient amount of submittal evidence, the court must dismiss this case, clearing ‘James Francis Quasar’ of all accusations.” Local parents of students are furious and plan to sue the university for the catastrophe when an experiment executed on October 11th apparently went wrong. The assistant professor is presumably accused of causing the fire, a fire that initiated the collapse of the Main Hall dome. After the building is rebuilt, the university plans to rename it “Bascom Hall” in honor of *John Bascom*, the university president from 1874 to 1887. Even though the experiment caused three deaths, the graduate student did not lose his job. He is said to be continuing his experiments in the basement of “Science Hall” despite the hundreds of complaints from professors, students, and parents. The university’s only public explanation was: Experiments bring performed in the former ‘Main Hall’ are of the utmost top-secret. There is no evidence linking student James Quasar to the fire. For our country’s safety, the work being done by top officials in cahoots with our university staff must remain privileged.

December 20th, 1920

Madison State Journal

City Fears for its Safety

The Good Doctor is at it again! The recently graduated student, now Dr. James Francis Quasar, is again being accused of performing dangerous and illegal experiments. Experiments were thought to be the cause of the death of three innocent students four years ago. Since the tragedy, the former student is now the head professor of the Physics department. After publishing his groundbreaking work on time-displacement, he was appointed this role—a topic emerging from his Hypothetical Physics thesis. Many Madison residents, WI, are nervous about the professor's part on a new construction site downtown near the capitol. It appears he is in charge of the construction of an enormous building. There is great secrecy surrounding the architecture and materials being delivered. The building's structure is to be located on the block encased by West Washington and West Mifflin.

The little we could find out led us to believe that there will be two towers, Tower I on West Washington and Tower II on West Mifflin. The structure is said to take up to 20-years to complete.

Having new buildings put up is not abnormal. However, the reasoning why a mad physicist would be in charge of the construction, architecture, and managing of the engineers brought this to our attention. Further investigation led us to believe that this is due to an anomaly located at this geographical position. We researched the professors' studies and dived into his recently published textbook title, 'Hypothetical Physics.' In Dr. Quasar's book, he mentions that there are electromagnetic hotspots positioned about the Earth. The strongest one discovered may be right between Lake Mendota and Lake Monona. Based on the book's data, it appears that the location chosen for the building is the same location he speaks of in the text.

Electromagnetic hotspots are found using geometry across spheres. Many monoliths, pyramids, and other massive structures have been found built on these hotspots. It has been hypothesized that the sites were specifically chosen to amplify these hotspots or ley lines. Ancient astronaut theorists believe these monolithic structures positioned about the “ley lines” would allow the builders to communicate with beings from other planets, galaxies, or even dimensions. Although, in Dr. Quasars’ textbook, ‘Hypothetical Physics,’ he makes valid arguments that theorize that these monolithic structures are not for communicating but rather to collect and store energy. The energy is then dispersed into the ground. It would be the ideal way to power an underground civilization that could only harness large quantities of energy from a celestial body’s surface activity.

According to Dr. Quasars’ text, this particular hotspot is the most active and most potent in the Americas or likely on Earth. It is said to be so because of the location, i.e., it is wedged between two large lakes, which create a sort of invisible medium between them. A medium that can contain and trap electromagnetic anomalies. People did not take Dr. Quasars’ theories seriously. Many people have still reported strange phenomena in this zone, such as lightning bolts shooting out of their fingertips while standing on the frozen lakes during snowfalls.

The precise use of the building is unclear. Citizens are frightened that dangerous experiments are to be performed.

December 24th, 1960

Madison City Journal

Bankruptcy on Mifflin St.

The 16-yearlong vacancy of the Mifflin St. high-rise has come to an end. It is to be taken over by the local banks and is planned to be remodeled for residential use. The bank will convert the mysterious building, initially designed for local scientists' physics experiments, into condominiums.

The original architect and project manager, a former physics professor, Dr. Quasar, had been the primary resident leading up to his disappearance, speculated to occur sometime during 1943 or 1944.

According to the city's records, the construction began in 1920 on a plot of land formerly owned by Dr. James Francis Quasar and his wife, Elevyn. They signed the plot over to the university and government under the condition they would be granted rights to keep permanent residence on the property. No one is quite sure what happened to Dr. Quasar's wife. Over the years, it appears that the former professor just vanished from the university. Some people believe that he murdered his wife and buried her deep within the building's construction and then left the state or country years later. Everyone we interviewed said there is no way that could be true, stating, "The love between James and Ella was pure and unbreakable. Only God himself could keep them apart."

Former colleagues of James had reported that he had lost his mind after his wife Ella went missing. Then, after the death of his closest friend Nikola Tesla, he stopped talking to anyone. His former students said that Mr. Tesla was the only person that helped him keep it together after his wife disappeared on his 35th birthday, December 13th, 1919. When we interviewed one of his former students—now esteemed physicist Dr. Adam Aker—he told us, "Dr. Quasar was the happiest, smartest, kindest and most generous person I have ever known. His pure optimistic approach to life was desolated after Ella disappeared. The only thing that kept him

sane was his obsession with his experiments. I tried to keep in touch and offered my help, but he would always say to me, 'It's best we keep you where you are.', and leave it at that. I remember that he befriended Nikola Tesla. The two of them had resided in his buildings for a decade or so. I think they found comfort in each other's genius. The two of them had become social outcasts over the years for their talks on alien races and how they are responsible for the existence and the deliverance of knowledge to humankind. This led many to think they were off their rockers. I believe it was due to this that James and Nikola isolated themselves in his buildings. I tried to stay in touch over the years, but around 1940, I never heard from him again. Leading up to that time, he had become consistently drunk and stopped showing up for lectures. He was only sparsely seen by one assistant in his basement office in Science Hall. She said that he would randomly appear, stretched out over weeks and months without notice until he just never came back. She knew when he had been there by measuring the amount of alcohol in a bottle he kept tucked behind a loose stone in the wall. She said that sometimes, his notebook would also be resting against the bottle, but she never invaded his privacy. Then, sometime around 1943, when Nikola passed away, the lights of his building on Mifflin St. went out, and no one has seen him since."

December 24th, 1960

Wisconsin State Journal

Lightshow on Mifflin St.

On Tuesday, December 13th, a brilliant light show dazzled amongst the falling snowflakes. The show was so spectacular that Madison's whole city was lit up in the middle of the night around 2:00 am as if it were a summer day.

The strange light show originated above the isthmus wedged between Lake Mendota and Lake Monona. Spectators claim that it emanated from the twin high rises on Mifflin St. and West Washington a few blocks from the capitol. The viewers say it looked like veins of electricity were connecting each individual snowflake to the top of Tower II on Mifflin St.

Tower II had recently been acquired by the local banks. They are set to begin remodeling it for condominiums, which will be named "The Metropolitan Place Condominiums." The previous landlord had been the missing professor, Dr. James Francis Quasar. When questioning the banks, they had no knowledge of the light show or where it came from. They said, "As far as we know, the building has been vacant for years." We went to the local university to question their astrophysics department. They said: The light show mimicked the 'Aurora Borealis.' It was a freak occurrence likely due to the heavy snowfall generating friction. The large space between the two high rise towers created a sort of vacuum that then turned the buildings into a giant capacitor. The two frozen lakes must have built up a collection of electrons. The friction from the snow and the building's design created the perfect situation for the weird strings of electricity.

When asked if the professor who designed the building meant this to be the case, they declined to respond. Some students came out and said, "The building itself acts like two huge prongs of an electrical plug protruding into the sky. It creates a sort of positive and negative intake which isolates the static electricity into waves of lights flowing in circles between the towers."

Some suspect that this was a secret experiment by Dr. Quasar. But the university physics department says,

verbatim, “It was simply a rare natural phenomenon. An archaic-drunken-physicist who is likely dead or passed out drunk in a ditch somewhere couldn’t be responsible for such a complex experiment.”

October 3rd, 1970

Madison City Journal

50 Years of Construction Finally End

The former head of the university’s physics department, professor Dr. James Francis Quasar’s buildings are finally finished. The downtown monstrosities had a constant backslide with funding the original construction and then the remodeling for the condominiums. Somewhere along with the original structure, Dr. Quasar had disappeared without leaving behind any knowledge of where he went.

The rumor goes: While the building’s construction was taking place, Dr. Quasar was performing experiments in some secret underground lab, the former basement of he and his wives. However, the building has no basement on record, so it must have been closed off or hidden, considering the rumor to be true. A few of his former students said he was rambling on-and-on—night-after-night, at local bars about some time-wave displacement equation that he couldn’t solve. They said he would sit at the bar drinking Gin, scribbling endlessly in his notebook trying to solve something.

Apparently, Dr. Quasar was suffering from severe alcoholism after his wife disappeared. When interviewing some of his students, now in their 70’s and 80’s, they recalled him saying that the only way to bring her back is to solve the equation. But he was too old now to do it and needed to find his younger self, who is living in the future trapped in the building he did his experiment in. They assumed he lost his

mind due to severe depression combined with an excess of ethanol consumption, which ultimately ruined his career.

The former students went on in some more detail, recalling him say that he claims he had discovered the secret behind the numbers 3, 6, and 9. The numbers Nikola Tesla famously claimed are "The secret to the universe."

If you only knew the magnificence of the 3, 6, and 9, then you would have the key to the universe.

Nikola Tesla

July 10th, 1856 – January 7th, 1943

Mr. Tesla had been seen around the city early in the 1930s. He was not associated with the campus, and it was thought that he was just visiting. Still, rumors spread that he had been secretly living in the high-rise building on West Washington, now called 'Metro Place – Phase I.'

The former students, who wish to remain anonymous, are now reconsidering Dr. Quasar's drunken gibberish as protentional ground shattering truths. I.e., considering the recent breakthroughs in quantum mechanics and relativity.

The students that brought forth these rumors had great details about the work the Professor and Tesla were doing together. It had not been released to the public when found due to the alcohol-driven nature of conversations that took place thirty-some years ago.

The Metro-Place Phase I and Phase II are now available for business and rental properties even though Tower I had been completed some 20-years before tower 2.

The atmosphere within the two identical buildings is anything but identical. Tower II feels like being in the Plaza Hotel of New York City when it first opened on October 1st, 1907. The interior design choices remain a mystery. We think

the lack of funding led to purchasing out-of-date décor. Nevertheless, a home in PHASE II accompanied with an evening at the Tornado room is a euphoric blast from the past. Perfect for anyone seeking refuge in the history of America.

