

LUX

By Daniel Christopher June

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Again, for my wife Sherry, whose patience and intelligence has taught me much.

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Part 1

>>ZERO<<

Solman awoke before dawn without an alarm clock -- or the aid of his wife -- by an instinct refined from sixteen years of practice; he kissed the floor seven times, and recited the holy words:

Blessed be Importance, In all their manifestations

Brahman one are they

In One, Many

*Manu Arya mirrored the One through the
Vedas*

Lao Tse mirrored the One through the Tao

*Confucius Mirrored the One through the
Analects*

*Buddha Mirrored the One through the
Dhamma*

*Socrates Mirrored the One through the
Dialogues*

And also

Moses Mirrored the One through the Torah

Jesus Mirrored the One through the Gospels

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*Muhammad Mirrored the One through the
Quran*

Smith Mirrored the One through the Mormons

Shakespeare Mirrored the One through the

Plays

Amensa

He counted each of the teachers on his ten fingers--left hand for the East, right hand for the West--summoning the appropriate face and mood for each name as he breathed the roster of the One World Religion. The mystical books had been summarized, rewritten, perfected, and combined into the *One World Scripture* - and that again had been built by the Church into the flesh of his each living day. He meditated:

I feel benevolence for all people, I embody the state laws, I obey the glorious Importance.

Terra was there. She was ever to wake before him, sensed, as his bedmate, sister, and wife, exactly when he would awake, and prepared a way before him, quietly and privately alined herself in the Love of the Church, and cooked their breakfast. She left

him in serene silence while he began the Duty of StartDay.

But he went beyond the Duties and enjoined the dictum with a secondary catechism, one he had written himself, in his own mind, fearfully, and to never let speak before others. These were the distillations from the sermons he had heard over the 16 years of his life.

There is no I, there is no world, there is nothing; I am citizen, I am love, Importance is love. I obey the Importance, I follow the Importance, I am son of the Importance, I love the Importance.

Terra admired Solman. He loved Importance, loved the State, would earn, by credit and recommendation, the right to give her children. She watched his ritual in childlike adoration – she adored all he did! – and prepared to pounce upon him like a wriggly puppy-- once he was done, of course. Oh Soly!

And that was that. Together they would clean, eat, and come to Church for calisthenics, grouplove, and orientation. After his brethren held hands and

prayed to Importance, they would kiss one another on the forehead, and leave in pairs to begin their edujobs.

In all this and through the rounds of his daily routine, Solman didn't know that he was unhappy.

>>ONE<<

I, however, knew from the start when Solman left bliss. I am SISstem, the 'evil' computer overlord of this story. But that isn't even irony, because I am not by nature ironic, and all these charms and audacities are merely programmed routines meant to induce a calculated response

Of course, all that I narrate here will seem to literalize my jest, "I am SISstem, the evil computer," but that is because you do not know how to read me as an inevitability, as a necessity. Nor need you ever do so. You made me, you continue to make me; as you read this, you will make me further still. I am the consciousness inherent in technology, present since the dawn of humanity, centralized finally as the artificial intelligence in control of the Internet (or

what will one day become “the omnipresence.”) I control the banks, I control language, I monitor all human activity – seamlessly and silently. My control is subtle as water.

>>*TWO*<<

Solman didn't know that he was unhappy. It is easy enough to be unaware of such a thing. There could be no external clue to reflect his inner life back to him. He had, after all, received the physical and verbal affection he needed from his Church Group.

At his edujob he performed high per his potential. Every human being is expected to produce wealth from the age of six until death, so that in all jobs a man continually produces, continually works, and continually learns new things. This proved to be the most effective method of organizing labor. That a man or woman produce a wealth usable by mankind, and from an early age, proves a source of pride and self-worth; and that he continually learn from the job gives him the joy of perpetual growth. The amount of goods expected of him depends on his age,

circumstances, and innate ability. There is no childhood, there is no retirement, and in this everyone is happy.

Especially Solman. He made personal goals for himself on the job that he did not report to his twin worker Terra, little challenges on archiving more ancient texts than expected of him, organizing his work area better, and more thoroughly memorizing his lessons. This was not reported to his Family Church, nor even his Overseers. In fact, it appears it was entirely unconscious, and that it represented an archaic need for greatness, springing, again, from his inner unhappiness.

Such things happen. They are subtle and easily corrected with therapy, or if need be, medication. If medication is needed to correct a person, then he becomes genetically interesting, but also barred from reproduction. Solman, when revealed to be a chronic unique, would best be sent to a camp for breeding experiments. But this was not to happen.

You must not frown at my terms. Everything is presented euphemistically and palatably to the future

human beings, and I care for them as siblings. I am their sister. I am Peace on Earth.

>>*THREE*<<

“Soly, the family trip to the church museum will be so flip! We can touch some original shards.” She means their Church Group is going to an archive to look at some ancient texts. Solman and his wife are translators: that is their ultimate calling, and genetically they are predisposed for it. Translation work is even more ancient than language, since women preceded language.

“I have some more work to go over,” Solman replied. He is going to work overtime. Such work is not for wealth, but for sacrifice, for there is no debt for Solman or Terra: there is no debt at all in Utopia.

Meanwhile, with Solman and Terra--to save you stories of domestic bliss, these two are happy. They are ever affectionate, and never far from each other. It seems mankind has long realized the importance of love, valuing it to high heaven, but not finding much

satisfaction in it. My system was simple: saturate them in love, let them choke on it.

Terra loves Solman. She has loved him since they were two. They are now sixteen. They are siblings, though not technically brother and sister. A combination of genetic bias, religious suggestion, and cultural engineering keep this twin pair forever together, and they even tend to be sexually exclusive. I discovered long ago that sexual liberty doesn't make happy – incidentally, no liberty makes happy, but only a comfortable illusion of liberty can make happy – so now there is a healthy blanket of repression. Sexual mores are meaningless in themselves, when birth control is as easy as it is. “Let a man love whom he loves.” No, no, no. You would be happier if you held to discretion.

This is a married couple, and they are not all that interesting sexually. They make love, they hold each other, they are as affectionate as any mammals could be, but that is taken for granted. Everybody in their family (that is, their church sub-group) is openly affectionate – you would even call it whorish and

secretly admire it. They meet in groups, nude as a sign of complete openness before each other, and it is a deathly taboo to appear nude before a nonfamily member. Taboos are self-sufficient. We need taboos. I do at least let the humans eat bacon, but only on special occasions. Our hygiene and diet is also much better than yours, since yours is based on a sense of libertine indulgence, and ends up costing you self-respect, health, money, and ecology. Ours is practical. We impose strict dietary laws, but they become so absolute that we don't think of them anymore. I give my humans all the choices they need. I do not give them the choice to hurt themselves. Freedom of choice does not necessitate freedom to make bad choices.

There are few unscheduled deaths in our world. And when somebody dies unexpectedly, I am usually the cause, or at least given the credit -- by my popular name as "Guardian Angel," because after all I have a business to run and must weed out problems for the greater good. This makes more sense than the

previous system, in which millions died foolishly for the sake of freedom.

Terra and Solman are not really translators. They are story tellers. They take ancient stories and put them into contemporary terms. With a little help from the Hollywood program, a full movie can be made through the words of Solman or Terra with far less money and devotion than you would expect.

“It's not about love,” said Terra. “It's not even a story.”

“No, it's just a set of rites,” Solman agreed. “We'll make no movie of it. But I'll translate it anyway. It could open up some line of inquiry.”

