Experiments on Doomed Timelines

by medicinalElectricals (BizarreHarlequin)

Summary

What does it take to keep timeline doomed individuals from dying? And why do they die in the first place?

Notes

Hey. This fic is written (mostly, barring a few out of perspective 3rd person chapters) from the perspective of the narrator writing a personal log which is being uploaded chapter-by-chapter to an outer ring server for the purpose of being read by others. It takes place in the replay AU, which is originally based off GodsGiftToGrinds Sburb Glich FAQ Fic, but if you're interested in the AU you can also find more on it at https://eternity-braid.tumblr.com/ who is currently writing a whole lot on it.

Of course, you don't actually have to know the AU at all to read this, my intent is that this will be a completely self-sustained story.

My intentions for this work are for it to be part narrative told via media written in universe, part worldbuilding for the AU, and part character exploration for the narrator themselves.

I'd love it if you left comments on what you think, as even within the homestuck fandom this is a fairly experimental work.

If you want, join the replay value AU discord here! https://discord.gg/2w2E2Z4
Chapter 1

Experiments on Doomed Timelines

By medicinalElectricals

Timestamp 74.41

Experiment report: 4 days since session entry.

We’ve all come into contact with doomed timelines. And doomed people. I am sure that almost all of us would have experienced the death of our immediate family during our first session. For some, learning that they were going to die regardless was reassuring. For me, it made me wonder. What would it take to prevent a doomed timeline individual from dying?

I have been gifted with a very stable replay session this time around. All 14 of us, relatively experienced replayers with mostly non-murderous psyches, and so far, very little gamebreaking glitches. We all decided a few meetings in that we would create an extended session itinerary, take things very safe, and try and use this time to relax, deal with our issues, and spend some time not constantly in immediate danger like all of our befores. Current schedule sets total session length at roughly 2 and a half years.

If I can get a single doomed timeline body to survive even close to that long, it would be a revolutionary discovery. To this end, I have acquired 26 bodies from the presession world that have been taken with me in this apartment block [Note: observant viewers will note that apartment style dwellings usually only bring in the building frame and the players own apartment. To include the entire apartment, I used the “Houseboundry stacked declaration” glitch as detailed in thespianGlassblowers “Guide to initial housing conditions and medium entry”]

7 bodies, designated B-0 through 6 have been designated for experimental, esoteric procedures of removing doomed status.

The other 19 bodies, A-0 through 18, I will keep as secure and well maintained as possible, for the purpose of seeing how far “conventional” protection can keep them alive for while still maintaining a doomed status.

Current status:

A-0: Age 21. Male. Healthy
A-1: Age 52. Female. Overweight but otherwise healthy.
A-2: Age 49. Male. Healthy
A-4: Age 9. Female. Healthy
A-5: Age 38. Female. Missing left leg below knee. Injury sustained shortly after
A-7: Age 74. Female. Hip replacement. Type 2 Diabetes.
A-8: Age 34. Male. Healthy
A-9: Age 12. Female. Healthy
A-10: Age 11. Male. Healthy
A-11: Age 41: Male. Many broken bones, damaged shortly after medium entry.
A-12: Age 32. Female. Healthy
A-13: Age 29: Female. Healthy
A-15: Age 45. Female. Healthy
A-16: Age 44. Male. Deaf.
A-17: Age 41. Female. Healthy
A-18: Age 56. Male. Healthy

Overall, I could have not hoped for a better experimental group of subjects. None of them are already in immediate danger of dying. A-14s lung cancer may present issues further in the experiment, but I believe that I can cure it using my Life aspect abilities.

Containment procedures

It became apparent to me early on that despite these non-players only possessing what a minority of replayers would call a life or consciousness, they still seemed to heavily object to being contained and monitored. Initially I had hoped to keep them confined in the makeshift facilities I had my server player construct, with food, water and essentials being transportalized in daily, but it soon became apparent that they had no intentions of participating without struggle. Many, in the absence of knowledge, became to believe that me, or rather the original player whose place I had taken, was responsible for not only their entrapment, but the entire circumstances of entry into the medium. During preliminary examinations they would become hostile, demand release and information, and often become very distressed upon being informed that earth was destroyed and that I could not return them there. Many attempted physical violence against my person, to no avail.

To solve this issue, I have devised a containment procedure that will ensure that they can not interfere with the experiment. It will also eliminate many potential dangers in of itself, such as suicide, which is permissible for their beings.

The life aspect ability [To sleep, perchance to dream] is a low level buff that is used to
increase the sleep coefficient of targets, and to also induce fatigue in the target. I have found that if I increase the given power to the ability by roughly 50,000% (A less significant upgrade than it would sound due to the very low cost of the ability in the first place) by freestyling aspect modification, a permeant deep sleep state can be induced. Unfortunately, this only works on those with zero or near zero sempersand, which is universally only found on non-player humans. Extended usage of this technique may result in irreparable brain damage and muscle decay, but should not cause actual bodily harm.

With the issue of consciousness solved, a type of “stasis pod” was easy enough to alchemise, and with mild life aspect infusement, the pod was able to provide its inhabitant with nutrition, waste disposal and biometric monitoring.

Currently, all A series subjects are contained in my lab floor room. 4 hired consorts have been acquired to provide routine checking of systems that they are intelligent enough to handle (at this point, only cleaning of subjects).

To avoid interference with future experiments that may require intact cognitive facilities, B series subjects have not been put to sleep. I have instead decided to keep them in a separate containment facility. Suicide and self-harm prevention will be an issue, but I believe that I can prevent serious issues from occurring if I ensure that their environment is unable to be misused, and also if I provide them with adequate psychological stimulation. For this, they have been provided with a collection of 10,000 pre-session human written books and 2550 tv and movie DVDs (Thanks to the society of human culture preservation for the data and achhemisation assistance). I will also take it upon myself to regularly monitor their status, hopefully when they stop attempting to aggress me whenever I show myself.

Experiment report: 12 days since session entry.

Just what makes someone or something doomed? Current consensus on the topic is that the “Doomed” flag sources from individua who hail from a doomed reality. Where doomed reality seems to be defined as “reality that is not a reality that is not doomed” or in other words, not as is the common vernacular, not “Alpha” timelines. This logic is as circular as it sounds.

Is the code that attempts to end those are flagged as doomed on the doomed themselves, or merely a tag on them that invites larger sburb code to take action against them? Indeed, is there code at all, or is doomed a property of reality itself that sburb has simply adopted as part of a game mechanic? Is such a question even meaningful, given how deeply sburb and reality itself are intertwined, that they may as well be said to be one in the same?

Analysis from our Guard of Doom have confirmed that all test subjects do in fact have a doomed status, not that them not was ever really something that I had considered. Analysis from our Seer of Heart has placed all of their surface level stats as expected, including luck, which is strange since I had expected that luck would be set at zero, due to the anecdotal convoluted coincidence that often are the end of doomed individual. Perhaps ParadoxPotentia’s theory on doomed status effecting luck checks rather than luck stat itself has more substance to it than I first assumed.

So far all reports of death of doomed individuals has been that which is in the realm of possibility to begin with. None of them have reported simple cessation of life, which is what I would expect. After all, is not the simplest way to kill someone to remove their life? Such a thing is surely within
the games capabilities. Or is that just a misconception based on me being a native life player, and the simplest way to kill someone would be, as our dame would say, “Sticking a fuckhuge sword through their goddamn chest”.
Chapter 2

Experiment report: 16 days since session entry.

I believe that I have witnessed the first attempt by the game at eliminating doomed timeline individuals. Today, at 1612 standard time, an imp navigated its way from my land into my house, and attempted to enter the lab floor before being stopped by me. The imp was captured and restrained (No small effort thanks to the games many routines against trapping, presumably to prevent underlings from getting trapped on geometry, but which have no issue activating when one is restrained using non-glitch methods as well) and will be kept for further examination when I can request our Seer of Heart to take a look at its core.

While underlings entering a player’s house after the initial entry creatures have been cleared out is not a common occurrence, it is not unheard of. To my current understanding, the known instances of such a thing are currently theorized to be pathfinding errors, which have a higher than usual occurrence of happening with respect to player dwellings due to the sheer magnitude of navigation code that is procedurally generated for homes. However, this imp seemed to know exactly where the lab floor in my house was, and moved with a purpose not often seen on lost underlings, who have a tendency to wander around aimlessly.

My current theories are threefold

- The imp itself has code for locating doomed entities, and executed an internal subroutine causing it to seek one out and destroy it. An instinctual response, if you will.

This has a certain degree of precedence. Anecdote confirms that underlings and game enemies have shown to be more likely to target doomed timeline players in multiplayer strife, indicating some degree of local awareness of doom.

- A higher level game logic system gave the order to the imp.

Also possible. It would give a better reason as to why every single underling on my land didn’t automatically seek out my house and execute the doomed individuals with purpose, as sending a single assassin who already is known to be where it’s not supposed to would be better at keeping the suspension of disbelief.

- It’s all just a big coincidence.

True science never dismisses the possibility of all experimental results just being the result of random events that we’re seeing in an order that does not really exist. A single imp is hardly statistically significant.

Regardless, of the course, amending my containment procedures will be a good idea, as I expect that this imp will not be the first.

Containment Procedures

A monitoring system has been setup to scan my house and 50m outside of it for any entity not cleared for entry. 2 auto-turrets have been setup in the lab floor itself, set to automatically fire upon anything not given clearance. (Note: those turrets are expensive as fuck. Guess the game, while not prohibiting it, really makes it a pain to automate anything. Guess it probably wants to prevent players from just chucking
down sentry guns everywhere). Thanks to the Electronics and Computer Group for assisting with technology and network setup.

This should prevent lone wanderers from attempting to break into the containment area. Right now the turrets should be able to handle at least 40 imps at once, and probably an ogre or two. I tried to teach the consorts how to reload them, but they don’t seem to be able to quite understand it. Right now, I will have to attend to their maintenances personally.

---

**Experiment report: 18 days since session entry.**

In our session meeting, our player of Time reported a very disturbing fact. In a very large degree of doomed branch timelines, his alternate selves claim that our Grace of Rage goes berserk and attempts to slaughter… pretty much everything. Something that she does not seem to have much problem doing in these branch timelines at all, as the Time player claims that her power exceeds even the most brutal of Rage berserk triggers. Some kind of [Infinite Rage] plus [Dark Funk] positive feedback loop, they theorize, although we suspect something more than that is at work.

Our alpha timeline Grace of Rage, most worryingly, seems totally unaware of her being able to possibly even do such a thing, and is most disturbed by tales of what her alternate self is committing. She never seemed the type to attempt a PK at all, and my personal analysis of potential problems arising from her in the session were entirely around her developing pacifist tendencies.

The other players are working on developing countermeasures for it as I type, both for the good of branch timelines, and also in the event that she “berserks” in the alpha. As for myself, I am much more concerned with the reason behind such a thing at all. Is this a consequence of my research in some way? I will have to do much greater investigation into this, and scan the archives, see if such a thing has been reported by other sessions before.
Experiment report: 20 days since session entry.

We have our first death.

Subject A-8 managed to shrug off the sleep enchantment (Not impossible, but unlikely. My estimates place the resist check frequency at once every $2^{18}$ seconds, and the possibility of a human with near-zero sempersand shrugging off the effect at $\sim 1/64,000$). Not a worry by itself, as my assumption would be that the stasis pod would alert me, and that the human would have no way to escape the lab floor anyway.

Unfortunately, it seems that not only did my alarm fail to notify me in time for me to intervene, but the auto-turret opened fire on the hapless subject, it not being included in the turrets whitelist. An oversight on my part I admit, that I should have accounted for. The subject died within seconds of the hail of bullet fire.

Even a single human resisting the sleep effect so soon is quite a probabilitical anomaly. I can only presume that this is influence of the game at work. Interesting that throwing off the sleep debuff was considered a way to further the chances of death for this subject, you would expect that by default the game would make you more likely to fail to resist debuffs if it were trying to kill you. This suggests some kind of oversight on the games part, letting it realize that this subject awakening will lead to its immediate death. With omniscience hardly something difficult to obtain in this universe, such a thing is not surprising.

I will remedy the containment procedures immediately.

**Containment Procedures**

Turret whitelist updated with all A-series subjects.

Motion detection system improved. Upon detecting motion in the pod room, it will automatically dispense a sleeping gas devised by our Doom player. System should not trigger on consort sized-movement, but consort assistants issued with gas masks regardless. Doom player estimates time of unconsciousness by gas to be between 2-5 hours. Should give me enough time to attend to the scene myself and recast the sleeping ability.

Gas system can currently only hold one dose of gas at a time, and requires manual reloading. If there comes a requirement for me to make a stronger system, than I will handle it when the time comes.

**Current status:**

A-8: Dead at 0322-20d. Blood loss via bullet wounds.
Experiment report: 21 days since session entry.

So far my B series subjects have been mostly neglected. Despite my already quite ample spare time (I currently devote only 4 hours a day to standard required land questing), I have yet to acquire the resources that I will need to implement some of my more extreme plans.

The subjects themselves are healthy. Physically at least so far, as B-2 seems to spend almost all of its time in its room, writing on the walls, and B-5 has become extremely distressed at finding that many of the provided books are clearly of an alternate earth to theirs. I believe that the book to trigger this was a copy of the biography of President Ronald Reagan that had half of it dedicated to how the former head of state dealt with contact by an alien race, something that evidently did not happen in their source earth, 4d-162/6. All of them have been worried by the fact that they were provided with thousands of DVDs with no TV to play them on. Another oversight on my part. Am I that out of touch with the needs of my biological kin that I forget that not all of them keep at least 5 computers on their body at all times?

**Containment Procedures**

B series containment facility provided with TV and DVD player.

My first plan for B-1 will be quite simple. I hypothesize that the game will struggle to find a way to kill the subject if the subject is plainly, very resistant to killing. The following adjustments will be made to the subject.

- Provided with custom life aspect imbued regeneration equipment.
- Steel plates welded to skull.
- Bones augmented with steel rods.
- Provided with custom blood aspect “Toughness megafier” equipment.

By provided, I really mean subcutaneously implanted with. A magic amulet is too easy to remove, but I doubt that subject B-1 will be willing to dig through its own viscera to remove a magic stone.

The idea, as the blood player who assisted me has taken to calling “Project wolverine”, is that the life aspect regeneration will remove all issues traditionally associated with invasive surgical implants by negating all rejection reactions by the host, as well as preventing death by conventional illness and disease. It troubles me that such a thing is considered trivial by suburban magic standards, compared to the struggles prescratch earths have had with conventional technology.

The blood aspect equipment will make the skin of the subject very hard to penetrate, as well as render them near immune to must forms of blunt trauma. Such a thing greatly borrows of their natural fluxmoxie and other power reserves, but it’s not like the subject is using it much. Any actual wounds acquired should be healed in short time by the regeneration. In addition, the steel reinforcement to their bones and skull should prevent an easy death by total bisection or decapitation.
In short, I believe it possible that we could throw the subject into the heart of an atomik ebonpyre and see them survive. Or at least prevent terminal brain wounding, the requisite for “death” to occur. Were the underlings creative, they could probably attempt to suffocate the subject, which would cause death in around 2 hours, or to simply attempt any sort of indirectly harmful abilities against them, but as of writing no underling has been shown to ever deploy combat abilities against non-player entities. Carapaces and denziens are another story, given their increased level of autonomy, but I don’t believe we should be seeing them as a threat, at least any time soon.

---

**Experiment report: 22 days since session entry.**

Surgery on subject B-1 was a success. All modifications have been performed successfully, and subject was introduced back into the containment area at 1752 standard time today. Subject appeared very confused and worried about what has happened to them, but shows no propensity towards committing self-harm or attempting to harm other subjects at this time. Subject will be monitored for further behavioral changes post-surgery.

I would like to dedicate this surgery to the part of sburb that saw fit to give me a comprehensive knowledge of human anatomy in my first session. And also to the many corpses that I have gone through in refining my surgical knowledge.

Oh, and to gh, our Rogue of Blood, who assisted with the surgery. Were it still a thing that existed, earth medicine would already have been made completely obsolete just by the two of us.
Chapter 4

Experiment report: 23 days since session entry.

It seems that news of my surgery has filtered through the session, and details of which were brought up at the meeting today. It appears that a few of my teammates seem to believe that my research is, in their words “paramount to needless torture”.

Honestly, I don’t see what the big deal is. These aren’t players or anything, they’re just like, you know. Random presession humans. They’re not even from our native universes, and each and every one of them would have died in the reckoning anyway. If anything I’m doing them a favour by allowing them to live out their worthless lives for a little longer.

Telling them this did manage to alleviate their concerns slightly, but many were still clearly uncomfortable with my procedures. It is beginning to rather remind me of my rejection from Ivory Tower, really. It is quite surprising to me how people can feel empathy for non-players at all, given their total lack of cosmic importance and droll, eventless lives.

Our Witch of Hope was the most vocal about his opposed to my research, believing that I should have left the subjects to die “noble deaths”. I asked him exactly what was noble about dying in a meteor shower for no reason. He mostly then prattled on about not interfering with the natural order of things, and that attempting to force them to live beyond when they were supposed go would cause consequences. And I thought that hope was supposed to be the aspect of rejection, I suppose that evidently includes rejection of logic.

In the end, our esteemed leader did not call a vote, and allowed me to continue my research unimpeded as long as I remain focused on producing viable outcomes and not “subject the presession humans to needless suffering”. I suppose I can live with that for now. I suppose that she too sees the potential value in my work, and I honestly doubt that if they were given the same choice of sacrificing even millions of presession humans for the life of even a single replayer, she would make the same decision. Just that she’s too weak of stomach to actually get their hands dirty. Cognitive dissonance at work, folks.

Experiment report: 25 days since session entry.

Slow work day today. Consider this a general status update.

All current A and B subjects are alive and well. Subject B-1 has taken its surgery well, all things considered. I believe that the current prevailing theory down in the B containment facility is that that have been abducted into an alternate universe for the purpose of receiving strange biological modifications for the purpose of them fighting aliens. Ironically, from a certain point of view, it’s not too far from the truth.

Still no major headway into the case of our Grace of Rage ending doomed timelines by herself. Current contingency plans involve us mostly just running away from the girl and hammering her with long distance spells until she finally dies. Our time player tells us that we’ve already tried doing that in at least three separate timelines to no avail, so we’re back to the drawing board. Who knew that the Grace has both enough power and finesse at the same time to jump 250 metres into the air and bisect three alternates of us. Remind me never to get on her bad side, timeline ending
rage or not.

As for my own land quest, it’s going well enough. I am slightly behind schedule on my terraforming prelude quests, for which our esteemed leader is getting all up in my grill for, but I know she means well. I’ll do some duo questing with gh for a while, since I know that they’re way ahead.

I should be meeting my denizen in a week or two as well, which I already just know is going to be a huge pain in the ass. Especially when I have to start enjoying its company and then kill it. Man, fuck this game.

While doing my rounds as the sessions life player, I ended up curing our Dame of Mind’s head trauma. Not an uncommon occurrence, of course, but what I found interesting was that they showed no sign of impeded mental function despite sustaining what should be at bare minimum a severe concussion, and what should have been serious brain damage. Infact, their brain matter was quite literally, if you will excuse my non-technical language “mushed” in several areas.

I’ve cured much worse before, especially so in my first session (for which I am still proud of my greatest feat of healing yet, bringing back a spinal cord and half a head attached to it back into a combat ready player in merely seconds. God tier powers are indeed addictive), but it never quite occurred to me. Why does damage to the physical brain of the player never actually result in anything happening to their, well, mind?

I’d write the entire thing off as just being another consequence of having an immortal soul made of data and magic, but I do think that this may warrant further investigation, especially since a very large amount of actual player deaths do happen because of cranial trauma. Perhaps there is research to be done here?
Chapter 5

Experiment report: 26 days since session sentry

Recall, if you will, the imp that I captured, the one that tried to sneak into the lab to attack the subjects. Well, I’ve finally convinced the Seer of Heart to take a look. Here’s what he said.

“There’s clearly something going on here… I think that you’re right, the pathfinding is deffers[sic] being modified. That much I can see since it’s pretty top level. It also has some kind of… link going on. Like a receiver I think, that’s connected to deep in the shiny. I mean there’s always data going in and out but this is something that isn’t normally there, you know”

This seems to give credence to my theory that the game is instructing underlings (and probably other constructs) to go after doomed individuals. Now, this is clearly only a minor part of the multi-pronged garbage collection routines that take care of the doomed, but it does raise an interesting question. What if I stopped the game from identifying the doomed?

There are stories of void players escaping the clutches of doom for quite longer than their peers. A lot of them seem to claim that they’ve “hidden” from the doom itself, something that I can only assume means that they’ve been utilizing their aspect to prevent the game from identifying them.

I am not intimately familiar with the games internal data flow mechanisms, but I do believe that the potential lies for them to be obstructed for the purpose of preventing doom. After all, how can the game dispose of them if it doesn’t know where they are, or indeed, if they exist at all.

Experiment report: 28 days since session sentry

The following section of the report includes information concerning The Others, or in the common vernacular, the “Horrorterror”. While no detailed information concerning them is provided, it still is a low level infohazard, so I suggest that you either have a good resistance against corruption, or have at least a class B2 filter on your local machine. If class B2 filters have not yet been invented in your local timeframe, or indeed, have not been invented at all in your area of paradox space, I suggest that you read it underwater or read it in a big cuddle pile or something stupid like that.

I walked outside during the eclipse on Derse today. While the rest of my fellow dreamers of darkness were too busy cooped up inside, I was not going to let a good opportunity to hear the beyond go to waste. Alongside the usual whisperings about how they’re going to eat my soul (likely, some day), how I could have saved my sister (unlikely) and how that they could give me another chance if I’d just make a deal (flat out impossible), a thought occurred to me. Perhaps dooming is part of The Others doing. After all, consuming souls is what they do right? And while obviously alpha timeline souls are a hell of a lot more delicious than the alternative, I doubt they’d let good food go to waste.
Chapter 6

Experiment Report: 29 days since session entry

What has originally started out as what I had intended to be a report based entirely around my protection and experiments on a bunch of presession humans has since become more serious. With the murder-spree of the Grace, the collaboration that I now recognize that will be essential to achieve meaningful results, and the broadening scope of my research, I have decided that it will be prudent to provide information about just who else is in my session.

Hopefully I can remember enough about html tables to format this in a way that isn’t completely annoying to read. You’d think that given the amazing future tech that we’re all using, we’d have finally invented something better than editing raw html for text documents. The more things change the more they stay the same I guess.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Handle</th>
<th>Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>th</td>
<td>Knight of Light</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our esteemed leader. Veteran of 17 sessions, more than any of us, and it shows. She’s fierce and warm, a good commander and a great leader. More so than even the Seer, she keeps plans on everything, and I’m pretty sure she has her name on the contributors list to Imperatives and Priorities at that. Still manages to be a frontline friendleader type rather than some mysterious strings puller through, which is pretty impressive really. Fierce bladekind combatant too, maybe one of our strongest.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gq</td>
<td>Seer of Heart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The right hand girl of our esteemed leader. Real typical Seer type, she’s ontop of everything that goes down. Doesn’t even have to cast anything on you, she just sees into your data core (or your “shiny”, if you must) all the time. Between her and the leader, they’ve got a plan for everything. Rarely gets her own hands dirty, instead utilizing the maid for things that require doing outside of her own land. Spends her spare time holed up in the meeting chamber, and is the reason that the walls are covered in a conspiracy wall so big that it would make even the most devoted insane nuts back on presession earth jealous. I’m glad that she can understand the thing, since nobody else, myself included, can make anything of it.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ki</td>
<td>Heir of Space</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Our sessions frog asshole. Jovial, friendly, and always carries around a chunk of uranium in his syalladex the size of a car. I’ve never calculated what kind of impact that thing could have if broken down, and I honestly don’t want because anything larger than “the entire session” is meaningless anyway. Our leader is confident that he won’t break the thing out unless he has a good reason to kill us all, and if she believes that, then I will too.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>me</td>
<td>Mage of Life</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>That’s me! And not just because my handle is me either, this is quite actually the person that I am. Who is writing to you right now. Veteran of 6 sessions, with this being my 7th. native Scout of Life. Nominally the healer of the session, since “researcher” isn’t exactly considered a stock role.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ja</td>
<td>Witch of Hope</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Has been the most vocally opposed to my experiments. Believes that we have a duty to all sentients, or something stupid like that. Guy even refuses to kill capraicians unless he has no choice. Could run into a lot of trouble later on when our sphere of operations moves out of our own lands and into more central areas that require killing things other than the borderline-sapient underlings.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Title</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>po</td>
<td>Prince of Sand</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>gh</td>
<td>Rogue of Blood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>wk</td>
<td>Scout of Void</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ia</td>
<td>Sylph of Time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>na</td>
<td>Guard of Doom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ow</td>
<td>Bane of Breath</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>op</td>
<td>Grace of Rage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>is</td>
<td>Dame of Mind</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

I haven’t even met the guy. Doesn’t show up to meetings, and defers all of his votes to the Witch, who other than the Seer and our leader, is the only one to actually see him. So typical of a Sand player then. His title does worry me a bit, given that it may as well read “Destroyer of All”.

I first met gh on my third session, and right now he’s the only person that I’ve met before in our current session. We make a real good team, if I do say so myself, and already have a couple real powerful fraymotifs lined up, mostly in the case of an emergency. Tends to be a real neat freak, if I had to say something bad.

The one that shares my native title of Scout. A very solo type, and doesn’t seem to like me very much. I’ll avoid writing too much on her least I incur the wrath of her whisperings and have my work deleted.

He’s in charge of timeline management. Does a pretty good job of it, too, considering that we have loads of players, and the issue of a certain Grace trying to murder everyone in every splinter. Is always really impatient during meetings, since he always sends a past version of himself to attend them, meaning that they already have read the minutes from the meeting that they’re currently attending in the future.

Don’t see this guy much, but he seems pretty solid. gh tells me that they’re fairly new, with this being their 3rd session, but they’ve got some real potential. Fights with macekind and a gigantic tower shield, as is fitting for a guard I suppose.

I swear that she’s a native Rain aspect player, given the way that she laughs when throwing around storms. Bane is an offensive title, and Breath is an offensive aspect, and it shows in this girl more than anything. I don’t think she even uses a strife specibus, and she doesn’t have to given how she just flattens people with waves of elemental bullshit. I’ve noticed something when doing my healing, is that she seems to channel her aspect so much that it draws upon her life rather than her fluxmoxie reserves when she runs out, which so far has mostly been making her hands raw and bloody rather than anything dramatic. Currently writing a report on it, which should be up soon.

This is the one that has been eradicating our doomed timelines. Ironic, considering how meek she is in person. She’s never raised her voice once, and generally tried to avoid conflict. Had to be asked spefically to do more combat missions rather than constantly doing peaceful land missions because it was starting to mess up the schedule. Rapierkind specibus, which I haven’t ever actually seen her use yet, and only know because I asked during a checkup.
The only one that could challenge our leader for the title of “strongest fighter” in the session, and we’re all glad that he has no qualms about the current leadership. Real aggressive type, and uses some personally developed ability that lets him actively see the best course of action in the middle of a melee, down to the level of “where should I swing my sword next”. Desperately wants to go god tier soon to see just how far he can push that ability, which could present issues if he tries to sequence break, but that’s not my business. What is my business, on the other hand, is the way that he keeps choosing “what causes the most damage to my enemy” rather than “what injures me the least” as his course of action when branching, which always leaves me with a lot of healing to do.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ng</th>
<th>Maid of Stars</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I like her, honestly. She doesn’t waste words, keeps to herself, and avoids getting injured enough to not have me have to spend my valuable time patching them up. The sessions “Hand of the Seer”, or so I’m told, so she spends a lot of time all over the place making sure that it all goes according to plan.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Experiment report: 31 days since session entry

It’s been a month now, and I wish I could say that I’ve made more progress.

We have another death. That’s something at least. At 0213 hours, while I was busy being asleep on Derse, the circuitry on the stasis pod for A-16 failed and it caught fire and burnt to death A-16 while he was still unconscious. The fire was halfway through killing A-15 as well before the consorts extinguished the blaze and woke me up, as per my instructions.