WISCONSIN STATE JOURNAL

1970 – December 30th

Christmas tragedy Massacre

It has been just over ten years since the bizarre light show on Mifflin Street. One week ago, on the same day as the light show, another inexplicable event occurred. On Monday morning, located in the downtown metro place condominiums an employee, opened the door to the clubhouse to find the room filled with slaughtered bodies. The entire ballroom was littered with bodies of which had been hacked to pieces. The body parts laid overnight half-submerged in a thin pool of blood accumulated on the wooden dancefloor barricaded by steps. Police officers counted twenty dead bodies in total. Detectives are baffled because there was no evidence of anyone being there to perform the acts. All of the deaths took place on the dance floor in the center of the room, which is about a foot lower than the surrounding floor creating the perfect liquid container. The forensic team can find no lead as there were no footprints anywhere to be located outside of the blood pond. They also found no weapons or signs of resistance from the body pieces they examined. It is almost as if the group took voluntary part in a simultaneous mass murder. Furthermore, none of the people found in the room were listed as tenants of the building. The host of the party was found to be a Dr. Tripper, but there does not seem to be any Dr. Tripper's that live in the building. The management and other tenants say it was as if the corpses just fell into the room out of thin air. Then

they murdered each other, and anyone left offed themselves. They had no knowledge that a party was to be thrown there at all. The tenants are supposed to go through a signup sheet and get approval from the board before scheduling the party. After that, they have to coordinate with the staff so that the staff is there to unlock the room and activate all of the equipment. The police interviewed hundreds of residents, but none of them came off suspicious or knew what happened.

A man was found sleeping in the trash area on an old mattress. He claims to have no recollection of what happened or showed any signs of being involved with the tragedy other than an ax being tucked up under his arms while he slept. The ax does not have traces of blood on it but is further being investigated. They assume the man stole the ax while intoxicated from an emergency firebox. So far, he is the detective's only potential suspect, but not likely based on the absence of blood leaving the center of the room.

February 8th, 2008

Wisconsin State Journal

Reconversion Project

DEFAULT CLAIMS FILED ON CONDOS TWO BANKS
ARE SEEKING FORECLOSURE ON METROPOLITAN
PLACE II.

ED TRELEVEN and DEAN MOSIMAN Wisconsin State
Journal Feb 6, 2008

The second phase of Downtown Madison's most extensive private housing project is in default to the tune of more than \$26 million. Its lenders said in court documents that seek foreclosure of its three mortgages.

The fate of the newly completed Metropolitan Place II, a 164-unit condominium tower facing West Mifflin Street, could indicate that national housing trends are reaching Madison, thought by some to be more immune than most places twists and turns in the U.S. economy.

“This shows that the national foreclosure crisis has hit Downtown Madison for the first time in any meaningful way,” said Ald. Mike Verveer, whose 4th District contains Metropolitan Place II.

But while the foreclosure action against developer Jeff Fisher and his company comes as market conditions have delayed changes to other major housing projects throughout the city, others are not so certain the condo market is to blame. Spokesmen for the city declined to speculate on exactly what caused Fisher’s struggles at Metro Place Condos or if they’re a sign of things to come.

...

Continued- After the strange massacre in 1970, the building had been converted into a mental hospital. Over the years, “Metro Place Sanitarium” lost funding for their program. It was mostly due to modern medications and prisons for the mentally insane. However, there were rumors of misconduct and complaints about the head Doctor, Dr. Tripper.

Dr. Tripper was in charge of the staffing and patients. He comes to our attention from reviewing old articles on the building and location. It turns out, Dr. Tripper was the same name as the coordinator of the mysterious guest list from the “Metro-Mass Murder” in 1970. Coincidence or evidence of a

time-traveling murderer? The man is nowhere to be found, and no records exist of him ever being there.

Since the closing of the insane asylum, sometimes at the turn of the century, a group of investors took over the property and had planned to turn it back into a luxury high rise condominium. Still, the economy seems to have other plans for the building. In an odd twist, the local banks have again taken over the building. They will continue on with Jeff Fisher's plans, and again, remodel the building. They have already begun short-selling the units for future move in. Unfortunately for Jeff Fisher, he will not profit from any sales and has lost all of his investment. He was able to hold on to an old hotel wedged between Tower I and Tower II. He had planned to demolish and convert into a modern version of the towers, Tower 3 of the project 100-years after the original construction began. The task for Phase 3 was scrapped, and Jeff Fisher refuses to sell the building to the bank. He takes up residence in the old hotel, only three stories tall, eclipsed by the massive towers he once owned.

Siri- search Dr. James Francis Quasar

Dr. James Francis Quasar

Biography of James F. Quasar

Professor and founder of Hypothetical Physics

December 13th, 1884 – September 6th, 1930 (presumed)

Before Professor Quasar's 1930 disappearance, he lived with his wife, Ella, in a small cabin on the isthmus of Madison, WI. They had married on June 4th, 1910, on a warm summer day. Dr. Quasar was twenty-five at the time, and Ella was fifteen.

He was noted as saying, “Ten-years younger and ten-times smarter.”, after she helped him win the Nobel Prize in physics for the discovery of the Transient Nano Quantum Particles or “Tranoquarts” as he dubbed them. They had met during a conference at the University of Wisconsin—Madison campus. A colloquium featuring *Ernest Rutherford – Discovery of the atomic nucleus*. It was a small gathering of no more than ten people—mostly local professors.

After 10-years of studying, James graduated and gained a professorship working for UW—Madison. He hadn’t been much of a student his whole life. Around the age of twenty-four, he had an epiphany and learned something unique about himself; he had learned that he has an exceptional ability to problem-solve. His discovery led him to pursue advanced degrees in mathematics and physics. This newfound life gave him a sense of hope. Leading up to this time in his life, he had been mostly lost due to a series of family events that altered his personality. It wasn’t until he met Ella and began the physics studies that he finally found peace. He and Ella lived in a small house together near campus while they both studied physics together. At the time, it wasn’t easy or even possible in some cases for a woman to get into a doctorate program, so James would go to school. At the same time, Ella stayed home and managed their small estate. He would return in the evenings and reiterate the lectures to her.

(‘This has to be some sort of a prank. I need a drink.’ ‘I as well.’)

19 | Insane or Sober

1:00 am

BANG-BANG-BANG – BANG – BANG-BANG-BANG

Jolted awake from a deep sleep, James's heart felt as if it were given a shot of adrenalin. BANG-BANG-BANG. *"Huh. What is going on?"* BANG-BANG-BANG. The muscles in his body stiffen, and his eyelids stretch to the back of his head. He sees nothing but darkness, and his mind runs without brakes. BANG-BANG-BANG. *"Christ! I'm coming."*

(Oh, God. Jesus. What did I do? Where am I? Is it dark outside, or am I in a windowless room? We need a drink. Is there any alcohol here? Wait, I must be in my bedroom; there are no windows in this room. Yes, this is my mattress. Thank God. Last thing I need is to wake up in a stranger's home again or on the street again. No, we drank all the alcohol. What time is it? Where is my phone? Shit – did I lose my phone? It must be sometime after midnight by now. Crap – where is my phone at? What time did we fall asleep?)

His eyes close back shut, but he feels them wanting to pop back open, the same sensation one has when they are tired but cannot sleep. The release of chemicals in the brain increases his energy, but his body is so fatigued, just rolling over is a struggle. BANG-BANG-BANG – BANG-BANG.

(Who the fuck is at the door at this time. Jesus.)

At this point, falling back to sleep is no longer an option, so James gathers up his strength and gets himself out of bed. He thinks to put something on but quickly learns that he is still wearing his clothes from the previous day. (Shit. I must have been really fucked up to still have my jeans on.)

He makes it to the door and looks through the peephole, but no one is there. He then squints to try and look around, but no one is off to the left or right. Then he notices something

out of place. There is an ax with a wooden helve resting against the wall in the hall across from the door.

In any normal situation, the site of this ax accompanied by the pounding, would have caused a rush of anxiety. However, James is not entirely lucid at-the-moment, so he removes all of his clothes and goes back to bed, thinking whoever was at the door must have given up and left.

Sometime later, James finds himself uncomfortably wedged on the corner of his mattress. He is half wrapped in sweat-soaked sheets that covet his torso. He wants to move to the dry side of the bed, but it is too much of a challenge, so he pulls the sheets off his body. When he unveils himself, his perforated skin continues to excrete beads of sweat. Cold air then disperses across the field of water droplets sending shivers to his core, so he pulls the wet drapes back over himself, feeling the unpleasant sting of fluid-soaked threads.

(This is not going to be a fun night, or day, or whatever time it is. I need water.)

He rolls side-to-side, trembling and twitching, flexing and unflexing his muscles. He moans in agony while scrunching blankets into his hands. He grips them fiercely then releases them in succession. He squirms about the mattress pulling the blankets off his body and then back on every few seconds. (Too hot, too cold, too hot. Too fucking cold—Christ.)

He endlessly expels warm salty sweat from head to toe. The body reserves no water in its attempts to flush the toxins.

The stress becomes too much to take, and his brain is still racing. He continues to toss and turn until his body shuts down. His eyes teeter-totter on him; then, he finally starts to fall back asleep. The moment before he slips into an unconscious state, voices from people talking next to his bed stop him from crossing the line of slumber.

An older man and a few children are chatting next to the bed, but he cannot see them because his eyes are still shut, and he cannot seem to get them open. He thinks to himself whether or not there is a TV in the room with him, but he doesn't own a television.

As he tries to sleep, they continue making chatter, and it begins to irritate him. All he wants is to sleep soundly without interruption.

Instead of using sight, he tries to shift himself to get their attention but cannot move. He is stuck laying on his back frozen, struggling with all his might just to open his eyes but cannot. He is forced to endure the noises and eventually falls back asleep to the sound of whatever the three are watching.

The sound disappears, and he wakes up in his bedroom, still lying on his mattress, dying of thirst. This time he doesn't bother fighting the pain he is in—accepting the situation for what it is, quickly falling back asleep.

The instant he falls asleep, he wakes up and feels the inability to move again. It is as if he is in a gravitational field far stronger than his own strength. A force that fixes him in place. Panic and anxiety riddle him as he struggles, unsuccessfully, to open his eyes. His eyelids feel as though they have been fastened together with super glue.

After a long pointless fight trying to open his eyes, he gives up and accepts his predicament, and then, suddenly, a slight crack of light seeps into his pupils. (It must be morning now. I must have been asleep for hours. Water. I need water.)

Before he goes to get water, he rests his eyes a few seconds and then opens them back up. When he opens them, the morning light is gone, and the room is dark. The sight of no light frightens him, and he, again, cannot move his body. He then falls back asleep and wakes back up to hear the television.

The shocking realization that he was dreaming that there was light sent him back into a sleepless state, (Oh god, I was just dreaming. This nightmare is just beginning. What time is it anyways and day? I don't remember seeing my phone anywhere.)

He tries to roll to his side to get more comfortable, but his back is still glued to the mattress. He lays in a frozen comatose-like state, looking into nothingness, a dark, windowless room. Only a faint glow of light bends around the corner of his eye. (Is there a TV in here.)

James cannot tell if he is dreaming or awake. The same sensation people describe when they are abducted by aliens comes to his mind. He becomes scared to open his eyes, concerned that a little grey man with big eyes is standing at the edge of his bed. The fear of what he might see makes it nearly impossible for him to open his eyes. He wants to overcome his imagination to prove to himself that an alien isn't standing at his feet, examining him, but he cannot open his eyes. It's as if they are fastened shut. The terrifying thoughts of alien abduction soon pass, and he falls back into a slumber only to wake back up a moment later.