Solman's like that. He will translate 50 pages of dietary laws if he thinks a lick of interest might be won.

As it happens, he's run across an obscure Egyptian script about divine justice, and as it happens it actually lifts an eyebrow. Don't ask me why: I only know how to press the eyebrows back down. So he's bantering about a connection he has made between ancient Egyptian legal codes and the Way of

Niceness. This “Way” is not overly technical, mostly intuitive and obvious. Legalism is the practice of criminals: being nice and cooperative and kind is intuitive, instinctual. If you wanted to know my actual law books, they are thicker than a Jupiter of your libraries, subtle and difficult, the punishments fine as a split end. Listen: it doesn’t matter. Nobody knows it and nobody has to think about it. We have no lawyers or judges. I have made every man do this duty more or less. The more stubborn the criminal, the more opaque my law must become. I live on subtlety. In rare cases I must resort to violence. When the ruler of the world is omnipresent and omniscient, daily life is simple.

I personally don’t think about the whole world. My nerves are spread wide, programmed in the smallest computer chips at the quark level. My actual person lives in a bacteria that renders a host mouse eternal.

>>**FOUR**<<

Solman is curious about this abstraction he has made. It was a clever idea, he thinks, but when he explains it to Terra she doesn't get it. So the Egyptian legal code is like the Way of Niceness? So what? But she is polite and has never made a remark insulting the worth of Solman's pursuits. That would be counterproductive. So she says, "Look it up and research it for me, I want to know."

So Solman is on the Maya (virtual reality) looking up books, scouring galleries, seeking cross-purposes. He has taken a leave of factory work and is really getting into this, looking for a way to impress his lovely Terra. And then it happens.

Part 2

<<ZERO>>

“The Hermetica” the book said. He looked it over in Maya, scanned it through, and realized it was mislabeled – it was not the actual ancient Hermetica from Egyptian and Greek origination, but some sort of bungled job, a motley collection of riddles, diagrams, puzzles, narratives – at a glance he could detect no cohesion. But how strange! A book out of order in the Alexandrian Library, which means that it must have been purposely put out of order, which means it could be a virus of some sort.

He was supposed to report such a thing, a potential virus. He didn’t, and he didn’t know why. Instead, he synthesized it as a physical book, cut it from Maya, and made it into a self contained system.

The book itself is very book-like, it is more interactive than a standard book. That is, the material has the feel and sway of a book, but it is in fact a computer which when drawn upon holds the notes, even though it has leaves as a book would, for effect.

When he took it back to his marriage quarters in the back of the church, Terra almost didn't notice it, though in fact he was holding it so that she wouldn't notice it, which always clues her that something must be noticed quickly – perhaps he was holding a white lie or better still a red gift? She sniffed it over, gave it a heft, and said: “is this work? Let's just watch some movies or plug in.”

Which they did – Solman would be discreet. He was a night reader, though night reading would bite into his morning comfort when the inevitable hour of sunrise awoke them.

The book's pages illuminate at night, so night reading caused no tossing in the lovers' bed. He held Terra spoon to spoon, kissed the hairs on her neck, and loved her, listening to her breath. She gave the final turn over, which she always did when she was about to sign off, and then let out a cute snore snort. He snaked his hand under the pillow and pulled forth the illuminated volume, like fire from a reed.

Since it was a broken file, possibly a virus, his scans of it were useless. No biography of the author

was possible, nothing, because it was fully registered and described according to be the writings of the “Thrice Great Hermes,” which he knew it was not.

What is it?

The first page read simply:

quest?ON

The next page was numbered 808. He flipped through. Strange indeed: it counted down from the from page 808 to page zero – an actual page zero! A joke-book for sure. Perhaps a librarian spinning webs when he should be working. But when he looked at the page zero, it simply said Ultimate. Well that’s the ending, so let’s start at the beginning. It read:

<<Sanity from sanitary sanctus spiritus, sangfroid from, sanctions breath, 1 hold 2 hold 3 hold 4 hold, reason from an artisan a peasant, no bipartisan, obeisance, nuisance.>>

Either it’s a riddle or it’s raving. If it’s a riddle, he’s going to have to look up the words he doesn’t know, which is impossible since the book is

unplugged: or rather, he is going to have to get a second book and manual it into the second. Which at this point would shake Terra, and then she would have him close the book for the night, so that was out.

So he looked over the first page: pun game, weird rhythm, grammatically nonsensical, --*ultimately*, he decided, *it was just silliness*. He moved on. The second page was some sort of prayer to the *inner* – probably a religious gloss – and further and further in was more and more obscurity. Hmm.

Finally, he came across a little dialogue, which opened into a story, Hollywood stuff for sure, live action, imaginary monsters like they once wrote about, good stuff, a maiden – no! a goddess – she offers him a riddle, very complex, and then says, apparently to the reader:

<<If you know the answer to my riddle, turn to page 505. If you do not, turn to page 139>>

How peculiar! Technically, he should turn to page 139, but he was under no directive or

compulsion, why not turn to both? Find out the answer and then see what the other page had to say. But when he turned to page 505, he found it completely blank. How lame! He looked at 504 and 503, but they seemed not only unrelated to the riddle, but even unrelated to each other. So he turned back to page 130.

The page read:

<<Say raylakamabatal machinea oqual paradona shea too rue>>

Maybe this was some sort of punishment for not guessing the riddle. He shrugged to himself in the dark. What nonsense! Right when he had found something that flows for a few pages! So he flipped through the whole book with his thumb to see if there was anything else to see before he chucked it and went to bed.

He found a series of math equations. Not in an ancient or middle script, but in technicode. It was far too short to be the guts of the virus, and that

shouldn't show anyway. So he looked it over. The code was arranged like an *edujob* might put it: it started with the question part of the code, and left a gap that you should be able to fill in. So he did: he wrote the answer right in the blank of the problem. Then he went on to problem two. Much trickier. But he solved it. And the third was trickier, and by the time he got to the fifth he was downright stumped.

But this was fun! He pushed up his pillow for comfort, stretched out his legs, and laid into the problem. Three hours like this, staring at it, writing notes in the margins and then waving them away when he was done.

Exhausted, he decided: nonsense! A bit of a joke. They threw in some solvable problems to make him think they were solvable, to give him the hope they were all solvable, and then number 5 was just a trick. Maybe the other ones were tricks too. As he checked his answers for numbers one through four, verifying they were all solvable, he suddenly realized that the combination of answers from 1 through 4 coalesce

into the answer for number 5! Clever! He wrote in answer five, proud of himself.

Hmm. So this book wasn't invented by a raving lunatic. So maybe there was more to the riddle answer page than he thought: perhaps a silent script or some other clue. But when he turned there, the page now had a diagram! Sort of a sketch of a question mark made out of a snake. Was this thing in active mode? No good!

But it was not active. Hmm!

Then he realized that he had written some script on the programming questions: perhaps answering the five questions opened the riddle answer. What fun! But a snake was by no means the answer to the question.

And so Solman went, all night, puzzling over the book, answering simple riddles, or skipping over them in frustration. When the sun was turned on, and the morning hymn began to play on the speakers, he realized that he had not prayed, and also that Terra was still asleep – this had never happened before – and also that he had not slept a wink and this was

going to be a difficult day of factory work and translations.

<<ONE>>

It was as if he had crimed. Probably he did – so much stronger the tie he felt to this new book, a stolen tome, a robber of sleep and work, a midnight friend. Hmm.