I was able to save A-15 by healing its burn wounds, preventing another death, however it seems that my healing powers are having a lesser effect on the subjects. They, in the best way that I can describe them, feel slippery to cast on, almost like it is hard to hold onto them with my aspect to cast on. This is, I suspect the doomed mechanics at work, trying to stop me from healing them in a way that is consistent with what could very well be just a generic fumble on a healers part if done in the middle of combat.

Containment procedures have been amended, again.

  Containment procedures

  Extinguishers fitted to the ceiling of the lab floor that trigger on smoke alarm. In addition, personal notification system updated with link to smoke detectors.

Experiment report: 33 days since session entry

After my healing of the Dame’s head trauma, the idea stuck with me for a fair bit. If our grey matter is truly redundant, then what need do we even have for it? To this end, I have developed a few hypotheses.

- Our brains truly are useless by the games standards, and it only kills us if they’re damaged because we expect to die.
- The brain acts as a medium between our true “soul” and the body, being the medium through which nerves are accessed.
- Mind players are immune to brain damage.

Truthfully, I have the most direct evidence for hypothesis 1. I’ve healed people with head damage well worse than the separation of spinal cord and skull has always proven to be fatal, regardless of the damage to the rest of body, true timed “resurrection” powers notwithstanding. (Note: the only actual resurrection power that I’m aware of is the god tier ability [Phoenix] which only works a day after death, and only works on each player once, but can be cast regardless of the condition of the body, or indeed, in total absence of one. I’m told that Doom players and in certain conditions Flow and Ryhme players can cast similar abilities, albit with more restrictions on them). However, evidence to the contrary is the fact that psychoactive substances can still affect users. The most well-known case of this is the sopor slime that the trolls are known to use to prevent their nightmares, however there is more than enough usage of recreational drugs and alcohol among human communities as well.

Maybe those substances are only effecting users because they think that they should work? This
can be tested easily.

**Experiment Gamma-2: Blind alcohol trial.**

Myself, gh the Rogue of Blood, ki the Heir of Space, is the Dame of Mind and na the Guard of Doom will each be drinking a glass of a provided substance.

Two glasses will be 40% a/v vodka found in the house of my original player. Should be about four and a half standard drinks.

The other three will be alchemised “non-alcoholic vodka” that tastes exactly the same, but has been tested and has absolutely no alcohol content.

The true contents of the drinks have been randomized and poured by my server player, wk, the Scout of Void.

The idea is simple. If we get drunk and it turns out that we drank water, or if we don’t and it turns out we drank vodka, the effect of these substances is merely an enforced placebo.

**Result:**

me and ki are fuckin ruined dude holy shit the other two are totes fine tho and whatshisface says that we got t vodka adn the others didnt which is pre obvios cmoj

haha hol yshit when was thelast time i drank i forgot how good this feels fuck man ki is the coolest guy ever

fuck ishould write a report on how awesom his space powers are shit iwish I had tkelekinsis

wwait I got a better idea for an experimnt y dont we all just get wasted af and forget about tihs fuckin game for a bit lemme get the other guys over here this guys house has loads of booze more than enuf foreveryone
Chapter 8

Experiment report: 34 days since session entry

As I nurse my hangover, I find myself asking. What is the deadliest thing in all of paradox space? Some say the game itself, more than anything else, game constructs have the highest head count. From the fresh kid in their first session getting taken down by a manticore, or a veteran being blindsided by an ogre by overconfidence, we've all seen someone taken down by one.

Others say glitches. Sceptrewraiths and ringwraiths. Our Bard from last session had a run in with a ringwraith, and he would do anything to never experience it again. I could see the panic in his eyes every time we even mentioned a queen, never mind the possibility of it happening again. And there’s other glitches too. The player that gets bisected by a bad gate, the one that gets trapped in geometry.

Me? I believe that the single deadliest thing in all of existence is another player. Nothing else can outthink you. Nothing else can plan, can exploit, can manipulate and nothing else can break the rules. Even the mightiest of The Others are bound by the ancient law. Players are bound by nothing.

We all tell stories of PKers, but a fair few of us have actually seen them. A lot of us tend to overattribute players to the big name forum-goers or channel ops and stuff. The big veterans, whose lives are like soap operas, who will gladly retell stories on networks about their heroics when they slayed the big bad PK and saved the day. The reality is different.

I don’t think many of us in this session have ever had to take down one ourselves. I know our leader has on more than one occasion, making her a minority in most networks. But she was always the type to butt into problems headfirst, most just… run. And let others like her solve the problem.

Me? I have once, a long time ago now. In my third session. She was a real professional too, one of those lifer PKers, the ones that have read guides and chat with each other about their head count. I was one of the last she came for, never bothered with me, thought I wasn’t a real threat. Life’s a support attribute right? And me, a regular roller of Life, was clearly unable to fend for myself.

I cut 5 major arteries in a fifth of a second. Her health vial had no chance to even react. She exsanguinated on top of me, and now every time I have a shower with hot water I feel her warm blood pour onto me.

…

Fuck, maybe I need another drink after all.

Hair of the dog that bit you, right?
Experiment Report: 36 days since session entry

Met my denizen today. As expected, she is a huge bitch. On the other hand, we did have a small chat about doomed timelines, and she implied that she has the powers to “undoom” timelines if given a good enough price, which she also implied would be at least, a life for a life.

Given denziens and their stupid deal making, I can only assume that she does not actually need a life to undoom a timeline. The fact that she is able to undoom a timeline at all is enough of a confirmation for me that there must be some way to do it. Clearly, somewhere deep in the game, there is a subroutine or function or something that when executed, removes the doomed status from an entity.

I’m not going to try and extract it from the denizen directly, that would be suicide. Greater scientists and gamebreakers than I have tried to fuck with denizens to obtain less powerful information, and it never ends well.

This is starting to feel more like an experiment in data flow and network hacking than it is medical science. Then again I guess our world is made of data so I don’t know what I expected.

Experiment Report: 37 days since session entry

Our Seer has taken to wearing a blindfold. I assumed that she damaged her eyes like Seers always do, and was wearing the blindfold for aesthetics, and I offered to heal her eyes, which is something I could easily do.

Turns out she wasn’t even blind; she was just wearing the blindfold because she said that she saw better that way. She’s so in touch with the data of the world that regular senses just distract her now, or so she says. Showed me that she was wearing earplugs too, which made the fact that she was still hearing and talking to me (or at least that’s what it seemed like, I doubt that what she was doing could be called hearing) kind of creepy, even by my standards.

She also thought that maybe wearing the blindfold will make Skaia less likely to take her eyes from her directly, which made me think. What if the eyes of Seers were doomed? It would explain their ridiculous tendency to be annihilated in random but omnipresent circumstances.

I had assumed that doomed status was limited to entireties of people, and couldn’t be “subdivided” like that, but if true it’s an interesting theory. Even more interesting it would be if it turned out that wearing a blindfold actually did stop, or at least delay Skaia from taking her eyes. It would fit in with my observations of my subjects. I had been attributing their general health to me not constantly putting them in mortal danger like we players tend to be twenty-four seven, but maybe the rate of Doom is directly linked to how much effect you’re actually having on events. After all, doomed timeline clones made by time players always tended to die dramatically, but they always come back and give ominous warnings and then die preventing the timeline that caused them to spawn to begin with, which is a pretty big change.

Either way, I think I’ll keep a close watch on the future of the Seers eyes.

Experiment report: 38 days since session entry

So here’s the idea.
I’ve finally convinced the Void player to do some work for me. I won’t say what I traded for his help, but I will have a little less free time in the coming days.

Anyway, we’re going to try and interrupt data flow between one of the test subjects and… everything. The entire game, or at least as much of its communications as we can get our hands on. Probably should leave them with hearing, vision and touch but everything else can go, mostly because without basic sensory input they wouldn’t be very good at avoiding danger at all, and would end up walking into a wall over and over again or picking their skin away. Seriously, I’ve read reports on presession humans who are congenitally insensitive to pain and they don’t have a long life average. Best to leave them, if it’s possible.

This is an entirely new field, I believe. Gamebreakers have tried to interrupt specific communications before but nobody has ever tried just… cutting someone off entirely. I can’t even begin to predict the sort of results this could have, but that’s what science is for isn’t it.

Anyway, here’s the procedure:

Subject A-2 will be restrained, and the Seer will take full inventory of game communications receiving and transmitting from its data core.

The Seer will then guide the Scout to areas to create a void “shield” that will interrupt game communications.

The Scout and myself will then tie the subject’s life-force to the void shield, ensuring that it does not fade, and continues to be bound to the subject itself as it changes.

We’ll begin today, at 1900 hours. Stand by for post-procedure report.
Chapter 10

Experiment Report: 38 days since session entry

It worked.

At least, we think it worked?

Subject B-2 is… alive. I hesitate to use such a word on them however, because they really don’t seem it. I am very well in tune with the whisperings of Life, and they really don’t like what we’ve done to the subject. Rather like they keep trying to surround the subject and connect with their life, but it never really works, leaving a glaring void. We haven’t tried to use any aspect abilities on them since the procedure, and I don’t think anybody wants to either.

Logs with the subject are as follows:

Me: How are you feeling, subject B-2?
B-2: Oh my god! What has happened to me! What did you sick fucks do to me!
Me: Answer the question, B-2
B-2: Y-you’re insane! Why are you doing this? What do you want with us?

Things continued much in the same vain for a truly unpleasant amount of time. Without the pleasure of using aspect abilities on the subject to enforce a more malleable state, I was forced to employ more conventional means of mood alteration.

Fortunately, replayer networks maintain a very well detailed list of medicine from pre-session worlds, and it was not hard to come across easily reproducible schematics to construct a piece of Alternian biotechnology once used for interrogation (Note: it was very hard finding a piece of Alternian interrogation tech that did not inflict horrible pain on subjects. Not that I am one to shy away from such a thing if required, but I hardly see the point of all their pointy and cutty gadgets if they had something that can just make them give the answers without any hassle lying around).

Me: How are you feeling, subject B-2?
B-2: I am not in physical pain, although I am very curious as to the reason for my predicament.
Me: Are you noticing any strange sensory effects, B-2? Tell me, no matter how unreasonably they may seem
B-2: The world feels very… static. Like the usual vibrancy has been lost, and that I am looking at it through a screen, rather than being physically here. In addition, I appear
to no longer have a sense of taste or smell.

**Me:** Do you feel as if you have an impending death? *(Note: a very high percentage of even un-aspect aware entities report feeling an oncoming sense of inexistence when doomed)*

**B-2:** I am currently tied to an operating table with a 13 year old wearing a labcoat and an array of surgical tools, many of which I have never seen before. For the past month I have been confined to a jail complex with only a single window that leads to an alien landscape.

**Me:** Other than that

**B-2:** Then no, I do not feel as if my death is soon.

Well, it seems that Alternian interrogation tools don’t eliminate sass from their targets. But these answers are at least interesting. I would venture to say that the sensory dulling from the target is consistent with at least some of the predicted effects of the procedure, namely that many of the more esoteric senses have been lost, such as aspect sensing, innate timeline awareness and probably many perception filters. Non-players, although never having a reason to develop these senses, are usually aware of very dramatic changes in them, but presession literature usually leads us to believe that they write them off as meaningless shifts in psyche.

As for the target saying that they don’t feel doomed, well, feelings are hardly scientific evidence, but it may be a step in the right direction.

I do feel as if the majority of effects on the subject are yet to be discovered, however.

---

**Experiment Report: 39 days since session entry**

Demons have always been an interesting curiosity for me. Information on them is scarce, and first hand accounts are even scarcer. Even the densest tomes of guides, FAQs and academic literature only mention them in bare passing, often giving them merely a sentence saying “demons are dangerous and if you notice really weird stuff it could be one of them”. Indeed, many question if they exist at all, attributing their mentions to nothing more than a particularly persistent suburban myth.

Regardless, I still find an external interference to a session, and by extension, universe, to be a fascinating concept. The word alien no longer has much meaning anymore, but perhaps these demons are truly alien, being extrauniversal forms of life like the Others or the Angels, that only interfere with our happenings at their own whim.

Such a theory would hold up with a lot of reported sightings, given that demons are always attributed with strange, unheard of abilities, and also very often coincide with frog overlaps and other incestuous issues.

Another theory which I find more interesting is the possibility that demons are players who have surpassed the game entirely, gaining enough power to break free of the replay cycle entirely, and are able to travel through the furthest ring by their own terms, or have a very well established Other deal. I can’t imagine what kind of deal would be required for endless veil travel, but the cost must be unimaginable. Perhaps the payment is these demons eliminating sessions in of itself. And
likewise I can’t imagine what kind of power source would be strong enough to let them exist on their own terms, it would have to be suburban magic on a level never once reported, or perhaps even more esoteric sources, such as something similar to a first guardian’s abilities, or indeed something of which even the concept is too foreign to theorise about.

I once heard a very strange tale, told to me by a co-player verbally a long time ago, about players that were strong enough to break free of the game, and took it upon themselves to travel through the veil, exterminating game sessions that were infected with a form of corruption (for which I assumable to be not the conventional meaning of Other/Angel corruption, but rather a deep code error in the sburb engine to which was referred to as corruption) that would threaten the stability of the multiverse itself.

Perhaps these players were demons to others, who were not aware of their mission and saw them as only external threats bent on meaningless destruction.

And perhaps sometime, when I have a long time to myself, I will retell this tale on a network somewhere, since I do think it deserves to be retold, true or not.
Chapter 11

Experiment Report: 40 days since session entry

For a bunch of little lizard people in labcoats that I gave them, I’m honestly surprised that the consorts haven’t tried to murder any of my subjects yet. That was kind of a big reason as to why I got them, because I honestly thought that the game would make them execute some hidden subroutine and get them to stab a subject, which would prove a theory that doomed timelines can manipulate the behaviour of more game NPCs than underlings.

But so far they’ve been just… helpful, if a little clumsy.

Maybe they won’t actually go violent at all, and they have some kind of immunity to doomed effects? It would be unique, since carapacians are generally thought of as being more intelligent than consorts, but there’s very good, if anecdotal evidence, that carapaces target doomed players.

Experiment Report: 41 days since session entry

Subject B-2 seems to not get on well with the other subjects anymore. I’ve noticed more agitation in the containment area than usual, and usually I would attribute it to stress from the procedure, but B-1 integrated well enough. If anything after the procedure he garnered more sympathy from the population, with the cost of increased anxiety that the rest of them would be next. Which I guess they are, but that’s neither here nor there.

Regardless, many of the subjects are avoiding B-2 socially, not making eye contact. I would speculate that the other subjects themselves are not aware of their motives behind their actions.

In addition, the Seer has noted a marked increase in difficulty scrying the general area, and while she has not made any deliberate attempts to scry subject B-2 directly, this is somewhat expected due to Void aspect “leakage”.

Experiment Report: 42 days since session entry

I remember when I first walked through the door at the end of the universe.

We were all so full of hope, the 3 of us, including me, that survived. We had seen so much death, and done so much wrong, but we had hoped that this would make it all worth it, that it would redeem us and our actions. If the ends justify the means then it would be the end to justify every mean.

I also remember waking up in a foreign bed, back on earth. An earth. I would later learn, not my earth. I remember it felt like waking up from such a long sleep, one that would almost let you believe that your past events were so distant and far away, that it was all a dream.

For a few hours I spent staring at the ceiling trying to come to terms with reality, that was my first assumption. That the session, that sburb really was a dream, and that this was my life. I hear that many do believe that so strongly that they still cling to it, even when the asteroids start falling
again. I forget the word, but there’s a whole field of psychoanalysis over those who associate so strongly with their new, replaced “lives” after their first session, that they believe themselves to truly be them.

After a few hours of introspection, the memories slowly come back. My second theory, was that this was the ultimate reward. The ability to live a good life again, peaceful on earth, with a family that, while not my own, were alive and caring. A mother came up to my bedroom, and beckoned me to get up for breakfast to go to school. I had never seen her before in my life, but she acted like she had come to me in this way every day since I was of school age.

For a while, it was strange. I had never actually been to school before, even in my true first life, having always lived very rural, but I had of course heard of the place. It felt so strange to see so many people at once in the same area. It reminded me much of the dersite cities more than anything human, really.

I settled slowly into my new life. People were always willing to recognize me as my previous host, despite quite clearing having my own personality, knowing nothing at all about my old life, and having my own body. And the body, I must talk about, because when I came out of that game the first time, I was a scarred, augmented, broken and deformed monster. But when I woke up I was minted fresh, and young again. You never notice your body growing normally, but you do notice when you are shunted back a whole year in an instant.

But regardless, this was my ultimate reward. I tried hard to integrate, I did. I learnt the names of my family, my friends, my teachers. I learnt my own history, when I needed to, but promised that I would always remain myself and never anyone else. I mourned briefly who I replaced, but it was not by my hand that they were replaced. And for months, life was good. I had settled into my new existence, free of world ending games, supernatural powers.

But it was never to last. Nightmares still plagued me, for every night I woke up in a cold sweat. Paranoia gripped me, as my reflexes took over before my brain could react. It started out small, anxiety over being in a crowded space, always checking exits, my insistence on always having several computers on me, at the laughter of my new “friends” and “family”.

Soon it grew. I carried my weapon with me at all times, like any sane person would. But sometimes your arms move faster than your mind, and a friend patting you on the back ends up with a broken arm before you can catch yourself. A “family member” trying to reassure you with a hug, and herself, in a psych office to treat your violent outbursts, catching a concealed scalpel to the th- I should say no more on this particular. A story for another time.

Regardless, soon the sky started to rain fire again. And I was living it over and again.

In some ways, it was a relief

I was never meant to live a peaceful life.
Chapter 12

Experiment Report: 43 days since session entry

There are a few theories about sapience of npckind. I’ve always subscribed to “The changing mind” because it gels with my personal experiences, but given the variance in game sessions, it wouldn’t surprise me if all were true in their own places.

In the changing mind, the concept is all about learning algorithms, and exposure to external stimulus. All NPCs demonstrate a learning algorithm, from the insectoid land consorts to denizens themselves, through all execute it at different complexities.

Regular underlings, for example, only execute a very bare version of learning. The easiest way to see this is noting how after you keep using a similar technique, they will begin to be able to predict the telegraphing markers of it before it hits and take defensive action. Usually, this is just cowering in fear as you start to charge it up, but occasionally they can take surprisingly cunning defences, such as using cover for non-penetrating casts, or for some boss types, using other underlings as shields.

The good news is that they only generally communicate in their own small groups, at most barring strange circumstances, to their own ebonpyres. The bad news is that many prototypes are shown to increase the speed of the learning algorithm and the communication efficiency as well, resulting in more tactical imps.

In addition, boss underlings that have tags like [Commander] possess a much more advanced ability to learn. Some of them can even speak, which is kind of weird, even if mostly all they have to say is poorly worded death threats.

So far, I am not aware of any reports of underlings becoming self-aware in non-extraneous circumstances. This is unlike consorts and carapaces, both of which show the capacity, given enough varied stimulus, to become almost sapient.

While both already may seem sapient, the vast majority of their actions are already hardcoded. It seems very convincing the first time around, but research into dialogue trees has shown that almost all of their behaviour can be boiled down to a deterministic procedure. And while many of the more important npcs show much more complicated dialogue tree, and actual initiative, they still tend to act in predefined ways.

However, after extended personal contact with players, both consorts and carapaces, will begin to adapt, so to speak. One of the clearest signs of this happening is philosophy, but that is only common in npcs that already have very vocal self-expression to begin with. Another clear trait is taking initiative and showing creativity, which is also almost totally devoid in the stock npcs, but can be developed.

Some of the community laughs at those who develop friendship with consorts and carapaces, but I wouldn’t be so quick to deride them. Given enough exposure, in a process that is certainly accelerated with direct, introspective conservation, I believe that game npcs can devloup a level of intelligence that is at least near that of player-kind, and the emotional depth and breadth associated with.

Denizens are a whole different story. Either their “dialogue trees” are truly immense on an inconvincible size, or they already possess true sapience and intelligence from the outset. There is
a fairly strong theory that supports that idea that denziens are linked to themselves in other sessions, mostly through anecdotes reporting their knowledge of the actions of players to themselves in the past in other sessions, through that could very well be regular denizen “mind-reading”.

One particularly interesting idea is the theory that all denizens of the same name are actually the same being, with millions of separate sorts of interfaces to their consciousness throughout paradox space. If such a thing were to be true, it would explain their role occasionally taken as a kind of troubleshooter for void sessions.

I would very much like to do research into this possibility at some point, if it were that messing with denizens almost always results in death. A pity, that.

**Experiment Report: 44 days since session entry**

I mentioned before that our Bane of Breath was overchanneling her aspect to an extent that it was beginning to cause physical injury. I noticed this during my usual rounds mandated as a session healer, where I found her life forced weakened (manifesting in fatigue and tiredness) and her hands bloody and raw. I was interested at these unusual wounds, and I asked her how she acquired them.

She told me that she was a native Flow player, and was used to being able to continuously lay down ability after ability for extended periods of time, and although she was glad at the heightened destructive potential of Breath, her even quite ample grit reserves would fall to the bottom too fast. She said that when she was exhausted of grit but wanted to keep going, she would “force” the abilities with her willpower and they would keep casting, sometimes even stronger than before, but at the cost of pain and the injuries on her hands.

This is a very interesting result, and I have a theory as to how it can occur. I believe, for an aspect to be channelled at all, that it must have some kind of “energy” to impart it with action. Usually this energy is natural grit and fluxmoxie reserve, but it does not have to be. It is well known that even beyond berserk triggers, players undergoing intense emotions are able to throw down abilities at higher powers than usual, which could imply that the aspect is tapping into “emotional” energy as well.

As for life energy, I don’t see why it couldn’t serve the same function. After all, there are already documented abilities that draw on the casters life to perform, so I don’t see why it could be broadly applied to other abilities. However, life energy is tethered to someone’s data core, making it usually impossible to casually siphon off externally, unless it’s being directly bypassed by a pre-established game ability or direct alteration. But somehow the Bane of Breath has found a way to do that regardless, which I theorise could be because of her title as Bane, her native Flow aspect, or her sheer determination to keep destroying shit.

Since life energy is in certain circumstances, such as the presence of a powerful Life aspect player (which I am), easier to restore than grit and fluxmoxie, further investigation into this could be very promising.

To this end, I have begun my own research. The first place I will start, as to not bog myself down with endless amounts of theoretical research, will be the tether between life energy and the data core, and possibilities in weakening it to allow for life energy to be siphoned easier.
Chapter 13

Experiment Report: 46 days since session entry

Now this is what I’m talking about. 7 A subjects dead, 1 B subject dead. Let me start from the beginning.

After Action Report - “Siege of The Spire of The Land Of Jacarandas and Pipes”

My denizen has decided that my trials to overcome to gain maturity in this session are understanding that some can’t be saved. I could only assume that this referred to my test subjects, and given the heavy hints dropped elsewhere, I could only assume that this meant “I am going to send an army to attack your spire”.

And that’s exactly what happened. At 1251 the Seer warned me that a massively large force was incoming, and that our esteemed leader had assigned me is the Dame of Mind, na the Guard of Doom and of course gh the Rogue of Blood.

At 1400 sharp, the warband appeared on the edge of the horizon of the Land of Jacarandas and Pipes. They were roughly a few thousand strong, the main fighting force being soldier imps, chalk hobgoblin sergeants, obsidian manticores for ranged support, and a handful of rocs, titanium ogres and redbacks for auxiliary support. All led by the commander the “General of the West” Warcheif Glass Tacica. Apparently my land has a sort of four cardinal generals Asian mythology theme now? First I’ve heard of it, but the giant letters that appeared when he showed himself made it pretty hard to mistake who he was. Regardless, it was a fairly well put together fighting force considering the usual organization of underlings. Maybe my denizen thought that I would respond better to fighting an army themed enemy rather than the usual flavour? Who knows.

As for a description of the majority of the battle, it was epic and all that. You know, a real lord of the rings siege of Minas Tirth kind of thing. The kind of thing that consort muses would write about for centuries in their inns, about how the four brave heroes defended their home from the vile Grass Tacica and his warband. As for specifics, well, the first thing I have to say that most of the credit should go to is, who’s power is starting to get almost as concerning as the beserking Grace. I’d estimate that he took out at least half of their force, and didn’t even receive a single dent in his health vial. The way his blade is where it needs to be, and the way that he isn’t where their weapons are is almost hypnotic to watch. And the part where he went full, excuse my pop culture reference, Emperor Palpatine on some redback wizards was pretty amazing too. I heard that he is working on a fraymotif with the Bane of Breath called [Electrocumulus] on the side as well as his mid-combat path divination, which according to him “Makes a windstorm made of fucking lightning”. Considering that the banes regular windstorms are already enough to level a mountain, I don’t want to even think about that sort of power. If I was on the fence about him being able to take the leader before, I truly think that he could take her now.

And of course the Rogue and the Guard were impressive. They made liberal use of their fraymotif [Nosebleed Section] which, at least in appearances, did pretty much exactly what it says. Combine that with [Lone Digger], [Freaking Out] and [Stronger] and they made a good team. Real classic tank/dps/healer stuff with me in the mix providing support.

As for me, well. Circumstances did pan out for me to take the role of the real hero in things, given that it’s my quest and all. After the general broke through our defensive line, he knocked me directly through a wall into the lab room, where we proceeded to have an archetypical “Epic Boss Fight”, which resulted in many smashed stasis pods and dead subjects, including him tearing apart
A-2 over his head and splitting it into bloody halves while mocking me for the “childish concept that I could save everyone”. Typical sburb stuff then.

I won’t bore you with the details of every ability, homebrew or stock that I threw out (then again, I might include such a thing in an appendix at some point), but the fight climaxed in me being thrown through another wall into the B subject containment area. We then proceeded to finish the final stage of the strife (sidenote: fuck bosses with multiple stages) infront of a bunch of slack-jawed humans cowering in fear at both of us, terrified at the 9-foot-tall armoured creature with jet black rock skin and the 13-year-old disrupting the ground with magic spells, growing mushrooms in half seconds, and fighting with an overly long gaudy scalpel. At the final moments, I was knocked away, stunning me for long enough for the general to attend to the subjects, give a few lines about the futility of saving them, and trying to take 6 of them out at once with a single fell swoop, which he would have very well done had B-1 not jumped in the way of his claw, taking the full force of his hit instead. Well, B-1 and B-5 who wasn’t in the right position to be moved out of the way, and also took a claw to the abdomen. Of course, the whole situation gave me enough time to gather myself and deliver a finishing blow with [Harvest of Sorrow].

After which, I attended straight away to the wounded B-5, who’s body actively rejected by healing magics, and in a frenzy I just kept pushing more power in, which made me pass out.

When I woke up a few hours later (my sleep ratio not being high enough to permit forceful unconsciousness dreamself control), B-5 was dead, B-1 had regenerated the damage and was fine, gh had taken the reigns of cleanup in lieu of myself, and sympathetic to my research, quickly patched up the facilities and kept the subjects from escaping.

And then I confirmed the success of the operation with leadership, and then I wrote this report, and now here we are.

There is a whole lot more to write on this, including my analysis of how this actually relates to doomed timelines and the theories on it, but right now I would very much like to sleep and regain enough grit to heal my missing right eye and various other grievous injuries.

So, uh, standby for an analysis tomorrow.
Experiment Report: 47 days since session entry

I’ve mostly managed to patch myself up, but the fight took a lot out of me, and my fluxxmoxie and grit responded in kind, so I am very much out of commission for a while. As for my eye, regenerating it will take more power than I can spare right now, so I’m stuck being a cyclops. Maybe I’ll get a cool Alternian cyber-eye if I can be bothered, I heard that those things give you pretty sweet benefits.

So while I’m stuck in my room for the next while, let’s get down to analysis.

Firstly, concerning the denizen. As we know, denizens speak to their players in a strange mind-language that can’t be understood by anyone else, so directly transcribing the conversation wouldn’t be possible. Instead, here’s my paraphrase of the conversation with her.