He lays motionless, swaddled in the blankets, but this time, he can get his eyes to open with relative ease. He looks off to the side of the bed, without turning his head, and sees a man sitting Indian style with children. They are watching an old TV from the '50s. These are the same voices he heard earlier. (I heard them talking in my kitchen the last time I woke. What are they doing here, or where am I?)

He can't quite make them out as his eyes are still adjusting to the light. Once his eyes clear up, he finds that he is still wedged in the corner of the room on his mattress pasted to the sweat-soaked sheets. (Water-water-water.) He thirsts for water but cannot move and falls back asleep, waking right

back up again – and again – and again – and again. With each succession, he is able to open his eyes and move his head a little bit more, allowing him a better examine the intruders.

It is too exhausting for him to care that there are people in his bedroom. He chalks it up to passing out drunk at someone's house and falls back asleep.

He opens his eyes and still cannot move. He realizes now that he is in his bedroom and can move his head, but the rest of his body is still immovable. His eyebrows scrunch with frustration wondering why these people are in his bedroom, disturbing his sleep. He tries with all his might to open his mouth and yell at them, but he can only think the words (WHY ARE YOU-YOU, why – errgghhhh.), and falls back asleep.

When he opens his eyes again, he can see two young boys staring at an old television. The light from the round glass tube glares in front of them, shining on their faces. James begins panicking, wondering where he is and who these people are and how they got into his home.

He can now turn his head and open his eyes, but his body remains stuck to the bed as if it is strapped in hospital restraints. The struggle to move sends him right back asleep, but he is quickly woken up by a man talking to the children. He again sees the glow from the TV on their faces but cannot see their faces. He tries to keep his eyes closed and pretend they are not there, but his eyes open anyway, and he finds he is alone again in his dark bedroom. (It was still just a dream. Water-water-water. I need water. Is there any water?)

He uses all his strength to shift his body from one corner of the mattress to the other. He then flails his limp hand alongside the edge of the bed, scraping the ground in search of water. He moves it slowly so as not to knock anything over. First, he hits what is clearly an empty bottle of wine. The lack

of fluids within caused it to topple over and ding when hitting the floor. He then encounters a larger plastic pitcher filled to the brim with ice-water. (Thank you, oh, God, thank you. The water is life, but I wish for death. Should I sip it? It will only help to heal and prolong the end, but the suffering is too much to bear. I must drink, for I shall dry if not.)

James lops his head over the side of the bed and uses his tongue to grasp onto a straw. He had placed a pitcher of ice-water next to the bed before he had laid down. He knew from experience, the effort to sit up and sip from it would be too much, so he stuck a straw in it. He grips the straw with his lips and sucks up close to half a gallon of water, swishing the last few tablespoons in his dried-up cottonmouth. The cold-water spreads throughout his stomach, seeping into his cells. As it spreads, it amplifies the preexisting shivers and shakings. He then moves like a snake and slithers back under the blankets.

Once the water settles, James repositions himself on his back, then wraps himself like a mummy with the blankets' dry half. He crosses his arms over his chest and pretends he is in a coffin. He lays there, stiff as a board, hoping and praying his body will turn off and he will be released from the hells of withdrawal.

The moment he fell asleep in his cloth coffin, a scraping sound woke him. His throat had all but glued itself together from dehydration. He tries to breathe smoothly but cannot get air to flow in and out without it causing a rasping-whistle sound, a sound that keeps him from sleeping calmly.

(Water – water, I need water aqua-aqua-aqua-aqua-aqua—I am dying. Please, Jesus, help me. God, please. Why do I have to suffer this way? Why do I do this to myself? Jesus, please help me. I am ready for death. Take me now. I don't want this. Please, Jesus, take my life now. Please – Please –

Please. I am sorry for everything I have done. Please, Jesus. I am ready for death.)

Amidst James's pleading, he has a moment of in-depth contemplation about God. (Why is it that when I am sober and doing well, I cannot grasp the concept of God, but when I am suffering in such pain, it seems all but clear and obvious that there must be a God? It is easy for people to believe in God when they are hurting, but when all is good, it must be of their own doing.)

James wakes up again. He tries to lift his arms up to go for the water, but they are stuck. He is still adhered to the mattress and can only get his eyes open a little this time. He hears the man's voice and can feel the children bouncing on the foot of the bed. This time he can get some words out and shouts them in a half-demented tone, "What the FUCK are you doing?"

His vision sharpens as his eyes dry up and come into focus. He seems to have control over his body again, so he quickly pops himself up to get a look at the people realizing he had been dreaming. (That freaked me out. Water.) James drinks the last of the pitcher's water and is too tired to refill it even though he knows he will desperately need the water. He weighs his options to walk the 10-feet to fill it or just go back to bed and suffer without it. Ultimately, he decides that suffering is less work than getting off the bed and walking a few feet to the kitchen to refill it. He quickly falls back asleep.

More time goes by, and the morning light fills the room. James opens his eyes and is now seeing clearly. He sees the man and the children in his bedroom again and begins to panic.

The children are playing at the edge of the bed, and the man is camped out sitting Indian-style, watching the old TV, which is playing a show that looks familiar to James.

He can make out that the television is a black and white set, and the show playing is from the '50s or '60s, he thinks. It is hard to make out the faces—everything still seems blurry. His eyes shut, and he falls back asleep. He wakes up again and can now keep his eyes open, and he can now move his head. He turns his head slightly to see these people are still in his room. He can hear more voices coming from the other rooms. It sounds like a family gathering. He screams at the top of his lungs, “WHAT ARE ALL OF YOU DOING IN MY HOME!!! Get out. Goddamnit.”, but they ignore him as if he isn't there. He quickly tires himself out, trying to break free, and falls back asleep.

He wakes shortly after, finding himself back in the darkness, and then wakes up again to see the light but no people. He feels the sticky pool of sweat that is being absorbed by his foam mattress and thinks, (I really need to shift to the other side of the bed. Eh, it's too much work.) He falls back asleep. He then wakes up again by the sound of the voices. At this point, he is confused about whether he is asleep or awake. The dream state and reality state are becoming hard to differentiate between. He has lost count of how many times he has woken up and whether he was or is awake. His connection with certainty has been severed.

Countless repetitions of his night to day awakenings go on for what seems like an eternity. At one point, James makes eye contact with one of the kids. She is a little girl with straight blonde hair that curls up at the end. She has big blue eyes, which appear far too big for her head. She is staring at him with her head tilted and eyes angled up. He can see her teeth; they look like broken pieces of glossed pottery straight out of a kiln. Sometimes, in the sequence of waking and falling back asleep, she would be looking directly at him with a sharp

pointy grin. Half the time she was there and the other half she wasn't.

Confused and stressed out by the situation, James tries to keep his eyes closed shut so he doesn't have to deal with the intruders. But when he shuts his eyes, he is finally released from the invisible shackles leaving him able to get off the bed and move about.

James wakes up now, fully capable of movement. He realizes that he is no longer on his floor-bound mattress before getting out of bed, but instead, he is lying on a metal-framed bed. He sees the little girl at the end of the bed with the back of her head facing him. He pulls back a wad of soft pink and white sheets and blankets. He thinks he should feel scared, but the room has a sort of familiar sense to him. He swings his feet out from under the blankets exposing yellow and blue striped pajama bottoms. (Where did these come from?) When his feet hit the ground, he faces the man and the two young boys who are still glued to the television. He looks at the TV but cannot hear any sound. The boys are almost frozen, like life-size dolls, and the chatter in the other rooms is becoming more palpable.

James gets up out of bed, and the people do not seem to notice he is there. He starts to get irritated, wondering why these people are in his home and why they won't just let him sleep. He is in terrible pain from withdrawal and needs undisturbed rest. When he walks out of his bedroom, he grasps that this is not the same unit as his.

(Where am I?) thought James as he walks out of the bedroom and into the hallway. The floorplan looks similar to his, an almost identical layout, but with twice the kitchen space, almost as if someone stretched it.

He sees two women and a young girl in the kitchen. The girl looks to be about fifteen, and the others are in their forties

or fifties. He immediately notices the perfectly petite physique of the girl. Her calves pop out from a blue sock hop dress. She has a pink blouse tucked in it, and her hair is done up in a springy ponytail with a ribbon wrapped around it. The other women are draped in antique dresses with hair in tight buns. They all have aprons on except the young girl. (They are making something out of flour, perhaps piecrust.) thought James as he watch's—spying on them from behind.

He can see them all bending their knees in and out as if they are moving to music, and he can hear them talking. But he cannot hear any music. He can see a radio on the counter with the dial tone turned on, but no sound. He tries to make out what they are saying, but it is all muffled like they are talking in tongue or speaking backward.

He walks up closer to them and says, “Excuse me, what are you all doing here?”, to which he receives no response. The back of their heads is all he sees—old 70-year-old haircuts and a cute girl. He says again, “HEY! WHAT THE FUCK ARE YOU DOING HERE?!!!” but still nothing.

Frustrated, he decides to get out of the condo and figure out where he is. Just before he turns, the young girl who is making a piecrust stops to swing her head around and then puts a finger over her lips to shush him. (That face. I know that face. Where have I seen this girl before?)

Terrified about what is happening, he decides to flee the scene, walking quickly to the front door to escape. He opens the door and slips out into the hallway. The sight of the vomit green carpet comforts him, letting him know he mustn't be far from home.

(Wrong floor I must be on. Drunk I was. I wonder who them people were? I probably befriended them because of the girl. Was that her bed I was sleeping in? Hope I didn't break any laws.)

He paces down the hall, searching for the elevator corridor but cannot seem to get to it. He turns back, and the little demon-faced girl at the edge of the bed comes bolting after him down the hall. He didn't notice it before, but one of her legs and arms is strapped up in a brace and harness like a stroke victim. The little girl runs at him, limping and wobbling back and forth like a retarded linebacker. She tilts her head 45 degrees, aimed right at his crotch. "Shit!" James screams. He turns and trips and props himself up off the ground as quickly as possible, panicking trying to get away from the little blue alien eyed girl.

After picking himself up, he runs down the hall as fast as he can, not realizing that he has run in an entire circle without turning around, ending back at the door he came out of. Scared out of his mind that the little girl is going to attack him and start chewing his flesh, he tries to get back in the condo. He pushes the door's handle down while he positions his body weight against it, forgetting that the door opens outward. He turns and sees the girl getting closer and closer. This time she says with a child's voice, "I love you, Jimmy." clink "Jimmy, come here, Jimmy." clink "Jimmy-Jimmy. Please Jimmy." clink "Don't leave me, Jimmy." clink "We will be so happy together Jimmy." He can hear her teeth clink together between each sentence as her leg and arm flop down the hall. He pulls the door out, keeping it split open just enough to tuck himself through it. Scared that he won't be able to shut the door and keep the freak child away, he hesitates and trips over himself, falling to the floor. Once he hits the floor, he blinks and is stuck back on the mattress, unable to move. He is back listening to the man talking to the children. Frightened and terrified by what just happened, he passes out as if knocked by the butt of a gun on the temple.