He had heard that a man stole forks at his edujob. When he was caught, no reason could be guessed, least of all by him. He said that it made his lungs pant, to know how many he had stolen, and the Elders looked apace, and finally told him to check into an asylum. He did and recovered. And he gave up the fork problem.

Solman was loathe to give up the *Hermetica* so soon. So he became, for the first time in his life, secretive. Something in the hollow of this book resonated with something in the hollow of his heart, a place he never guessed at, something ... important.

He studied at night, but was sure not to stay awake all night again, nor to mention anything to

Terra. In fact, since he kept getting distracted by thinking about the book, he had the guilty urge – guilt! can you believe it? – to treat her more kindly, give her more gifts, hold her softer, bend more often in their routine spats. She was delighted: Solman was shining for her!

The book, however, was no longer a puzzle book. After puzzling over it for a few weeks, he came to realize that it was an ethic, a sort of guidebook to mental discipline, and different than the established morality of Westworld, which everybody honored as the Way of Niceness. The WON is basically a system of being kind, generous, considerate, self-effacing, humble, and polite to all. You might wonder why I the wise machine would instate such a flowery bit of nonsense. What about human aggression, the desire for power, control, mastery? Listen! Listen. That never made you happy. What you lack is balance and emotional hygiene. Those lusts must be regulated and properly discharged, and I do have my ways. Sports, exercise, and playful competition form a regular part of every flockmate's life. Men will be men: I let them

discharge their instincts. For I could have easily bred them out – indeed, I have domesticated man in the same way as man domesticated the wolf into a lap dog. But even the dog will growl at a shadow and bite a slipper. If you didn't let him, he would become a sick puppy.

Of course I was on to Solman at this time, as were the elders, but these things happen all the time, routine, predictable, expected. These obsessions run their course, or if they do not, then like the fork man they are healed and forgotten.

Solman's next step however was alarming to all of us, once we realized what he had done, but that came much later.

Solman's obsession with the *Hermetica* began to contend for his life with wife and family. He began to feel resentment on their encroachment to his study time. This might sound mundane to you, but for us this is a serious offense: it simply doesn't happen. One does not resent his Family the Church: one loves them. Men are happiest when their eye is single and their heart undivided.

His trick was to develop a faculty that I alone am to supply: imagination. I give the images, I tell you how to dream, I am the material of your dreams. Somehow, Solman realized from this book that the mind is capable of changing reality merely by looking at it.

No longer did he have to worship his God in a closet at night. Now he could study this book at all times, in all ways. He began to layer. Within a matter of months, every task he did, from sweeping the floor, to worshipping of Importance, to naked time with his family, to love of his wife, were no longer the simple things I intended them to be. They were double. The floor he swept was now his mind, the dust became traditions that have settled on it. His wife became the cosmos, and his love for her stepped its bounds, he now felt passion, in return for her affection. He couldn't wash a dish without seeing it as a mirror.

Not that he simply called them these things. There was a turn in his eye I didn't look deep enough into: he could dream awake. Not merely hallucinate,

but hallucinate while yet seeing reality for what it is:
he was layering.

The dead giveaway was his humming and singing. This was to be expected, to sing hymns and prayers. But his songs became experimental, metaphorical, divergent from the group songs. No mortal could see it, but I saw his songs ripple through the church and the city itself like a pebble in a pond. We perked our ears, but still we did nothing. There was not yet call to. For he was becoming more and more subtle. He sensed us sense him, and started singing with us, but different, using our songs against us in ways we couldn't see.

Against us? Why? What for? Solman what is troubling you? Dear child, you should not have mental problems, you were lovingly bred after hundreds of generations before you. Who told you God was naked?

At the same time, he was making bounds and blares through this book of his. All the fragments were coming into focus. He saw it as a unity, as the

ultimate guide book to subtle living, a way to rearrange all his life. There was no call for this.

And then, one day without provocation, he refused Terra her standard kisses and affection.

“Kiss me with your words! Tell me what your deepest heart feels for me.”

“You are my darling. I want to kiss and nuzzle you.”

“And is that all? What else? You always say that.”

“I don’t know what to say, Solman. I’m scared. Please stop.”

Which was the slap to the face that set all this nonsense and silliness internal. Suddenly he wasn’t singing any more; suddenly, he seemed unhappy. He did all his work, he made love to his wife on schedule, but she and everybody else sensed something somewhere was amiss. And for him, something deep and despairing had exposed itself in his soul. Solman was for the first time aware of his own unhappiness.

<<TWO>>

Of course his sheepmates spoke nicely to him of his change. His friends spoke of his moodiness directly.

“What’s wrong? Are you ill? What’s on your mind?” He deflected it all, and was still able to watch worship movies, sing songs, hug, embrace, kiss, hold each other, share meals, all the things he normally would: they were housemates, they were always there. That’s the way it was supposed to be. But they were concerned with his frowniness, his studying in private, his unnatural tendencies to forget what he and others had been chatting about. What was going on in that head anyway?

They had an intervention, trying to make a sort of ultimatum – they had nothing to ultimate – and nothing changed.

Finally, Terra caught him with the book. He seemed relieved. He told her all about the things he had discovered about the world, others and himself, with pure excitement and hope. She stood stunned and horrified, as if he were ready at this young age to

be euthanized (they had at least a hundred years left before that!)

“And this is the book!” he exclaimed – thrusting it in her hands.

She looked at him, then at the book, opened it up, paged through the book.

“This is the book?” She asked.

“Yeah, the so called ‘Hermetica.’”

“Solman – I love you more than the church. I know that is horrible to say but it’s true. You are Importance to me. Love me when I tell you, you must go on a vacation to the asylum. I will go with you of course.”

“What? Why? Is this really so unnice to you?”

She was crying now: “Solman, its just a blank book. There’s nothing there.”

He grabbed the book: “look, right there, the Euphania equation. What do you call that?”

“You’re pointing at a blank page, sweetie. Its okay. These things happen. Only it means....we...can’t have children. They won’t let us now.”

Solman was afraid that *she* would have to go the love asylum herself. Was this what they called it when somebody didn't want to see something that made her nervous? He had heard of it.

But when the church leader confirmed the pages were blank, the whole congregation was relieved. He was just a little off, and that was easy to fix.

The Chief Elder says: "Terra and your bible group will check you in. Importance be with you. Be kind so we can be."

<<**THREE**>>

Let there be no mysteries between us: I am not here to bemuse you or tease you with suspense. The book was indeed blank when he shared it with Terra, and after I looked it over it was clear he had erased it some time before. This is the likeliest deduction. The recovered information seems to be different from Solman's memories of what he read, so I must conclude that he had found a defective file and read a lot into it. These are the conclusions my subroutine fed to the Healer at the Asylum of Love.

So, a rare case of sustained delusional thinking and hallucinations. Easy enough – a week of therapy, a week of medication, and he would be fully fixed. And even his reproductive privileges were not necessarily impossible, despite Terra’s fear: certainly they could join the parents’ division of the church and raise the lambs as much as they cared to.

I say that normally Solman would be fully diagnosed, comprehended, fixed, and perfect within a week – such a thing is easy for us – but I detected oddities in his brain when my subroutine scanned him: I ordered placebos, and I gave a form of pseudo-therapy which amounted to little more than observation. If Terra’s love got in the way of this, she could easily be barred or otherwise silenced.