Hemera: You know that you could never save her [I can only assume this refers to my sister, given the obsession that mind reading entities in this world have with her], so why do you try to save the others too? They are equally as doomed

Me: Maybe, but I hardly see the harm in trying.

Hemera: There can be great harm in not accepting the truth. Just like there is great harm in not telling your comrades the truth about yourself. If you continue down this path you will bring great ruin to yourself and all of those close to you.

Me: What, I thought being a hero of Life was about saving people, Hemera?

Hemera: Perhaps that was your first journey. But of equal importance is understanding who can be saved and who cannot.

Me: Typical denizen bullshit. Come on, can we get to the quest you’re going to give me already? [Okay, so that’s not exactly what I said, but that’s about the jist of it]

Hemera: Such arrogance, small one. If I cannot convince you perhaps a show of force shall.

At the time, I had figured this would be a fairly typical boss fight quest, where a big ogre or something would show up at my spire. Large organized formations of underlings are rare, and generally are only reported to occur from direct denizen intervention, or as pre-defined plot points.

Regardless, the Seer soon picked up on the massive flow of data congregating and organizing, and organized a rapid response team. I know the Dame had been bugging her to give her some more serious assignments, because she was getting tired of how easy her own land was becoming and wanted to test her skills even more. As for the Guard and Rogue, I believe that they were in the middle of their own unbreakable union quest, and had an easy gate in, due to the Rogue being my client player. So they’re who I got, which given the propensity of Seers, I can only assume was exactly the right amount of people.

As to how this ties into dooming, perhaps denizens are driven to eliminate them as well, and given their freedom of action, are capable of more direct action than just waiting for random chance to take them out? I’m sure that she wanted me to think that this was a big lesson in maturity, but I’m quite positive it was a just a convenient cover to excuse sending an army to kill my subjects.
As for general Glass Tacica himself, my running theory is that he was crafted specifically to provide a way to actually manage a large field of underlings at once, and to possess a level of intelligence high enough to specifically target my subjects while also engaging in verbal combat with myself in an attempt to convince me to give up my research. Being strong enough to punch through a brick wall and kill with giant claws probably helped too.

Of course, the issue still remains that they weren’t successful. Despite being a fair bit stronger than the usual progression for this point, Glass Tacica was still able to be defeated. It would be well within the power of the denizen to just send an overwhelming force, and she would know that my leader wouldn’t assign too much people to defend my lab given that it’s a non-critical feature, and the risk of losing a player would be too great.

Maybe she thinks that the best way to eliminate the doomed humans while still retaining plausible deniability would be to convince me that they weren’t worth keeping alive? It’s certainly a novel idea, and would have the cleanest break. The subjects would be dead, and I wouldn’t be around kicking up a fuss about it, and the game would still get to keep me alive to continue replaying and making more universes.

Of course, it does make me wonder. Would the denizen really be willing to kill me to get to the subjects? Is cleaning up doomed players really worth that much to her? Or indeed, worth that much to Skaia itself?

Oh, and here’s the subject status reports.

Current status:

A-0: Age 21. Male. Healthy

A-1: Dead at 1731-46d. Torn in two by Glass Tacica.


A-4: Age 9. Female. Healthy


A-6: Dead at 1729-46d. Death by impalement by Glass Tacica.
A-7: Age 74. Female. Hip replacement. Type 2 Diabetes.

A-8: Dead at 0322-20d. Blood loss via bullet wounds.

A-9: Age 12. Female. Healthy

A-10: Age 11. Male. Healthy


A-12: Dead at 1728-46d. Death by debris during the Siege of the Spire of the Land of Jacarandas and Pipes.


A-15: Age 45. Female. Semi-healed 3rd degree burns on 25% of body.

A-16: Dead at 0218-31d. Death by burning.

A-17: Dead at 1719-46d. Death by decapitation by Glass Tacica.

A-18: Age 56. Male. Healthy

As for the B subjects, B-1 has shown complete physical recovery from the four deep lacerations on his chest, including full regrowth of lung, heart and other organ tissue. B-5 is deceased by blood loss after failing to respond to Life aspect healing, which I can only assume is the games work at hand.
Chapter 15

Chapter Notes

[3rd May 2016] Added some intro notes to the fic on the first chapter

Experiment Report: 48 days since session entry

Well, at least in my incapacitated state I’m getting more of a chance to talk to my co-players. I’ve let gh take over a lot of the day to day running of the lab in the interim while I am mostly bedbound, although I can usually tear myself out of it for a while if I need to assist with something that he can’t handle. The good thing about being the team healer is that there’s nobody to tell you off when you break your own doctor’s orders.

Recall, if you will, my mention of ki the Heir of Space’s massive chunk of uranium. My initial assumption is that it was fuel for an [Atomic Bonsai] reaction (for those not in the know, [Atomic Bonsai] is a rarely used Space ability that basically performs a mass-energy conversion on a chunk of matter, which usually tends to cause a massive all-consuming explosion. The reason that it’s rarely used despite its massive power, is that all consuming includes the casting player, who is not given any sort of immunity to it).

Well, the truth is much worse. He is experimenting (as much as I hate to use that word with the unscientific practices that he is employing) with the forbidden art of Space players, black hole creation. He had a similar thought to me, in fact, about utilizing energy external to one’s own grit for Aspect manipulation. The uranium was supposed to be enough power, if broken down, to kickstart the transmutation of a planetoid into a singularity. So far he is nowhere completing it, or so he tells me, which I am sure that everyone this half of paradox space is grateful for. He’s named the ability-in-progress [Supermassive Black Hole] after the Muse song, because “that’s a wicked song and people see those giant ability letters floating up they’re gonna know that real shit is gonna go down”. Wicked shit indeed, ki, because if you get that godforsaken ability off the ground at all it’s gonna be the last thing anyone will ever see. And yes, the bold is part of the required formatting. He told me specifically that “you gotta bold it in your experiment diary or w/e so that people know it’s legit”.

I admit, I thought that most of my co-players would be using this extended session to relax, but it seems that trying to create overpowered abilities is becoming a bit of a hobby among us. With the Dame’s combat path divination technique, my own experiments, if they ever bear fruit, and now [Supermassive Black Hole]. And I hear even more, gh says that the Prince of Sand, who I still have yet to see, is working on something called [Vivid Memories Turn to Fantasies], which may or may not be a combination fraymotif and is supposed to do exactly what it’s called, and that the Sylph of Time working with our leader is still working on something that is supposed to stop the Grace from annihilating more timelines. Yes, her doing that is still a thing. No, we haven’t made any progress from what I hear. But I also know that the Sylph has an ability that he won’t throw down unless it’s an Alpha timeline called [Wheel of Time] that is supposed to be on equal bullshit with all the other stuff. No idea what it does, however.

…
In other news, some replayer communities concerning anatomy and biology that I frequent have begun discussing the idea of Troll-Human bio-compatibility. I admit my own knowledge of Troll biology is very much lacking, with it right now only really concerning the basics. I’ve only ever met a few in my replays, and I’ve never really had to do much complex alterations or healing on them, so it’s very much a blind spot. Maybe I’ll do some readings in my downtime.

The interesting thing is, is that one suggested the idea that, instead of regrowing my eye, that I try and implant a Troll eye instead. I think that they suggested this only because I am known well for my willingness to perform what many would call “insane” and “horribly unethical” live subject experiments on both myself and others, but jokes on them, because I’m seriously starting to consider it, even if just for the knowledge of what would happen. The networkers have even offered to assist me with the procedure, research and drafting a biomatter inter-session recreation plan, which are well known for being really god damn annoying. Lucky for the reader, that I have nothing else to do right now, so instead of having to wait for my next report, I can get started right away.

…

So I jumped my timetrav on the network so I wouldn’t have to bother waiting for them, and here’s what I’ve gotten.

2x Brownblood eyes, taken from a deceased female troll age 6 sweeps pre-entry. No known manifested psionic ability.

1x Yellowblood eye, copied from user echopraxicPowerplant, player of biological age 6 sweeps, high level telekinetic [8TK/RX, on the Alternian ‘PTP’ type psionic ability scale]

2x Tealblood eyes, taken from deceased player beyondInvisible, player of biological age 7 sweeps. No manifested psionic ability.

1x Violetblood eye, taken from deceased player foilsServant, player of biological age 104 sweeps (Note: I am told that her very abnormal age at the time of death was due to some kind of rapid aging ability used on her. The user was a human and forgot that violetblooded trolls live a whole lot longer than 220 human years, and only grow more powerful as they age. It did not end well for him, and she came out of the ability at the peak of physical ability)

All of these were quantum reassembled locally, to ensure no errors were taken while their data was being transmitted. This is important because improperly transferred biological materials have a very high propensity to cause horrible terminal cancers, if they come out as anything more than discordant piles of goo.

I’m most hopeful about the Violetblood eye. A mature highbloods eyes are supposed to be incredibly sharp and able to see in near-total darkness, as well as having a greater ability to both distinguish colour than human eyes, and being able to see further into the IR and UV spectrum, as well as possessing a thin extra eyelid membrane for underwater vision. The eye was gifted to me by her co-players, who are holding onto the other eye for sentimental purposes.

The Yellowblood eye is also of curiosity, due to the psionic force channeling conduits, usually used by powerful psionics to discharge excess energy, focus large scale manifesting, and occasionally as a brute force attack colloquially referred to as “Optic Blasts”. Not actually being a psionic troll none of this means anything to me, but it might open some paths to future research, if I go down that route.

The other four eyes don’t have much properties of note. I will hopefully be able to refine the
implanting process without running out of material, and even more hopefully will have some left over for future experiments.

Now, the first step in the implantation process will be to get the nerve interface working. After that… a whole lot more. Best estimates, if everything goes according to plan, I’ll have whatever eye I decide to use in the long term in myself in a few days. And with a whole lot of Life that I would have spent on regrowing my own able to be redistributed into general healing.
Chapter 16

Experiment Report: 49 days since session entry

I remember a proverb from old earth that was that said that good artists copy and great artists steal. From Will Smith or someone. I wonder if that applies to body parts?

The first thing I am learning is that performing a transplant on yourself, while conscious is actually quite difficult. Small applications of life energy makes the process of attaching nerve endings much less of a hassle, since they will branch out by themselves and connect themselves to anything that resembles a nerve that they can find. That removes the largest problem faced by conventional eye transplants with standard medicine by itself. Muscle regrowth and getting my brain to actually “talk” to the separate troll neural structure was more of a problem, but one that was eventually overcame with great effort. Full details of my procedure can be found in Appendix B.49 (The linear timetrav for this document will only make the appendix available upon completion or my death for all of you reading update to update. Really should fix that but that’s how the package I got works so)

So after spending quite a few good hours scraping dead flesh from my empty eye socket and preparing myself for the surgery, I tried first to implant one of the brownblood eyes. I am not proud to say that I slipped with the suturing needle and put it straight through the eyeball, but in my defense this is the first time that I have done this surgery, nevermind to myself and without depth perception.

The next eye, the other brownblood eye presented less of a challenge, but due to life misapplication it ended up overgrown with nerves and muscle fibre. Again, I tried with a teal eye, which I actually managed to successfully implant. However, in my rush of documentation and painkiller haze, I forgot to turn the flash off on my camera while taking a picture. It turns out that troll eyes being sensitive to light is not a myth, the eye burned out quite fast upon exposure to the flash, especially in the still very raw state of fresh implanting. Not willing to make do being half blind in one eye, I removed it and decided to go for broke with the violetblood eye.

The first thing you notice about having mismatched eyes is that it gives you a huge headache trying to look through both of them at once. I can only imagine that this will improve with time as my brain adapts. The second thing you notice is that trolls have a much better sense of motion than we do. It’s hard to explain, but, do you know how when you shake your hand really fast you stop being able to make out the singular hand and it sort of motion blurs out? Well, trolls can see fast enough that I was still able to make out my hand entirely with no obscurity when I shook it as fast as I could.

The next thing you notice is their visual acuity. I am now capable of reading a book on the other side of my room, as well as see all of the dust on my laptop screen even when it’s not in that sort of direct glare that reveals how dirty it us to rest of us.

Also, there’s the fact that I can now see in total darkness. At least as total as I can make it. Still with full colour and all too, unlike most earth-biology and technological forms of night vision. I’m told that this is a feature of the adult troll biology, as troll eyes only get sharper with age, and that most teenage trolls only have a mild but noticeable improvement in night vision over humans.

In short, it explains well why trolls are regarded as fierce killing machines, their eyes only serve to complement their entire bodies murderous purpose. I’m starting to wish I had another one, just for the depth perception, but alas, I am stuck being a ocular asymmetric freak.
I also guess I’ll only need goggles on one eye if I ever go swimming. I think that one of our players has a land that has a lot of oceans on it, not sure which one, but it will come in handy if I end up there.

**Experiment Report: 50 days since session entry**

I’m healing well. I’ve been able to redistribute a lot of my aspect to accelerate the healing process of myself, with the strain mostly taken off my eye (except for the energy that I need for it to not reject, which should take a few weeks before it becomes completely accepted into my system), so I’m mostly up walking again, but not really ready to strife.

gh told me that during his rounds, the B subjects seem slightly less… agitated. That is rather the opposite expect I would assume them to have, what with the death of one of their own, and the face to face experience with the horrors of the medium, but instead it seems to have steeled their resolve instead. B-1 has become something of a local hero among them. Perhaps this is some kind of Stockholm syndrome? Or perhaps they are genuinely beginning to accept their fate as hapless doomed test subjects. I honestly wonder, are they even aware of being doomed, and what it entails?

Maybe I’m getting too involved with their psychology. It was easier to distance myself at the beginning of the experiment, and the only reason that I didn’t put them to sleep or destroy their minds was because I didn’t want to box myself into a corner and find out that an experiment I could have done later relied on them being conscious. But gh seems to have grown somewhat sympathetic to them, even talking to them on a few occasions. They don’t even try to attack him or escape like they do with me, and he’s even bothered to learn a few of their names, for whatever reason. I would assume that this is partially because of their heightened mood and partially because he is playing a sort of “good cop” to my “bad cop”.

What is most worrying to me, is the thought that Skaia wants me to become attached to them, and goad me into giving them more freedom so that it can find a way to kill them easier, or even convince me that mercy-killing them is the best course of action.

Doom truly has a way of making you paranoid, even when you’re not the one it’s after. I find myself checking every occurrence, no matter how small or insignificant, for meaning these days, as if it was part of Skaia’s grand plan to eliminate them. I even find myself doubting my own mind for external influence.

I am beginning to understand why deep research into game mechanics has a high dropout rate.
Chapter 17

Experiment Report: 51 days since something or another

Suck it, towersRidge, guess who just beat your highscore for the fastest nethack ascension!

Yeah, I’m still stuck in bed. The leader has people running my land in lieu of me, but I’ve made a few escorted trips out. I should be back in action in just a few days now.

So since I have to write to alleviate my boredom, an issue I’ve noticed a few people bugging me about is terminology. Like, apparently in most other sessions people call those combination aspect attacks “Unite Synchronises” and not “Fraymotifs” and “Fraymotifs” refer to what we call “Anthems” and “Melodies”, or more commonly “That stupid AMV feature”.

Session drift I guess, it looks like that me and a lot of my companions are in some kind of corner of paradox space that runs newer code. Or, more likely, older code, since when I told some people on transam that I was a Faun of Time in one of my sessions they lost their shit, because Fauns are supposed to be some outdated title that has become myth. They’re not even that great, trust me.

I’ve also been making a lot of progress on my dream questing, which is even more boring than land questing. At least land questing has you killing underlings, most dream quests are just about talking to carapaces about baking for hours or whatever. At least the Courtyard Droll’s questline is cool and has strife in it, and he’s always a fun guy to have as a companion. Sburbian humour always has a hit and miss to it but the Droll is usually pretty actually funny. Good dancer too, we tear up together in the balls.

I’ve also been hanging out with our Esteemed Leader and the Maid a bit on the moons too. They’re actually enjoyable company when our Leader isn’t bossing us around and the Maid isn’t being a secretive recluse. All of my usual unioners and whatnot have always been sweaty boys so I’m glad that there are finally some ladies that I can hang out with, even if it’s in a purple coloured gothic hall.

In fact, in respect to the leader, for someone who is supposed to be a scarred legendary veteran she’s really quite sociable. Then again maybe if she could stop flirting with me for 5 minutes I’d have a different opinion. I mean, not that I don’t not like her or anything, she really is quite beautiful. Also, kind of hot that she could kill me without out even breaking a sweat. That’s not weird is it?

Wait, shit, here she comes now. I better hide what I’m writing.

Wait.

Wait how can she be coming now I’m in my room on my land.

Right?

Oh

Oh fuck me I’m dreaming right now aren’t I

I hope I didn’t write anything stupid this better not upload fucking perception filters
Chapter 18

Experiment Report: 52 days since session entry

It has come to my attention, that since starting this experiment, I’ve received many messages concerning it. While usually, it’s traditional for the author of a journal to respond to it after it has been finished, I’ve decided to bite the bullet and take a look at what some people are saying about me.

First off, we have graphicDissent commenting on the Heir of Space’s attempt at making a black hole.

..Wait. Black holes?! Is he insane?!
YOU NEED TO STOP HIM NOW.
In normal circumstances, a black hole with the mass of, say, a Land, would evaporate from Hawking radiation before it could do much of anything. That's strike one against something like that.
Strike two against black holes: THESE ARE NOT NORMAL CIRCUMSTANCES.
I've been studying the effects of gravity in the Game. All my current data seems to indicate that gravity works like it would in a work of fiction.
Lands, which are significantly less massive than your average presession planet, have a gravity of 1 g. Hollow Earth constructs like the Underworld have a gravity of 1 g. Everything that you could reasonably walk on, regardless of actual mass? You guessed it, 1 g. You know the Green Sun? That green spark in the distance that all sources say is twice the mass of the presession universe? We've figured out how to measure it. Not only is it smaller than the Schwarzschild radius the physics community had calculated for it, but it doesn't have a gravitational pull at all.
Black holes in fiction inevitably have a gravitational pull much, much stronger than the star that collapsed to form them. Odds are, the planetoid he collapses (which is incredibly idiotic in and of itself, because that specific wording implies he's going for a Land, or a Dream Moon) is going to make a black hole with the pull of a star. It will eat the Land, and it will eat the breathable air in the Incipisphere, and it will eat Skaia, and by the time it eats Skaia it will have breached the session bubble, and then you will get pissed-off Others. If the Time player hasn't gone back by that point then they are either insane or dead or both.

Like the other ones that I will answer, I have cut off the parts not important. If you feel the need to traverse the actual messages, it’s all available in the detailed log.
Now, these are actually fairly interesting results. I’m fully willing to admit that I know very little about physics, but even I was not entirely sure that the potential fallout would be this catastrophic. I figured the best thing to do would be to bring this potential to our esteemed leader. So here's the dialogue that I had with her concerning it attached.

ME: We have to talk.
TH: Oooohh this about yesterday River?
ME: No, it’s about KI.
TH: Oh maan
TH: It’s always all serious with you
TH: Fine, we’ll talk about real stuff later
TH: Now what’s wrong with Sidney
ME: You know about [Supermassive Black Hole] Right?
TH: I know that I had to kick his ass like 5 times before he promised that he would only work on it under supervision
ME: Would you mind telling me about the details of how you’re keeping everyone safe?
TH: Worried, are we? Don’t worry River I’ll keep you safe~
ME: Let’s go with that. Would you mind telling me anyway?
TH: Well, I’m holding onto his uranium myself.
TH: And my modus is encrypted so even if I die nobody will be able to get their hands on it
TH: He’s still able to work on testing the ability as long as he asks for permission in advance and describes what he’s trying to do to me.
TH: And then I’ll go through it with Romi and see if it’s safe.
TH: But I mean I’m not worried that we’re all gonna die from it.
TH: It’s not like we’ve heard anything about it from Steve.
TH: Like if I’m gonna devote any effort to things it would be to the whole part where we’re all getting killed by Averie in the alternate timelines.
TH: That’s still a thing you know, River.
TH: That never stopped being a thing.
ME: Well, if you must know why I am worried, I got this message from someone on my Experiment Reports.
ME Sent graphicDissent.txt
TH: Still working on that experiment then? Look I stand by what I said that I’m willing to let some presession humans die as long as you don’t endanger the session or its players.
TH: Please don’t make me regret allowing this.
ME: Just read the message TH.
TH: Damn that’s actually pretty intense.
TH: I’m pretty sure that Sidney’s plan has him figuring out a way to focus the black hole or whatever and not have it eat us all but I’ll bring it up with him, alright?
ME: Appreciated.
Once, a rustic Australian outback house, a wooden ranch with corrugated iron roofing, now is a spire that towers hundreds of meters upwards. Shaky wooden stories and iron roof outcroppings spit out at seemingly random intervals of the tower, with no seeming support structure. Across the land of grass and sunshine, hills and rock structures dot the shallow curved horizon.

At the bottom of the spire still lies the original house, and the spacious living room of the house is now the headquarters of this particular session. A large kitchen and loungeroom, with hardwood floors and a tall ceiling, illuminated by incandescent bulbs and big windows letting in lots of natural light. In the middle of the loungeroom portion sits the centerpiece, a large oaken wooden meeting table, roughly 3 times long as it is wide, surrounded by 14 varying, mostly antique chairs and stools. The table is covered in miscellanea, from books and papers, to discarded guns and other weapons, and empty drink cans and glasses. In the centre sits a raised metallic circle, connected with various wires to a laptop on the corner of the table. A hologram projector, mostly used to project 3D maps for strategy and planning, but generally spends most of its time turned off.

Nobody has assigned seating, but everyone does tend to sit at their own place regardless of the lack of official doctrine, with the leader often taking position at the head of the table, next to her Seer who tends to operate the computer.

On the other corner of the lounge sits a set of couches and armchairs, infront of a quite expensive looking television hooked up to a media server, the open windows letting the light in from the land, lighting up the dust in the air onto the sofas and coffee table, also covered in reading material, dvd cases, and empty food wrappers, in this case mostly empty crisp packets and bowls with a few unpopped popcorn kernals in the bottom.

The other corner again sits mostly empty, with a large section of the wall sectioned off for a truly massive corkboard, covered in papers, notes, pictures, and a big abstract map of the session, with the 14 lands, the moons, the battlefield and the veil, all covered in pins, string between pins of varying colours, and sticky notes with dense shorthand written on them, unreadable to all but the Seer that wrote them.

On the other side, lies the kitchen area, a sectioned off area of benches and stovetops and fridges, and a makeshift alminiter, and many idle ceramics, including a big stack of them in the sink that have yet to have been washed. A truly large amount of empty instant ramen containers lie around the bin, along with many cans of faygo, other forms of empty food containers, and on the benches most of the cooking equipment and chopping boards stays out.

Despite official meetings only happening once every week, each player is encouraged to come to group dinner every night, for the purpose of keeping spirits strong and engaging in regular social contact. Good food makes for happy players, and as one of the finer pleasures in life that has not been taken away by the murdrgame, everyone is more glad when they get to eat a nice meal. And indeed, despite the abundance of instant ramen containers, the session eats quite well for sit down meals. Nominally each one is supposed to alternate between cooking each dinner, but it mostly ends up to the Maid of Stars who gladly volunteers each time, and always asks for the team’s thoughts after each dinner for her own food blog.

But other than that, the place is used as the closest thing to a headquarters that the session has. Those on downtime often chill out here, despite it not being their own house or their own land. The
social value is great however, as being around others for a while and not having to worry about fighting for your life constantly is a blessing. At almost every time there is at least someone hanging about, either relaxing with a laptop on a couch, reading over their Imperatives and Priories or some other game arcana, sparring outside in the near grasslands, or just sitting for a while unoccupied, soaking in the precious downtime that was the purpose of the session to begin with, after all.

On the nearest wall to the table is a mass of posters, some movie posters, the most notable being an alternate version of a post-scratch Star Wars Episode IV filmed and written entirely in a wasteland on an apocalypse earth, found and printed out from a replayer server, which most agree to be a truly amazing piece of storytelling and emotion. Others are memorabilia that fell into the session from the other ring and that has been found, one being a large tall Ancient Alternian warbanner, a great violet flag stitched from lusus spider silk featuring 24 different troll signs. Some are public service posters printed out and stuck to the wall from replayer networks, made to remind players that regular hugging is essential to good mental health, that staying ontop of prophecies is everyone's responsibility, and to remind people to always speak to others when they’re not feeling well, in a we’re all in this together kind of way, along with other public good notices. In the center of the wall, directly aligned with the middle of the meeting table, is the centerpiece, a large framed photograph, depicting 13 teens and 1 broom infront of the house, then spireless.

They stand in the picture in a big line, in a wide landscape orientation photo, all on a grassy hill in a mild breeze, with the house behind them, the light of the land aside them and the light of Skaia above them, with Prospit visible as a small dot in the distance.

In the middle proudly stands Luciel Darlington, otherwise known as thermostatcHegemony the Knight of Light, the team leader of what its inhabitants are calling “The extended itnary session”, with a radiant smile, the one insisting on having the group picture taken. She wears a denim jacket over a plain t-shirt, and her long wavy straw-coloured hair hair falls far down her back. Her left arm wrapped around a meekly looking Seer of Heart, otherwise known as Romi Ninomiya, gyroscopicQuetioner, who has short unkept jet black hair and is looking at her feet rather than the camera, holding in a mild blush. In Luciels other arm, the slightly shorter than her, River Leighton, medicinalElectriacls, the Mage of Life, or better known perhaps as the author of the much controversial “Experiments on Doomed timelines”. Their short brown hair, pale skin and labcoat working well with their stoic glare, despite the enthusiastic pull by the Knight.

Next to River stands an even shorter boy by the name of Manuel Guimaraes, wearing a dark brown cloak clearly meant to imitate his godrobe of the Rogue of Blood, who wears a pair of thick framed glasses over his brown skin and bright green eyes. And next to him stands a tall, lankey Irish boy, with red hair, also wearing a bright green tatted cape over his shoulders, held on by a golden mantle. At his hip the scabbard of a sword is visible, the owner preferring to shun strife specibi and keep his primary weapon physically on his person. This boy would be the Dame of Mind, isotropicSycophant, Joey Rudin.

Beside Joey stands two girls, both leaning against eachother, both frozen in the picture in the middle of a laugh. One is the Bane of Breath, Kathrin “Katey” Shacklock, obtuseWeaponiser wearing loose fitting robes and bright blue dyed hair, and her companion is the Maid, showing a much more reserved laugh than her rapturous companion, who has her hand up to her mouth to cover her unsuppressed giggles. The Maid of Stars wears her solid black hair down to her shoulders, and is dressed in a light coloured sundress flapping in the wind. Her name is Kanan Varughese, or better known on the internet as negateGenerator. Or in this session, better known as the Hand of the Seer.

Beside them again, stands the Guard of Doom, a stout boy with very short brown hair, and a rough
face in an innocent smile. He wears what appears to be a set of full plate armour, coloured in copper. He holds his helmet in one hand and puts his other on his hip proudly, as if he were sworn to the service to protect his comrades.

And next to him is the one on the far side of the group photo, a small looking girl, with her bangs obscuring her pale skin and averted gaze, who seems to be content to shrink in the corner. She wears but a plain button shirt and jeans, and one would assume her to be ordinary, were she not the Grace of Rage, Averie Richards, organicParliament.

On the far other side of Luciel the leader and Romi the seer are three boys, up against each other in a loose huddle facing the camera. The one closest to the leader is jakartaAdvancements, the Witch of Hope, Terence Stone, who manages to remain looking perfectly photogenic despite being on the side of two other, his hair caught in a beautiful loop midair and his eyes looking gracefully into the camera, and his mouth caught half open.

In the middle of the three boys is Sidney Pershall, the Heir of Space, kineticIntergral who stands a solid head above both of the other two, and too is caught in a bright smile. He wears a grey button up shirt with a red tie, and a pair of square frameless glasses sit on his small nose.