James opens his eyes and wakes again, and the room is still pitch black. He wonders if he is at home or lost. He rolls over to have a drink of water, and the water hasn't even been sipped on yet. The pitcher is filled to the brim, and the ice cubes are still the same size; they haven't even begun to melt. He puts his hand to his side, searching for his iPhone, and finds it right where it usually is. He checks the time and sees that it is 1:17 am.

James falls back asleep after drinking some water. When it is daylight, he wakes up, swings himself out of bed, and leaves the bedroom. He walks past the man watching TV and sees the kids are now sleeping on a fold-out cot next to the metal-framed bed. He then turns into the next room, and the whole layout of his condo is reversed. It is like a dyslexic moment. (Is this how the condo always has been, and I just have been seeing it differently?)

The women are still packed in the kitchen preparing for something—a celebration of some sort. They are all making pies, cookies, and appetizers together. He wonders why these people are in his home, waking him from his much-needed rest. He decides to try and get them out, so he started talking to them, “I don't want you here. Why won't you leave?”, but they do not respond.

At one point, one of the women waves her hand at James to say, “pish posh you.” He can't tell if she knows he is there, or if she is looking at someone else, or just singing along to music he cannot hear.

Oddly, it doesn't seem as though he is yelling at strangers. He feels a deep connection to these people somehow. Especially the young girl in the sock hop dress. Something about her face he cannot quite put his finger on. Still, he doesn't like that they are intruding on his space. He cannot recall who they are, but he feels a deep-rooted connection to

them. He hates people disrupting his personal space. He thinks this is what it is like to get into a relationship with someone—no more rest.

He examines the women thinking, (Why would these people just barge into my home and disrupt my peace and wake me from my sleep like this? I didn't ask for this. Who are they, and why do I feel like I have a deep connection to them?)

He ponders the situation further, trying to make sense of the problem. (I must have a deep connection with these people. Particularly the young girl. Gosh, she is the most beautiful girl I have ever seen. I think I am in love. Does she know me? Are we together? Something about her makes this all worthwhile, and not only worthwhile but desired.)

While he stands there and admires the young girl from the backside, the man that was in the other room crept up on him—from behind. He had been standing behind James close enough to be breathing down his neck—had he had a breath to breathe.

James is startled by the man's voice: "You asked for this when you stuck your dick in my little girl." James jumps and turns around. The man stands a foot taller than him wearing a wife-beater shirt and blue jeans. James replies and says, "What was that?", but the man ignores him, walks over to a rocking chair, sits down, and stares out the window.

(Did I get drunk and sleep with this man's daughter? I don't like this; the man doesn't have the decency to respect my lifestyle and sleeping schedule. I need my sleep.)

James walks up to the girl and puts his arms around her, pressing his stomach against her back. He then puts his hands on her waist and feels that her belly is swollen, and she is pregnant. He then presses closer to her and moves his hands up to her shoulders, and then slides them down her arms

until his palms eclipse the back of her flour dusted hands. At the same time, she pushes the curves of her bottom into his groin and turns her head slightly for a kiss. He puts his hand to her cheek and turns her head a bit more, then presses his mouth to hers. The sensation he gets when their lips touch makes him feel as if nothing in the world matters, and he has found absolute purpose. (Something about this girl, I know her.)

One of the older ladies gently whacks James on the arm with a ladle. Like flipping a switch, he can now understand what they are saying, "You too keep it together here; we got to get everything ready for the Christmas party." The young girl smiles at the lady, kisses James on the lips, and says in a silly-like fashion, "Alright, Mom." She ducks out from under James's arms and then hands him a wad of dough, "Roll this out, sweetie for a pie crust. I am making your favorite! It was going to be a surprise, but you woke too early. I saved a bunch of sour cherries from the cherry tree out front. Froze them back in July so I could make you a pie for Christmas." When she moves away from the counter, it becomes evident that she is five or six months pregnant. James says under his breath, "Cherry tree?" "Yeah, silly. The one you named after me." "Ella?" "That's my name! Don't wear it out!" She whispers into his ear: "The one you took me under. Remember, the night responsible for this little bun." She kisses his neck and then walks off, heading to the restroom.

James went on rolling out the dough. He is very methodic, taking it slowly to make a perfect circle. He pushes the pin down on the dough's center, creating a trough. He turns it 90 degrees to make another imprint crossing the trough perpendicularly. He repeats this until a uniform flower imprint is in the dough, and a cylindrical disk appears. Then he gently rolls the pin over the dough, eliminates the indents,

flips it over, and makes another pass. He repeats this while rotating the dough until it stretches out into a large circle, about 13-inches in diameter.

James finds himself comfortable and at ease amongst these people, a feeling he had only dreamed of, a feeling he thought he isn't worthy of experiencing. He thinks to himself about how he found what he has always been looking for. The American Dream – a beautiful young wife, house, family, cookouts, two-car garage, and kids on the way. He thinks to himself as he feels the dough's smooth surface, (Life is good.)

The young girl returns and tucks herself up to James and says enthusiastically, "Wow - I am impressed! That is the best rollout of a pie crust I have ever seen!" The other ladies look over and say, "Ohhh my, Jimmy- now we know your role in the kitchen!"

He moves away from the counter to let Ella take over and then looks for the man but finds an empty rocking chair still rocking. "Where did he go?" One of the women responds, "Who?" "The man that was rocking in the chair." "You must still be drunk, Jimmy. We are the only ones here." "Oh, yeah. Right." "You did have a bit much last night, honey." "It was Christmas Eve – let him be." "Yes. Gotta let loose everyone once in a while else you'll tighten up and snap."

James doesn't respond to them—he just thinks, (The last person to call me Jimmy was my mom.) "Mom, you mind if we take a break? I need to lay down for a bit." "Sure, Honey, you two lovebirds, go take a nap. Take care of that little angel in your belly." "James looks like he needs some more sleep too." "Pale as a ghost he is."

James and the young girl walk off into the hallway and enter back into the room. He sees the pink sheets and metal-framed bed and then realizes he had been sleeping in this girl's room.

James is on autopilot, feeling pure bliss being with the mysterious yet familiar girl. All his life, all he wanted was to fall in love and have a family life, and now he has found it.

The two of them slide into the bed and lay on their sides to face each other. James tries to get close, but her pregnant stomach keeps them separated, so they twist their feet together. Ella looks into his eyes, romantically and says, "I love you, James." He isn't sure what is happening. Still, he reciprocates and then kisses her passionately.

"I wish my mom wasn't in the other room. I would take you right now. If we are quiet, we could get away with it. Risk it?"

She rolls over and puts the swell of her back up to his stomach and then pops her butt into his pelvis, securing their bodies together like a puzzle piece. He feels immediate pressure build in his pants, and his heart thumps with anticipation of her opening up for him. She reaches her hands around her back to pull his bottoms down. She had removed her panties when she went to the bathroom so she could easily pull her dress up under the covers. She grips James firmly and angles him inside her. He feels the slippery warmth embrace his girth. The moment he begins to enter her, his eyes shoot open, and he hears someone yelling at him, "DON'T YOU REMEMBER – Don't YOU!"

He hears a voice coming from somewhere, but he cannot see. It is still pitch black. It is the voice of that man that was camped out next to him, but when he turns to look, his eyes open again, and he is still pushed up in the corner of his bed, sweating profusely. He had been dreaming the whole time.

Great despair overwhelms him, a realization that he has lost this girl in his dreams forever. It was so real to him that tears well in his eyes when learning that he was dreaming,

and it was a fabrication of his imagination. She was literally the girl of his dreams.

He has to urinate terribly now, but he ignores the urge, desperately trying to get back to the dream state he was just in. He felt love and comfort, a sensation he thought he would never have. Unfortunately, the urge to use the bathroom is too much to ignore. He pulls himself off the mattress, pushing himself upwards with what felt like a more generous than necessary force, and makes his way to the bathroom. He stumbles slightly against the walls for balance as he finds his way in the dark.

He stands at the toilet with his hands pressed against the wall for leverage, waiting for the tepid death to emerge. The need to release is strong, but his dehydrated body is having trouble letting it go. Weeks of funk are stuck up in his bladder and kidneys. He is so parched that his urine practically comes out solid. It drips out of him and hits the water making a loud thunk, and he can smell the rank-moldy-vinegar scent wafting up into his nose. He titles the moment, "The reembrace of death brought to you by bodily functions." The color is so deep that it turns the water a dark orangish-brown, resembling apple juice. (That must have been the whiskey I drank.)

James is starting to come awake after standing in the bathroom light. The fantasy he just had has left a pit in his stomach. The kind of feeling someone gets when they are in love with someone that is not in love with them.

When he walks out of the bathroom, he is not in his condo. He flips the light switch on and examines the place. It is a small apartment on the outskirts of town. He recognizes the location by the interstate outside the window. The room resembles a hotel having two beds in it, one on each side of

the room. Both beds with a simple metal frame not dissimilar from the one he was just in with Ella.

One of the beds has no bedding, so he lays down on the mattress with blankets and pillows. He tucks himself up and looks out the sliding doors on the wall parallel to the foot of the bed. He looks out the window at the grass yard and recalls renting this place so that he could get away from the condo he purchased. He couldn't remember why at first but then recalls. (It was the distractions from the neighbors that would pound on the walls endlessly every evening like clockwork. Oh, yes, that is why I left. I couldn't get a good night's rest because of the psycho neighbors that cannot stay still. God, what the fuck is wrong with them. Oh well, acceptance is key. At least, I can get a good day's rest now.)

He is not currently aware if he was dreaming or if this is reality. He simply goes about his business as if everything is normal. He lays down on the bed, listening to the constant flow of traffic from the interstate. He feels the summer breeze blowing in through the screen door. The fresh air brings on comforting laziness helping him fall asleep.

Days go by for him, and he sleeps peacefully through the nights. He has fully recovered from the withdrawal period and is now back working on his physics formulas. He spends most of the day at a small desk positioned in front of the sliding patio doors toiling away in his notebook. He writes equation after equation filling half the book up with theories on time-waves and displacement rings, which converge on certain intervals.

In the middle of a physics trance, the landlord came barging into the apartment. The landlord escorts a woman and her daughter to the empty bed and says, "Here, you can stay here." James sits in the chair after the landlord leaves, speechless, wondering what the hell these people are doing

in his apartment. He looks at the woman. She looks like she just came off a 5-year meth binge. She jumps right in his bed and wraps herself with his blankets. The little girl runs through the room, past James, and slips through the screen door to go outside.

James gets up and runs to the door to catch the landlord. He shouts down the hall: "What is going on here?" The landlord responds while walking away: "Those is your new roommates." 'I don't think so. I don't want lodgers.' The landlord ignores him, closes the door, and disappears.

James is now standing at the bedside, staring at the girl lying on his bed and not the other bed, which is clearly vacant. He is debating whether he should jump in with her or kick her out. (I bet she is ready to fuck right now. Probably why she jumped in my bed anyway. How long has it been now? About five years, I think, maybe longer.)

James contemplates unprotected sex with the stranger for a few seconds. (Even a scabbed face meth head is starting to look appealing—just so long as she has a decent body and her snatch doesn't smell like a can of catfish stink bate.)