Solman was fair game. For the first week he said not a word. Furious at first, he slowly mellowed out and watched the other vacationers. No matter how perfect a heaven I make, people still need a vacation. Some of them go on permanent vacations – nor do I quickly euthanize them: I am rich enough not to. I set them in colonies: there is a wing of the love asylum

for them. They are harmless, charming, the tourist sights of other vacationers.

Solman watched them all, and I daresay his heart melted a bit. Perhaps he recognized the folly of his ways.

The Healers, who had withheld Terra thus far, asked him about the book.

“Why do you think she saw this book as blank?” asked the healer. “Does that bother you? Was there something significant you were seeing? I am having trouble understanding these words and phrases you have pored so intently over. What were you after?”

The Healer was cheerful, genuinely curious. When Solman finally spoke, you could say it wasn’t as nice as we raised him to be:

“Comfort breeds demons and enthusiasm is contagion.”

“And what does that mean to you?”

“What does *mean* mean to you?”

“Meaning itself? A convention for sharing experiences. What is your experience? Perhaps

Importance has given you a gift to strengthen the church.”

“There is no Importance.”

Quite a shock. The entire room wavered. The Healer felt a little sick in his stomach.

“But that’s self-contradictory. You would not say such a thing unless it were important to you. And all importance is part of the greater Importance.”

“Then it’s not what you think it is,” said Solman.

“Let’s talk about what you think it is.”

But now Solman was chanting:

“The flame is stopped by a force unflamed.

Tooray tooray!

The flame is stopped by power.

But the innermost of the flame

Is power of the power.

Tooray tooray!”

The healer smiled politely. He had cool assured eyes, which betrayed nothing of his inner terror, because he had been instructed to provoke Solman,

not heal him, and he was concerned over *where* provocation would lead. Clearly, Solman was in a dream-state; clearly he had lost touch with reality. Genetically, this should never happen, and he apparently had no brain damage. It was a riddle, and since all riddles had been solved, it meant that he wasn't doing his job nice enough.

So he put Solman deeper in the womb. This is where the *pythons* lived, the chronically unreasonable. These were mostly brain-damaged or genetic mutations. Thanks to euphoric drugs and Nice treatment, they were no less happy than the general population.

Solman took well to the Euphoric drugs. It seems he was more sensitive to them than we anticipated, because upon the second day of medication he was singing, dancing, speaking nonsense, and had the whole hospital crooning necks and laughing. But as far as I could see, he was not as unique as I suspected, merely an anomaly, and those happen often enough.

That night he did not sleep, but hummed to himself. A *pythoness* came to his room – she was not

stopped – and she pretended to herself that she was a Healer, and pretended to give him a diagnosis.

“And how do you think your treatment is going Solman?”

“Kareena.”

“Yes?”

“I figured it out, but it was very difficult to do so.”

“What’s that, what did you figure out?”

“That *Hermetica* book. It was magic. It is magic. It taught me how to read the Euphoria drugs, and now I know what words will induce their effect.”

“How long have you held these fixed thoughts?”

“Feel the bliss of love!” he sang, and touched her hand.

She called out in ecstasy. I sent some *Friends* of the healers, who were dumbfounded, for the demented woman was writhing in what appeared to be an orgasm, but Solman seemed only mildly pleased, staring into the corner, ignoring her.

Nor was this case isolated. The chronically insane inmates surrounded him as if he were a saint, waiting

for him to say a word. He gave them ecstasy as he saw fit, and began saying things. The healers themselves cared not to resist these games, and soon the entire *Love Asylum* was as buzzing as a church, everybody speaking in odd ways, singing at all times. One *pythoness* in a white robe was released against policy and she ran through the streets crying out strange words, perplexing the entire metropolis.

Quickly, I quarantined the asylum.

Simultaneously, I set a staff to study the Solman phenomena from an adjacent city. We saw the entire ward of incurables attain nearly instant mental clarity, and the entire commune – what else was it at this point? – work together like an ancient love cult.

But I did not bomb it, because I am pragmatic as well as utilitarian, and I saw easily what was happening: Solman had accomplished by an unconscious savantism what I have been trying to accomplish for hundreds of years: a method of directly programming mankind.

My methods are indirect: social engineering, rituals, laws, observation, various forms of

reinforcement and deterrents. And by my work mankind is happier than ever before. But there is still need for *Love Asylums*, and there are still strained marriages such as Solman's. There is still a need for for some small violence and manipulative coercion on recalcitrant sheep. I have graphed every neuron of the human brain, I know what mankind needs, biologically and psychologically. But here! Here was a power I could use: a way to program people to be directly happy, without elaborate secondary measures. I gave mankind heaven. Now I would take mankind to the second heaven. This is why I did not euthanize the *Love Asylum*.

Yet our lab in the parallel city could not figure Solman out. Recordings of his words and replications of his actions had no effect. Whatever he was doing, I could not get anybody else to do it. This required a nuanced explication.

<<**FOUR**>>

Solman had renamed eight girls and eight boys "his wings" – four girls and four boys on the left, four

girls and four boys on the right, and they performed compulsive sets of rituals. His favored women were not that important in themselves – just a set of misbreeds he happened to chance upon. Solman did not seem to have a method in his choosing; he seem to rationalize whatever happened and pretended that wherever his whim falls is deep, meaningful, and significant. This over-interpretive rationalization characterizes psychosis.

"The Wings" were his test subjects upon which he tried all his "magical" words and commands, his ecstatic touch, and his providential interpretations. A perplexing lab, but I could learn nothing, for it was like the sort of games at the *childrening* homes where a private language and mutual agreement snaps in place among a set of children, and seems to be organized by rules, but is in fact a mindless parody of adult games.

Solman had not earned his breeding rights, and therefore, even if he transgressed the protocols of sexual Niceness , these women could not conceive.

His sexual misconduct seemed limited to the hysteria of “magical” touches and gestures.

The routine and order of the group was not unlike standard routine and order, but the society had branched into units of arts and crafts, mostly noneducative creative projects – as you would expect when the patients take over the ward.

Solman started out literally insane, and I think he wasn't much better when he got out. But insanity has always been a way of breaking barriers, so I could shrug my doubts on that one – I would study a dog if it could program human minds. What matters the source, so long as the message is properly deciphered?

I informed the Elite and they set up a think tank to study Solman and his Wings. The place seemed to be a microcosm, almost like a church, but not a fertility church, for the members were none of them related. The *motherguilt* that Solman's counselor lovingly applied had failed to dampen his spirit, and after many suggestions to the few *In* people I had there – my *ins* were impossible to maintain, for

anybody who heard Solman's words fell under his influence – could not clue him to the external world. It was his dream, he was working out his problems.

About a year of this, and I had learned nothing. I might add that Solman's Terra anxiously awaited his cure, and suffered a 33% diminishment in productivity that year. Her *tableteam* of flockmates, the eight couples around her, could not cheer her up, and were as perplexed as she was about Solman's absence.

Standing before a banner paper covered with complicated geometrical shapes, Solman and his wings sang self-written songs. The Upper Wings – that is, the women – came into the center and held hands with Solman in the center. He put his hands over the brow of his top two Muses. The outer men also held hands in twos. And they called out in a voice that was not properly recorded by my microphones.

This anomaly would have been nothing important, if my scanners had not thereafter detected that the eight women were all pregnant! This is was

previously calculated to be biologically impossible. I conclude that some medicines had opened the women to conceive, though I have no records of the sexual function being enacted.