And the last of the three boys is the one that looks slightly less impressed with the antics, but still can be seen having a smile escape through, workingKiting, the Scout of Void, Lawrence Kissinger, who wears clothes that would not be uncommon to see out of an early 2000s scene store on old earth, torn black jeans, mesh undershirts with a band t-shirt on top, and well-kept dyed black hair not quite flowing in the winds due to the heavy hair gel usage, across his pierced eyebrows and lips.

And finally on the other far side of the picture stands Steve Oregon, the Sylph of Time, internetsAtrocity wearing an array of cane flutes stitched together by woollen fabrics across his neck, and attached to his belt as well, wearing a poncho and in his hand, at the very edge of the photo he holds a boom with a poorly kept black wig on top, with a piece of paper taped to it, that reads in large handwritten letters “MAHEND UNTEOS – PRINCE OF SAND”, presumably a stand in for the single absent member in this photo.

On the bottom of the picture frame sits a metal plate, that names each member of the photo in order, followed by the location of the picture (The Land of Grass and Sunshine) and the timestamp in which it was taken. And the astute will notice the slight energy of time absent from the frame, because indeed, it lacks the passing of time entirely, having been enchanted by the Sylph himself in a way that will prevent it aging, and make it near indestructible at that, ensuring that long after the session ends, in success or failure, that it will continue to float through paradox space for all eternity and past it, floating through dreambubbles eternal as a testament to the 14 that entered this session.
Chapter 20

Chapter Notes

[12th May 2016] I'm glad to see so many people commenting on the fic! I love hearing what you guys have to say about it, and I love even more that you're suspicious about some of the information in the story as it is presented. Of course, the story is written entirely (barring 1 chapter) from the first person, and thus does not always present an entirely unbiased view of events, and it's great to see people reading actively and engaging with it!

Experiment Report: 53 days since session entry

Now that I have effectively finished healing, I have begun my plans into the study of life energy as a power source. While clearly, the study of doomed timelines was my initial intention, I hardly see why I should turn down the opportunity for such interesting research.

My working model, and I mean it when I say model, because currently this is nothing more than bare conjecture in a way that explains well the behavior of what I’ve observed, rather than how the reality of it actually is, is that each living being has a mass of “life energy” or “life aspect” that is tied to their data core. This is only partially expressed in a health vial, more functionally life energy ties together all aspects of physical wellbeing. If your health vial can’t defect a blow and your body itself takes it, it still knocks off life energy from you. Beings tend to naturally regenerate up to a certain point, and can generally only be healed up to their usual maximum life energy by traditional means.

Many aspects manipulate it, blood is an easy example, in my model it is easy to explain blood abilities as stacking on the life energy directly ontop with blood instead, increasing it above the maximum, resulting in the enhanced durability and health associated with blood abilities. Doom erodes it, or in the case of the various “Zombie” abilities, replaces it entirely with Doom instead of Life.

This model breaks down when exposed to certain problems, like the fact that Doom-sustained players also exist in a strange state between life and death as a result of the death script being suspended, and I won’t even get started on how this ties into the player clocks and predestination. That is not my field of gamebreaking and I won’t attempt to explain their results with my model, because broadly, it wouldn’t fit.

The interesting part, is the way that the Life energy of a being is tied to its data core. The best way to think of this is as a tether, a kind of rope tying it to the core, shaping it in a certain way. This explains the way that Heart manipulation can change physical appearance and abilities, because it would alter the tether and force the life to take on a different shape.

The interesting part to me, is asking why there needs to be a tether at all? Why would there need to be a function of the universe that ensures that life energy only grows and shapes according to a preset core. Is it part of ensuring that beings are not healed beyond their maximum alone, and is nothing but a game feature meant to ensure balance, or a more fundamental consequence of reality?

And the even more interesting part is the question, what happens when this tether is weakened, or
even removed? Would the life wisp away, leaving the body dead instantly, or would it grow and expand without limits and lose its shape, turning the owner into a grotesque deformed monster.

With enough willpower and determination it can be convinced to give out a little, as proven by the Bane and her wounding herself by overchanneling, but she tells me that getting it to work took gigantic effort.

Truly, I think that I might actually be able to sever the tether right now, were I so inclined. I’ve been introspecting my own Life energy very deeply these few days, and I rather believe that I can already feel it binding and shaping my energy. With a small, sharp application of inverting I think that I could cut it, but I am not going to go trying it any time soon without much more subtle research first, least I just accidentally end up killing myself, or worse.

Regardless, I’ve formed the process of slicing it off into an ability, and named it [Final Chapter] because hell, whatever ends up happening if I ever do just remove the tether wholesale, things sure as hell will never be the same. Destroying it is one thing, but I don’t think that I can create one again. Or indeed, if anyone could.

---

**Experiment Report: 54 days since session entry**

It is, truthfully, starting to become worrying that my subjects aren’t dying. I would have thought that at least the B block would be tripping over their own feet all the time and running headfirst into walls until they die of brain damage, but so far they seem to be mostly… alive. Well except for the dead ones. But that goes without saying.

A lot of other reports usually report death much faster than this, even in non-combat scenarios. I don’t think it’s especially common for a presession human to even survive a week, nevermind 54 days. Is there something else keeping them from dying? Have my meagre but present containment methods truly gathered much more success than I expected, even considering that some of them were purposefully underdesigned for the reason to get more data to work with. Or is there something else at play here?

Something that I hadn’t considered is inter-temporal effects. Even when I was a Time player I never messed around much beyond my duties with timelines, but maybe It’s possible that alternate timeline me’s, or future me’s are skulking around in the shadows, preventing threats before I’m even aware of them. I don’t have any memories of doing that in the past already, so it either must be an even more future me pulling a lot of weight, or disconnected selves from my memories altogether, like doomed timeline clones.

That would be pretty ironic, doomed selves saving doomed selves.

But overall I find the time travel scenario unlikely, if possible.

---

**Experiment Report: 55 days since session entry**

We finally found the magnificent. Took long enough too, the first entry we found was in the middle of some dungeon in the Guard’s land, where he accidentally tripped over a rock and ended up in. Freaked him out too, he’d never been to one before.
But of course, once you find one entry you find them all, so now we’ve all mostly got access to the place. I haven’t checked it out myself yet, but I hear there’s an entry not too far away on my land, so maybe I will if I’m out questing around there.

I also hear that it has not only a full set of 14 player clocks, but a session disk as well. I don’t know if that’s a good sign or not, but as the only gamebreaker (as much as I hate to use that term, I much prefer scientist or researcher) in the session that I know of, and one that at that has absolutely no plans to mess around with the things, I guess it’s a moot point.

Still, it’s weird to think about the player clocks. I’ve always wondered if they’re merely linked to the status of players, or that they are the status of the players. The latter would explain much better why the players reflect the clock if you mess with it, rather than just the clocks reflecting the players. And I know that the suitably dedicated have messed with them to etch a bit more out of their lives at great cost, but I’ve always wondered. What would happen if you destroyed the clock entirely? Would you just vanish from existence entirely, or something much more sinister?
Chapter 21

Experiment Report: 55 days since session entry

Had a look in the magnificent. The clocks are as ominous as I expected, the ticking sounds like it would get to you after a while, especially considering that all 14 clocks are slightly out of sync and on slightly different frequencies. Feels weird looking at my own too. It’s a big ornate one made of copper painted in Life aspect off-white with my text colour making up the internals.

Now the session disk, that’s what really got to me. Okay yes, it was incredible and awe-inspiring and blah blah. Come on it was a fucking circle in a vinyl player. But the most significant part was what it was, and I don’t think the other guys would have recognized it since I’m pretty sure I’m the only one that ever actually bothered with vinyls, because I’m that kind of hipster.

It was a Long-Play vinyl.

Fuck I hate this game sometimes and its shitty puns.

…

On the subject of the magnificent, kenoticAntagonism writes

   alright my 'research' specialty is magicanstuff. i'm no guide writer but i can throw you some insights on what people in the know with it currently think.

      the clocks have some kinda association with one of the aspect energies, tho we can't pin it down to being time/doom/life/fate with any certainty. essentially if it has anything to do with procedurally generating prophecies and-or stable time loops the clock seems to have some sort of connection. we're tentatively calling it [majyyks], that's the name that most frequently comes up when datamining. we think the overall purpose of the clock is another player tracking mechanism within the game, separate from the pendant or the shiny. like you pointed out the players reflect the clock, because it likely stores some of their session relevant info, especially stuff like doomed status. we know for sure that the clock has a causative effect on ascension, when you go tier some component of the majyyks takes effect over your entire timeline.

      observation over a range of sessions with equipment on the clocks and with doomed time clones equipped with camcorders has confirmed there's a statistically significant tendency for the clock majyyks to activate when a doomed timeline is created. it likely stores the relevant data? like say, if the doomed self does anything to benefit the alpha timeline the clock will be where sburb notes what went down. the conditional immortality of the tiers seems to be majyyks directly assuming providence over the player's various doomed timelines and purveying over all player deaths, at least in the doomed timelines (because perma-death sucks and everyone tries to avoid that shit we have yet to observe the consequences of an alpha death), from that point on.

      we're not sure about the details but it seems to be some sort of logic check done by the clock face. if you meet certain conditions you die, otherwise it keeps on trucking. there's a causation with 'morality' observed, as in perma-deaths seem to be related to how the ARC audience could view the death of the tier. common conditions between perma deaths were self-sacrifice or being put down after a berserk trigger.
breaking the clocks is ongoing research, because we don't want to accidentally kill people. at the very least it would likely turn off conditional immortality. it might also wreak havoc on the stability of their timeline, with likely horrifying consequences.

sample size so far is across twenty something sessions, which is actually decent considering what it is we're working with.

oh, and unless anyone in your sesh is an apeshit bananas enough coder to ath hack an exile terminal blindfolded you don't have the necessary expertise to handle the session discs. don't even look in their direction.

>Note: Terms glossary

**Pendant:** The spirte pendant given to you from your sprite. Sometimes called your “soul necklace”, “land pendant” or the “kernallace”. Holds important game data in it concerning you.

**ARC:** Accumulated roleplay coefficient. One of the first and most important discoveries from gamebreakers, an invisible game tracker that tells you how much you’ve acted in the session as according to your “role” in the game

Thanks for the comment ka. I’m always glad to hear from a fellow scientist about the cutting edge, even if this stuff isn’t really my field. Although it might have to be, because of my doomed timeline research. Mostly I had intended to focus on doomed nonplayers since I had assumed that both worked under the same mechanism, but maybe they don’t. Do nonplayers even have clocks? There are only 14 in the magnificent, so if they did they would probably have to be in some deep code crypt somewhere. But I don’t even think they would really, since they’re not players they wouldn’t need to bother with any of the conditional god tier immortality, or their own unassisted timetravel.

If the clock is really the place where doomed status is stored, perhaps if purged from there it would free the player from doom? Given that nobody has had any luck hacking pendants or data cores to remove the status, it might be a line of inquiry. Once again through, still not my field, to my regret. But even if, I doubt it would be that easy, if there is one thing that my research has taught me already, is that Doom is a very faceted topic that exists across multiple scopes and multiple levels of existence, rather than just something in a single place and single timeline that can be disposed of trivially.

As for the session disk, there is no way I’m touching that. I only know enough ~ath to write a program to send out memorial letters on my death, anything beyond that is beyond me. I think that gh is a decent coder, but nowhere near that kind of level to mess around with sburbian code. So I wouldn’t worry much about it, it’s not like it even matters that much unless you’re dealing with multi-scratching or frog crossbreed scenarios anyway, which we don’t have any indication of occurring here. So far.

### Experiment Report: 56 days since session entry

So today, me and our esteemed leader are sparring on her land at headquarters. Well, rather, she is kicking my ass and teaching me how to fight in the process. I’m rather good at strife, at least I like to believe so, the scalpelkind modus is fierce, and between my 3-foot-long “Precision textual ASCII Edge” scalpel for general strife and autoparry and the standard sized “Aleph-one Slicer” for actual surgery and well, if it comes to it, attacking of vital spots, I’m pretty decent. But she is on a whole different level. I can’t even land a single hit, even when moving at full speed.
She’s trying to teach me how to flash step, but it turns out that despite the apparent ease that she has teleporting all over the place, it’s pretty damn hard to do. I wouldn’t even believe that a human body could do that if I wasn’t seeing her do it with my own eyes (well my own eye, and some trolls eye). The troll eye actually gives me a good advantage, since its letting me actually see her move rather than just having it be a flicker across the eyes, but it doesn’t matter since I still can’t physically move fast enough to intercept her.

She says that I actually have potential to master the flash step, because I already demonstrate a lot of the same speed and precision required with my precise vital strike strife style, when I employ it. Which I don’t except for special circumstances because of the effort it takes to pull off anyway. But the way that I can move my tool fast enough to slice open someone’s arteries in fractions of seconds before they can react is much the same principal, except instead of just moving your arm, you have to move your entire body.

Once again, it sounds fucking impossible, but still, here she is, kicking my ass moving at lightspeed.

I asked her how she learned in the first place, and she told me that her guardian, her brother, taught her in her native presession. She says that it’s much easier to learn if you’re taught it from a very young age, and even better if your guardian teaches you, because of some sort of divine connection or something.

I asked how her brother knew, and she says that he absorbed the knowledge across the scratch that would happen in the future, from his post-scratch self, because in her native session they would scratch the game and then enter the post-scratch session to complete. That post-scratch self learnt it from his guardian, his sister, the alternate timeline esteemed leader, who of course, absorbed the knowledge from her across the scratch. Which means that the original knowledge of this style came from some stupid time paradox. I don’t even want to think about that.
Chapter 22

Experiment Report: 56 days since session entry

It is a grand tradition of all those who write on their sessions to include references to abilities and descriptions of what they do. Now, the last thing I want is to detail every stock ability that we all throw out, even if some do differ from the most common soul pollen iteration, because frankly there are already millions of guides on them. And I honestly do not have much to add on the subject of actual practical advice for other Life players, my own style with the aspect is very… unconventional already. Maybe if there ends up being demand much later I’ll write a bit on my personal style of aspect manipulation of the Pulse and Life aspect. For now, I have instead deemed to write on some of the more interesting abilities displayed by my co-players. Or well rather, the ones that they tell me about.

Of course, given that qualifier, this only makes up a very small subsection of the total set of shit that they’re inventing with all of their free time, but regardless I found some of these unconventional applications very interesting.

[Total Eclipse of the Heart]: This one is between the Scout of Void and the Seer of Heart. It’s supposed to shroud the data cores of a mass of entities, effectively stunning them for an extended period of time before they boot back up and recover. It seems like overkill to me, there are loads of aoe stuns in the game that don’t rely on deep data manipulation, but maybe they’ve got a special circumstance in mind. I doubt that they will be able to use this before hitting god tier, at least not without some serious effort. I think that it has something to do with the Grace.

[Silent Running]: This is a single Aspect ability that I made. The intent is to reduce your life signature so much that most things can’t detect you as being alive. It doesn’t actually exhaust that much pluck, but you can’t cast other things while using it so it’s usefulness is limited. I stumbled across the idea while working with the Life energy tether, and figured out that I could mask the signature of the Life energy from clairvoyance. I think that I could improve it too. Life aspect also has control over the earth, and with some tweaks I could make myself indistinguishable from the terrain. Right now it only really shields me from things that seek out specifically the living, anyone with a moderate degree of intelligence could just target my “corpse” and find me easily. Plus, if you’re using an alternate vision mode or sensing mode, I would be discoverable anyway. But if my data core has the same “signature” as the ground, they wouldn’t be able to tell me apart from it. Using sensing modes, I mean. Anyone using their eyes will still see me plain as day. The improved version will be called [Silent Running (On Dangerous Ground)] when I get it working.

[Spider Dance]: This is what the Dame calls his general combat clairvoyance stance. I think it has to do with being like a spider dancing, because of the eight arms that it looks like he has when he’s moving through the battlefield like a dancer. Or maybe it’s just a song that I haven’t heard, because it’s pretty typical to name abilities after songs.

[Heartache]: Also one from the dame. He said that he made a customization of [Spider Dance] (I think that [Spider Dance] was already a fork of another ability he made anyway?) that targets decisions that result in non-lethal disabling of a target, mostly with the intent of disabling another player if they go BT.
[Heparin Nightmares]: A combined Blood-Life 2x fraymotif that me and gh have been using. The idea occurred to us last session that we had together, but we were different aspects then so we never got to use it. Now we can. I won’t go into detail about the effects, because frankly, they’re gruesome even for me, being much like an overdose of the actual drug Heparin. But against single targets, it is a very effective damage over time/debuff that uses full exploitation of the crossover between Life and Blood.

[No Credit Card]: Here’s an interesting one. I have no idea how he managed to do it, but the Witch has figured out a way to reject payments. In boondollars and grist. While he has it running, nobody can pull his grist from gristTorrent, or take any of his boondollars, even if we have claim to them. The weirdest part is, game shops work fine, he gets the item but it never subtracts boondollars from his account. As long as he has enough to pay for it at all, he effectively gets it for free. I suspect it might have something to do with “rejecting” the payment request from the game, but the game clearly doesn’t have checks in place to cope with that from the consort and moon shops.

It isn’t able to reject alchemiter grist cost, however, so we can’t start mass producing overpowered weapons. Yet.

[Guns of Brixton]: I must admit, the practice of taking metaphorical songs and literally interpreting parts of them for abilities is entertaining. The Maid of Stars invented this ability, and it has to do with manipulating the gravity on her guns to make them hilariously overpowered. They hit like artillery shells and destroy the terrain mercilessly, and strife zones with her tend to look like battlefields after she’s done.

Unfortunately, she tells me, it isn’t effective for covert work because of its very obvious nature, so it isn’t as helpful in her duties as the Hand.

[Pork and Beans]: 2x Rage/Doom fraymotif. Not sure why they called it this, nor am I sure about the mechanisms, but the Grace and Guard use it to disrupt the doom around themselves, or rather as they said “Make the doom disregard the shitty opinions of reality around it[sic]” and I’m not really sure what that means, but the end result is that they’re both a lot harder to kill.

[Fasten Your Seatbelt]: 2x Time/Breath fraymotif. It’s a lot like the stock ability [Jackknife] from Breath combined with a generic time acceleration from Time, except self-targeted. The interesting part comes from the increased precision and control offered by Breath, allowing them to use the increased speed from time without running into walls like a bunch of morons, making it much superior to the stock ability which just tends to result in black eyes all around.

[Electroculumus]: Whoever said that Mind elemental bullshit isn’t powerful hasn’t seen this. Because clearly the Dame needed more power, he teamed up with the Bane of Breath to create this needlessly destructive thing. It’s… it’s very similar, outwardly, to [Pyroculumus] from Flow, except instead of clouds made of the idea of fire, it’s clouds made of the idea of lightning. And also destruction.

Needless to say, once they got this thing working, the first thing they did was try it out on some mountains in the Dame’s land. Of course, it didn’t work because it requires way too much power for their weak mortal-tier bodies to throw out, so they both ended up passed out there for an hour until the Seer found out and sent me to go pick them up and heal them.

I’m not even sure what their deal is, this thing is way too powerful to have any actual application anyway.

[Progressive Uplift]: 3x Light/Hope/Time fraymotif. After the Sylph of Time stumbled upon a type of feedback loop concerning the interactions between Hope and Time concerning circumstance
bonuses, he came up with this. I’m not sure where Light comes into it, but I am assured that it wouldn’t work at all without it.

The effect is subtle at first, but the longer that combat goes on while they have this active the more powerful they get. It’s a lot like some of the high-tier Time inevitability effects, but on a much smaller scale and generally subtler. Most time players don’t get to play with inevitability except in really special circumstances anyway (I myself tried as the Faun of Time but I couldn’t manage it either, even at Max rung God Tier), since only a few small subsection of players ever have the mindset to work with them, so this is probably as close as they’ll get.

It’s also much less terrifying than inevitability effects, which I suspect might be partially due to Light’s influence, but it’s probably more than that. I hear that inevitability effects are supposed to be akin to existential dread, like facing down the universal reality of death, except contained in a single entity, but this is just more like someone improving rapidly in the middle of a fight. Rather like some of those stories about the AI that leans as you fight it and adapts to you, except in this case it's much more quantified as an ability.
Chapter 23

Experiment Report: 56 days since session entry

I can’t believe that I broke my nose flashstepping directly into a wall. And to think that I didn’t trust our dear leader when she said that it was dangerous. I am now absolutely positively convinced that flashstepping requires reflexes faster than the human brain can provide. Alongside some more comments on the player clocks, kenoticAntagonism had this to say and gl learning the flash step. i also learned it in my native sesh, exactly like ur leader (who sounds awesome btw give her props from me, ideally in the form of hella fist bumping). like now that i fucking think about it it seems to be a common set of conditions in consensus pressession that produces flash step players. what if it's, like, a modulated time ability or something like that? damn, i'll propose it as a hypothesis on ivory tower and see if anyone steps up like they outta the water to do the research.

glad we can talk shop on some things at least.

That… might actually make sense. I’ve certainly been time once myself, and while I couldn’t tell you directly if our leader is too, I would assume so given the large amount of experience that she possesses. That being said, I know that time isn’t her native aspect, however. Aspect channeling outside of an sburb session or outside of your current role isn’t unprecedented, if rare and difficult, but I don’t believe that anyone has ever channelled an aspect that they’ve never been. To my knowledge, all results of extra-sburb channelling has been native roles, at that, although this I am not as sure on, as there may be research that superceeds me.

Given Time’s well… timeline nature, it could very well be that you need not have been Time assigned before the actual action or learning of flashstepping, rather just that you are time at any point in your flashstepping. Or perhaps it is a form of aspect channelling entirely unrelated to sburbian mechanics entirely. While magic (I absolutely refuse to use those stupid j’s and k’s when spelling a very real world thing) is certainly very much a thing that is real and exists, it is unrelated to aspect’s entirely. But given the theory that Aspect energy is not created by the game but rather a universal constant bound to a use, it would not be out of the question that individuals, players or not, could channel it by themselves.

Have fun on Ivory Tower, I guess. I myself don’t really want too much to do with them after they rejected my paper a year back, and banned me for life at that.

As for my nose, an application of Life should take care of it, but the Growth seems very keen on having me conserve pluck for some reason, and while I usually wouldn’t pay it much mind, it seems strangely active about it, so I’ll abide it for now and set it manually.

Experiment Report: 57 days since session entry.

Subject B-2 is seemingly acting very much out of character today. While escape attempts and fruitless general attempts at stirring problems are not uncommon in the containment block, lately he has become even more agitated than usual, yelling for hours on end about how it’s imperative
that they let him out, that we’re all going to die soon, and how he does not want to die.

I think there is the potential that the Void is damaging his brain, or triggering some kind of instinctive panic response causing him to cause trouble like this. I myself even made a personal appearance to tell them to keep down at threat of violence, which has always shut them up for a few days before, but not this time.

Surely after almost 2 months he cannot really think that this is a viable escape strategy?

---

**Experiment Report: 58 days since session entry**

The Sylph of Time noticed something quite interesting. At the insistence of our esteemed leader, we took a group photo of ourselves to hang on the wall in the meeting room, against my better will, and the Sylph as a token of sentimentality or something spent some real grit enchanting it in a constant time stop. I didn’t even know that Time players could stop time permanently without upkeep, but apparently it only works on inanimate objects due to the extreme cost involved. In his words “To do that to something like a person would require so much god damn grit that like the entire damn green sun wouldn’t be enough”.

Anyway, the interesting part, is that it seems to be non-existent in doomed timelines. All of them. He has not witnessed it fading himself, but he claims that no matter what manor of doomed timeline, it is never present. Perhaps this has to do with the Grace? Or it is just another strange coincidence concerning the liminal nature of objects with great sentimental value.

Nobody has any theories yet, but at least it should make for a good indicator if the timeline we are in is doomed, although from what I hear the usual indicator is that players start dying at a rapid rate due to rapier stabbings.

---

**Experiment Report: 59 days since session entry**

The Sylph met his denizen today. I forget its name, Yaldabaoth or something. Instead of being a usual vague bullshit denizen, it seems to constantly speak about [The Doomed Prophecy].

None of us can find anything in any replayer network or resource about something by that exact name, leading him, and us, to believe that it must be something of unique consequence to this session alone. Or a word-pallet swapped general quest, but given the especial focus reported on it, I find it unlikely.

The prophecy in question, if indeed it even is a literal actual prophecy is nowhere to be found, and sure as hell wasn’t delivered by Yalawhatever himself, but all that we know is that it will appear to us “soon, and in due time”. Typical denizen bullshit in of itself again I suppose.

I can’t imagine what exactly is going on here honestly. Imperatives and Priorities doesn’t even have anything on this, not a single one of the tomes. Well, it might, but I don’t have the hundreds of years required to read the entire thing, and the usual search algorithms can’t find anything.

Ironically, prophecies aren’t even often time player business. The important ones are almost always distributed to Doom aspect players, by the metric of important ones being ones that talk of the death of a co-player, and our actual Guard of Doom hasn’t heard of any prophecies that aren’t
being managed already and present a threat to session stability. In addition, while Denizens often speak of prophecies, they universally tend to do so only after the prophecy in of itself has been revealed in full, foreshadowing is generally a narrative job of the consorts, and not reserved for the denizens.

Plus, they’re often not named in [Square Brackets], so all of this leads me to conclude that this prophecy may not even be a literal sburian prophecy, but rather some other kind of Time-like construct that the literary engine of the denizen has determined to name a prophecy.

I am not sure if I should be worried. There is a very real chance that this is all just a glitch, but the unease of the Growth, the panic of subject B-2, and the speak of Doomed things, when such is both the study of my experiments, and the cause of a cataclysm in our doomed timelines, well.

I can’t help but feel ominously that we are on the precipice of something big.
Circumstantial Similarity I

Out of Perspective Chapter: Circumstantial Similarity I

Years in the past.

A girl wakes up in a cold sweat. She tries to grasp onto her memories but they slip like sand in a sieve away from her. A small room, a soft bed, a doona covered in patterns of suns. Is this her room?

She unsteadily tries to pull herself up, her feet shaky on the plush blue carpet. Shelves full of various objects, books, figures. Are these hers? She doesn’t recognize any of them.

Her eyes locate a mirror, and she stares into it. A face stares back at her. She recognizes it, it is her face. Dark eye bags offset a pale round face, and her deep brown eyes stare into themselves. She tries again to think. Who is she? A name comes to her. Averie. Avirie Richards. That is her. What else is she? The Maid of… something. Was she working as a maid somewhere? She does not know. But one thing is for certain, this is very much herself. And despite everything, it is still her.

…

Days later, it comes back to her in pieces. She remembers a game, she remembers friends. But she thinks that they might be dead now, or at least gone. She is not sure if there a difference between being dead and being very far away. She is not sure why she thinks that.

Messages on the internet tell her that she was once a player of a game that ended the world, except that every time you play the game, you have to wake up and do it all over again. She feels angry at that; she feels like she has been cheated out of… something. Maybe what she lost will come back to her in time.

…

She asks why she doesn’t remember. The messages tell her that sometimes something called “The Door” doesn’t work quite right. That it might sometimes take memories, or make them hard to access. Or that sometimes what someone had experienced was so traumatic that a mind tries to shut it out. And that the door helps it along. They say that her past will come back to her in time, that sometimes a lot of second sessioners have problems like this, and that she should not worry, because they are all there to help her out.

One asks if she remembers her Class and Aspect from her native session. She doesn’t know what any of those words mean, but part of her mind tells her to say that she was the Maid of Hope. The messages are very excited to hear that, they tell her that often a Native Role is a significant part of someone’s identity, and that if she can remember that she will remember more in time.

…

The messages encourage her to spend time outside, interacting with the humans. They say that a lot of them are always happy during the “presession” because it lets them live like normal people for a while. She is not sure what normal is anymore, but she takes their advice because she trusts them. She wanders the roads, the centres, the shops of a city that they call “San Francisco”. It sounds familiar to her. A stranger asks about her accent, and asks if she is from England. She is not sure, she tries to respond, but she tells them she is from the Land of Ink and Chalk instead. They look at
her very strangely, and trail off to leave. She is not sure why she said that.

...