19.1 | Later

The day jumps without notice, and James finds himself lying in bed under the covers looking at the strange woman. She is wearing nothing but a bra and some sweatpants and has a slight potbelly sticking out. He is considering sliding his hand down her belly, into her pants, then between her legs, but just as he moves his hand towards her, the thought of how she might smell stops him. He wonders how he even got in the bed in the first place. (How did I get in this bed? I was just at the desk, and it is starting to get dark out.)

He snaps out of the daze he is in and becomes hugely frustrated about why he would have to share a place with someone. His whole goal of relocating from the condo was to be alone, on the outskirts of the city, in a quiet area, so he can work. (How can this person and her daughter just be placed in here without my consent?)

Without notice, James jumps off the bed and takes off through the sliding doors. He steps outside and lands his foot right into a pile of broken glass. Just as he feels the sharp edges about to break the surface of his skin, he quickly pulls his foot back to avoid it. The jerk causes his body to fly forward, and he falls palms first on the cement, just missing the shards. While he sits on the ground examining his scraped palms, a beer bottle rolls up next to him. "Damnit. Why the fuck people leave this shit here."

He pushes himself up off the ground and sees, in the corner of his eyes, what looks like the woman's daughter. He turns and squints but isn't sure what he is seeing. (It looks like she is being raped on the side of the street.)

He gets up and runs over to her, so he can rip the man off her, but when he gets closer, what he sees isn't a raping at all; the kid has turned into a half-man, half-woman beast child

having anal sex with itself. The small demon creature sits on the curb of the street, shoving its cock in its own ass, moving back-and-forth while its tits bounce about. Shocked and horrified, James turns around and runs back to the apartment, bursting through the patio doors and slamming them shut behind him.

After he closes the doors, he trips over a beer bottle. The bottle rolls under his foot, sending him face-first into the edge of the bed. He sees his future while flying through the air, ending with his face smashing into the metal frame. He doesn't have time to protect himself and cannot get his arms up quick enough. He is headed right for the metal bars. The girl watches with a twisted look of pleasure. Just as his face is nearing it, and the acceptance of oncoming pain comes to fruition, he shoots up from his bed, back in the dark lightless room, soaked in sweat, and screams, "Fuuuuuuck! Goddamnit!" His dry throat hisses when he breaths. He is so dehydrated that his trachea has practically closed in on itself, sticking together like pasty glue.

The room is still dark, and the water next to the mattress remains untouched. By the size of the ice cubes, he can tell that he has yet only been in bed for a few minutes, even though it has felt like days.

The dreams he has been having are so irritating and disturbing that it takes him a while to calm down. He feels the same way someone would feel after days of being tortured for information. But he is comforted knowing he is back in his place now. He feels a sense of relief, knowing that this had all been a dream. However, he is still distraught over losing the young girl he fell in love with only seconds ago. He thought he had found acceptance in a celibacy like state of life, but his dream of Ella has woken an overpowering desire for true love, a passion that burns deep within his soul.

Sunshine and Death

James continues to lay on saturated sheets. He cannot fall back asleep, and his brain feels like a needle is stuck in it. A Christmas song plays on repetition in his head repeatedly, and all he can think about is committing suicide. He thinks about buying a gun, (The gun is the solution. If I had a gun, I could put it against my head, pull the trigger, and then I'll be dead.) He tries to fall back asleep but cannot. The only thing that soothes the pain is the fantasy of killing himself. He prays to a God he doesn't believe exists for help, (Jesus or Jesus or God whoever. Please help me. Why do I do this to myself? Why must I torture myself this way? I am ready for love. Please deliver me true love. Who is this girl from my dream? Where can I find this love? Please, Jesus, help me. A gun that is all I need. I need a gun. If I buy the gun, I can have some fun and pull the trigger, and I'll be done.)

Life goes on

After a few more hours of tossing and turning while fantasizing about suicide and divine intervention, James is finally able to get out of bed. He doesn't feel as bad as he thought he would feel, so he gets dressed and heads to the lobby.

The place looks slightly different than he remembers. It seems as if it had been filled with brand new antique décor while he was on his binge—not different furniture, just new versions of what was there before. There is a beautifully carved round wood table standing in the middle of the room with a freshly picked bouquet of long stem roses. They are pink and white like the blankets from that girls' bedroom.

The lobby is empty, and the only person he sees is his own reflection in the peculiarly placed mirrors. He notices a newspaper on the table. He looks down at it to see the date,

“December 13th, 1954.” He doesn’t think about the date as odd. Instead, he thinks one of the elderly tenants probably had it in storage and thought it would be interesting to share. An article catches his eye, so he stops to read it.

Madison, WI Journal – December 13th, 1954

Local man found breaking into neighboring apartments while severely intoxicated

A young pregnant girl woke in the middle of the night to a severely intoxicated man jumping in her bed. She claims he attempted to force himself upon her just before her father was able to chase him out of the unit. He tried to catch him, but the man mysteriously disappeared. The residents think they know who the man is and helped the police to identify him. The man has since been detained until further questioning can be completed. The Metropolitan Place condominium tenants are in a state of shock, learning that this man had been living in their storage units for years. He was, apparently, sneaking in and out without being noticed. They all believed him to be a former professor at the university. They asked the management how this man could have lived in the building for so long without being found out, but the management had no awareness or knowledge of him. They assumed that the man had been living in an unclaimed storage unit that was off the records. It is tucked in the corner without a door number and no lock. He had been able to pass off as one of the condo owners by being careful when he went in and out of the building. When they searched the storage unit, they found cases of empty wine bottles that had been stolen from another resident’s storage unit. The mysterious man even found food and water supplies meant for a disaster. He was able to keep

himself clean by use of the exercise room's bathroom. He must have been living in the building for years, they speculate. Only a few people even met the man. The residents are in disbelief that this could happen right under their noses. They have filed a group-wide restraining order against him but do not know what his name is. All they have is a picture.

James looks at the picture in surprise. Wrapped by text is a photo of himself but twice his current age. He cannot believe his eyes. (Wait, am I still dreaming? What is going on here?) He puts the paper down and turns to see an old lady sitting in a rocking chair. He screams at her, "What the fuck do you want!? What is happening here?!!" He looks again at the newspaper and sees bloody fingerprints on it. He looks at his hands and sees his hands are covered in blood. There are blood spots stained on the walls and streaked across the mirrors. He thinks to himself, (I must have dragged myself across the walls to keep my balance while drunk.)

He flips open the paper to find the rest of the article on page 4:

"On Oct. 10, 1916, the dome on top of what was then called Main Hall caught fire. The one responsible for the tragedy was the previously well-respected physicist, Dr. James Francis Quasar. After the incident, he had been stripped of his professorship. He then went on to pursue his experiments privately. Some years later, he disappeared. The police only learned who he was after a former student saw his photo on the news.

Apparently, over 40-years later, the missing professor again moved to the downtown Madison area. He gained work at the university as a janitor and moved into a small apartment next to the prestigious *Metropolitan Condos*.

After the Metropolitan incident, he was found in his apartment (formerly metro-hotels 'a conversion to modern living'), seemingly trying to drink himself to death. There had been many reports made to the police about a crazy wide-eyed man stumbling through the halls of Tower II of the Metropolitan Condominiums, but they never panned out. In interviews, tenants said that he would be coherent for some of the time, and he would make his way into people's units by befriending them. Some said, 'he was a perfect gentleman,' but then suddenly a switch would flip, and he turned into a raging lunatic. Others described him as a tall-dark-handsome man with a charming way about him and a seductive smile. In contrast, most said he was a gibber-jabbering drunkard probably doped up and on disability and that he couldn't hold a conversation with anything more intelligent than a dog.

Somewhere along the line, people started showing up dead in their condos. It was thought to be suicide or natural death at first glance, but after multiple perversities occurring in a short string-of-time, police began to suspect a murderer is on the loose. They dubbed him 'Doctor Serial-Suicide.'

The morning after, a call came into the 'Madison Police Department.' The former professor was passed out drunk in a family's bed with two children lying motionless. Apparently, this happened while the family prepared food for a Christmas party in the adjacent room. Their holiday enthusiasm, television set, and radio drowned out the murder of their children. They were completely unaware of what had happened until they found the man sleeping with them as if they were stuffed animals placed upon the bed to provide a sense of security.

There is currently no evidence pointing to the professor as the one that committed the crimes other than him being found

in the bed with the children's corpses. There had been no sexual assault, and the cause of death is unknown. When questioning Dr. James Francis Quasar, he had said, 'I am not supposed to be here.', and nothing more."

James finishes the article while sitting on one of the oversized Victorian chairs in the lobby, wondering what could have happened, where he is, and why this was happening to him. He looks over at the old lady in the rocking chair, and she is just sitting there with her toothless mouth shut. He starts shaking frantically, and then he sets his head back and closes his eyes. When he opens them, he is back on his bed, staring at the ceiling fan.

A massive sense of relief comes over him when he learns everything has been a dream, and he is back in the comfort of his sweaty mattress. He lays on the bed, feeling the breeze from the fan blow across his naked body wishing the fantasy life with Ella were reality. He musters up all his brainpower to try and put himself back into an imaginary state with her but is interrupted when he hears loud pounding on the door and a man shouting, "OPEN UP – POLICE!"

He snaps out of his daydreaming and runs to the door, thinking there must be a fire or gas leak. He looks through the peephole to see three police officers standing outside. They continue to pound on the door disturbing everyone on the floor, so he opens the door, and the officers immediately grab his arm, ripping him out of his home. They grip with such force; he feels the blood vessels pop in his bicep. James speaks in a very calm way saying, "Uhhmm, what the fuck are you doing, officers?"

"Is your name James?" "Yes." "Have you been drinking tonight, sir?" "I had some drinks earlier, but I was just in bed sleeping."

One officer restrains James, while the other two ransack his home.

James is wearing nothing but a pair of boxer shorts. The officer pats the thin cloth and asks, "Where are you keeping the drugs and weapons?" James responds, confused, "What?" The officer begins to read him his rights, "You have the right to remain silent and refuse to answer questions. Anything you say may be used against you in a court of law. ..."

James is confused and not clear-headed at the moment. He is standing in the hallway with his hands cuffed tightly together behind his back. The cuffs have no chain connecting them. They are just two rings locked together, forcing his elbows to pop out like chicken wings.

The neighbors all peek through the crack of their doors lined up and down the hall. He hadn't met the neighbors yet; at least, he doesn't remember if he had. He can see that a few of them were the people in his dreams. And at the end of the hall is the blonde-haired, blue-eyed porcelain-toothed child freak that chased him. (I must have met them when drunk to have been able to manifest them in my dreams. But where is the one? I don't see her. Could she be real? Could she?)

James pleads with the officers to let him go, "What are you doing? Why are you arresting me?" The officers tell him that they cannot let him be alone in his current condition, "We cannot leave you to yourself, sir. You are clearly severely intoxicated and a danger to yourself and others." "What do you mean I am a danger? I was just sleeping."

The cops ignore James and drag him off half-naked, down the halls and through the lobby as if to purposely embarrass him. He is reminded of the Game of Thrones' scene: "Shame – Shame – Shame," he could hear everyone thinking it. They dragged him out the front door into an undisturbed layer of freshly fallen snow about 6-inches deep. They prop him up in

the back seat of the squad car. They take him away without any explanation or verification of his identity.