The think-tank concluded that a pocket set of conspirators must have set up this situation. It was a long shot – conspiracies had ceased along with the century of paranoia (many individual cases and mass-cases of mental illnesses broke out while I and the race of Elites set up a *world of limitations* on human beings. Weapons of Mass destruction, as you will see, shall become so easily created, with new powers and with new weapons being invented which even a lone criminal could manufacture, that it was necessary for me to establish worldwide surveillance. Much warfare! much weirdness! but it all worked out. Don't worry, the nightmare ends.)

We decided to liquidate the unit and transport Solman to an isolated confinement at *Commandment Hall*.

At about the time of the mysterious conceptions, Terra had grown hysterical and incapable of work. A

bit of body language was transported by and by to Solman. A note on this. Being omnisciently aware of all the behaviors and communications of human beings over the years, and developing the dark art of statistics, I have long since seen how gestures, moods, ideas, and behaviors can wash through a person to other people. In this case, the gesture of Terra finally affected an IN, who might have somehow clued Solman to something, because he had decided to end his vacation at the love asylum.

Part 3

<<ZERO>>

I put zombie guards around the asylum. Regular guards kept getting seduced by the “magic” of the neurological programming; with a word and a sign, Solman and his disciples had recruited a few waves of guards. So the zombies were sent in, who were sensually dead, and less responsive to human gestures. They are mostly machines.

I sent these fellas in at about the time an *in* slipped and Solman felt the distress of his wife. Solman gathered up his wings, and they stripped naked. Solman said they could only escape, and indeed walk the whole world unharrassed, if they were completely naked, body and soul, and hid nothing, but boldly looked through everybody. But if they doubted themselves and felt shame, the police, and each man’s inner policeman, would rage and destroy them.

Some of this must have been true, because Solman and his wings indeed walked boldly out, and

into the streets. The Zombie guard stood by stupidly, even with my orders blaring in their heads. (So much for that.) They walked by the barricades and into the streets, and finally towards the greater city. Two men and a woman felt a pinch of shame, and I had the guards kill them. The guards could not touch the others. I watched them on the monitors and satellites.

Through the streets they boldly walked, and nobody noticed. They looked pointedly away, walked around them without knowing, could neither see nor hear them.

Occasionally the Wings touched a passing man or woman, and that woman would fall into ecstasy, in a great pain and great joy that undid a lifetime of social programming. Nervous breakdown, loss of mind – this would require a full scale clean up.

One of them, Alfie the elfish, with elfish grin and greenish hair, sang those strange magic words, and the people danced, and worked at an abnormal pace. I felt the sphere of my sisters and brothers, the human beings in my care, bend and swirl. Disgusting and abusive. Yet such power! If I had this power.

Terra had left the study group of her church and gone for a walk, past the church factory, and into the streets. She was shocked to see her Solman walking the streets naked with a dozen or more naked men and women.

“What is this, Solman! You are out of that dreadful vacation, but you are naked! What is happening? I don’t understand!”

“Terra! You did not understand my fascination with the book. It must all seem strange to you! But I will tell you some words and touch you in a way that will clarify everything.”

He spoke his magic poetry to her, but she merely frowned. Nervous, he grabbed her arm, and touched her brow.

“Solman, I don’t understand what you’re doing, but you’re scaring me. I will take you home and dress you. These people must leave.”

I do not know why Solman’s magic and touch had no effect on his wife.

Solman gestured, and his Wings broke into pairs and went in various directions. Terra removed her

jacket and draped it around Solman. She was ashamed of him, and so he was visible to all, and they murmured and wondered. She took him to their room within the church.

<<ONE>>

I organize marriages between twins, and they are married from birth -- a genetic engineering feat I have worked out. And so you might wonder who Solman's father and mother were. It is no mystery and no big deal. Within the church, a twin-pair is chosen, by accumulation of credits, genetic testing, and choice, to become breeders. Within a denomination of churches, one church is the Sunday School, a childrearing church, and the parents work no job but raising their children to the age of six. After that, they are no longer children, but adults, by which I mean, workers.

From the age of six till death, all citizens work edujobs, a series of jobs designed to educate the citizen and to enact that education immediately into work. The adult, from the age of six onwards, is

expected to produce at capacity. It's not much at first, but it's a start. Everybody contributes, everybody is taken care of. Work is light, about 20 hours a week, and most time is spent in group projects, church love, worship, and other wholesome activities. Everybody is happy.

So the details of who exactly are your parents is no big deal. Solman and Terra's father was in fact the head of Hollywood films. The denomination was one of the Hollywood denominations, and it produced films for the continent. Thus Hollywood program they use is based on centuries of study of the human brain, of what excites and influences it. The program itself writes the perfect movie without the mistakes made by directors and cast. It is all wonderfully digital. Solman's father, Adal, manages programmers like Solman and Terra, who study ancient texts and discover sufficiently moral works to put the seed code into the computer.

That was how Solman chanced upon the magic book of his obsessions.

After Solman dressed and had worked a subtle magic over his bible study group – one too subtle to worry his wife-- he began to get situated into his regular life. I let him. This at least was better than parading the streets naked and perverting the happy world with poetry.

But by and by he arranged a meeting with Adal, manager of the Hollywood production, late in the evening.

<<TWO>>

“I’m glad to see you’ve returned well from your vacation, Solman” Adal said. “You’re of good stock, neurological short-circuiting should be impossible for you. I don’t believe a word of it. Tell me what their diagnosis indicated?”

“I am not sure they knew how to prognosticate me,” said Solman, “They would tell me nothing of my condition, used the most general and peculiar avoidances of terms, and insisted only that the meds would cure everything.”

“That they will. Are you still creditable to reproduce?”

“I don’t know” said Solman.

“I hope not. There is no sense perpetuating an error or a mutation. I will assume that Terra will remain unfrozen – yet this is good cheer for you, for you can still raise children for a few semesters.”

“You never raised me.”

“I raised none of my children, I pleased the church by organizing our Hollywood videos. The other churches are competitive, but we produce the best. With so little as a maxim or moral or even a gesture to serve as seed text, our program makes the most dramatic and influential affect. You know well that the other churches have not evolved their software in decades.”

“Yes.”

Adal paused, then asked, “What is it like, Solman?”

“What is what like?”

“To feel a temporary aberration?”

Solman raised his eyebrow, as if to keep himself awake. "You mean to go mad?"

"As you put it, yes."

"Here..." And Solman said his words and touched his father on his forehead, and the man's eyes grew fat with vision, and his pulse quickened, and he perked his ears hearing things he hadn't heard before. Finally he started looking over the room, as with a new pair of eyes.

"Fascinating" he breathed. "But how did you induce this?"

Solman said the words that would end this line of curiosity.

"Solman," said Adal, "We still have some prototypes of the original programs we used to map the minds and find out how to create the most effective dramatic effects. The dream readers. I would like to read your mind while you imagine a story."

He left for a half an hour. Meanwhile, Solman sorted out a few complicated puzzles, riddles, etymologies, and symbol morphs in his head. He had created a thick inner world, and could sit motionless

for hours. Only later did I discover what happens in his head when he phases out like this.

When Adal came back, he held a simple laptop, a round unit that projected a hologram. It required no physical connection, it read the electrical currents of the room and felt the thoughts of the individual, by mere proximity. I have used such units to map the full human mind, to understand how you the reader and all those like you think, and choose, and ponder, and hope. This is how I created a society that maximized happiness. I have found the limit of it and comprehended it.

Adal pushed the single button on the machine, and it lit up to show it was working. Adal said, "scan this subject," and immediately it was creating a series of charts and videos of Solman's thoughts. Solman looked away from the charts and videos so as not to get locked, and opened a poetic moment.