The messages are conversing among themselves. They ask each other what keeps them going. Some of them say that they do it for their friends that they met, because they hope that they’ll meet again some day. Others say that they do it because they hope that some day they’ll get their “Ultimate Reward” and that the door will finally work. They ask her what she keeps going for. She says she doesn’t know. They ask her to think about it. And she does, for a long time.

...

They get her to keep at least 5 computers on her at all times. They tell her that it’s standard procedure, just in case they need to start the game early. Or if one breaks. She supposes it is good advice.

She spends a lot of time outside. The people are nice, if strange. Sometimes she seems them and remembers random things, like birds talking to her in a great plane of violet, or a golden planet filled with these bone white coloured people. She learns some of their names. She thinks that she remembers liking coffee, because she stopped by a café once and got some there, just like she had done it a million times before. The man working at the coffee shop is called Kyle, and he is working there to pay for his studies at university. The old woman who is there every morning is called Jenny, and she works as a teacher at a local school, and she says that she needs the coffee to get through the day.

...

The messages ask her to check her strife specibus. She pulls on an imaginary abstract part of the universe, and in an instant, a razor sharp metal rapier appears in her right hand. This too, feels familiar. She tells them that, and they say that rapierkind is a fairly expensive specibus for a native, and that maybe she was wealthy in her old life to have afforded it. She didn’t even know they cost money. Don’t you just pick something up and the first thing you do is assigned? She isn’t sure.

...

They ask her again if she has figured out what she wants to keep going for. They ask her if she wants to save others? They say it is a noble goal, and that many of them fight for that. She says that it is an admirable thing, to suffer and live only for the purpose of helping your comrades. They ask her if she wants to see anyone again. And that if she remembers any of her friends. She remembers that she will never see them again, and she feels sad. She decides that that isn’t for her either. They ask her if she keeps going because she just doesn’t know what else to do? It sounds right but doesn’t feel right. There must be more to it than that.

She decides to keep thinking about it.

...

Some of the messages have a fight with each other. One was stealing from a shop, and the other did not like it. One said that it doesn’t matter since they’re doomed anyway. The other says that it should matter because it’s still the wrong thing to do. She think she agrees with the latter, that surely it is wrong. She knows that one day they will all die, both in the immediate, because the game will end them, and in the abstract, because someday all things die. But she still doesn’t think that it is okay to steal from them, even if it is for a helpful purpose. There was another way, after all, they could easily have paid for it.
She imagines that maybe these arguments are common among the replayers, which is what they call themselves. But she dismisses it, they are all clearly very moral people, apart from some which are set right by others. She can’t imagine anyone doing anything truly bad to innocent humans, regardless, even the shoplifter agrees that she would never harm one unless she truly had to.

…

She really rather enjoys spending time outside. A lot of the locals and regulars know her, even if mostly as “that strange young girl”. She wants to learn about them, because the more she learns about others the more she feels she can learn about herself. She knows now that she was once a Maid of Hope in a Land of Ink and Chalk, where she and her friends played a game that ended the world but created a new one.

And now she knows that she and her hopefully new friends will play it again. And one that calls herself the Seer told her that she is now a Guard of Light. They tell her that each role is like a lesson, and that the better you learn that lesson the better of a player you are. She hopes that she can learn how to Guard Light well so that she can help her team.

She knows that there are 6 others in this session, and that each will have their own role to play just like last time.

…

For the first time in a long time, she finally starts to feel okay with things again. She has made new friends again, who all seem to genuinely care for her. They tell her it will be a few more months until they enter, and she’s okay with that, because maybe they can all get to know each other well before they play the game again. Maybe they can even meet up in real life, but she isn’t sure how she would afford the plane tickets. Maybe one of them can use the game powers they’re all vague about to help? She knows that magic is a real thing now, so maybe it can help.

When she goes to sleep, she sleeps well, despite the occasional strange dreams and abstract nightmares. But she still thinks about a reason for playing. She doesn’t know why she fixates on it so much, she thinks. But there must be a reason. There is clearly a really big reason that she has, or that she used to have, and she just has to realize it again.

But regardless, she sleeps well. Things are well, and she is happy.

…

…

…

Human flesh is cut through like air. Human reflexes are slow, human feet are clumsy, and human panic and self-preservation even stops them from fleeing in a pragmatic way. Chaos overcomes the large plaza and central business districts as Averie Richards cuts a bloody crest in the population of presession humans.

It is too easy. Not even their own protectors, the so called police, can even pose challenge. Nobody is keeping count, but if they were, the body count would be in the hundreds. Sirens and screams blacken the air and the stench of blood and death is fresh in the air.

A rapier cuts through body and metal all the same. Civilians run and hide but to no avail. The keen eyes of a replayer see through all barriers. And the swift movement allows no escape. The bravest among the humans try to fight, to no avail.
Years in the future, this would be known as the Massacre of Earth\_Bwa0!hc. Right now, nobody knows what to call it. Reporting helicopters try and fly in the airspace, and the world is confused and shocked. They need time to make sense, but the meteors are beginning to fall already, and ironically despite all the indignation and horror at the bloody scene here, it soon wouldn’t matter anyway. They never learnt the reason behind this, but maybe we would someday.

One human backs up in fear. They trip over the corpse of another, and fall onto hard concrete and stone. Cold eyes from a short girl with pale skin look him over. He knows that his death is soon, but perhaps unlike all the others, he dares to ask one final question, satiate a primal desire for knowledge before his doom.

He asks “Why?! Why are you doing this?”

And the girl pauses for a moment. Enough to be only taken a little back by someone finally daring to ask a simple question to find out the reason for this event.

But she will satisfy him. After all, the reason took her by surprise too, but she did what she had to. She will always do what she has to, no matter what the consequences.

“Because,

I want to live.”
Circumstantial Similarly II

Out of Perspective Chapter: Circumstantial Similarly II

Years in the present.

A girl wakes up in a cold sweat. She tries to grasp onto her memories and finds them exactly where she left them. A large room, a soft bed, a doona covered in patterns of moons. This is her room.

She steadily pulls herself up, her feet firm on the hardwood floors. Shelves of various objects, books, paintings. Her stuff is right where she left it, her reading material properly bookmarked, and her art hanging as usual.

Her eyes locate a mirror, and she stares into it. A face stares back at her. She recognizes it, it is her face. Dark eye bags offset a pale round face, and her deep brown eyes stare into themselves. She reflects on her circumstances for a moment. She is Averie Richards, the Grace of Rage in what the locals are calling “The Extended Itenary Session”. That’s a really stupid name, she thinks. But despite everything, in the mirror, it is still her.

She steps out onto the balcony and breaths in the crisp cold air of The Land of Lavender and Chills. Looking across the plains of great curved stalks of plant matter and gusts of purple particles, she feels a brief sense of familiarity and security. Each land, no matter how many times you get one, always feels familiar to you.

She removes her sprite pendant from her bust and holds it, feeling its faint warmth. Her sprite died a few weeks back, a bit sooner than usual, and she felt a bit disappointed. She never really got to know him, even if he was just a liminal ghost of an ex-player that she replaced.

She presses a button on her belt, and holographic panels cover the balcony. Windows XP has never looked so good, in her opinion, than when it is projected across a snowy balcony in monochrome blue in an extrauniversal medium.

It seems that the leader and her friend, Luciel Darlington, has called an emergency meeting today. Well, not quite an emergency. If it was an actual emergency she would have been woken up and would be there already. Unplanned would be a better word. Meeting of significant content. Her yellow words occupy the announcement feed.

Meeting at 1100 today! Everyone is expected to show up (That means you Joey as well). Katey and Steve have found out the deal behind this whole [The Doomed Prophecy] thing and it looks super important. But they say that we’ll need everyone on board to go over it, since they’re not really sure what it means yet.

Anyway, HQ at 1100 sharp.

She had heard about [The Doomed Prophecy] before from Steve’s denizen. Or what Steve told of his conversation. It’s supposed to be a really serious thing about the session that might have really big consequences, ones that might even stretch beyond this session alone. It scares her, that something this big is happening to her in a session, that she’s in, but she’s prepared. She’s experienced worse.

Her real fear is that it will concern her directly. She knows well of what she is doing in the doomed timelines, and she is truly terrified of that more than anything. It must be a weird Rage thing, right?
Despite similarities on the surface, it could surely have nothing to do with… back then.

She tries to reassure herself. Her Rage is, according to the mainline theory adopted by the sessions more shenanigan-inclined, something exclusive entirely to doomed timelines. A property of them, if you will. Something meant to clean up in lieu of game features, like the way that troll worlds will often be cleansed by a Vast Glub rather than just asteroids.

A change of clothes, a check of inventory and a short gate trip later, she arrives at headquarters. The temperature change as always, takes her a bit off guard, but she quickly adapts. She apperifies in the reception chamber for the 3rd gate, a small wooden room a good 20 stories up. She takes the stairs down to the 1st gate room, and a quick pole ride down from there into the headquarters proper.

It’s 1042, so the meeting has a bit before it starts proper. She recognizes a few familiar faces, however. Luciel herself sits at the meeting table with Romi (or as more people end up calling her “The Seer” but she always found that kind of rude. She herself made an effort to learn everyone’s names as soon as she could upon entering this session). They are deep in conversation, one that she can’t quite make out at this distance. Presumably discussing the meeting that they are about to present.

On the kitchen bench, Manuel and River both sit, slurping down some instant ramen. They are discussing deep technicals what appears to be River’s strange experiments that they do reclusively in the depths of their house. And also Ivory Tower, and someone called skeletonWhiskey. She thinks the experiment has something to do with presession humans and doomed timelines. She wants nothing to do with it, really. River always kind of weirded her out anyway.

Out the window, on the porch, she sees Ivan, still in his full plate, going over some combat drills with Katey and Kanan, both fighting over which one of their techniques is better to push onto the younger Guard.

And on the couch she sees Terrence, the one that she has taken a liking to more than anyone else here. He always speaks with such genuine care and empathy, and was the one that when the news of her Doomed self accolades was discovered, was the first to argue in her defence. Many times they had both stayed up late together, talking about life, death, the sessions and the world. Were she willing to make such a plunge, she maybe even say that she loved him. Maybe.

But regardless she always felt safe and comfortable around him. No matter if it was jovial teasing about him being assigned the traditionally female title of “Witch” or him holding her in the depths of the nights of the medium as she cried, he never once expressed anything more than the deepest caring.

He is sitting on the couch, a bowl of chocolates, m&ms she thinks, in hand. On the other armchair sits Sidney, and they both appear to be watching some sort of TV show. There is time until the meeting, and hell, mostly they don’t start proper until half an hour later anyway, because someone is always late. So she decides to relax in the meantime.

She sits next to Terrence, and snuggles up close to his side, moving his arm around her, and he, in the same way he has many times before, pulls her close, and with his other hand gestures towards the chocolate bowl, for her to take a handful.

Obliging, she stuffs a handful into her mouth, and mouth still full, asks “So what are you guys watching?”
Terrence, eyes still mostly focused on the show says “House M.D. It’s like, about this doctor who’s a genius but also a total jerk. But he’s got a heart of gold”. Sidney interjects with “Yeah, it’s basically like, River: The TV show”. She giggles, she supposes that does sound a lot like River. She at least hopes that River really does have a heart of gold, but if Sidney says so then it’s probably true, right?

“Watch for a while”.

And she does, and for a while, all is well in the world.

…

The strangest thing that she noticed is that Mahend actually showed up for the meeting. Along with Steve himself, he was the last to arrive, and this was honestly the first time that she’s seen him in person. She wishes she could say that she actually learnt something about the guy by looking at him, but he was dressed entirely from head to toe in linen rags and desert wraps, like someone living deep in the Sahara Desert on old earth. She couldn’t make out even a single patch of bare skin, and even his eyes were covered by some dark orange glare goggles. Maybe he was taking being the Prince of Sand a bit too literally.

The second thing she noticed was that Steve looked very ragged. He had clearly been going without sleep for some time, his hair was even greasier than usual, and many of his pipe flutes that he kept all over his body were damaged, burnt or otherwise abnormally deprecated, especially considering his usual absolute dedication to keeping them all intact. He and Luciel shared a silent nod to eachother, and the leader announced the beginning of the meeting proper, at 1121.

Rather than taking their usual seats, she directed them to stand around some empty floor space, next to the table, and rigged the hologram projector to make a large flat screen facing them all. She had a private moment of enjoyment as she compared this to a teacher giving a lecture to a class, which she supposed wasn’t entirely inaccurate. Luciel had after all, done a similar presentation to the session back in one of the very first meetings, to go over all of the gates and the server/client chains.

“As we know” Luciel started speaking, “about 4 days ago, Steve, our Sylph of Time, talked with his denizen about what is known as [The Doomed Prophecy]. I hope you can all hear the square brackets on that, because this thing is pretty important. We’re not really sure just what it means yet, but that’s what we’re here today to suss out, you know?”

“Now, usually I wouldn’t give this much fanfare to another generic prophecy, but the thing is, we’re not really sure if this thing even is a prophecy, by technical terms. From what we can tell, it seems more like a… statement. Like not necessarily about things that will be, but more explaining how things are.”

“Also of concern is the fact that none of us can find any literature on this. Things aren’t the same as they were back when I was a fresh second sessioner, there’s like, leagues of intomation about pretty much everything out there, no matter how obscure. I admit, it isn’t always good information, but there’s always something.” Luciel put particular emphasis on the ‘something’. “But here, nothing. And that’s what really worries me. This may very well be minor and entirely inconsequential, but we’re totally in the dark here.”

And for a while, the entire 14 of the session, together for the first time ever, listened to the story of just how Steve came across [The Doomed Prophecy] from Yaldabaoth, the details of the research that they all did, and how it all came to naught, the experts that they contacted who knew nothing. The moon library studies that all came for naught, except for a few namedrops. And it all lead to
the showing of some pictures captured by the Slyph of Time on some diving in the Veil.

“This is a picture taken from the veil. We believe this to be our sessions seeding asteroid, or ‘frog temple’. The 14 spires and central frog head make it pretty clear. As steve goes inside we see how he documents the lotus room, various code crypts, usual stuff. But the central room is the most interesting part, and while we wouldn’t call it the prophesy in full, it looks like the first actual detail of what [The Doomed Prophesy] actually is.”

Terrence grips her hand. The Witch of Hope, too, feels fear.

Luciel gestures at the holoprojector to go the next slide.

Across the room, a photograph of a code temple wall takes central stage. On it, in a coloured chalk, lies a huge collage of words, diagrams, arcane symbols, numbers. Code and equations. Essays and expositions.

It only takes a moment for Averies eyes to comprehend the meaning of what she is looking at. She understands it all in an instant, as plain as day. The truth is as absolute as the ground beneath her feet, and as absolute as her new imperative. She knows what she has to do.

She pulls on an imaginary abstract part of the universe, and in an instant, a razor sharp metal rapier appears in her right hand. This too, feels familiar.

Human flesh is cut through like air. Human reflexes are slow, and while the Witch of Hope is a grand replayer veteran, survivor of 8 sessions, someone quick on the draw, someone who can hold their own against ringwraiths and kings and denizens and glitches, he has no hope, after being caught off guard like this.

A rapier enters his heart. Time slows to a crawl, not because of any actual time travel, but merely in the gravity of the situation. It is a universal constant that the dead are allowed final words, and that they must always be able to be expressed no matter the deadliness of the surroundings.

He mouths a single syllable, and looks into the eyes of the Grace deeply, with both love and hate, horror and acceptance. “Why?”.

She will satisfy him. After all, the reason too her by surprise too, but she did what she had to. She will always do what she has to, no matter what the consequences. And the group photo still hangs on the wall, just where it was, a sign too clear in its meaning to all that see it.

“Because

I want to live.”
Cataclysm I

Out of Perspective Chapter: Cataclysm I

If you could measure the capability of sburb players, one of them would certainly be the ability to rapidly adapt to changing situations. For the most experienced of them all, this would measure in the milliseconds. And indeed, when the Witch was struck down, the fastest of mind were overcome with the knowledge that they were now trapped in contained room with a foe well out of the usual range, even for sburbs regular lack of balance. And in this case, deaths were final, with no reassurance of merely being an offshoot timeline.

Luciel, esteemed leader and master of the flash-step, with reflexes so high that measurement of them by traditional technology is effectively impossible, is the first out of everyone to react. She knows that she can’t hope to take the Grace of Rage in single combat, she is simply the best there is. Or so she has heard. But she also knows that if they are going to get out of this alive, they’ll need to stop her from immediately slaughtering everyone. So she thinks that maybe she, combined with the Dame, could probably last a few seconds. In that time, she would need to make a plan, communicate the plan to everyone, and successfully execute it. So she starts thinking.

Next up is the Dame of Mind himself, Joey Rudin. Truth be told, he had seen this possibility, but he wrote it off, thinking it another dead end timeline, never to come to pass in the Alpha. But clearly that was untrue. Now, while his aspect enhanced brain might be able to notice and react fast enough, only just being beaten out by the leader, if only by dint of pure experience, on the other hand he is mostly of possessing a one track mind. So indeed, most of this experience is, for him at least, less of an impending “I am going to die” and more of a “I finally get a chance to show my real skills without a doomed timeline holding me back”. So while Luciel is already also in mid-lunge directly at the Grace, he also grabs his two swords from his strife deck and prepares to join her.

Next up is the Seer. Romi, being both technically blind and deaf, is able to come to a clear picture as to what is happening very quickly, without all of those technicalities of image processing and whatnot. She watches the Seer, herself about fifty milliseconds, give or take a few, after realization, about to impale the Grace with a sword that has enough kinetic energy at that speed to break through a steel wall. She also watches, for her own definition of watches, the Grace’s off-hand raise and catch the blade directly into the palm.

The fact that she was watching Luciel attack the Grace directly, told her two things. One, is that she knew that Luciel knows that she can’t win, so she must be stalling for time, and two, is that they are operating in a timeframe where there is no way to verbally communicate a plan to the entire team before they all die. She herself, at least she likes to think, that she is fast of mind, but she probably couldn’t make one up in the time that Luciel could, nor would it probably be as good. So her plan was to find enough time for Luciel to make a plan, and then make sure everyone knows the plan.

The Seer takes inventory of the individuals in the room. Luciel has just finished putting her sword through the Grace’s hand, and hopes that this will distract the berserker for enough time for the Dame coming up behind her to finish her. River has just about come to, and is pulling some scalpels into his fingers, presumably to throw them like throwing knives at the Grace. She supposes that they’re taking advantage of their troll eye, since she was very sure that they weren’t this fast on the draw before they got it.
Who else? Lawerence the Scout of Void? No, he wouldn’t be helpful. Katey or Kanan? Katey would take too long to channel anything particularly useful of Breath, and Kanan didn’t have much to help either. What else? There has to be something.

She tries to think from the beginning again. She needs time, and communication. Time. Of course, who would be better to give more time than the Slyph of it.

And indeed, Steve Oregon, the Sylph of Time himself, is ready to do something himself. Well, not current him, because current him is too busy being in shock. But future him has already received a future plan from the future Seer and future Knight, and all he needs to do now is go back a couple of seconds to connect to them both so that they can invent the plan, and then tell it to current him so that he can go back in time a few seconds and become future him. He breaks a flute off his hip and crushes the weak bamboo in his hand, a crude way to utilize their power, and indeed, usually he would play them traditionally, but time is of the essence. He feels the freed Time escape, and he captures it, and forces it to take him back a good couple of seconds, to appear behind the Seer just when she came to the realization that she would need the Slyph of Time.

How much time would they need? 100ms into 5s sounds like a good bet. 10x dilation was hard at this level, but he wouldn’t be maintaining it for very long. Plus, it needs not be whole body, he only needs their minds to work that fast.

He forces some spare Time out of the air and moulds it into the Seer and Knight.

And know we return to the Knight, once again being Luciel Darlington. Esteemed leader. She is now coming to the notice that having her sword impale the hand of the Grace was what Averie was planning all along, because with her actual sword hand, she had literally dearmed the right shoulder of the Dame coming from behind. If there was enough time to speak, she is sure that the Grace would have said something along the lines of “It doesn’t matter if you can choose the best decision, if they’re all bad”. The 100ms mark was quickly approaching, and she didn’t have time to remove her sword from a hand, so she lets go and prepares to grab another one out of her strife deck, when suddenly she realizes that the world has slowed down. Even more than usual. Her keen timeline awareness, lets her realize in a second that she has been given enough time to come up with a plan, and the fact that she can feel the telltale metaphorical tendrils of the Seer reaching out to her soul, lets her know the Seer has already come up with the other part of the plan. Namely, actually reaching everyone else.

It makes perfect sense to Luciel, after she realizes Romi’s intention. Light is, after all, not just luck and fortune, like the truly stupid always believe, but information, agency and freedom. She will imbue her intentions into the Light, and Romi will funnel it to all 12 currently alive and non-murderous players, and all will understand what they need to do. She wasted about 300 relative milliseconds on realizing that, so she now has 4700 left to come up with this mythical plan before she returns to normal time.

So she thinks even harder. And during that, maybe she can try and deflect the rapier coming for her face, from the backswing after de-arming the Dame.

…
Chapter 27

Chapter Summary

I'm back from hiatus. Prepare for experiments on doomed timelines act II.

>  

>  

>  

>ping sessionAlias:extendedItinerary.medicinalElectricals

Pinging sessionAlias:extendedItinerary.medicinalElectricals with 32 bytes of data

Request timed out.
Request timed out.
Request timed out.
Request timed out.

Ping statistics for sessionAlias:extendedItinerary.medicinalElectricals:
   Packets: Sent = 4, Received = 0, Lost = 4 (100% loss)

>ping sessionAlias:extendedItinerary

Pinging sessionAlias:extendedItinerary with 32 bytes of data

Request timed out.
Request timed out.
Request timed out.
Request timed out.

Ping statistics for sessionAlias:extendedItinerary:
   Packets: Sent = 4, Received = 0, Lost = 4 (100% loss)

>aliasLookup extendedIteinerary

Closest alias server rs:2251:7732:1732:1221:4441:6772 responding:

512-byte UUID of session aliased as “extendedItinerary” is:

--BEGIN UUID--
0c579150e198b0db4ce296d678f29b78c408037082129b4d8a96079349ae209c
834fbcceed5d447a27579d21e2a2eda12f0efdf86c0f0df086b784763151b7f27d8
3140691d36565eafa7963aeceadcb725807700dec0c62faff657c2160a3da2fde
4d5dc6eabaee081ff963036dd815d8ceebf5d57c353c2ec67467b46205b164
534d869e775235db73f1e96b09433e10564d546f84a8fab4fa9fa63f0e43f96
0c3f07aabd1d49b3b225aca23736a1180492e9a51980e625a3dd4d3203d3c86c

--END UUID--
fa186d3ec275d4b9156fe8fa26f17cd77f8edf8f6ddfd6d798e0358d8bc87bc7
6c0a541dcfadce2e74802e8c52301572455b342f193c2a5d21846346527d55b75
afec9594b1d2fa31cbb992007b045466f8bebe49426e65882ee35f255df61d808
5c07b4c79e5b40a523c72da1e40424a2004c53bc0e20d2d4c2add772b4fc3433
1d33951ede8b85bf96a63cbe4c4823b731e50188ebf0fbdc71e5035388fe9f743
7c677d9f3eeb3b4e9990abb3c150f2c9291b8e214bdcb2ed37d6d2e99fff1cc
563cf271857791a2904f946a144be9dbae6f19e317fa298fb2b20253f7d4759d
8a05415a25231e5cde42f0d5ec3e6a97e5b3fe87d259942da8bf4da25ad4e6d6
86f24a5803c3719c7cb09ebd29fdd8871720b0be1e46d4e9b2c243aaf31db7
da2b096da39a856e748363c68d309bff1434561e8b6b6d2d755099e13760747

--END UUID--

>Mark

Marking…

Terminal copied

>ping sessionID:<marked>

Pinging sessionID:0c579150e… with 32 bytes of data

Request timed out.
Request timed out.
Request timed out.
Request timed out.

Ping statistics for sessionID:0c579150e…:
   Packets: Sent = 4, Received = 0, Lost = 4 (100% loss)

>rmail

=Ring mail version rc13.2=

Changelog: rc13.2
- Fixed memory leak when cancelling attachments
- Fixed problems during infinite execution procedures
- Now IT:722 standard compliant

Rmail>compose -f -s -to:remoteClient:<address[12]> -enableSecureKey:<keylist[12]>

Composing mail to ****:****:****:****:****:****

>Still can’t get a ping on MEs session. Been 3 days local now. What’s the differential on this?
-RH

Sending….

Send confirmation received

Rmail>receive

[1] New message
---BEGIN MESSAGE--

Hard to say. Most common cause would be a TPK, but I find that unlikely. Even after a TPK their hardware would still be running for at least a few sweeps before the others ate it. They could have shut it all down themselves if they really wanted to, but I can’t imagine why ME or any of their sessionmates would want to cut themselves off. Just checked the traceroute myself, and it’s not a problem with an intermediate relay. Closest is relayAlias:shellsAndOceans which is working fine. Strong V_id effect could cause this, but it would have to be a berserk trigger or a really determined GT to pull this off, and last I heard their hero of v_id hasn’t shown a propensity. Could be a glitch in their hardware, but I know for a fact that ME could easily get a backup running and they’re not even the sessions computer manager. And we both know that we wouldn’t wire them those troll eyes if we didn’t think that their system was stable.

Their last blog update was kind of worrying though. Sounded like something big was going to go down, so I think that our best bet would be high level external interference or game kernel problems.

See if you can deepnet into their blog server, might still be something in the buffers that never got published.

-TP

--END OF MESSAGE--

Rmail>exit

>deepnet

Deepnet remote access tool 0.72

Created by cidersFailure

Deepnet>connect -t -hw -ww -rt serverAlias:experimentsOnDoomedTimelines

Connecting…

Connection to serverAlias:experimentsOnDoomedTimelines established in 12.32pS.

Deepnet_server>init emergencyContact

Emergency contact protocol engaged. Transmit failsafe key now.

Deepnet_server>rawtransmit <emergencyKeys[ME]>

Transmitting byte data <emergencyKeys[ME]>

Starting…
25%...
50%...
75%...
Completed in 25.12s.
Deepnet_server>su

Superuser via emergency contact failsafe accepted.

Deepnet_server>copy -y -t RECEIVE_BUFFERS_ALL localhost

Receiving byte data <RECEIVE_BUFFERS_ALL>

Starting…
25%...
50%...
75%...
Completed in 88512.12s

Deepnet_server>exit

Deepnet>exit

>rmail

=Ring mail version rc13.2=

Changelog: rc13.2
-Fixed memory leak when cancelling attachments
-Fixed problems during infinite execution procedures
-Now IT:722 standard compliant

Rmail>compose -f -s -to:remoteClient:<address[12]> -enableSecureKey:<keylist[12]>

Composing mail to ****:****:****:****:****:****

>My deathkey still works. I’ll go through the buffers myself, see if I can find any fragments or broken transmits that give us an idea of what happened. Will keep you updated on anything I find. -RH

Sending….

Send confirmation received

Rmail>exit

>shutdown -t

Shutting down…
Manuel Guimaraes, the Rogue of Blood, had a clear goal given to him. Save the head. Terrence may be dead, but his dreamself can be saved if he can be kissed. Unfortunately, French kissing a corpse to revive their dreamself takes at least a good 10 seconds, and they don’t have that kind of time. So it was his job to decapitate the Witch of Hope and bring his head with them. In addition, if anyone else were to kick the bucket, their heads would have to be saved too.

A Rogue concerns themselves with redistribution, and blood is about unions, bonds and strength. All it would take is to find some strength and then put it somewhere else. Or do the same thing but in reverse. Fortunately, it looks like he won’t even have to look very hard, Luciel already had the right idea. Joey was about to bleed to death from having his arm cut off at the shoulder, and that would be very bad. And Terrence’s head was still firmly attached to his own shoulders, usually a good thing, but in this circumstance, the opposite of what was wanted. So all he had to do is funnel some of that “body parts being attached to other body parts” strength out of his neck, and put it into Joey’s arm. He won’t regrow an arm or anything, of course, but it will seal up the wound and stop him from spraying blood everywhere like a firehose.