19.2 | Insanity or just insane?

James finds himself in a detox center locked in a padded room wearing nothing but a disposable paper gown. He can tell that he must have been asleep for some time by the level of anxiety he has. As the alcohol in his system diminishes, his nerves upsurge. This feeling triggers the need for a drink. He usually starts drinking before it comes on. Now that he is locked up and has no alcohol available, he is forced to sober up. He thinks of it as a blessing in disguise—just like what happened in Dallas, with the stock market, before moving back to Wisconsin. (But what did I do this time during my blackout?)

As James becomes coherent, he is jostled by the situation. No one likes being detained and locked up, particularly for doing nothing more than sleeping in one's own bed.

He sits up against the cold leather padding and sees himself in a stainless-steel mirror bolted to the wall across from him. Next to it is a small window, which allows for a glimpse of the moonlit snow to shine through. It is just enough light to irritate someone trying to sleep but beautiful enough to force one to enjoy, regardless of the situation.

He fell asleep shortly after being tossed in the cushioned cell. When he awoke, he wasn't sure where he was? He had been so drunk, he couldn't quite recall how he got there until he felt the bruise on his arm. The stinging pain became evident when he propped himself up, and the nightmare of cops ripping him from his home will leave him scarred for life.

He notices the door to the room had not been shut or locked. He stares at it, wondering what kind of trouble he will get in if he leaves the room. He isn't sure why they would

leave a door open in a jail cell until he realizes that he isn't in jail but in some twisted sort of detox.

He gets up and pokes his head out the door to see a small group of people sitting in chairs in an open lobby. They are spread out, backs against the walls. On the other side of the room is a glass shielded counter with nurses protected by it.

The nurse sees James's head pop out. She exits from behind the protective window and heads over to him. She shoves a breathalyzer in his mouth with a rude look on her face and says, "Blow HARD!"

He didn't want to cause any problems, so he blew into it, and it revealed that he is about triple the legal limit. (Goddamnit. It is Dallas all over again.) She looks at him and says, "You better get comfortable. You will be here for a while." "How long is a while?" "Got to blow a zero and speak with the therapists before we can release you." "How can you keep me here without me doing anything wrong? I was just sleeping in my home, and those cops ripped me out without a warrant or anything." "Honey, you are drunk, and a neighbor called saying you were a danger to yourself, possibly suicidal. Here in Wisconsin, if someone says you are suicidal and you have alcohol in your system, you have no rights. We have to detain you until we deem you are no longer a hazard to yourself or others." "WHAT! I am not suicidal! Who called and said that?" "They have the right to be anonymous." "What the fuck kind of bull shit is that? So you are telling me that if I wanna fuck with someone, all I have to do is call the non-emergency number after they've had a beer and say they are suicidal, and you will lock them up in here?" "Yes, sir, if there is alcohol in someone's blood and anyone makes that claim—whether it be anonymous or not—we have to detain said person until they are free from alcohol and psychologically analyzed."

He knows he is shit out-of-luck in this place, lest he becomes Houdini. He thought he could use his money and call a lawyer, but the twisted governing officials of Wisconsin figured out how to bend the law so they can restrain anyone they want whenever they want.

(Alright. No reason in getting flustered. Let's just sit this out and get it over with. Will be nice to sober up finally.)

James sits next to someone in the open room that has his face buried in his hands and greets himself, "I'm James, funny meeting you here." The man turns to him and looks at him with a blank emotionlessness. He opens his mouth to speak to James, and his jaw falls right off his face, slipping out of its socket. He tried to talk, flapping his tongue back and forth, flipping droplets of spit and blood about. Flying dots of red absorb into James's paper gown as he watches the fleshy tooth lined jawbone saturate the other guy's gown. James looks at him and says, "Nice to hear you are doing well.", then gets up and goes back into his padded room to sleep.

He lays in the bed, looking around, thinking about how similar this room is to his condo. Small with a mattress, mirror, chair, and a single window.

He tries to sleep but can't, so he decides he doesn't even want to try after everything that had happened. The fear of more nightmares and lost love haunts him. He is still wondering why he had gotten hauled off by the police and dragged into this place. It is beginning to look strikingly similar to the trash area at the condos. The cement walls mixed about under thick white padding look identical. (Perhaps it is common architecture in the area.)

While lying on the provided mattress, he starts to think he is still dreaming and is still in his bed. He thinks back to everything that happened. (Is this some sort of twisted sentence in hell.), when a nurse walks by, clanking her heels

like some sort of stilettos. He looks to watch her walk by, but there are no shoes, just raw bone snapping on the cement floor. Femurs shift back and forth under a white dress like curtains in the wind.

James looks back into the mirror and sees he has aged some 30-years.

Unable to mentally and emotionally handle what he is seeing or what is happening, he begins crying and curls up into the fetal position sobbing himself to sleep.

19.3 | Intellect of the mad man

James wakes up from his series of extensive nightmares to find himself sleeping in a bed discarded in the trash room area of his condos. Cops had been standing over him while he slept, trying to wake him up for a few minutes now. He comes to, and the officers ask if he is alright and if they needed to call anyone? James is quick to his feet, replying, "I had a little too much to drink and couldn't find my keys. Someone so graciously left a mattress here for me to rest upon while I waited for the cavalry to arrive. And you have arrived! Thank you for your kind services. I shall return to my quarters now that the day has begun."

The officers had found his keys in his pocket along with an old article of newspaper folded up neatly. "Your keys are right here, sir. We would be hauling you in, but the lady at the front desk told us you live here and had recently moved in and that you may have locked yourself out. Do you need help, sir?" "No, thank you, officer. I am fine to get up and go home. I must have forgotten I had the keys. Welcome to Madison, right?" (Will the nightmare never end. My neighbors must think I am insane or some sort of crazy person.)

The cops depart, and James waits for the elevator. While he waits, he notices a picture of the old lady, the one that was in the rocking chair. He learns from the flyer that the building he lives in is connected to a senior center and that he must have hallucinated or imagined this woman. He sees on it that there are Alcoholics Anonymous meetings held there daily. (Shit, if that ain't a sign from above—don't know what is.)

It is 7:00am, and a meeting would be held the following Monday. (Maybe it is time to give up the drink.) James thought as the past months blurred through his mind.

The emotional pain he is feeling inside has been incomprehensible. There is nothing worse than having no clue what you did for months on end. It is the equivalent of hellish rattles to the souls-core. (Many people see an alcoholic as some sort of irresponsible, crazy person, but they haven't a clue of the truth, and they are lucky to live in such a fantasy land.)

On the elevator ride up, he continues to contemplate. He thinks about how crazy persons were hung or burned at the stake in the past or even sunk in freezing water while locked in a cage just because they were mentally ill and misunderstood. People assumed they must be witches overcome by demons or something, but, in reality, they were just misunderstood and or chemically imbalanced. Many people treat alcoholics in this fashion as if they had a choice to pick up a drink but trying to explain to them how that works is as pointless as explaining color to a blind person.

He is now sobered up, feeling the urge to begin drinking but wants to refrain. He gets into his unit, locks the door, and empties his pockets. He sees his iPhone on the counter and checks the day and time. The time reads, Saturday, June 7th, 2018, "What?" He realizes that he has only been here just shy of a month.

He sees the yellowed paper next to his keys and recalls the newspaper he found in his dreams. He picks it up and slowly unfolds it as if his dream had come true. It reads about how there were multiple suicides in this building. "All the suicides were due to great shame or inability to accept their lives." At least that was the conclusion after the investigation into a possible serial killing. A killer who disguised his acts by methods of untraceable suicides. A theory that failed to be taken seriously since all the victims were in the same clinic, (The Metro Clinic – Phase II, a home for the mentally insane.)

He dropped the paper down to the counter, wondering what this could mean and where he may have found it.

(I must still be dreaming. This cannot be.) The article further read and tells the story of a former professor that had held himself up in his apartment, apparently drinking himself to death. He had accomplished his mission in less than a week, they say, but nobody was ever found.

Dream or foe

James concludes that perhaps he died at some point during his binge and is now stuck in some endless circle of mind-torture. He isn't convinced he is awake yet until he sees the notebook on the windowsill next to the rocking chair. He notices that more pages had been disturbed. He walks over and picks it up, opening to the most recent page. In it, it reads, "The building is still resonating on time-wave 5. It has displaced between 2019 and 1950. Note: it appears that we have located the pretemporal position of displacement. Keep a close eye on the progress of his research." (What the hell is this gibberish.) thought James as he flips through the other pages filled with drunken scribbles. (Alrighty then. I must have been really fucked up.)

He sits down in the rocking chair and stares out the window, looking at a clear blue summer sky. He was hoping to see the snow he dreamt of. He looks to his reflection in the mirror to see his pale dry-flaky-dehydrated face and tries to remember the last time he drank water realizing he probably hasn't had any water outside of ice cubes since he moved in, a month ago.

He rocks slowly back-and-forth while looking out the window when he hears footsteps and turns to see a nurse walking up to him. She says, "Good morning Mr. Quasar. Beautiful day out today—ain't it?" He isn't able to respond.

He is stuck and unable to communicate. He realizes that he cannot move his arms or legs and that is strapped to a mattress. The nurse shoves a tube into a preexisting tube that is wedged in his throat. He feels his throat sticking to the plastic. His breath makes whistling sounds as it flows around it. She connects the tube to some brown liquid that pours into his stomach.

He can only roll his eyes slightly to look about the room, but that is it. A little girl stands at the opening of the door staring at him. It is the same girl he saw in his bedroom staring at him from the foot of his bed. He tries to move again but cannot. Not only is he strapped down, but he feels drugs coursing into his veins. The nurse had stuck him with a needle when he wasn't looking. Her face was no longer moving; it took on the same appearance as a porcelain doll. He watches the nurse leave the room, hearing her heels click on the floor. He becomes drowsy, and as he passes out. Just before he dozed off, he read a sign on the door: "Metro Mental Hospital: Phase II- Room 0416."

19.4 | Friends in Strange Places

After James is considered stabilized, the nurses remove the tube from his throat and let him out of his restraints. They explain that mixing alcohol with his medications and mental illnesses will cause severe hallucinations. If he does it again, he may not be able to return to a state of clarity.

The nurse says to him, “We won’t move you into maximum security this time. We learned that it was your former roommate that had his wife sneak in the alcohol for him. You were just unlucky and vulnerable, so we won’t hold it against you—this time. However, if you become drunk again, you will find yourself in a restraining jacket indefinitely.”

James is still a bit confused about accepting this reality. He is trying to understand how he went from his condo to drinking for months to being in a mental hospital. His brain fights furiously to recall anything he can piece together.

While he struggles to find an answer, a familiar-looking doctor comes into the room and wants to have a chat. The doctor asks, “What is your profession today, Mr. Quasar?” James is having a hard time comprehending the question and takes a minute to respond. (What does this man want to hear me say. And what does he hope to get out of the response?)