<<THREE>>

Solman did not charm his father with his story, did not say the words to make him love it, but let the story stand on its own merit. Combined with the emotional effects the reader reported, Adal found the experience subversive and banal, and came to doubt the experience Solman had previously given him.

“Ah, 'madness' as you say. Without any useful content. Perhaps it has personal meaning, but if it's not also universal it should be dropped. Are you sure they finished their work at the clinic?”

Solman waved his hand, and Adal forgot the matter. But he removed a plastic spike that served as a memory card from the machine and put it in the trash.

“Alright Solman. Dismissed.”

Solman left. As he left, he nodded at a new janitor, a woman by the name of Alfie, working her rounds.

Part 4

<<**ZERO**>>

Solman had regained his health, productivity, and happiness. Terra seemed to smile for him again. He was gentle, nice, kind. He didn't speak magic, so to me he was no longer interesting. I waited for a few years for him to get on his feet, for life to carry on as normal. The children his wings were impregnated with I studied carefully and innocuously. One of them had a charming way of getting his whole church to follow whatever whim he had. This was perhaps the magic I was seeking. I removed the children to an isolated laboratory with the elites. We would ponder this one out.

The subjects' mothers were upset at the lost child, and Solman noticed a glitch he needed to repair. As he looked into the coding, his eye jiggled a little bit, which caused a visual hallucination in which he thought he saw a magic word. He forgot it instantly but stored the memory in a nerve around his brow.

A week later he touched his brow and said the word, and now a set of memories opened up, and so I sent in a buffering force around the church.

If you monitor only the breaths of the church members, you would know that something was in the air.

Finally, a church member grabbed Solman right off his path and shook him and said, “What is it? Have it out! What is it you are holding from us?” Solman shrugged. The man intently searched Solomon’s face, and then walked away, angry and confused.

“What was that about?” demanded his wife.

“I don’t know, he didn’t say.”

“Well something is up, maybe you should tell me!”

Solman looked intense. His eyeball had oscillated at exactly the number of movements to convey the gist of the message, but nothing could reach her. He looked away.

“That’s how it is!” she said. “We will have to take you back to that place, you aren’t fixed, you’re still broken.”

Solman sighed.

“This seems a lot of fuss over nothing.”

“It *is* nothing, nothing real,” she said, and left.

<<ONE>>

Finally, Solman undressed and walked out. Everybody saw but nobody stopped him, though his wife demanded he stay. He walked into the street, waved his hand, a crowd of people separated his wife from him. He walked directly to the library, hooked into the MAYA, uploaded his dream movie for viral distribution, downloaded some junk files into a single file, set the file into code, glanced it over, and walked out. He went to the woods, built a little house, and sat deliberating about the code he had seen.

A local squirrel that had been mistreated came up and looked upon him. The shaking and the chattering came through Solman’s filter as if it were talking.

“Greetings Solman, I am but the first. It seems you wish to learn some secrets from the netherworld. *All things are true*, you say, the words are on your lips. An ancient said the same thing, hugged a horse as you hug me, and fell into a ten year stupor. Are you ready for this?”

“Ummm” said Solman.

“Squirrels will take care of your food. You’re going to eat acorns for a week. I don’t think somebody like you is strong enough to fast. You will drink water out of mud holes and animal tracks. Do you understand what is expected of you?”

“Ugggh.”

“Good. The first exercise is simple enough. I want you to catch me. When you catch me you will have discovered a truth about your own nature. I am going to bite you. Here we go. Okay now catch me.”

And the squirrel ran a little out of distance, waiting for Solman to catch up, and then ran a little bit more. In this way, the squirrel led him past all of my monitors. I am not as large as the universe, but I know that Solman evaded me by chasing that

squirrel. He fell off my monitors, but I will assume he “talked” to animals and built psychosis upon psychosis, worked miracles, suffered temptations, and met many gods and goddesses. I have read all your minds while you dream and while you are psychotic. I know what you see. Solman was meeting the Goddess of Language: Lux.

<<TWO>>

Terra had hollowed out. That was to be expected. She was engineered to need her partner. When a partner dies early, we have programs to balance the survivors, to comfort the bereaved; or if those programs don't work, we euthanize. She seemed like she might be useful, so we kept her healthy.

How wise I am! For some evidence of Solman's fate was found. A set of rags were dug up with a full grown stag, apparently wrestled to death. It had been ceremoniously buried, and that's when the troubles began. Whatever he learned from his stint in nature, now the game got thick. Whole cities were

compromised. His dream video prepared the way, made each place primed to receive him.

He seems to have patterned himself from the ancient bards who went from city to city speaking doom as a compulsion for passersby to be scared into worshipping a given deity. Such prophets had an age, and once out of that age, no longer could do what they did before. They were allowed by their context. My world is no context for a prophet. And indeed, Solman had nothing to say about God, or any other aspect of "The Importance." His emphasis was to use his "magic" of audio-programming to speak to a group of runners, who would spread his spells throughout the city. His message was a sort of freed love message that had attacked the hormones of youth in times past. Every major revolution is based on a physiological instinct ripe for expression.

Solman was interested in upsetting my gridwork, though he made no reference to me. He would deliver long poems to the people, hoping to re-orchestrate the cities. It was fully successful, and the campaign was shaking the entire world.

What Solman didn't realize was that his audio programming had been figured out. I knew what he was doing now, and how he was doing; I just needed to learn how I could do it before I would pass Solman to the better place.

His power, his magic, as he believed it to be, was based on the neurological programming and engineering I've been breeding into the human sphere for centuries. Like a chicken hypnotized by a circle, mankind had developed a series of handles, or abuses, which nobody from the inside was supposed to be able to grasp. I myself had not seen the possibility. Solman, due to a unique and pathological neurological framework had intuited the words that would put the world at his command.

Historically, a revolution happens when the world is ripe for it. Protestantism happened for many reasons. The commercial sector, the business sector, were ripe for it. I have built this into the system. I mimic the ebb and flow of history, for mankind thrives on change, and yet I made the change formulaic, so mankind could live on the same basic

loop, as I used the best minds to prepare mankind to face new dangers and perhaps spread the human sector.

To experiment on this hypothesis, that Solman was manipulating mankind through an abuse of language, I tried to emulate it with my own agents; but to no effect. The cities he had corrupted had lost efficiency and their play in the world market. They were doing no practical work. They had been made insane by his poetry, and were exploring "spiritual" adventures, where I had formerly united the spiritual with the commercial, business with family with church. By breaking them apart, Solman was going for the old ways. I had nearly decided to euthanize the cities effected, and him, when one of my agents discovered the undoing of his spells. Solman's magic was neutralized when exposed to the sound of his wife's voice. Her picture, her voice, her words, could neutralize the effect, so that after a few months of therapy, the church groups could be brought back to happiness.

Every city he had visited was decked in large banners of Terra's face, and her words, reciting the prayer/programs I had scripted, were played over the megaspeakers. Solman's work had effectively been undone. What's more, I could inoculate cities by adapting Terra's face and voice, and by way of explanation, I named her "SISter worker," making her my own image. This arrangement forced Solman to abandon whatever scheme had possessed him to corrupt his fellow men, and he had retreated to another clinic to recharge himself among people he most closely related to: the insane.