Averie, seeing that Luciel had just parried her killing blow with a new sword yanked out of her specibus, figured that she’d go for an easier target first. Divide and conquer right. She jumps up, and with both of her legs at once, kicks the Knight of Light square in the chest. She goes flying into the wall, and due to Newton’s laws of motion, in exchange, Averie tumbles backwards. This also has the useful sideeffect of dodging a flurry of scalpels flying at her.

Her next target is Ivan. His platemail served him well during PvE, but against another player its nothing more than an inconvenient bunch of metal that stops him from dodging properly. So mid-roll, Averie slams her rapier straight into his left shoulder, and then cuts diagonally downward, using the force to propel her back to her feet. Ivan has been opened like a tin-can, and in that time, Luciel is still reeling from the force of her ribs shattering, Joey, while his arm appears to be healing over, is still quite out for the fight, and the Grace of Rage claims yet another life.

Sidney is standing totally still, his eyes closed. wisps of starfields emitting from him. River prepares another barrage of Scalpels, and sidesteps closer to Sidney. Manuel’s eyes flicker to Ivan, briefly in panic, and then quickly in knowing. The Seer falls to her feet, exhausted from her expenditures. Right next to her, Kanan grabs her with one hand, and spawns a pistol in the other, aiming right at Averie.

Katey crouches slightly, and aggressively yanks Mahend, the Prince of Sand against her, clutching him against her side. In the tradition of two arms meaning dual actions, her other hand waves around, gracing the dead Ivan and the still living Lawerence with currently gentle winds behind them.

She was the keystone of the first part of the plan, a way to escape. Katey knew exactly what she had to do, she would pull those close to her, and then propel herself outside, and into the 4th gate.

Of course, she could not fly with enough strength to carry everyone out, and of course, there was nothing stopping Averie from simply following them through the gate.
Averie picks herself up infront of the corpse of Ivan. The Guard of Doom and the Witch of Hope have fallen already. Joey, taking a moment to clutch at his stump with his one remaining limb, steps in-between Averie and Luciel. He unsheathes another sword out of his syalladex, having dropped his previous two from the pain of being dearmed. A long sword with a box-cutter resembling blade. He points it forward, part challenge and part statement of defense. As if to say, that he is still alive, and still willing to fight. Averie responds in kind, blood still dripping off her rapier and onto the thick rug below her feet, staining it red.

Despite the tradition of fighters about to engage in personal combat being allowed to share words without being burdened by time, the two have nothing to say to eachother.

Averie takes a step forward.

The air smells of ozone and headaches. A faint lime green glow emanates from the Dame of Mind. Finally, he has gathered enough focus and enough grit to channel something serious. The casting of a fraymotif is a strange internalized game abstraction, despite no words being said, everyone knows what it is called when one is cast. Some describe floating words telling them in literal terms what it’s called, others merely describe just simply “understanding” what the name of an ability is.

[Heartache]

…

Manuel holds the severed head of Terrence in his hand. He watches Steve, current Steve, travel back in time to become future Steve from the past, while now future Steve becomes current Steve and the time loop is complete. Future, now current Steve is very exhausted and unable to assist in the fight. Then again, Manuel also thought that Joey was out for the count, but the noise of blades clashing faster than the eye can really track speaks for itself. With a single arm he is managing to occupy Averie, at least for a while. He knows that he won’t be able to keep up this fraymotif for long, not if he wants to come out of this with his psyche intact and his pluck bar not forever melted into game abstraction slag due to serious overburning. Averie only seems to be getting faster and stronger with time however, showing no signs of fatigue. Or slowing down.

He’d go in and help but he has a job to do. Katey is about to lift off with the body of Ivan, Mahend and Lawrence, whom she has also pulled to her. Sidney, the Heir of Space, is still channeling. River, Kanan and Romi are already by his side, who are currently stanced defensively around him, occasionally providing ranged backup to the fight across the living room.

That leaves… Steve and himself. He’s going to need a way to get the head of Joey if, or rather when he dies. He can’t sever his head like he did Terrence without a source of severedess to transfer. Unless he… he supposes he can do that. It’s not like there are a lot of options. He quickly waves his hands at the very faded Steve, who nods gently, still collapsed onto the floor.

…

Joey is being pushed back. He’s only taken surface wounds so far, scratches and lacerations on his torso and limbs. His sword is exactly where it needs to be, but sometimes it feels like it needs to be in two, or three places at once. You can know what is coming, you know what the best you can do is without a doubt, but sometimes the best you can do isn’t fast, isn’t strong enough. Mind only makes decisions. It doesn’t empower those to be able to make better decisions to begin with, only the best of what is already an option.

Managing this much flow is extremely hard. The hand of his aspect guides his movements, but in the end it can only do so much. He has to be inside his own head, sorting through scenarios,
calculating options, and also be in his body, moving himself to the options he calculates. It is much akin to having to play 10 games of timed chess at once, except you know you don’t have enough time to make the best moves, or even good moves. You just have to make moves at all because if you don’t you’ll fail automatically. At least he is playing the game, he thinks, when he has the option to.

But doing this isn’t good for the brain that is performing it. He’s heard stories of Mind players driven mad, but he never took them seriously until now. And he honestly thought he could adapt [Endless Climb] for combat? What a fool he was.

…

A boom fills the entire room, reverberating off the wooden walls, and scattering papers and objects everywhere. Katey, the Bane of Breath takes flight, 3 in her arms, and crashes straight through a window, smashing the wood and the glass to fragments that scatter.

As they fly up through the air, a certain Mahend raises his arm to the sky.

And reality breaks apart.

[Gatecrasher]

…

The noise sounds like 5th dimensional nails being scratched on a 6th dimensional chalkboard. The answer to a question nobody ever asked, what does it sound like when 7 gates begin to fall apart at the seams. Not like one would take apart a table, but like one would watch a great ship come crashing apart, components slipping away from eachother as if they were never bolted and riveted on to begin with. Game code slides against itself, and classes and functions and methods deravel line by line as the land gates return to the raw essence from which they came.

Just before the 3rd gate crashes, Katey flies her group into it. The timing had to be perfect, too early and they couldn’t crash the gates at all, and too late and they wouldn’t be able to escape at all. Or worse, as very few people really know what some of the conquences could be if you messed with gates to begin with. The whole plan was really on the fringes, but it was a risk that had to be taken. The most important thing, Luciel the dear leader had decided upon, was preventing Averie from following them. They needed time to escape and regroup.

…

Back on the surface, the sound of 7 gates crashing shocked the unexpecting Grace of Rage enough to give just a small moment of respite. It was a pity that a millisecond before she had already impaled Joey straight through the stomach, was holding his skewered body high.

And in that moment, Manuel yells and plunges a clever straight into his own thigh. A neck ceases to be an object that holds heads on their bodies, and Joey’s head flies into the air, before being caught mid-air by a Sylph of Time appearing out of mid-air and grabbing it, before swiftly redirecting the caught head straight at Kanan, who deftly catches it.

Future Steve catches a sword in the chest for his trouble, now being the second on the rapier.

Averie turns her head once more to look at all that remains.

Sidney finally opens his eyes, and looks straight into Luciel’s, who lies on the ground at his feet.
“Do it.”

And with a loud crack, the once HQ of the session is deserted, leaving only the Grace of Rage, alone, and for now, with no easy way off the land.
Chapter 29

byteReclaim>find type:plaintext -l 256 -offset:<i> source:<RECEIVE_BUFFERS_ALL>; i++
Searching…
0 Hit(s) found

byteReclaim>find type:plaintext -l 256 -offset:<i> source:<RECEIVE_BUFFERS_ALL>; i++
Searching…
0 Hit(s) found

byteReclaim>find type:plaintext -l 256 -offset:<i> source:<RECEIVE_BUFFERS_ALL>; i++
Searching…
0 Hit(s) found

byteReclaim>find type:plaintext -l 256 -offset:<i> source:<RECEIVE_BUFFERS_ALL>; i++
Searching…
1 Hit(s) found

[0] – Experiment Report: 61 days since session entry.

.byteReclaim>rawdump 0 -> root.htmlCompiler

Dumping hit 0 to root.htmlCompiler…
Complete

.byteReclaim>exit

>typheus

Typheus v0.2 terminal mode

Please enter ‘help’ for command list, or enter command now

Typheus>load root.htmlCompiler.raw

Loading…

--BEGIN OUTPUT--

Experiment Report: 61 days since session entry.

Can anyone read this? Communications are down. All of them. Internal and external. I don’t know what caused it, but given the timing I’m inclined to believe that the Grace of Rage has done this. Somehow. If you’re outside of our session and you’re reading this, she lost it. In the alpha timeline. Needless to say things are very bad. More likely, if you’ve stumbled across a copy of this message
floating on one of my devices that left the session after we all died, than I hope you enjoy what is
quickly taking a turn from experiment report into Armageddon log.

I’m going to blind broadcast this into the ring. We know that no information can come into the
session from outside, but maybe information can still get out. I’m no computer engineer, but I think
that if this signal reaches a ring router, it should still carry it to my server. I don’t know what will
happen then. Fuck, I’m out of ideas here.

I’m just doing all I really know how to at this point. Which is write stupid ‘experiment reports’ that
serve absolutely no purpose and now everyone is probably going to fucking die. I should have
been able to do something. I should have at least taken the threat more seriously.

Fuck.

Stand by for a full status report… I guess. Maybe if I get the Heir to fuck around with the antenna
we can get some more power and this message might have a better chance of reaching someone.

--END OUTPUT—

Typhesus>exit

> rmail

=Ring mail version rc13.2=

Changelog: rc13.2
- Fixed memory leak when cancelling attachments
- Fixed problems during infinite execution procedures
- Now IT:722 standard compliant

Rmail>compose -f -s -to:remoteClient:<address[12]> -enableSecureKey:<keylist[12]>

Composing mail to ******:******:******:******:****

>I found something. After combing through the raw buffer for hours it looks like it captured
a message fragment from ME. They’re alive, but their comms are down and they don’t know
why. They mentioned their Grace of Rage going cata right? Looks like that happened, but
then why are they still on the run? And how could she be responsible for shutting down
communications. None of this makes any sense right now. I’ll see what else I can find. I’ll also
batch process byteReclaim, if we’re going to go through a lot of this stuff, may as well make it
faster. -RH

Sending…

Send confirmation received

Rmail>exit

…

>exec findReport.bat

Executing batch script findReport.bat
Okay so we’ve boosted the antenna as much as we can, but the Heir doesn’t think it will make a difference. At this point I’m willing to try anything.

I should explain exactly what happened.

Last morning, the Grace of Rage went cata. Am I still explaining the jargon? I guess I am. A cata, or cataclysm is when a hero with the class Waste or Grace has a berserk trigger. Except usually, instead of a standard berserk trigger like we all have where we chuck a minor tantrum and then go back to normal, they fuck up the entire session. I’ve been in one before, when a Waste of Light well… I won’t go into the details.

But usually they’re not like this. A cataclysm happens, and then the player goes back to normal. And even when, they usually never deliberately target other players. They usually just destroy a game construct or ruin an abstract concept or something, not just try and murder… everyone.

So the Grace tries to murder the entire session, during the first time we’re all together, after she gets a load of the [Doomed Prophecy], which is strange since we sure as hell don’t know what the [Doomed Prophecy] is. Was it put there deliberately to trigger the Grace? Is this all just the games sick idea of a challenge. Sburb nightmare mode, this time, the final boss is another player.

Anyway, she takes down 3 of us, and kills a doomed timeline copy, which is impressive that a doomed timeline copy even made it in fighting form, since usually they only appear when they’re running from a doomed timeline Grace to begin with. Through some quick thinking we get their heads, kiss them, and escape.

The Bane takes along the Scout and the Prince, and destroys the gates with some crazy power that I didn’t even know Sand players could do. Destroying gates? I’ve heard of space players ruining one or two, but breaking them all at the same time? That kind of stuff is potentially game ruining, if the game wasn’t clearly ruined already.

The rest of us get teleported the fuck out of there by the Heir. Right now we’re in his land, the Land of Gravel and Smog, which is the only place he thought that he would know how to teleport to under the circumstance. And on his land, we’re hiding in a cave somewhere. It looks like LOGAS has an extensive underground cave system, rather than just the standard underworld and cc set. They were investigating it before, and they thought that it might be a removed game feature that spawned accidentally, or something like that, because the caves are seemingly full of… content.

The Heir is very confident that they’re safe however, and I believe him. Plus, they will help us hide.

Speaking of hiding, it looks like [Silent Running] came in handy. While we stay underground, and while I am alive, we’re undetectable. The Bane, Scout and Prince have a void player, so they have their cloaking handled as well. We’re not entirely sure where they are however, because we can’t get in contact. But we have enough scrying to know if they died, so we know that they’re alive.

The dreamselves of the killed Dame, Guard and Witch were revived.

But our allies are stuck on Prospit. They can’t leave without revealing our locations, and while the Grace is supposedly stuck on the land at HQ after we blew the only gates going out, we’re not
about to rely on that. So for now they’re stuck there. It also presents major problems, without the Dame being able to easily go god tier, we’ve lost one of our main combatants.

I am currently in the alcove of the cave that has been designated as “my room”, and on my 2\textsuperscript{nd} last laptop that I still have on me. Things are grim here. We only have so much food, and we’ll have to go out to get some at some point. As for game progression… well, we’ve built up a whole lot of buffer time, but at some point we will have to start questing again if we don’t want the reckoning to start and have everything fall to pieces.

My subjects are still back in my Spire. The A series will be fine, they’re fed automatically. But the B series I had to feed myself, usually by chucking a bunch of cans in there once a week. The last time I fed them was 3 days ago, so they’ll have 5 days until they start to starve. But they’ve got running water, so they should be able to last a while without food.

Maybe it’s time that I start really devoting some serious time to trump cards that we can use. I am supposed to be a researcher after all. The goal of my experiment to begin with was to find a way to stop the doomed from dying, but now we’re all doomed in a less literal way.

The last and best thing I had on my burner was trying to release the cage that shapes life energy in a being. I’m going to have some free time in this fucking cave, so it’s time to get my meditation on.

Fuck look at me, using idioms and slang. This was once so official and clean. Now I’m writing into a shithouse laptop in a fucking damp cave broadcasting messages to absolutely fucking nobody about how we’re all going to die.

I think we’re having mushroom soup for dinner. At least we still have the Maid of Stars who is capable of turning anything into good food. I feel even more sorry for the Bane’s team in god knows where. And at least I’m getting extra rations because I’ve got healing duty and have to maintain [Silent Running] so maybe things aren’t all bad.

--END OUTPUT--
Chapter 30

>exec findReport.bat

Executing batch script findReport.bat

…

First match found. Dumping to html. Running typheus inline.

--BEGIN OUTPUT—

Survival Report: 63 days since I entered this godforsaken session.

Exactly what is the capability of our enemy? I wish I had more to go on. From my direct observance, I can know that the Grace possesses exceptional physical strength, enough to puncture through the solid steel of the Guard’s plate armour by grasping a sword with a single hand. Very impressive reflexes and martial skill, enough to fight the Dame and our leader two on one and still come out on top. She clearly possesses some degree of tactical planning as well, although she said nothing during the fight in HQ, she formulated a strategy to disengage from combat to attack the Guard, and to manipulate the fight so that she would be in a more advantageous position.

That being said, I am not willing to attribute that behaviour to genuine sapience. Game constructs are capable of equal degrees of tactics in certain circumstances, and can only become sapient under abnormal conditions.

A popular theory among our group is that she has been possessed by a foreign spirit, like the AI of a particular powerful game construct, such as an archagent or even a denizen has taken over her body and is simply going about their nature of ending all player life. I’m not willing to dismiss this theory, but it doesn’t explain everything. Why start at that moment? Was the [Doomed Prophecy] some kind of memetic hazard that transmitted an intelligence into her? And why did she take the same activities during doomed timelines. Surely if the [Doomed Prophecy] was really just a route to transmit a hostile mind into the Grace then it would only happen when she actually saw it, doomed timeline or not.

I think that if we were to test if this theory is correct, we would start by seeing if she reacts to certain AI-breaking patterns and procedures that are well known. She doesn’t seem to do much talking, so we might not be able to tell her that our name is “AAAAAAAAAPA…” and watch her freeze up saying it back to us, but an implementation of the Willman-2 constellation player positioning pattern should tell us if she really is running game target acquisition.

Jargon dictionary thing that I do apparently: Willman-2 constellation player positioning is a glitch discovered by semi-famous gamebreaker Jo Willman, where he discovered that if you position 5 players exactly 13.21 meters away from their neighbouring 2 in a pentagon formation it causes a near-infinite loop in the AI routine that identifies targets, that can only be broken by external stimulus. Unfortunately, external stimulus is a big category and at best you only get about a quarter of a second of freeze time before they break free. It’s not a given either, Willman himself only identified that it worked in about 72% of sessions to begin with in his sample (I understand that he had no trouble finding willing sessions to help due to the ease and potential of the discovery), and many enemies are immune to it entirely for no real consistent reason. It remains only really of interest to academics due to its lack of practical application.
I’m not feeling confident that we could just walk up to the Grace in formation regardless. Even if it did work and she really was a game AI it wouldn’t stop her from just killing us anyway after being stunned for a few hundred milliseconds.

Maybe if we really wanted to test this out we could try something with drones? The Heir is our designated technician; I’ll see if he thinks that he can create anything.

As for abilities which it is to dangerous to assume that the Grace does not have, our current list is session-wide scrying, flight and pretty much every established Rage aspect ability. Rage and scrying go surprisingly well together if you know where to look, as it is oppositely aligned to Heart (according to common knowledge at least, bke still thinks that it’s opposed to Hope, and makes some very good points about it too, but I digress).

Fear of scrying is the reason why we’re taking the precautions that we are. [Silent Running] makes us effectively dead, something that our Seer is doing does… something that I really should ask her about. And never underestimate the anti-scrying capabilities of just being under 10 tons of rock underground.

The other group with the Bane has the Scout of Void, who can easily shield 3 people, and the group of players on Prospit, well. They’re a problem. The Grace would clearly know that they’d end up on Prospit, and if I had to guess, she would be waiting to intercept us on the way there to regroup. I don’t know how she will get off the land that we left her on, but we can’t afford to assume that she is stuck there.

As for her Rage abilities, we haven’t actually seen her make any overt use of them since going berserk, which is suspicious in of itself, but given that she hardly seems to need them, it could very well be a trick, and she is waiting until we think we have her cornered to bust out some mind control or something.

…

When our leader was kicked, it shattered her entire ribcage, and sent bone fragments into her torso. It is extremely lucky that despite all of the trauma that she obtained, her vital organs were only damaged exactly on the edge to my capabilities to heal them. Punctured lungs, a torn liver, mangled intensities that I don’t think need a full medical description on this report. Serious spinal injury (no paralysis, however, by the looks of it). The Grace’s legs hit with more force than what is biologically possible with a baseline human. Her legs should have exploded with the amount of force that was going through them to do this. But I guess biological impossibilities are par the course these days.

It will take a long time for our leader to recover. She is conscious most of the day, but isn’t walking. We privately discussed ending her life to revive her in her dreamself, but she refused. She thinks it would be too much of a blow to morale. I’m scheduled to spend 2 hours on healing her every day, and I know that I could push more energy into it, but we can’t afford to risk the anti-scrying to fall, and we also can’t afford for me to totally exhaust myself in the case of an emergency.

It is a testament to her abilities that given the fact that she is unable to leave her bed (or rather a bunch of blankets on some rocks) she yet still manages to act with enough leadership and authority to stop everyone from breaking down, and still manages to formulate plans.

GH is missing a leg after he cut it off to save the Dame’s head. His own abilities sealed the wound very well, perhaps even better than I could myself, but he isn’t going to do any fighting like this. I’m not going to be able to regrow that any time soon, so our best option is getting him a prosthetic.
To do that we’ll need to get an alchemiter and a set of engineering equipment, and to get that we will need to take the Heir’s spire for supplies. We’re on his land after all, and he should have everything we need to actually start self-sustaining in general anyway, because we are in fact going to run out of food and supplies very soon. But we can’t split the group without revealing at least one of our positions, and we have wounded that are incapable of moving in their current states.

It will have to be our next move. Hopefully by the next time that I write we’ll have an idea.

--END OUTPUT—

>rmail

=Ring mail version rc13.3=

Changelog: rc13.3
-Better performance on alternian Y-class bioarchitectures
-No longer crashes when receiving mail from a version of rmail in the future with the same key as the current version

Rmail>compose -f -s -to:remoteClient:<address>[12]> -enableSecureKey:<keylist>[12]>

Composing mail to ****:****:****:****:****:****:****:****:****:****:****:****:

>They’re still broadcasting. I guess old habits die hard. I’m putting this onto their server in the same public list as the rest of their previous documents, because If something like this ever happens again maybe someone can read this and know what to do. If ME doesn’t like that they’re more than welcome to survive and come kick my ass themselves. \n It’s clear that they’re not handling as well as they claim to be. Their writing is less cold and technical and much more… personal. Well as personal as they ever get, and more personal than I’ve ever seen them. I honestly doubt that they’re as well put together right now as their writing would reveal.

Sending…

Send confirmation received
Dialogues I

Out of Perspective Chapter: Dialogues I

RIVER, the MAGE of LIFE enters from stage left. LUCIEL, the KNIGHT of LIGHT is slumped against a cave wall in stage centre. LUCIEL is propped up against a pile of pillows. The pillows are beige with white stitching. She is wearing a blanket. The blanket is pale blue with patterns of clouds on it.

LUCIEL notices RIVER.

LUCIEL: Mushrooms.

RIVER: Mushrooms?

LUCIEL: Yes, mushrooms. They’re your life plant, aren’t they?

RIVER: Yes, I suppose they are. White caps to be precise.

LUCIEL: It’s funny isn’t it. Mushrooms aren’t even plants, they’re fungi. Life plant is a fairly inaccurate term isn’t it.

RIVER: I suppose it is rather strange. They do make certain things more difficult. It took me a very long time to learn to use the mycelium rather than the bulb to wrap around people’s legs to snare them. And I also lack the typical buffs that life players get in strong sunlight, mushrooms not being autotrophs and all. But back to your original point of life plant being a misnomer, you would indeed be right. For example, Alternian players receive not only Alternian ‘plants’ that strictly meet the definition of being a plant as their life plants, but also other Alternian lifeforms that don’t meet the strict technical definition of being a plant, but rather still are commonly thought of as being plants in the minds of the players at large.

LUCIEL: You suggest that perhaps the life plant is based on perception, rather than a hardcoded fact into the game? That brings up some quite serious questions. The most pressing I can think of is the fact that I would bet money on the fact that you knew that mushrooms were not plants before you even started playing, and yet you still received mushrooms as your life plant, despite the fact that you could not have possibly internalized them as plants.

RIVER: That’s interesting, Luciel. Perhaps the game was not looking for something that matched the word ‘plant’, but rather something that matches the abstract concept of plants, rather than the technical definition thereof. Mushrooms, being unmoving soil-dwelling things must trigger a very strong association with the abstract ideas of what a plant should be, despite not being one. Even I, despite knowing that it is inaccurate to call a mushroom a plant, still thought of it as being part of the same category as a plant, and thus was assigned to it.

LUCIEL: A very wise analysis. Through indeed, fungi are presented life plants before you, it would not surprise me if the game itself retroactively rewrote life plant assigning for the sole purpose of giving you mushrooms. They fit you very well, don’t you think so.

RIVER: I have my own reasons to think they fit me, but I would not mind hearing yours.

LUCIEL: You always were one to crave other peoples opinions on yourself, River. I will indulge you then. The mushroom feeds itself on the death of others, but not to their detriment. It fixes the nitrogen and other nutrients in the corpses of animals and other plants to feed itself, but it does not
play an active role in the killing of them. Indeed, you could say that the nutrients in a dead body were going to waste if it were not for the mushroom making good use of them. In the same way, I would think that you make good use of more metaphorical, and literal, corpses to further your own and our advancement, but you yourself are not the one that kills them.

RIVER: Ha, I guess that is very fitting, isn’t it? It always warms my heart to hear that you think so well of me, Luciel.

LUCIEL: Yes, I am a real charmer, aren’t I?

LUCIEL: But off that topic, and back onto the previous one, perhaps the reason that mushrooms can be assigned is not because of the thoughts of the life player themselves, but the collective meaning assigned to them though the entire session, or maybe even entire playerbase. I think that if we did a survey of if people thought mushrooms were plants, we would see that the majority would indeed view them as plants. Maybe that pushed mushrooms into the set of ‘things that can be assigned as life plants’, and it then it pulled the mythological associations of mushrooms to you.

RIVER: Also a good theory. Say Luciel, you were once a life player yourself, weren’t you? What was your life plant?

LUCIEL: I was indeed, through it was a long time ago. My plant was the Sycamore tree, I believe.

RIVER: The Sycamore? Such a fitting plant for a lady as yourself, no doubt. A pure expression of archetypical beauty, strength and strong resilience, a centrepiece around which a garden can be built, or the cornerstone of a grand mansion in the central American states.

LUCIEL: And who the flatter now, River? If I knew that you had such a shining analysis of me waiting, I should have asked you long ago what you thought of me and my personal tree.

RIVER: It was merely what thoughts crossed my mind of the associations of the Sycamore, esteemed leader. Such a skill, the quick analysis of metaphor and word trick is a very important skill for us, as I am sure you know well. After all, we do live in a world of which the story is the most powerful force there is. On the subject of metaphor, I think there is another good reason for which I am associated with the mushroom, and you, with the Sycamore, the tree of broad sunlight, and more broadly, of your more literal epithet, Luciel of the Light. For mushrooms are the only plant which do not receive energy from the sun, only from the death from which they are given their own life. In this sense, I stand broadly in your bright light, which would illuminate the lives of all else around you, but receive nothing from it.

LUCIEL: You should not phrase it so depressingly, River. Perhaps that is the very reason that I like you, for you remain unchanged in my presence unlike all else in this world.

LUCIELcoughs violently, as she removes her hand from her mouth, specks of blood are present.

RIVER: Are you okay? I can help, if you would like.

LUCIEL: No, I’ll be okay. Save your strength for the coming trials.
Out of Perspective Chapter: Dialogues II

RIVER, the MAGE of LIFE enters from stage left. LUCIEL, the KNIGHT of LIGHT is slumped against a cave wall in stage centre. LUCIEL is propped up against a pile of pillows. The pillows are beige with white stitching. She is wearing a blanket. The blanket is pale blue with patterns of clouds on it. This is the exact same setup as last time.

LUCIEL notices RIVER.

LUCIEL: So, I’ve been thinking. About the narrative analysis of our current circumstances.

RIVER: Kind of jumping the gun there. Aren’t we supposed to save the evidence gathering for the fringe theories until after we all prevail victorious?

LUCIEL: See, that’s exactly the thing. Everyone always does it retrospectively, they look at a session or player’s life and say, look, there’s the narrative there. Orientation, Conflict, Climax, Resolution. Acts one two and three. Hero’s journey and all that. Make it fit into their nice theory of narrative causation.

RIVER: If you’re crazy enough to believe that narrative causation is anything more than some easy modus of thinking to begin with that.

LUCIEL: I wouldn’t sell it short. All the other theories of everything all do a wonderful job of staying logically consistent and easy to understand to our truth and subjective experiencing of reality-brains, but narrative causation explains circumstances much more deeply without having to resort to clumsy patchwork excuses or big holes saying “Hey, we don’t get this yet”.

RIVER: Nobody is saying that the more concrete ideas are perfect, and many of them adopt many parts of narrative causation. Admitting to gaps in knowledge is as scientific as you can get, it’s the theories that proport to explain everything using undisprovable concepts that I am wary of.

LUCIEL: I can understand where you’re coming from. And I also understand that there are many types who see where the scientific method fails us, and take it to conclude that it’s worthless, in the same way that perhaps people are willing to see theories that don’t base themselves on the scientific method and discount everything they’ve produced as fruit of the poison tree. I think that we should try and find a middle ground here, where we can accept that the scientific method is not a foolproof path to all truth, but can provide us with many truths regardless.