“Well, I am retired. Doctor.” “Good, wish I were in your shoes. Retired from what?” “I am a former college student.”, The doctor chuckles lightly and says, “And your name is James, correct?” “Yes, that’s me. The one and only!” James looks at the name tag of the doctor, and it reads, ‘Doctor J.F.’ (Where do I know that name from? I feel like we have met before. Wait that is the monogrammed name on my front door. Same initials as mine.)

The doctor sits down and begins asking very detailed questions about where James has been, what he has been doing, and how long it has been going on for?

James sees his reflection in the mirror, and it doesn't look the way he remembered himself. He sees himself strapped in the hospital bed with long hair and a long beard but not older like before. (How long have I been here for? I look the same age, but it must have taken years for my hair to grow that long.)

POUND – POUND – POUND

The doctor is deeply interested in the rooms he was staying in, asking James, "What numbers were on the doors? The numbers on the knockers, James. Do you recall the names on the knockers? What rooms were you in?"

BOOM – BOOM – BOOM

"THE NUMBERS, James!" he shouts.

The doctor takes a deep breath and relaxes his muscles so as not to get excited.

"James, which numbers on the doors did you see when you moved in?"

He confusingly replies, "Well, it was unit 6140. It said Doctor J.F. on it."

The doctor whispers to himself, "Outstanding!" and then says under his breath, "We finally have the right place and time."

POUND – POUND – POUND

"Have you come across any notebooks?" "What are you trying to find out?"

Ignoring his question, the doctor asks, "Do you recall what the year is?" "It is 2018." "Jesus, you have been stuck that way for 20-years. How old are you right now?"

Not understanding why the doctor said he had been stuck that way, James replies softly. "I am, uh 25, I think, but the last time I looked in the mirror, well, I am not sure." "You are not who you think you are. Do you understand where you are?"

BANG

"Yes, a mental hospital." "No, you are trapped between dimensions half in the past, half in the future. This building and the former building or whatever building you have been in are all built on a magnetic hotspot. A ley line of 3, 6, and 9. These lines connect different dimensions of time that all coexist simultaneously through their wave intersections and don't exist simultaneously in space." "Now, I know I am crazy, Doctor."

POUND – POUND – POUND

"Not at all. You have another person's history flowing through your mind, and you cannot stabilize due to a device you invented. It caused your conscience to vibrate in space and to separate the time-waves we all live on. I need to know what year you are living in, day and time as well." "Last I recall, it was June something 2018. Or sometime in December. I am not sure." "Do you recall the precise day in December?" "I remember seeing my birthday, December 13th, in the newspaper." "What newspaper?!" "The one about the serial suicider" "What year?!" "Uh, –54, I think." "That sneaky bastard. Alright, you originally moved into Phase II of the

Metropolitan Place on December 23rd, 2019, the night of the Christmas party. Do you recall this?" "I do not recall. I am in a mental hospital, after all! What are you trying to fuck with me or something? And what is that god dang pounding! Sounds like someone stomping my skull in!"
"Alright, then." The Dr. Replied.

POUND, POUND, POUND-CRACK

James looks back into the mirror to see himself dressed as The Doctor hovering over the bed, which is now empty. He turns his head around to look for the Dr. when he sees reflections of bronzed colored mailboxes. He turns to look at the mailboxes and suddenly finds himself standing in his condo's lobby by the mailroom.

20 | Unit 6140

Sometime in the future

“Hey Steve, I think you should come over here.” “Where you at, kid?” “Back—back in the bedroom here—by the closet.” “Alright, I’m a come-in. What’s hap-nin back here?” “Look at this. Is this a swastika?” “I think that there is a sauwastika kid.” “Yeah, that’s what I said- swa-sti-ka.” “Nah, kid: Sauvastika. It’s that left face-in gnat-z one, you know, clockwise turned one. It’s a Buddhist symbol or some-en—I think. See them dots there in the centers. Hindu garbage.” “Look: they are everywhere. All up and down the wall.” “Put yer flashlight up there to the ceil-in, kid.” “Jesus. Is that blood?” “Nahhhh. It’s just some deep red paint pigments. Blood don’t stay bright like that long after hitten oxygen. This fella sure did a number on this here place.” “How do you know so much about this stuff?” “Oh, you know, just hearing things here and there—you know how people are. They love to talk, and talk bout stuff they know bout. You just get dem going like start-en a lawnmower, and they won’t stop run-in they mouths till they run out ah gas. Easy way to gain someone’s trust too—just let them talk their little hearts out. Also, an easy way to learn who not to trust. See. There I go blab-in on just like-em. But really, I heard mostly from the history channel. You ought-ah try watch-en some-in educational every once while kid. You’d be surprised how enrichen knowledge can be.” “Wait. What do you mean about ‘not to trust?’ How’s that?” “Well, people that don’t wanna talk, dey usually try-in to control the conversation. Dat way, dey get some-in out of it. Well, not the shy ones but the strategic ones. You ever find yourself talk-in someone that keeps ask-in questions, and you just keep talk-in and talk-in

more and more?" "Ahhhh, Yeah." "Hand me a light bulb here, kid, so I can screw it up in the closet get some photons go-en in here." "60 watts good?" "That oughtta be fine. Anywho, you are likely be-in manipulated for their own personal gain of some sort. Keep an eye out for question-askers. Easy way to spot-em is when you find yerself blab-en on and on, and in the middle of yer blab-in, you think to yerself 'Wow. *This person really likes me and is interested in me.*', they ain't. No one in they right mind gives a hoot bout what anyone else has to say less they married and wife-E is trying to nag some-in outa ya." "Wise words, Steve – wise words." "Yeah, but the wise are lonely, kid. Very lonely. Best to tuck yer pride deep up yer butt less you want to lose dat pretty young gal you always toat-in round. Arrogance will get you nothing but a bottle of lotion. Just remember: Whenever, and I mean whenever you is having a conversation with a woman, you are always wrong—especially when yer right. This why ain't nobody wants a woman in office—they is prone to communism—got to control everything." "So, what's the deal with this place?" "Oh, some old professor lived here. Physics, I think. No one knows where he went off to. He actually had some help in the design of this building—I think, back when he was still working at the campus. They say he lost his marbles and then went looking for them." "Alright, then. What do you want me to get started on then?" "Suppose we should replace this drywall here first and then put new drywall up on the bare studs. We gonna have to rewire the whole place too. We'll have to get the maintenance to turn off the power for the build-in fore we do that. Kid, why don't-cha run on down the lobby and ask that pretty little brunette—what's her name again? Lay-Na?" "Lena, I think." "Yeah, Lena—that's it. She ain't gots the best for look-in, but her back ends like a crisp apple. Go on down there and ask her to get

them to shut the power off for this unit. Also, tell her to tell the maintenance fella I may need the whole build-in or neighbors units shut off too. We oughts fix up the electrical first while the walls are all exposed, and I gotta figure out where the currents come-in from." "Anything else?" "No. I think that should be about it for now. I'll start pull-in down this here closets walls—get rid of all these back-faced gnat-Z mark-ins fore someone gets the wrong idea. You gets all these scraps off the floor and sweep up good after you get the electrical shut off—if it ain't been already. Hard to tell- the way olé professor here reworked everything. He has some backup flow of electricity come-in from somewhere in these here walls all up along the studs. Weird looking studs, though—never seen anything quite like it outside of this building. I have to locate the source fore we fry ourselves." "Sounds good, Steve." "Okay, Billy. Let's get to it then."

Steve and Billy walk away from the closet, and Billy heads to the condo's front door. He then props the door open using a loose brick, which seems out of place amongst the rest of the material. He then heads out of the apartment, into the hallways, and off to the lobby. Steve stays in the unit kicking aside broken pieces of drywall to clear a path along the walls' base. He then begins inspecting the wiring lined up and down the metal studs and feels the sudden urge to remind Billy of something- "OH HEY KID" "YEAH STEVE?" shouts Billy from down the hall. "GRAB THAT BARREL from the TRUCK while you down there. THAT GREEN ONE." "GOT IT."

Steve continues to inspect the wires throughout the unit. At the same time, Billy gets to work cleaning up the chunks of wall scattered about the concrete floor. He picks them up and tosses them into the barrel while still holding one, then shouts

across the room, "Hey Steve, what is this, you think?" "Kid, you got something to show me; bring it on over here." "Alright. It's just some crazy drawing. Here what do you think this is?" Billy hands Steve the piece of the broken-up drywall half dusted in powdered rock. Steve blows on the piece to clear the picture up, then rubs it along his thigh and takes a look. "That there - is a Toroid." "Toroid? What's a Toroid?" Steve looks at Billy confused, points to the image, and says sternly, "Kid - this is a Toroid.". He then hands it back to him. "You think some of this stuff might be worth money, Steve?" "Hell if I know Kid. I did see a cracker that looked like Elvis sell for five-grand once. I met the guy when he moved in here. Odd duck that one. I couldn't tell if he was a genius or just plain full of it. I wasn't convinced he even had an education; that was until I saw a documentary on the History channel mention his textbook. Hypothetically Physics – no Hyper Physics – no no—it was—yup, Hypothetical Physics. I remember because they explained the difference between theoretical and hypothetical. It was pretty interest-in stuff. I didn't understand a lick of it, but still interest-in. I can see how someone could lose their mind spend-in a lifetime think-in about that crazy voodoo." "Maybe I'll hold on to some of these drawings. Never know, we could be sitting on a lottery ticket." "Sure thing, Kid. Maybe get back to work now?"

Steve goes back to fidgeting with some wires in the wall. Then, out of nowhere, he frustratedly says without turning around, "Kid - you got any more questions, use that phone of yours yer always playing with. I'm get-in paid to work here, not teach. You wanna learn some-thin, go up the street to the university, hand them a hundred-grand, and someone with a fancy pants attitude will give you a really big book to read."

Billy stops talking after feeling a bit offended by Steve's sharp comment. After that, some time goes by, and the floor

becomes clean. Billy then feels the urge to start asking Steve more questions. Just before he opens his mouth, a light tap on the open front door is heard. "Hello. Anyone here." Steve talks loudly from the other side of the condo, "Hey there – we back here in the bedroom." "Okay then - I am coming in. Heading down the hall to the bedroom." "Come on in. We ain't gonna bite ya." "Hi there. I'm John, one of the building maintenance. I understand you are having some troubles with the electrical?" "Hey there, John – we've met before on a few occasions." "Oh. Yes. You were up here a few years back." "Well, it seems olé professor here went on and tapped into someone else's electrical." "Hmmm. How's that?" "I ain't quite sure as of yet. I was hope-in you may shine some light on it. We have shut the power off for the unit's breaker box so that we ain't got no electrical flowing in, but here on every other wire or so, I am getting a reading that they have currents." "I see. Well, there isn't any way he could have tapped into a neighboring unit without disrupting their electricity." "How do you figure these wires are getting current then? See, they all run to this unit's breaker box, but without taking the whole thing out, I won't be able to see where they go to. You can check all the lights and outlets in here – they are not getting a charge." "Hmmm. Let me check the box."