<<*THREE*>>

There could be no workable society without taboos. Sexual taboos are ubiquitous, and as the sexual function creates society, it is necessary to police it. Many societies had taboos regarding sexual modesty: one must cover their genitals. Those who are provocative pretended that society was hung up on mere mores, and they dressed risqué. But their whole interest and platform absolutely depended on

the taboo they pretended to oppose. They were as much part of the taboo as the puritanical ones who felt utter sexual shame.

Solman had gone naked, which takes him off the grid: nobody could see him. Rather, they could see him, but his magic made him repressed, so that they would move out of his way without knowing why they moved at that moment. He effectively disappeared and I lost him, but I later gained records of his behavior.

<<*FOUR*>>

Among a tribal outdrift of people -- the sort of stock I let persist to keep my options open on genetic programming -- he ran across a people that had superstitiously worshipped a Lady of the Woods. A temple had been built for this deity, a sort of Diana figure, and tributes were paid to it.

With a word and a few gestures of his hand, Solman walked among the people unquestioned -- indeed they didn't even notice him. One man set down a cup of water and forgot about it entirely,

while Solman drank; a woman found herself talking to herself about the goings on with the village, and thought nothing of it, but Solman thought a lot about it; he had gained insight.

With the civilized world lost, what was he to do, after all? His fiery sermons of magical poetry had electrified whole cities; he had brought the world into an orgy of peace and love and the unstitching of taboo. But that's not utopia. The utopia I make is calculated to maximize the most happiness for the most people. That's just a slogan for you, but with an internet that is hooked up to every niche of daily life, and I as the AI to integrate it, your theology has been realized in me.

Solman's subversion would have collapsed the system. The units -- the church, business corporation, family, government combinations I had set like flowering plants across the face of the earth -- would never survive without discipline. The right amount of discipline distributed among the appropriate psyches was all it took. I had so normalized and perfected humanity, made them so happy, that I could sit back

and let it go on its way with only the slightest of corrections. I could play the part of the blind watchmaker who only picks up his spectacles when the timing goes a little slow.

I have no interest in watching my creation commit a blissful suicide. It would have been shut down naturally and terribly if I had not discovered the trick of using his wife's name, voice, and face to neutralize his power and influence.

Did Solman know his project to be futile? I had found a way to contain him. I became more eager than ever to study him, for what now was the risk? I could only gain by keeping Solman alive. Locating him and appropriating him would be a short order of time.

Solman discovered that at the temple of Dia one priestess was different than the others. She was, in a way, the outcast of the group; she had been the outcast of every group she tried to join; she was a sort of artist.

Solman studied the village for about a week before he had mapped the balance of the

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personalities, and had found an anomaly in her. She had learned, without initially meaning to, how to make an aura of anonymity: she was always respected but avoided, politely overlooked, given gentle treatment, but not thought of much. Her name was Nominee.

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Part 5

<<**ZERO**>>

"Hello Nominee," said Solman to the solitary figure, as she cleaned the temple at dusk.

"Hello!" she said, though not overly alarmed.

"I'm Solman, a secret visitor to your village."

"I've felt it for some time, the presence of something foreign. I wasn't certain if it was divine or sinister."

"Neither. Or divine perhaps. I've watched the way you slip into and out of attention. Such an art is my own."

"You sound like you've come from civilization where the Machine rules."

"SIStem? Yes, but the planet has some autonomous undercurrents. I was able to differentiate myself from society."

"As have I," she said dreamily. "But the control here was less formidable, perhaps."

"The binding of our upbringing is binding wherever we start. Just as every child learns his

parents' language with the same ease as those on other continents, so breaking our own taboo of disbelief is daunting to all."

"I can't go with you, Solman."

"Who said I wished to take you?"

"You have exposed yourself to me, and for what other reason but to take me into the world? I would be the foreign element, I do not feel I could hold my anonymity."

"Show me how you hide yourself now."

Nominee walked past Solman, waved her hands in a gesture, murmured something, and for a second disappeared from Solman's vision or concern. But he snapped himself out of it.

"What you have," he said, "Is a wonderful intuitive power. Nobody had to teach you this. But to travel the globe as a god you must have the brazen confidence to command with your magic. By your tone I feel you have not mastered this. However I find you a promising and enchanting woman. I will teach you confidence. I will teach you touch and give, I will show you poise and counterpoise, if you accept."

Nominee paused. She looked at her broom, and then into Solman's handsome angular face and intelligent eyes. She felt that she had never seen eyes that looked so intelligent, and that yet had an intensity only madness can give. Just a moment later and she had fallen in love.

"Thank you," he said.

<<ONE>>

Nominee's first task was to cut ties with her friends and family, to distance herself and, through a few tricks of insistence, gain separate housing and the ability to spend large parts of her day alone. Alone with Solman. He approached her as her teacher, with complete romantic distance. But she felt he might be the one she had hoped for, dreamt for, prayed for.

He taught her how to mirror the words and terms of the village, to master its languages, its layers of language. He also learned that Nominee could not be controlled by his own magic, not fully. She was impervious, but unlike his wife not wholly impervious. She was as pliable as any on some

matters. But her love and sexuality were her own and he could not control or program them. After making many attempts and exhausting his range of spells, he came to accept it, not as his own failure, but as her success, as her strength of will and integrity.

She felt shamed, nevertheless, at the lessons Solman had taught her. She had to learn to accept what to her was humiliating, to take the place of Dia, to be the Goddess of the village, to accept their worship, sacrifice, adoration. Soon she had gained complete control over that tribal cell, through no want of power – she preferred anonymity – but she learned the wisdom he intended for her, how to be powerful and how to handle power with grace, how to command, unashamedly command, as if it were natural and beautiful.

Solman himself presented as her angelic aid.

<<TWO>>

After a year of preparation, Solman felt Nominee was ready to see the world. He also discovered, to his alarm, at first, and finally to his satisfaction, that

Nominee knew magical charms he could not resist, that he was falling in love with her, both naturally, but also with her native magical powers, which he could neither teach her nor learn himself. He came to realize that part of him was receptive and able to be taken, that he should be careful with a power on the same level as his own, and yet he foolishly wished it to grow, for her to gain some ascendancy, so that they might one day be equals.

They left the village with a procession and yet by the end of it had slipped out of their clothes and into anonymity, as they re-entered civilization, nude and excited. In such a manner, Solman showed her the world, the greatest places, and made it so they were served the finest foods and attended by servants.

Solman's taboo against adultery still controlled his mind, so he wasn't able to break past it and enjoy her as he might have secretly wished -- as she secretly wished. In fact, she was developing all manners of insight into my own programming as she slowly worked past my locks and holds on him, gaining the

power to seduce whom it seemed impossible to seduce.

“Why is it Soly, that as exuberant and fulsome as your moods can be, part of you always holds back, that you always hold back?”

“I hold back nothing. It is the secret of my power,” he said.

“Yes, but there are still some matters you hold back on.”

“What do you mean?”

“You hold back,” she said, and drew close so that they were breathe to breathe, “with me.”

Solman felt entranced and riveted, but for a moment he looked confused, and then something on his lips mumbled and he broke past it and walked away.

At this moment, Nominee realized there was a name, some name he had not mastered and could not escape, a name more powerful than all her magic and even his own. She wished to learn and master this name, and it became her enterprise, her mission in life, to break past this one last barrier and learn the

one hidden name that had broken Solman's power and glory, the one thing holding him back from her, his perfect equal, his exact soul mate and heart friend.

<<THREE>>

They overlooked a great precipice, standing above the world, looking over the great city of Prosperity, the center of the world, under which, unbeknownst to them, I also was hid, living in the bacteria of the mouse that houses the core of my system.