RIVER: Great, another knife edge to walk. As if we didn’t have enough of those already.

LUCIEL: Ha! And therein lies the real stinger, using a core theory of all sides of the debate to provide an answer that unifies them. It’s a fucking floor of knives to walk on.

RIVER: Fine. Okay. Even I have to admit that narrative causality is just too convenient to ignore. But back to your original point, you’re suggesting that we could actually practically apply it in the immediate? I mean, we all understand the power of tropes – why do you think our seer wears a blindfold, or why I fight with fucking scalpels despite the fact that actual regular knives would do better – but this goes beyond just roleplay bonuses.

LUCIEL: I always thought of roleplay bonuses as just being a big neon sign saying, ‘Hey look there might be more substance here if you looked further’. But yes, that’s the crux of it all. We
understand our story, and through it, gain some control over where it leads.

RIVER: Alright, I’ll bite. What do you have planned.

LUCIEL: Nothing! Well, nothing yet. I’m still trying to think of how to approach this. For example, what kind of story do you think we’re actually in.

RIVER: I don’t know. Books are the classic, right? But our session – our story – seems too laden with technical details and maneuvering that only someone familiar with sburbian mechanics would understand what is going on. You don’t think that we’re in a book intended for sburb players do you? That is to say, in a book in the sense of thinking that we’re in a book is beneficial for understanding our own circumstances and planning our next move.

LUCIEL: Write what you know, right? Anyway, you don’t think that’s possible to take it literally? That we’re not actually literally in a book, rather than it just being a tool for understanding.

RIVER: I think going down that road is a bit too metaphysical for me. I’d really rather not spend my time thinking about if my character and person is just part of the machinations of an omnipotent writer.

LUCIEL: Understandable. Going down the road of MC Escher’s 2D dragon won’t help us anyway, book or not.

RIVER: 2D dragon?

LUCIEL: Not an art fan? I find it another useful metaphor for understanding why rage against the author is an unwise idea.

*LUCIEL types on her tablet computer a bit, and a picture is displayed on it. She shows it to RIVER.*
LUCIEL: The dragon realizes that it’s in a 2D artwork, and tries it’s hardest to escape the bounds that it is confined in. It gives as very realistic look of it too, but we, the observers of the artwork, still understand that it’s flat on this screen and it could never actually reach out of the canvas and bite its own tail. In the end, despite all its effort, it can never escape the medium to which it is confined.

RIVER: A depressing thought. Are you saying that if we are in a story, escape therefrom is impossible?

LUCIEL: It would make just as much sense for the characters of a novel that you or I were reading to come out of the book and kill us.

RIVER: Well there is that one Mist cataclysm-

LUCIEL: Okay, so, maybe it’s not a perfect analogy. But I think you get my point.

RIVER: I do. Not thinking too much about if we are literally fictional characters or not was already my plan.

LUCIEL: Of course. But you mentioned that our story would only make sense to those versed in
sbruan mechanics. I think that’s making the fallacy of assuming that we’re in a plot-driven story to begin with. What if we’re just a character exploration and melodrama? That the concrete happenings are just a convenient way to put is in situations in which we talk and interact with eachother.

RIVER: Averie didn’t do a whole lot of talking when she was trying to kill us all.

LUCIEL: Maybe she’s the point of view character and is engaging in a rich monologue while to us it only seems that she’s in a silent rage. Or maybe she’s just a convenient force of nature to ensure that we interact in predefined ways. The storm that keeps the protagonists from leaving the closed circle island, so to speak.

RIVER: Or maybe it’s supposed to build up a mystery. I mean, it’s already a mystery to us, why not to our ‘readers’. The mystery of why the innocent quiet girl went nonlinear.

LUCIEL: Nonlinear. I like that, a double meaning on both her insane out-of-regular-progression power and disproportionate violent response.

RIVER: I’m not sure that in a book you’re supposed to explain the wordplay.

LUCIEL: Yeah well in a book you’re not supposed to talk about being in a book either, but here we are.

RIVER: What, you think that our conversation right now is ‘on the stage’ so to speak. Actually, I’m not even sure if narrative causality, or whatever version of it you’re inventing on the spot even possesses an idea of on and off-stage happenings.

LUCIEL: I honestly hadn’t thought of it. I’ll have to give it some more thought. Reminds me of the whole ‘unspoken plans always work’ trope.

RIVER: Okay, forget about book. What if we’re in a TV series?

LUCIEL: Oh, a serial. You know, I almost pity that your earth missed the rise of the TV series as the highest art form.

RIVER: I don’t think I would have enjoyed Breaking Bad when I was 13 Luciel.

LUCIEL: Fine, what about House M.D. Don’t tell me that small 13-year-old you wouldn’t have eaten that up.

RIVER: Oh don’t start on this. I’ve had enough weird Dr House references thrown at me by the others for one lifetime. Let us not forget that you’re the cripple here right now, not me. Anyway, I had House. 2009, remember?

LUCIEL: I stand corrected. Hell, Joey’s already strange enough for me – I think he was late 2016. Do you know he names all of his fraymotifs after the soundtrack to some videogame that we all missed? I was trying to find a copy of it before our comms got cut.

RIVER: To think that despite all of us having the entirety of earth media, future and past, as much as those terms apply, to us, there’s still such a cultural divide based on what date you got sucked up by this accursed game.

LUCIEL: I wouldn’t say it’s that bad. I think a lot of people just tend to view their lives as being two halves however – pre and post sbrub – or sgrub or s-whatever as the case may be – and media that they remember from before they had to watch it on a laptop in a spire that they pulled from
transtemporal space servers seems more ‘real’. Maybe I didn’t get that as hard – life only really started to become real for me when I started playing, the time before all seems like a hazy dream.

RIVER: I can see you’re really throwing yourself into the narrative already, saying things like that. Really playing up the escaping from your 9 to 5 job life to a fulfilling fantasy trope there.

LUCIEL: Don’t be facetious, River. It’s a trope because it has a basis in reality. And don’t tell me that you were having a great time doing whatever it is you did before you started putting malformed animal foetuses in jars and kidnapping and experimenting on random civilians.

RIVER: Fine, I’ll pay that. I admit I never cared much for the concept of returning to my old life either. The constant threat of death, the constant stress and pressure – I well, I enjoy it.

LUCIEL: Try not to dump your entire heart all at once to me here, I’m still already swooning from being compared to a sycamore tree the last time we talked.

RIVER: Ugh. I thought that I was supposed to be the cool collected scientist and you were supposed to be the warm and loving leader figure.

LUCIEL: And here we are back to the knives edge. To embrace your archetype, your class and aspect, and to be what the game and the story wants you to be, or to hold onto your true and actual nature. A decision between death and unlife in a sense – and one that we have to walk on every day of our lives.

RIVER: That reminds me, isn’t your whole plan to create a narrative for us to follow, or supplant the existing narrative, I’m still not sure about which one it is, throwing ourselves off the other side of that knife? I mean, we’re embracing our archetypes and not ourselves aren’t we?

LUCIEL: I don’t think of it that way. The whole idea is that we move the story to fit us, rather than the other way around.

RIVER: These are dangerous words. I can think of 10 IRC channels you’d get kicked from right now just for saying that – it could easily be construed as courting death.

LUCIEL: Good thing we’re in a communication void then, isn’t it? I’ve already dated a Doom player; courting death is my hobby by this point.

RIVER: It’s not like we have anything more to lose I suppose. Our style is forging magic bullets and then praying that one of them works either way, isn’t it?

LUCIEL: I like to think of myself as specialist in ultra-close quarters tactical maneuvering, but okay, you can say it like that.

*RIVER takes a seat on the wall next to LUCIEL, a change from the regular pacing that they’ve been doing.*

RIVER: You know, what if we’re not in a book. What if it’s a play.

LUCIEL: No, that hardly works. Look at me, I’m disgusting, being near-mortaly wounded tends to leave one unable to bath regularly, nevermind living in a cave and living off mushrooms.

RIVER: Well obviously, your actor would be taking liberties in the portrayal. I mean if we were going down the play route, you couldn’t be sitting down anyway. No way for the audience to see you.
LUCIEL: How about a dialogue?

RIVER: I suppose we do do a lot of talking. But we do a lot of doing things as well, that’s hardly very dialoguely.

LUCIEL: Okay, how about a book with pure dialogue chapters. You know, like a change in format thing. All the fancy writers always mess around with that. Could even explain the circumstances being laden in sburbian mechanical context – what if your experiment report is being used as a regular exert to explain things. It’s not like the thing even talks about your subjects much anymore anyway. Remember when you used to write about them every day?

RIVER: Yes, well that was before we were on the run by an insane sword-bitch.

LUCIEL: No, you’re right, it wouldn’t work. Your writing is just so bland and boring that nobody could possibly read a book which featured it unless they had an overpowering masochistic desire. And we all know that the only masochist here is you.

RIVER: That’s harsh, Lucy. Firstly, my writing is top notch, and secondly, here I was thinking that we were trying to keep our book-experiment report-dialogue medium blend rated G.

LUCIEL: Oh well it’s already rated M at least for the violence and adult themes, we may as well add sexual references there. Also, calling me Lucy already? Here I was thinking that we were going to save that for the ‘off-stage’.

RIVER: Hey, you just said it. It’s all out in the air now. We’re officially crossing into rated M for violence, adult themes, and sexual references.

LUCIEL: Can you grow magic mushrooms, River?

RIVER: Violence, adult themes, sexual references, and drug use.

LUCIEL: I notice you didn’t say no.

An indeterminate amount of time later.

LUCIEL: Anyway, call a meeting for me if you can. We’re going to make moves on Derse and Prospit soon, we have some corpses to turn into living people and one sleeping living person to turn into a corpse.
Out of Perspective Chapter: Songs I

The largest cavern was set as the main living area. For a place that has been only occupied for 5 days in stressful circumstances, it looks surprisingly homely. Battery powered lamps illuminate the cave, a small section has a large pot boiling mushrooms, wafting a surprisingly nice aroma through the cave. Every member is glad that the Maid is here to cook, because she is simply the best there is. Is that a plot point? Maybe, there sure are a lot of plot points in this story.

In the middle sits a table, because someone happened to have one in their sylladex, complete with stools, and a slightly fancier chair that Luciel “The Esteemed Leader” “The Knight of Light” “Lucy” Darlington slumps into, still wrapped up like a bloody burrito in blankets and bandages alike.

Around her sit the rest of the cave squad. The subterranean team. The underground group.

Steven Oregon, the Sylph of time, is the first to raise his hand. “If Averie was able to dream, wouldn’t she have already killed our dreamselfs already? Well I mean, your dreamselfs. Not mine, since I’m a Prospit dreamer and all”

Luciel our dear leader responds. “Do you know why I haven’t had you leave your rooms when you dream since this all started?”

“Because we’re safe from being scryed through our dreamselfs into our realselves if we stay in the shielding of our dream rooms?”

“Well, that too. But the main reason is a fairly well unknown consequence of player death, [The Pensive Dark]. That’s got square brackets around it by the way, if you couldn’t hear them”.

Steve replied again. “Okay, I’ll bite. Tell us about [The Pensive Dark]”

“Well, when a single player dies, and is revived in their room, their room is sealed off until they leave it, breaking the seal. It’s supposed to be a time of reflection on your new life, until you return, you know? You take a few hours to mediate on your death, and nobody can disturb you. Not that anyone uses it since few people even know. Now the interesting part, like most things in the death-game, its glitched. It works fine if just one person dies at a time, but if more than one player dies within a few seconds of eachother, and are all revived in that same timeframe, like we were, every room on both moons gets hit with [The Pensive Dark] until at least as many players that were killed all leave.”

“So Averie can leave her room all she wants, but she can’t enter ours until at least 2 more of us all leave our rooms?”

“Exactly. Which is good, since it gives us the initiative to act here, and she can only react. Now, our dead friends on Prospit were told to stay in their room as part of the abstract concept of the plan that I beamed into their heads until we can make contact and make them a cloaked path back to cavebase. Namely, all we have to do is get Sidney, our convenient Heir of Space and Prospit dreamer to teleport them here.”

This time it is Manuel, the Rogue of Blood to speak up. “Sidney, if you’re teleporting already, why do we even have to dream? Just pop over there and pop back.”.
Sidney responded. “It already took me this long to channel enough Space to ‘port 3 people from Prospit to our cave on my land. Going there and back would kill me”.

“Okay, so, then we should just send you alone to Prospit”

Luciel interjected. “No, we need to minimize the amount of time we spend out of our rooms anyway. Being killed while we’re inhabiting our dreamselfs is much more dangerous than just having our sleeping dreamselfs killed. And either way, once we pull this off, I’ve got a few plans in place to discourage her from trying to off us while we’re napping on the moons anyway.”

“Averie isn’t even a Prospit Dreamer, she’s on Derse.”

“Yes, but nothing would stop her from hauling her realself to Prospit just to nail us the second we leave to pick them up. It would explain why we’re having so much trouble tracking her movements.”

“Yeah, I’ve been meaning to ask about that. What’s our deal on that Romi?”

The Seer was sitting next to Luciel, but you wouldn’t know that given how she’s been spending all of her time spacing out lately. She still wears a black cloth blindfold and earmuffs, along with a small nose clamp, not unlike one that swimmers use to stop water from entering their sinuses, and also has some kind of bodysuit under her clothes, covering all skin below her neck. Regardless, without having any clear mechanism to infact hear the question, she answers.

“Her movements are erratic. They have sudden jumps, periods of dormancy spliced with sudden rapid movement in seemingly random directions. Sometimes she goes dark for a few minutes at a time, before returning where she was before. Her interactions with the data network are strange. Whatever she is doing to the Land of Grass and Sunshine, it’s very hard to tell. She moved offland 2 days ago, back into her own land, Land of Lavender and Chills. I don’t know how, but it was instant with a delay of 3 minutes, so I’m suspected magnicent or a hidden land gate. I have no reason to believe that she is aware of our location, or that of our other group. On that matter, I do not know the location of our other group. They are hidden very well.”

Luciel replies again. “Yeah, that. We’re hoping that she hasn’t found a way to easily travel between lands at will yet, but I’m not discounting the fact that this is all a trick yet. Our Romi is a hard Seer to fool, but it’s not impossible. Either way, we have no idea if she’s been leaving her room on Derse yet, or indeed, if she can even dream.”

Steve is next up to speak. “You think that she disconnected from her dreamself? If she’s pulling an Aproch. Antithesis then we might have an ally right?”

“It’s possible. That entire line of questioning leads us into the second part of our operation. We’re sending a Derse team as well to investigate, and if required, kill her while she sleeps. Even if she looks like she’s Aing, we can’t be certain that her alternate personality isn’t a trap. We could take her back to the cave and she could drop the façade and cut us all down. But we’ll try and get as much out of her as we can if that’s case.”

“And if she’s waiting for you to arrive so that she can butcher your dreamselfs?”

“Then we run. Well, rather, the Derse team runs. Romi and I are staying here to coordinate. If it hits the fan, then we’ll scuttle to the crypts. We… do have a priority listing of who needs to stay to slow her down while the others hide, for both teams, if it comes to it, but hopefully it won’t come to that. And hopefully if it comes to that, we’ll all be able to hide deep in the crypts anyway.”
The entire group sat there pensively. Luciel spoke again “We’ll go over the entire plan again. We’ll split into 3 groups, Derse Team, Prospit Team, and Control. Derse team is Kanan and River. Prospit Team is Steve, Manuel and Sidney. Control is Romi and I.

Derse team will proceed to the bedroom of Averie. If they can enter it, then we know that [The Pensive Dark] has been broken and that Averie must have left her room. If they can’t, then we know that she’s still in there and hasn’t moved. Either way, after we confirm that, Prospit team will leave their rooms. Each one of the three members will travel to a revived player by themselves, and then they will all meet back up in Moon Plaza on Prospit’s moon to teleport back the solo dreamselves back, and Team Prospit will return to their rooms and go back to wake.

Meanwhile, Derse team will investigate the sleeping body of Averie. They’ll communicate with us, and we’ll make a call together if we should execute her or not. If she’s hostile, we’ll scramble, Romi and I will sleep as well, and we’ll all move as deep into the Crypts as we can get. Otherwise, they’ll return to their rooms and wake up again.

To ensure that we have solid sleep values, Steve has been kind enough to provide us with sleep buffs before we hit the hay.

Any questions?”

Sidney raised his hand. “How are we going to communicate if inter-session comms are down?”

“Howsets on our sleeping bodies in the cave. If we nail the sleep coefficient, you’ll be able to hear through them.”

“Sounds good.”

“Any other questions?”

There was a pause for a few minutes, before Manuel raised his hand.

“Every expedition might be our last now. Do we at least get to drink and party to our deaths before we do this?”

“Of course, we do.”

….

“...

Though she was but a horse
History changed its course

Though she was but a foal
Her story touched us all

Sing the Ballad of Maplehoof

Sing the Ballad of Maplehoof

Ride, you Maplehoof, Ride!”

Acoustic guitar strums and pipe flute back a perfectly trained and smooth voice, delivered with force and softness alike.
This was of course, Steve the Slyph of Time, Manuel the Rogue of Blood and Luciel the Knight of Light performing the suburban classic “The Ballad of Maplehoof”.

Rapturous cheers echo the cave, as bottles of spirits and wines and beers are placed down so that their holders can clap with both hands.

Luciel, bowing, before taking a large gulp of cider, eats up the audience’s attention. “Thank you, thank you. Playing Rage 3 times leaves you with a good singing voice, what can I say? So what’s next? We won’t wander alone? Time s-”

Steve interjects. “How about some storytelling prose instead? I’ve always wanted to tell Nightfall in the Medium”

Kanan – “No music?”

Steve replies “I mean, it has tunes and riffs, but like, it’s delivered in prose form you know? It doesn’t really rhyme, it’s more of a story with a musical backdrop than a ballad”

And River voices their thoughts. “Like the Ballad of Maplehoof, Nightfall in the Medium is a rare piece of replayer culture that originated before networks. Unlike the Ballad of Maplehoof, Nightfall in the Medium is actually a story passed down through oral tradition about our predecessors who survived with less than we ever did, but still had the strength to make stories about their experiences, distributed replayer to replayer in shared sessions, rather than a central network like we now enjoy. Were you told the song by another replayer, Steve?”

“Yeah, I was. Way back in my second session our leader told it to us all. We were all really fresh then, and I think he was trying to show us that there’s a history and culture that we can enter into, you know? That we can live and not just survive. I mean, maybe Nightfall was a bit dark, but it’s still a pretty treasured memory, you know?”

“Then I would be honoured to partake in this piece of genuine pre-networking culture. And you all should be too.”

The rest of the party shrugged. Luciel said “Well, take it away then Steve”

And he did.

---

For her whole life, the Sylph dreamed of flight. She would look out the windows of her mountainhouse and imagine the winds. The currents

She played a game with 7 friends that ended the world, and her dreams would be destined to come true

She claimed her Aspect, the breath of the world. In the lands of ceramics and butterflies she did reside, a land meant for her, where she found true peace among the winds and the crows

Her friends she knew well. They each were unique, and they each played their part

The Prince of Dreams led them all, his vision of the future as clear as the reality he saw every day of his life

But the Rogue of Stars kept the Sylph together. She cried for the world that she lost, and the Rogue
held her, and the Rogue cried for the people that she lost, and the Sylph held her back

The Sylph abhorred violence. To hurt another, she was truly against. She would fight the minions of darkness only out of requirement, but every pawn knight and rook taken by her hands wounded her deep. And it never got any easier. But she did what she had to do

Her lands dweller would rise against her. And she would be forced to take up arms

The Prince of Dreams told her;

This is a world where only the strong survive. The game is a test, one that we will pass. We abhor the weak, detest the cowards

Strength of mind, strength of body, strength of soul. Through these pursuits we attain purity

Force of arms is absolute. We will do away with what will not survive, and the game will reward us with eternal joy

And the Sylph knew no better, but still knew it was wrong. She would never embrace violence, never embrace bloodshed. To soar through the sky was her true desire. To be free

But for the time being, she can do what she had to do

Her last guide died, disappearing into the light of Skaia. She could never believe that her pendants spirit had to pass like this. He had done no wrong, and she had gotten to know family she never knew before. He did not die because he was weak

In time, she had to slay her lands dweller. But it was not a victory of arms, but a sad death. She knew nobody goes with dignity into the dreams of the outer rim

She feared for the life of the Rogue. So much was lost to her. She anchoed herself onto the Rogue. She was what kept the Sylph sane. Kept the Sylph in reality. She could not handle the rigors of bloodshed alone. But together, with companions, she felt she could handle the world and all its games

She soared into the sky, on wings made of wind and gust, and the light of Skaia shone through her. The daylight that would never fade

She braved the depths of the land, where dark suns shine, and came out unscathed. She was the eternal shore, kept by the presence of the Rogue, and the Rogue by her

Presence became love, and love became the truth of the world for them both. The daylight that would never fade

She faced herself, and conquered her fears. Love answered all. Flight answered all

The stars themselves fell into the battlefield, and the end began

8 players struggled long, but overcame the king of darkness.

And the end was in sight

But the Prince of Dreams saw it was not right. He saw through the door to the end, and saw that an end was the last thing he wanted. He was promised eternal salvation, eternal struggle, and battle, not the cessation of the world. Not the end
And he did all he knew. He struggled

He saw the Rogue. And he saw the Sylph. And the rest were desperate for the truth. Desperate for answers. And they saw the Rogue too. And the Slyph

A peaceful union in a world of strife

Against the way of things

Suffering brought strength, the Prince of Dreams said

Pain brought perseverance

And loss brought gain

And through this, they would obtain their Valhalla. Their endless battle

They broke the wings of the Slyph. A curse, never to be lifted. A scar never to be healed

She would never rise again. No matter how many lives she lived. Bound eternally to the ground

And she suffered. She suffered the pain of knowledge, that it would never get any easier. That she would only fall, never soar

They broke her wings again. A curse, never to be lifted. A scar never to be healed

She would never soar again. Never again experience joy, elation. To suffer in the most literal sense, to be unable to live for a cause in of itself. 6 Gods unleashing divine punishment. The Berserk Trigger, unleashed sixfold

But it wasn’t enough. Not enough for Skaia. Not enough to bring the endless night. Not enough to eclipse the sun

The Slyph and the Rogue still clung together. A union, more of themselves in the other than themselves. They could lose it all, but as long as they had eachother, nothing could break the eternal flight of the unbound soul

And in that, the Prince of Dreams saw the next truth. To create the endless dream, two beings must become one

And the Rogue was struck down

And the Sylph played a game with 6 gods that would end her world

She would never fly. She would never know love again. They took her body first, then they took her mind, and then they took her soul

“How long shall I

Mourn in the dark

The beauty of this world is gone

Never to return”

And the sky turned dark with the Slyphs passing. Sunlight was overtaken, defeated in agony.
And the peaceful gusts that once brought joy to all around them

Gave in to the storms

And the Prince, seeing the gate to the end become a gate to the endless game, had achieved his goal

And he left, with all those that stood with him

Leaving the crippled bird alone

Alone now and alone forever

The Nightfall of the medium.

And the replayers curse, birthed in that instant.

And the storms, birthed. Spoke:

“In this nightfall, understand

That I swear this oath

On Skaia and the Furthest Rings

On Angels and Others

Until this games end, it shall not break”

The words of the crippled bird

I swear revenge”

Filled with anger and bloodshed, never to be quashed

Full of hate. Full of pride

She screamed for revenge

The prince left. And the 5 did leave with him. Their wish, their dream made truth. The endless games of their Valhalla

And the door shut forever, trapping the Slyph

But no one medium contains a storm

And in the night of the medium, she carved into her flesh

The names of all those that did this

The ones that took her wings

The ones that took her love

And she would travel too. She would escape the inescapable valley

She would endure the endless night of the mediums
And she would end the Dreams of the Prince

And all that walked with him

And all that stood in her way

She swore the path of bloodshed

Of violence

And she did what he had to

For now and forever
Chapter 34

Journal of Idle Thoughts, 64 days, some of which was spent in a cave.

High level game logic exploits were perhaps the first area that gamebreakers put their prying eyes to. Before there was the Ivory Tower, or the late Seer Network, or even communities of replayers at all, playerkind has yearned for the easy quest that they can grind for disproportionate reward.

In The Elder Scrolls 5: Skyrim, you can find a skill trainer, NPCs that raise one of your skills in exchange for large amounts of currency, spend all of your gold on having them train you, then pickpocket the gold that you just gave them off them, and spend it again on getting more skills. An easy loop if you have a high pickpocket skill. Unlimited skills are yours to behold. It wouldn’t be right to call that a glitch however, or even an exploit. Every mechanic on its own was working as intended, but there was clearly an oversight from the developers in that they didn’t expect them to be combined like this.

There is no easy equivalent in terms of massive gains for little effort in sburb. There have been, in certain games, certain strains, but they tend to fade away very quickly.

The fact that this happens at all is an interesting aside, that I should dedicate some time to exploring. Many have suggested that the game is evolutionarily selecting positive traits. Game code or markers that activate code reside in players, and as players move through sessions they carry code to sessions, like an extended incestuous sexual reproduction in paradox space. This idea of “Version Drift” is a very popular theory at the forefront of gamebreaking, and I don’t think I could do as good a job of explaining the prevailing ideas as those that are inventing them.

However, while version drift explains sessions being stable because game-ending traits are (sometimes) filtered out, it doesn’t explain why positive traits aren’t being selected for. A single code gene that gives a session an exploit for infinite boondollars or whatever would massively increase the win-rate of sessions that have it, and would surely begin to overtake paradox space until all sessions have totally trivialized boondollar collection. We can trace the recorded history of replayers through tens of timestamps, and unrecorded through a countably infinite amount. If session-winning traits were being selected for, we would already have them.

Some attribute this to sentience. As if there are game developers who sit in an infinite office combing through an infinite number of genes who only let through traits that prevent catastrophic events, or at the very least offer no real change other than aesthetic, while traits that are good for players are filtered out and never get to propagate.

I am reluctant to accept intelligent design, for many reasons. Another argument is, why does there even need to be a sapient overmind? Skaia would have the logical chops to make these choices all on its own in whatever algorithm determines the flags attached to someone at the door to the end.

But there is still a missing link here. My personal theory is that winning games aren’t being selected for at all. That instead, we’re selecting for traits that produce the most hardship while still maintaining session growth (how we would model session growth is a whole issue in of itself. It’s not even proven that there is a finite amount of sburb players to begin with). Session traits that make a game harder to complete, while still being possible to complete are the selected genes. Glitches that drive a playerbase up the wall without making a session unwinnable or making it trivially winnable are the name of the game for our lives, I think nobody would be surprised to learn that there’s a meta-reason we tend to face new bullshit all the time.
Perhaps the replayer networks are their own worst enemy, because they give us more ways to deal with catastrophic session traits and survive, making us select even worse catastrophic session traits. In the past, even session mainstays could have started out as random feature mutations made to make the game harder without making it unwinnable. Is all post-terraforming content, all classes and aspects beyond the “Mental 12” just features introduced to make the game harder? We haven’t seen a dramatic change in what we consider a “standard” session since replayer history began (The vanishing of the Faun class is arguably the biggest change), but on a much longer timescale, this suggests that we’ll start to see things get worse and worse the better we get at dealing with them.

Maybe this is why this session, one that we were trying to exploit for an easy time, is trying to kill us extra hard? We’re the beta-testers of the new sburb feature coming to you all soon, “Murderous Ungodly Powerful Players” ™. After all, every other game in existence other than sburb has a formalized pvp mode.

It’s depressing to the grand idea that the gamebreakers hold, that we’ll someday get enough knowledge to make playing sburb trivial, reduce death rates to nil, and even escape the game and make a funtime space city in orbit of the green sun where we can party for all eternity. Instead the future holds a game that gets harder the better you get at it forever. That we can never escape the fate set up for us, that our grand ideas of the undefeatable human (or troll) spirit can never let us overcome the system that contains us.

Or maybe I’m just a sad sack, and there’s a much more benign reason for the fact that we rarely see glitches that make a session trivially winnable.