John goes on over to the wall where the breaker box is and inspects it. After a few minutes, while Steve stands patiently waiting, John says, "Well, you shouldn't be getting any electricity in here, so yeah, it is all turned off." "Yes. I know this, but where is the current in these other wires coming from?" "There shouldn't be any flow going through here; the breaker box is turned off." "Yes. I am aware, but when I put my voltage detector up on the wires here, we get a clear signal of current." "I don't see how you could be; the breaker is shut

off, and also the power to the breaker has been shut off from the building's main breaker." "John: You are not hearing me. The man has linked this place up to another unit or some other source of electricity. I can't fix any of this here electrical until I find the source." "I don't see how he could do that. Each of the other units are directly connected to the main breaker – it would have disrupted the electricity." "Alright. Okay. I understand that, but look. When I put my voltage detector up against the wires here, we have a clear current flowing in and out, so where is that coming from?" "There wouldn't be any electricity in here; the breaker is off along with the source from the main breaker. Is there anything else you need? I have another tenant I need to get to shortly." "Are you hearing what I am saying, John?" "Well, if you have any more issues, let me know – I have to run now."

"Geez. Is that fella just messing with me, or what the heck."

"Billy, you understand that guy?" "Nah. He sounds like a religious person being explained science." "Some-thing, I guess. Alright then. Since he is as useless as a polished turd, let's try and figure this out ourselves. I am gonna try out all the switches and test every wire mark-in em for hot and not hot. Don't you go touch-in none of them. And I need you to go back down to the lobby and get the main breaker flipped on and then off again. Alright, Kid?" "Yeah, Steve, I got it." "I also need you to call me up here on the phone while you down with apple bottom flip-in the switch." "Sounds good." "But, let's get all this here drywall off the floor first." "Sounds good."

After Billy and Steve got the place cleaned up nice, all that is left is to tear down the closet's drywall—which was oddly untouched by the tenant.

“Now, Billy, don’t forget to give me a call on the phone before you have them turn any electrical back on. I don’t want you come-in up here find-in a french fry.” “I will, Steve.”

Steve positions himself inside the small walk-in closet, and then shuts the door behind him to get access to all the walls. This leaves him tucked in a dark box with little room to move around. While he stands just barely rubbing elbows to the wall, he pulls his phone out of his back pocket and turns the flashlight on. He then rests it at an angle on the floor, so he can illuminate the room. Once he has vision, he looks for the light switch and toggles it back and forth to check for any electrical flow. Still, nothing happens—the room just continues to remain lit by Steve’s phone. Steve then notices that there is more writing on the back of the door, so he moves the phone to another wall and angles it to illuminate the door’s backside.

Steve examines the writings on the wall:

1
2 2
3 3 3
4 4 4 4
5 5 5 5 5
6 6 6 6 6 6
7 7 7 7 7 7 7
8 8 8 8 8 8 8 8
9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9 9

The same amount of numbers, of which number there is in a row, is how many numbers there are in the row.

$$3 + 3 + 3 = 9 \quad 3 + 6 = 9$$

$$3(1 + 1 + 1) = 9 \quad \text{WHAT DID HE MEAN!!! } 3-6-9$$

$$(1 + 1 + 1) + (1 + 1 + 1) + (1 + 1 + 1) = 9$$

$$9 - 6 = 3 \quad 9/3 = 3 \quad 6/3 = 2 \quad 2(3) = 6 \quad 6/2 = 3 \quad (3)(3) = 9$$

$6 + 3 = 9$ 1, 2, 3 3 is the first non-prime number after the first prime number. 6 is the first non-prime number after the second prime number. 9 is the second prime number after the 3rd prime number. 2 times 3 is 6, and 6 plus 3 is 9, but why?

Steve continues to stand in the half-lit closet, looking at the writings. He ponders to himself what must have been going through the man's head when he scribbled gibberish about 3, 6, and 9 on the door. As Steve continues to contemplate various fits of insanity, a sudden "POP!" and "sizzle!" sound startles him, and he about jumps through the ceiling. The lightbulb just above his head blew out, leaving a blinding string of filament fizzling in a spherical ball of half charred glass. "Yowzah! I'm awake now! Damm Kid was supposed to call me before they flipped the switch." As Steve's heart settles back to a regular beat, he looks up to see the snapped filament fading into nothingness. He watches as the last bit of red-hot glow dwindles away to a burnt up lightless thread of tungsten. When the filament completely goes out, so does the light from his phone.

"Geez. Stupid technology always failing on ya at the worst times."

Steve turns around in the small closet, searching for the doorknob but cannot figure out which wall he is facing. The room suddenly seems a tad roomier as well. Steve's elbows

are now free to move outward without hitting the walls. He moves his hands up and down the walls, methodically inspecting every square inch as he searches for a doorknob but cannot find it. He thinks to himself, *“This doesn’t feel like drywall.”* as he goes in circles, trying to find his way to the handle. *“It feels like cold cement.”*

Before he starts to get scared like a child locked in a public bathroom screaming for their mother, he takes a deep breath and says, *“Alright. Maybe there wasn’t a doorknob, but how did I pull the door shut then. Just wait for the kid to come back and open the door. Where’s my phone anyway.”*

Steve has all but lost his compass of the closet, not knowing which wall is which. He kneels down and slides his hands across the floor, leading to the baseboard, and then moves in a counter-clockwise motion, never breaking contact with the wall’s base, but he never hits his phone. Steve makes another pass but still cannot find it. He begins frantically scouring the floor in the pitch-black room for his phone. He then realizes that he should be able to see the light at the base of the closet door through the crack between it and the floor, but there is zero light—he might as well be blind.

“Is this a hexagon shape? I swear I have hit six walls go-in round. Where the hecks my phone at? I must have kicked it. This room isn’t that small, I should be able to find it if I just check every part of the floor. Where is the wall now? I cannot even find the wall. Is the room get-in larger, or am I go-en crazy here? Alright, Steve. Just relax, fella. Just sit back and wait for Billy. You are get-in flustered and are start-in see, or well not see things in here. Imagine-in things is what I mean.”

Billy gets back up to the unit and yells out, *“Hey Steve! I got them to shut the power off, but you weren’t answering the phone. You wanna get started on the wiring of the place then? Steve?”*

"KID! Open this dang door for me."

"Hey, Steve, where you at?"

"In the closet, Kid. Damnit, open the fuck-in thing! I cannot get out."

"Steve?"

"Kid. You better not be playing with me. I don't think I will have room for you on the team anymore if you are. Kid?!"

Billy heads down the hall and back to the bedroom and sees the closet door is shut. He walks up to it and says, "Hey Steve, you in there?" but gets no response, so he grabs the doorknob of the closet, turns it to the right, and tries to pull it open, but it won't. "The hell. Dam-It" He pulls on it a few more times, thumping it back-and-forth until he sees the hinges and realizes that it opens inward, not outward. "Idiot." He gets the door open and sees all the reversed swastika symbols painted up against the wall being illuminated by Steve's phone, but the closet is empty. "*Huh. Wonder where he went off to.*" "Hey, Steve. You in the bathroom or something?" Says Billy getting no response. "*He must've gone out to the hall or something. Forgot his phone. I'll get going on the scraps till he gets back. Maybe he had the runs or some-in.*"

Knock-Knock-Knock "*Someone at the door?*"

He walks over to the front door but doesn't see anyone standing at it. Billy walks up to the opening and pops his head into the hall but doesn't see anyone. "Weird."

When he goes back to the bedroom where the closet is, he notices that the door is shut.

"Steve, you in there? You messing with me, man?" Billy grabs the doorknob and pushes the door open. He sees Steve's phone is still resting against the base of the floor and wall with the flashlight on. This time Billy picks it up and turns the

light off, and the half-lit closet goes dark. He instinctively flips the light switch in the closet as if he were at home—despite the electricity being shut off—but the light switch had been in the on position when he went to flick it up, so he taps it down and then, without reason, flips it back on. When he pushes it back up, the broken filament fizzles for an instant, and Steve suddenly appears in front of him, dangling from the ceiling choked by his own belt. His dead half popped out eyes gaze right into Billy's, and Steve's face is almost close enough to be kissing. Billy jumps back out of the closet, turning pale white. He flies back, trying to keep his balance while Steve sways back-and-forth. Billy then slips on a piece of dusty drywall left in the closet and falls to the ground right on his tailbone. Billy watches the bulb slowly fade, and Steve's body becomes transparently in sync with it, also fading away. Within seconds Steve's body disappears just as the light flickers, its last spark of illuminance leaving the closet empty and dark.

Billy sits on the floor, holding himself up with his palms on the cement, and stares into the empty dark closet – speechless – waiting for something to happen. It's as if he can sense whatever is going on is not over. Suddenly, oddly cylindrical and uniform looking lightning bolts fill the closet scattered about, jolting from wall to wall. Each strike illuminates the closet, and the room looks different every time—first, rectangular, then a hexagon shape.

Between flashes of light, a body comes into view. “Steh-Sta stash Steve – is that ya ya you?”

The room then goes completely lightless as if it became a black hole and no light could escape it, making it appear to be void in space. While Billy sits on the ground looking into a vast nothingness, a body begins to materialize into a tall thin man. The man then steps out of the closet dressed in a flannel jacket with Kneehigh snow boots and a winter skullcap

flattening down his shoulder-length hair. The man steps forward, crunching into broken pieces of sheetrock, and notices Billy on the floor in front of him. He asks, "What room is this?" "Whah-huh?" The man walks further out of the closet and then steps over Billy. He says under his breath, "*six thousand something. must be*" "Kid." "What year is it?" Billy doesn't respond. "The year Kid, what year is it." Billy is in a sort of state of shock but manages to stutter out, "twen-tee-tee twenty."

"Hmmm. Looks like the Dr. isn't here anymore." The mysterious man takes a vial out of his pocket that has a brush attached to the lid. He carefully pulls it out, making sure to scrape off the thick liquid from the stem of the brush onto the container's inner walls using the lips of the small bottle. He then turns around and shuts the closet door. Billy watches him draw a bright-red straight line and another connecting it on the outside of the door. While the man is taking his time making the lines straight and even, Billy comes to his senses, thinking this has to be a gimmick, and pushes himself up off the floor and says, "Hey. What's going on here. Where is Steve?" The man doesn't reply; he just continues drawing until he completes a nonagon and leaves it to let the red liquid drip down. "Hey Kid- you know what the day is?"

Billy doesn't want to comply with the stranger, but he feels not doing so may be worse, so he responds, "Monday, the 23rd – October." "2028?" "Yeah." "Alright, then."

The tall thin man slips the vial back in his pocket, turns around, and heads to the hallway. He stops on his way past the propped open door, puts his fingers almost romantically on the gold-plated unit number under the peephole, and reads out loud, "Sixty – one – forty, 6-1-4-0 – 10-23-28 and 6140. It has been a long time, my friend." He drags his fingers

slowly over nametag under the door knocker, and then walks off and disappears into the hallway.

Billy gets up off the floor and runs into the halls to catch the guy, but he is already gone. He stands at the door opening, still holding Steve's iPhone in his hand, wondering what just happened and where Steve could be.

The End...

(or beginning?)