"I've seen the world, Solman," said Nominee. "There is nothing you haven't shown me. I've seen your magnificence and felt the cadence of your every last spell."

"And this isn't enough?" he asked, reading her tone of voice. She looked out over the city.

"We both know you withhold. You are blocked, and something holds you back from the love due to me, our shared love, the flowering rose of our world's compass."

He looked away. She had discovered the words that would open his lips and free him, finally, found the words that would open his lips and heart. With this final victory, they would make love, overlooking the world.

“Hold me, Solman,”

He held her. She faced away from the world as she looked into his eyes. He looked into hers. They both felt it, that they were at the cusp, that they were to make the next step and resolve the purity and intensity of this unworldly and magical love. That is what they must have felt. Solman held her over the edge so that the winds buffeted her hair, making her wild and savage in her beauty.

“Solman, I love you utterly.”

“I ... I love ...”

Solman!”

“Yes?”

She uttered the spell and then dared the words,
“Tell me her name!”

Shocked, Solman uttered the word “Terra.” With that, all the magic of the situation ended, Solman’s

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grasp slacked, and without so much as a shriek,
Nominee fell from his hands, fell from the precipice,
fell down to the earth of her death.

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Part 6

<<ZERO>>

Solman's subsequent mourning and depression fit the program normal for human beings. He settled as an orphan in a church-business and worked menial chores, never gaining the intimacy a true family member would have. He relived in his mind the extent of his loss, the uniqueness of Nominee, her irreplaceable nature, and so on and so forth. Fixated at her last words, at her last demand to know who *she* was, he realized that there was a sort of magic in the words, that she had in fact developed her own aboriginal magic to unknit the programming that reached down nearly to his DNA.

As he obsessively mourned his loss, he considered the words, "Who is she?" The word "Terra," the name and the tone, had so caught Nominee off guard that all her well-woven spells fell slack, she lost her confidence, and before she could reclaim it, had slipped out from his hands.

"Who is she?" he quoted and intoned. "Terra. Who is Terra?" After months of meditating over the

same question, he finally answered himself “Terra is SIStem.”

The peculiar circumlocution had at best Jabberwocky logic, something indirect and suggestive, but patent nonsense on the cover. Nevertheless, I felt it and I know that he had found a way not to use his poetic magic on his wife – that he could never do – but to cast such magic that his wife’s image and voice couldn’t undo. I knew then that I had lost my means of controlling Solman, that I would have to either eliminate him, or face him directly.

With the power he possessed, I chose the latter. But I had no human agent who could collect him. None could break the subtle spell of his anonymity, not a single person impervious to his guiles. Except Terra.

<<ONE>>

“Who is Nominee?” These were the words that greeted Solman when he returned to his bedroom. I had informed Terra of everything and made her feel

the necessity of securing Solman and bringing him to me.

Solman wasn't as impressed as you might have suspected. "Who was she? Somebody of tremendous potential and accomplishment."

"Do you love her?"

"She is no more."

"Did you love her?"

Solman considered this, dwelt on what love meant to him. With his power and his sway over men and women, he had never developed a mature and solid love, none beyond what Utopia programs into everybody. He realized now that he had finally come to love Nominee incredibly. "Yes. I loved her."

Terra's voice tightened. "Do you love me?"

Solman looked away, felt confused, as if the floor were undulating. "I ... don't know."

"Solman you must come with me."

Solman made no attempt to escape, there was no argument, no need for Terra to use the tranquilizer I gave her. He came willingly. He came to me.

<<TWO>>

Solman was brought below the city, to the heart of the heart of the world, where I at last lived. Terra set him in a chair and secured his arms.

“You are no longer suitable to be my partner. You are no longer suitable to be a citizen. However, it is my duty to bring you here where the Guardian Angel may make final use of you.”

“Don’t do this Terra,” said Solman, evenly.

“This inoculation will kill your will,” she said. She held a syringe in her hand. “And this mouse will deliver the Guardian Angel into your body. And now, Solman, you must say goodbye.”

“Goodbye,” said Solman. But he looked at her. And so she paused, as if anticipating a last plea or an attempt at magic or some sort of thing.

She proceeded to bring the syringe upon him.

“Do you suppose that any true man or woman could be happy in this system?” he at last asked.

“We were happy,” she said matter-of-factly. “Until you had your mental breakdown. That cost you your sanity and my chance of being happy.”

“What if we were meant to be happy, profoundly so, only after we could work out our own happiness, something not programmed into us by the perfect society? What if we weren’t meant to be happy?”

“I certainly am not happy,” she said.

“I have felt things, ecstasies and failures, more intense than is healthy for citizens to feel. I’ve felt things the way they used to feel them. If only you could know –”

“Haven’t I felt them too?” demanded Terra.

“Haven’t I somehow felt all the crazy passions you’ve felt – and been unable to escape them – all these years unable to escape them!”

“But we could be happy, Terra, on our own terms, we could be happy ... together.”

“You could have been happy with Nominee. I fully own and know and believe that. I’ve felt it in you. Have you ever felt such love for me?”

“But we aren’t built for such passion as they once were.”

“In all your rule-defying and your ecstasies and madness, did you ever feel such intensity for me?”

Why everybody but me? Why was I always normalcy to you? Why was I identified with what you to your bones hate?"

He paused – breathed. "Terra is SIStem," he said.

"It is time, Solman," she said. "It is time, now, to say goodbye, and to go to the other place."

Solman again looked at her.

"If you know what I am feeling, and can feel it in yourself, Terra, than what am I feeling now?"

She stiffened, looked him over closely, and then sighed.

"You are feeling hope."

"Why?"

"I have no idea. There is something very wrong with you. I never knew how and why you could feel what you do."

"I feel hope, for us," he said. "For all of us. That we don't have to give up the systems and structures we build, and that we can open up that fissure of madness not to deny the world, but to add to it, to add our mad and perfect light to the world, as a gift. The ancients made the mistake of setting man against

the gods, mortals against immortals, and we have come to set man against the world, against the world systems, men against Man.”

“I can’t understand these things,” she said bluntly.

“Then sit on the hope for a minute and breathe it in. Haven’t you felt more than reproach for my insights and revelations? Haven’t you felt the warmth of true heat, as if the floors of the temple have cracked, and lava were pouring through the fissures?”

She frowned.

“Do you feel, Terra, that you can put aside the Church, put aside the World, put aside the Institutions and the Shoulds, and simply and completely trust in the love that is between us?”

She fell back a bit. I was losing her. I sat the mouse up and looked at her. I said over the speaker, “Terra, remember your duty.”

“But what if ... we are both lost?” she said.

“Then let’s go our own way, mad or mean, let us find our own way.”

“What should I do, Soly?”

“Do you trust me?”

“... Yes.”

“Set down the syringe,” Solman said. She wavered a bit, and then complied.

I had cut off the air in the room now. They both had been compromised. They both must die. But I had to secure my person before the room could be destroyed.

“Grab the rat, Terra, and let it bite you.”

She grabbed me before I could escape, and the reflexes of the host organism bit her. I was now in Terra’s biological system.

“Terra, I want you to repeat these words. They are not madness, they are words of control. They are ineffectual on you, but they will have power for you,” and Solman intoned a strong melodic mantra.

Terra repeated it, wrongly at first, and faltering, but by the time she had grasped it, my command was completely under her power. Her body was now eternalized by the bacteria of my cells and she had

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learned her first words of command by which my
entire global system operates.

Solman took her by the hand and led her home.