…

After we exhausted the low hanging fruit of the unintended mechanic, we looked for the more genuine exploits and glitches. And to be fair, we found quite a lot. Dungeons could be bypassed by moving your body in exacting ways letting you clip through bevelled corners. Stack underflow your purposefully bad alchemical item until your -2147483648 Damage sword turns into a denizen one hit killing 2147483647 Damage sword. Start a rap concert on Derse and give them increasingly complicated instructions, overloading their minds and making the local node freeze, letting you stop time and walk straight into the royal vaults.

All of these listed no longer work. At first we thought glitches were session unique, which was true to be sure, we didn’t expect it not to be. But we expected to find patterns, expected that the amount of easy to find glitches would stay relevantly constant. But it didn’t. To this day, you can die instantly by telling your denizen that your name is “Yahweh” (For the love of Skaia I am serious don’t do this. An old ‘practical joke’ on the corpselikes was telling people that the denizens will let you into the vault if you tell them your name is this. They will not. You will instantly die with no way to prevent it) or by body-slamming the prototype towers, but good luck stumbling across a way to summon the door to the end out of thin air, like comacheMastodon did close to the genesis of sburb.org decades of subjective time ago, by using what we consider now to be amateur gamebreaking techniques, without spending years studying deep level data structures and being extremely lucky.

The end result is, the more we searched for exploitable glitches, the harder they became to find.

The modern sburanite finds more use for the extremely common but rarely useful glitches that can only be helpful in extremely limited circumstances, since they tend to be ones that remain present across sessions, rather than knowing that all of their problems can be solved by paying a skill trainer gold that you steal right back to max out their skills.

Slowly but surely, we lost faith in finding a golden glitch.
We commonly hold that sburb is incredibly badly designed, but the more worrying thought for me is the fact that it might be incredibly well designed and that all of this is intentional.

Modern gamebreaking has been reinvigorated by exploring things closer to the externalities of the game itself. We may be on the precipice of a mathematical theory of outer ring navigation (Something to do with transinfinite dimensions in the imaginary plane? My mathematical knowledge doesn’t really extend pass rudimentary differential equations, but the consensus from people in the field that I used to talk to were very confident that they’re onto something here), and advances in demonics, reality altering machine code and sburb metastructure offer illustrious results if the theory holds up.

Perhaps these will hold fruit enough to let us break the cycle of having our accomplishments eroded by version drift.

…

Reputation is a more complicated system than anyone gives it credit for. On the first level, it’s pretty simple. People thought that it was like any other game, you do quests or do predefined activities, and part of the reward is a numerical bonus to reputation. You complete the quest where you fetch the golden needle for the seamstress and you get +5 Prospit Carapace rep and +25 Royal Tailoring Agency rep, and then they have better dialogue options, their stores have an according discount and they sometimes give you free stuff. Simple.

Well, it’s not that simple. The first question people ask is, if carapaces are/can be sapient beings, how can you reflect their opinions of you into a single numerical value? How could you hardcode every action you could take to change what they think of into altering a single number. They had the idea that the rep number was propagated upwards from the weighted sum of every individual who kept their own personal number on what they thought of each player. So your carapace rep wasn’t really a entity that could change on its own, but just a reflection of the average opinion that each single thing under that reputation group felt of you.

This made more sense, but had its own problems. After all, if the system is this complicated, how come quests can give static rep rewards at all? And how can they be displayed beforehand before you even start the quest? The reputation system should be entirely divorced from questing then, but there is clearly some kind of two-way feedback between reputation numbers and what actual carapaces think of you. Indeed, people who have managed to directly mess with reputation numbers find strange results. The classic underflow, for example, where you upset your land so much that the number loses its minus sign and ends up being several billion, works. Slaughter enough carapaces and they’ll love you. We recall the famous case of transmissionRollercoaster who threw all of Derse into the outer ring for eternity, and then ended up triggering a previously thought impossible event where the Black King handed him his sceptre and told him that he had done so much for the Derse people that they conceded to him. Then again, maybe the story involved the Black King surrendering in fear of what transmissionRollercoaster did, reports are ambiguous.

The point is, you can change your reputation, and those it governs with follow, but you can also affect those governed a reputation metric and the metric will reflect what you’ve done. The map and the land it represents are interchangeable.

Many things in sburb are like that, actually. Numbers represent reality and numbers represent reality. Spend hours hitting the gym and you’ll raise your vim, but chuck on a belt of strength and your vim will increase, making you stronger as well. A lot of players tend to already think in this way due to internalizing perception filters, which is a good thing anyway since the concept is a
hard one to wrap your mind around.

Our Bane of Breath once asked me why I spent so much time learning how to stich wounds, and didn’t just cast a healing spell. I didn’t have the words at the time to tell her that really, they were the same thing.
Chapter 35

Ruminations on Doomed Lives: Day 66

On Old Earth, they had a saying – “When it rains it pours”.

What this means, without taking into account the potential relations to the Sburban aspect of Rain, is that bad things that happen are never evenly spaced. They hit you all at once, in what must be the universe's sick idea of pacing.

Two things happened today. The first thing, is that we did the moon mission. The second thing is that I managed to connect to my spire's computer network.

So let's talk about both of them.

…

She’s already dead.

I was the first on the scene. The Grace of Rage’s dreamself is dead. Killed by being stabbed through the heart by a regisword, gripped by her own hand.

Based on the corpse, she has been dead for 3-5 days by the time we got there. There was no sign of a struggle, the sheets were even pulled over her, and puncturing the heart bled over the mattress and her covers.

It looks like a suicide, except we all know that that should be near impossible. Suicide is exile disabled. It’s not something you can just do. I’m not going to say suicide is impossible, because it’s not, it just takes a lot of dedication and setup. Any easy and quick routes to ending your own life are impossible, presumably in an effort to both increase the survival rate of players, and to make it so you can’t cheat your way to ascending to god tier.

It wouldn’t even surprise me if it was only to stop us from killing ourselves on our quest bed and turning into gods, and the part where it forces you live with your own suffering is just a convenient side effect (not that there is relief in death because then you get to live out your entire life in repeat for eternity in what may as well be literal actual hell).

But the point is, if you put a gun to your head, your fingers will never be able to finally pull the trigger. You’ll always spit out an overdose of painkillers. You’ll never be able to take the final step of a ledge. I know, because I’ve been there and tried that.

It’s what we call “exile disabled” which is a fancy way of saying that carapaces with magic computers from your destroyed planet cast mind control on you to stop you from killing yourself.

If you really want to end your life, you have to be a lot more careful about it. Some people end up trying to put themselves into more and more dangerous situations until the game gets them, others give up on playing sburb and wait until the game catches up. Others create insane rube Goldberg style machines to kill them.

But you don’t just… grab a sword and stick it in your chest. So that’s worrying.

The other question nagging at my mind, is why? Why would the Grace kill her own dreamself?
Was the dreamself acting against her? Like an apocryphal antithesis (a situation where a dreamself disconnects from the real self so much that they take on differing motives and personalities), except that going evil and off the rails, it broke… good. And wanted to stop her realself?

Did she have a reason that she wanted to dream in the outer ring? Something out there she wanted to see that was worth discarding her extra life?

Or maybe she wanted to hide something that I would have found from her corpse. Maybe she does have a critical weakness, one that she knows or fears that I or another would have divined from being able to examine her dreamself. I wasn’t even going to take any chances on it, I was planning to slit her throat the second that I entered the room, but if she was willing to end her own life based on the fear that I would find her alive, maybe I should have reconsidered my approach. At least I can only assume that it was fear that I would find her alive, she couldn’t have known that it was going to be this long before we found her corpse right? I would like to say that she clearly could not use that kind of precognition, but in these circumstances, I would take nothing for granted anymore.

Or maybe she is not rational at all, and despite the fact that her dreamself is nominally under her control, had such a desire to end the life of all that is not her, that she mustered enough suicidal willpower to source a regisword, tuck herself back in bed, and stab herself.

Or hell, maybe she wasn’t even the one that did it. It would work, asking an archagent to assassinate you in your sleep. Archagents generally don’t do work like that, but there are ways of convincing them. It would explain the regisword, but making it look like a suicide? That would be new.

Her body revealed a lot of note, but nothing that I can draw any conclusions from. I wouldn’t trust my own dreamself to make a phone call, but I’d trust them to do an autopsy and do it right.

Her lymph nodes were swollen. That was new, I never noticed it on her realself during any medical checkups. Was her dreamself specifically suffering from an infection, or even cancer? I find it incredulous, but not impossible, that her dreamself alone would come down with a case of lymphoma. Maybe it was even a mercy suicide if she knew that her dreamself was going to die of terminal cancer without being able to seek me out for medical aid.

She had significantly developed muscles, ones that clearly suggested a regular exercise routine. Compared to the fighters of baseline non-player humanity, exercise does not nearly benefit us as much, but it has its place. Returns are considered much more significant with full contact sparring or at least strife drills than the kind of pure strength routine that it seems that she was undertaking, and I was not aware of her showing any inclination towards physical exercise when she was non-murderous. She did not have any significant muscle growth when I examined her in the past.

She could have been hitting the carapace gym every night, which would be strange but possible (the Dersite 24 hour gym has quite an expansive quest chain by itself). Or there are maybe more esoteric reasons for her muscles. She could have just gotten so broiled with Rage aspect that she commanded herself to become strong, and her body made it happen literally. I regret that I cannot remember to see if she was packing some massive gains when she was murdering us all at HQ.

Her physical feats are beyond the realm of regular human biology, which while not being a very interesting statement by itself (after all, so is the fact that I can accelerate from standing still faster than a sports car), led me to first believe that her power didn’t stem from her conventional body at all, but maybe that was the wrong approach.

I am still thinking over the results of her Life aspect energy. The best way to explain it at this
point, is that I get the impression that a lot of it was missing. Like the empty space in her metaphysical health bar was significantly larger than it is for me, or any of the rest of us. By the time I found her, she had nothing but the token amounts of life that is left in a corpse this long dead, but she felt much hollower than any other corpse that I’ve seen in my life.

I am unsure of the ramifications of this. If she really is overflowing with life Aspect energy, then perhaps she could be using it to kill us as effectively as she has been. But it should take a Life aspect player with incredible control to even use that much potential energy for anything useful.

The nagging fear I have in my head is that I did this somehow. That the Grace of Rage is the doom in doomed timelines, coming to finish the job on my subjects, and punish all of us for my own arrogance in seeking to question the machinations of god. I keep trying to push the idea out of my head, telling myself that it is nothing but fear and paranoia that has no place in me, especially now during these times where rationality is perhaps the only key to our survival. But it still lingers. Yet another reminder of how I have failed to be a true rationalist. And how Ivory Tower made the right decision about me.

... 

The surprising part is that some of my subjects are still alive.

While I was asleep the script I had set to automatically run on my laptop to try and connect to my spire's LAN had actually worked. I don’t know if that is a coincidence.

It automatically dumped all the essential data it could find, which is good since the connection has gone back to being dead, eaten by whatever anti-information spell the Grace cast across our session.

The stats on the A subject pods came back. 4 of them are still alive, and the rest have died. Unfortunately, without access to their bodies, I can not tell what it was that had gotten them. The ones that remain do not seem to be in good condition, they stay hydrated because the saline drip is automated, but their food supply has to be manually restocked, one that is usually done by consort assistants, who appear to have given up the job. They are slowly starving to death.

I really did expect something to kill them all the second I took my eye off them, and this whole living a cave thing would have been the perfect excuse for the game to do it. That being said, maybe something did, but it didn’t quite reach the full way. Even the biggest mass slaughter of doomed individuals that we know, the reckoning that causes asteroids to fall on earth, tends to leave one in 500 million alive (not counting the players or their housemates), who due to sheer skill or sheer luck survive. A gas main could have blown up, in Skaia’s attempt to kill a large swathe of my subjects at once, but come up short.

In truth, I do not know. But I would dearly like to know what got to them.

The B subjects are much more concerning.

They are gone.

Last captured video surveillance images show an empty containment complex. All of their trackers report null (Either they’ve been removed or they’ve been killed so hard that it destroyed them). And there’s a cabinet moved out of the way of a wall with a huge hole in it that leads to the space in-between the walls of my Spire.

They must have been digging at behind it while the camera wasn’t looking. The recording circuits
only actually record from any one camera at once, although you shouldn’t be able to tell that from inside the complex. And that was a solid brick wall, it must have taken a very long time. I honestly am very surprised at the ingenuity of the subjects.

Finding them should not be hard, at least. The Seer should be able to track them down in a second if she’s on my land or spends time focusing. Except for maybe the one that I stuffed full of Void aspect bullshit. That… might be a problem.

It is ironic that in their attempts to escape they have probably just lowered their odds of survival by a very large amount. Even a handful of imps can overpower regular humans, and underlings show no mercy to those who are not players nor guardians or others of ectobiological significance. Nor can I imagine what must be going through their underdeveloped non-player minds right now, without perception filters to dull the shock of a twisted murdergame.

At this point, I am less worried than I used to be about them getting themselves killed (which would still be an outcome to my experiments, just not the desired one), and more about them doing something that gets the rest of us killed. After all, a mere ant may grind a huge machine to a halt just by jamming itself in the right gears somewhere.

…

Our deceased players are back in cavebase. I was getting used to not having the Witch antagonize me with insane moralising at every opportunity, although he can at least act as a lead male vocalist for music nights. If he can stop crying. I’m happy for the Guard too I guess. He fills out the group, or something.

Our next step will be moving out of this fucking cave. Our esteemed leader thinks that our best bet might be hiding right under the Grace’s nose on her own land, The Land of Lavender and Chills. The Seer gets a clearer picture of her movements every hour now, with a data signature that we retrieved from her dreamcorpse. She patrols through the lands using the spire portals, and takes occasional trips to the veil and battlefield. It’s clear that she must have a form of scrying, but we believe it must be short range, because if it was long range she would never leave the ruins of HQ (where she seems to sleep, or at least spend a third of her day at), and if she didn’t have scrying, she would be investigating the lands much more thoroughly, at least bothering to visit points of interest rather than what looks like just hanging around the spires for a few hours before moving on.

She also has some form of flight, through its method we do not know. While she takes the gates to move around the lands, she flies to the veil and the battlefield, by leaving the planet closest in orbit to them.

But she spends much less time on her own land. Barely staying there for more than half an hour on her patrols. Maybe she thinks that we would never have the guts to hide there. Or maybe there is something else. Emotional attachments?

Still, we think that we could move to a new makeshift headquarters on her land. Ideally, somewhere on the southern hemisphere, and ideally for me, not in a cave.

Soon, a spire raid. The Graces patrols are technically random, but she almost always tends to go for at least the first few gates, closest to the ground. This lets us select a land to raid that she is not likely to visit for a while, and we’ll move light. Take enough for us to set up our own alchemeter and peripherals, and as much grist and artefacts that we can grab.
Diary of Desolate Timelines: Day 67

The Grace of Rage.

What does that even mean? Classpect analysis isn’t my forte, but I should give it a go.

The Grace is the passive cataclysm class. The classic “Sburb Glitch FAQ” (for which I of course have a copy saved locally on my laptop here) has this to say about a Grace:

"Class explanation: Well I’ll be honest- this Class could be renamed the DISASTER CLASS. Technically the role of this Class is to bring "change". In application, it ignites catastrophic chain reactions. As the active title, the Waste is the embodiment of cooking" with petrol. It's a walking typhoon. The Grace is slightly less volatile and more poisonous. She's like a ticking bomb to your session. If you start a game with either of these Titles in your session, you can start your blank Plot Chart by drawing a huge line in the middle. Then you can write pre-cataclysm and post-cataclysm on either side."

The Waste is perhaps one of the most heavily, if not the most heavily analysed and poured over class in the entire community. While I am unable to get the exact statistics, I would be very surprised if the Waste was not responsible for the largest amount of player deaths of any class. They change the rules, in a way that mostly makes them much deadlier for everyone close to them.

The Grace on the other hand, is the passive Cataclysm class. For some strange reason, we don’t know as much about them. Less Graces have been recorded, and whenever they are spoke about it is with much less gravitas attached. This just does not seem right, the active and passive dichotomy does not mean anything about power and significance of a class, just the expected way that they are supposed to exert their change onto a session. The Grace should be just as much of a change for destruction and ruin as the Waste.

And yet, they are, on the whole, not taken nearly as seriously as the Waste. Even in our own session, in the early days, in our arrogance, we never considered the cataclysm of the Grace to be a significant event. I’m not sure who said it, one of the boys I think, but the quote was “Who cares, a Grace is just a nerfed wiener version of a Waste without any of the power”. Well, that doesn’t seem entirely true to me. I’ve been in the cataclysm of a Waste of Light before and this is different. Terrifying in an entirely different way.

Being in the aftermath of a Waste is like being in a crashing train, you act on autopilot. Everything all happens at once, and it happens quickly. But this, this feels more like a slow crush to death. We all run around in our caves and on our moon missions and every day the idea that things can be okay dies a little more. And we realize that this is the rest of our life, pain and suffering.

Maybe that’s what a passive cataclysm is. She cuts us in the right way, and then we slowly bleed out.

The other concerning thing that I am now only realizing for the first time in my life, is that maybe the reason that we know so little about Graces and their stories is because nobody ever survives to tell them. Or maybe nobody even knows that it was the Grace that did it. People die and things go
wrong and every time it seems like it was just another generic thing going wrong like they always do, but really someone was pulling the strings from above.

The other part of the passive nature of a Grace is that it could explain why she isn’t seeking us out. Well, she’s looking for us to be sure, but I can’t help but shake the feeling that this whole hiding out and planning thing is exactly what she wants. Like she’s the rocks on the shore, and we’re simply going to crash against her and break.

As for the cataclysm itself, well. Going berserk and murderous is worrying and dangerous and gamechanging for sure, but it’s not really a fundamental rewrite of the rules of the game that cataclysms are known for. I mean in theory any of us could just decide to turn murderous, we don’t need a special class to do it. We might not even know what the actual cataclysm itself is, just that the consequences of it is that the Grace herself is killing us.

Or maybe the cataclysm hasn’t even happened yet, and her murderboner is totally unrelated. She hasn’t been yelling out any motives yet, but it does happen. People just decide that they’d be happier if everyone around them was dead. Which leads me to ask, if this isn’t the cataclysm, then what will be?

…

Rage is the aspect of yelling at things to change them by conventional wisdom, and the aspect of limiting possibilities by mental 12.

The Grace of Rage has said no words since she started this spree. She doesn’t even seem that angry, more… resigned to her fate. Just going through the motions.

Whatever the case is here, I’m not seeing a lot of Rage. It could be why we can’t communicate with the universe outside our session, if she commanded the air to refuse to carry our signals. It could even be why her dreamself was dead, if she commanded herself to end her own life.

Rage is supposed to be about changing things through will and force, not through subtle machinations, and a Grace is supposed to be about bringing change through subtle effect.

Maybe looking to the wisdom of those that came long before will be helpful. BKE’s theories may be utterly insane when compared to what we think we know of the modern world and all it’s aspects (he only admits to 12 aspects existing, when we have 14 in this session alone), but they can sometimes offer a very tight and suitable theory that fits all the markers of evidence.

So, by his mental 12 diagram, Rage is supposed to be about limiting possibilities. The opposite of Hope. Is that why the Grace was killing off doomed timelines, before she was limiting the possibilities that they had ahead of them? Maybe this is the ultimate expression of Rage, leaving us with only one option ahead of us: die.

Not that we had any more options than that to begin with even before this all started. Escape from sburb was never an option anyway.

…

I think a while ago I did a big html chart of our sessions players. I should write another one, to save all of my readers (read: the horrorterrors that are munching down on my data packets. Yeah, I’m calling them horrorterrors and not ‘others’) the trouble of keeping up to date with all of us.

Presenting, the current status of the players of the extended iternary[sic] session. Maybe I should include their names, since this page might very well be their obituary. If only I actually knew most
of them beyond their first names.

Handle: th
Role: Knight of Light
Name: Luciel Darlington
Status: Realself injured in cavebase. Dreamself okay.

Our esteemed leader. She is recovering well, through I still would not want her doing any strenuous activity. After all, after what she went through, she’s lucky to even be alive.

Handle: gq
Role: Seer of Heart
Name: Romi
Status: Realself in cavebase, and dreamself okay.

Our Seer. Grows more manic with every passing day. Recently had a meltdown during dinner about us not following the plan exactly. Tactician’s folly is probably soon (for those not in the know, a commonly observed part of the story arc of Seers and Sages, where they will have a berserk trigger over all of their plans falling apart after they tried to take on more than they could chew. I like to tell myself that the reason that I haven’t been a Seer or a Sage is because I’m too smart to fall for the folly, but lately I am beginning to doubt it), and I just hope that she doesn’t end up getting the rest of us killed because of it.

Handle: ki
Role: Heir of Space
Name: Sidney
Status: Realself in cavebase, and Dreamself okay.

It’s his land we’re on right now, so he’s the only one of us to get any mild amount of questing actually done. Turns out there’s a quest chain in these caves, who knew? Has enough pluck to teleport us all somewhere in an emergency, like he did to get us here, but doing that almost killed him. He could pull it off again, but the chance of the almost becoming an actually grows smaller every time that he pushes himself, so we’d rather save that for an emergency, and move around using more conventional means.

Handle: me
Role: Mage of Life
Name: don’t you mind.
Status: Miserable.

Despite everything I’ve been through, it’s hardly me anymore.

Handle: ja
Role: Witch of Hope
Name: Terrence
Status: Dreamself kiss-revived, currently with us in cavebase.

Yeah, this guy is still around. Really didn’t take the whole Grace of Rage murder thing well. Because he’s the real victim here right, and the rest of us aren’t going to die equally anyway?

Handle: po
Role: Prince of Sand
Name: Maend?
Status: Realself with Katey’s group, dreamself okay.
I haven’t heard from him since [Gatecrasher], and never really heard from him before. Business as usual I guess. I hope he still has something up his sleeves.

Handle: gh
Role: Rogue of Blood
Name: Manuel Guimaraes
Status: Realself missing his left leg; with us on cavebase. Dreamself okay.

I regret that we don’t talk as much as we used to. I think that the only time that I catch with how gh is doing now is when im tending to his wounds.

Handle: wk
Role: Scout of Void
Name: Lawrence
Status: Realself with Katey’s group. Dreamself is okay.

He’s keeping the other group safe. At least I hope so. What does a scout of void even do?

Handle: ia
Role: Sylph of Time
Name: Steve.
Status: Realself in cavebase, dreamself okay.

At least he can’t attend meetings using a future self anymore.

Handle: na
Role: Guard of Doom
Name: ?
Status: Dreamself kiss-revived, currently with us in cavebase.

I’m not sure if this is their first death. It might very well be. He clearly suffers from nightmares every night, even with the amount of sleeping pills I have him on.

And yes, I did forget his name. If this text ends up being his memorial, I’m sorry about that. He seems like a cool guy.

Handle: ow
Role: Bane of Breath
Name: Katey Shacklock
Status: Realself unknown location in the medium – probably in the veil. Dreamself okay.

The defacto “leader” of the second group that escaped from HQ. Our own esteemed leader thinks that she knows what she’s doing, so she probably does.

Handle: op
Role: Grace of Rage
Name: Averie
Status: Murderous.

She sleeps in old HQ, by the look of it. I can only imagine her sitting on her wooden throne, with the walls splattered with blood and the corpses of those we left behind still here.

Handle: is
Role: Dame of Mind
Name: Joey
He trains harder than before. He spends every moment meditating on the aspect of Mind, preparing for the time that he’ll have to fight again. Argues a lot with our esteemed leader, more than ever before. I think it’s his way of coping.

Handle: ng
Role: Maid of Stars
Name: Kanan
Status: Realself in cavebase, dreamself okay.

Probably the only thing keeping the Seer from losing her mind at this point. Those two are never separate anymore. She joined me on the moon mission, and watched over my dreamself do the autopsy. She mentioned there that our Seer is going to ask me to remove her eyes and permanently deafen her soon in the future, which she asked me not to agree to do. Usually I’d have no problem at all mutilating a Seer to let them feel better in touch with their aspect, but in this case it might present a problem. I’ll deal with it when it arises.

…

Soon, I’ll have to install some mechanical limbs on those of us who are missing them. Namely, gh is missing a leg, and our Dame had some serious feedback during the fight, and lost his dreamself’s arm when his realself got his severed (Which is strange that that happened at all. Dreamseelves are only ever wounded in response to a realself getting wounded when the realself internalizes the wound as being truly part of their identity. Maybe he is more unhinged than I think).

The standard bionic limb is an incredible piece of Alternian biotechnology. The Model 1 Arm, R and L, replaces up to the deep shoulder, the Model 1 Leg, R and L, replaces up to the hip joint, and the Model 1 Full Lower Body, which replaces from roughly naval down. And the standard replayer modifications make it even more convenient, reducing the need for skilled installation personnel and manual adjustment. They are quite literally plug and play limbs.

It can be alchemised and put together by even the stupidest medic. Installation is as simple as jamming the arm directly onto whatever is left of the limb in question, and the limb will automatically interface and fuse to the body. It telescopes and adjusts its size for anyone between 4 and 7 feet (If you are above 7 feet, the XL model does just as good of a job), and perfectly matches the shape and size of your other matching limb, if it exists, or roughly approximates the size of your previous limbs if your lost both. Articulation is as good as a real body part, with even more in the wrist and fingers. It automatically adjusts strength to just under the limit of which the body can stand without tearing itself apart, but is still able to be used for delicate procedures requiring great manual dexterity. It can be even be modified using standard packages to include hidden blades, projectile weapons, and storage spaces.

The Alternian empire has a style of technology, where they do one thing for each application, and do that one thing well. This is only something I really noticed after I realized that almost every trolls husktop is exactly the same unless they’re some kind of biotech enthusiast. And makes sense, they’re a huge militaristic empire that needs an excellent logistics system. It’s much easier for everyone to keep track of if they have one item that applies to many situations, rather than having many items apply to each different needed circumstance. And the Model 1 limbs are a perfect example of that. And replayers favour things requiring as little time to learn to use while being as powerful and robust as possible. In our software and our bionic limbs.

But I think I can do better. My troll eye still outperforms even some of the most cutting edge bionic
eyes. I’m a scientist, with a speciality in biology, not a mechanic. And flesh always wins out over the machine.

Once again, I have subjects to experiment on. At least these ones being willing will make things easier, gh is already confident enough in my abilities to let me stick anything in his leg, and the Dame is so desperate for power that he’ll let me do whatever I want.

I can’t just download a supercharged troll arm from the internet this time however. But I’ve been practicing my life aspect control constantly for a long time. I think that this will be my first practical application of my ideas behind manipulating the “Life guiding cage” that I’ve mentioned a few times before.

After we get an alchemiter and some tools, I think I can create some truly amazing things. After all, our style is throwing as much science on the wall and seeing what sticks, right? And maybe this will be part of one of the many magic bullets we have in the fire in our hope to take down the Grace.

--END OUTPUT—

Typheus>exit

> rmail

=Ring mail version rc13.4=

Changelog: rc13.4
-Now able to support up to 2^256-1 mails sending at once.
-Fixed series of crashes relating to recursive replying of infinite mail chains
-Logging out and in again related memory leak fixed

Rmail> compose -f -s -to:remoteClient:<address[12]> -enableSecureKey:<keylist[12]>

Composing mail to ****:****:****:****:****:****

> We still uploading this to their ring server? I suppose we better, people are still commenting and writing in. We put that note from the editor in saying that we’re uploading it from scraps found in the memory cache of the box, right? \n Maybe we should answer some of these comments ourselves, do you think? -RH

Sending….

Send confirmation received

Rmail> receive

[1] New message

Rmail> open -s -f 1

From: ****:****:****:****:****:****

--BEGIN MESSAGE—

Maybe. It probably can’t hurt.
I’ve got something in the works as well. We can receive this from their session, despite it supposedly being dark, so we must be able to send something back. I have a contact in a ring vessel making a trip that could be close to their session. And I’m getting them to run some tests.

Will keep you posted.

-TP

--END OF MESSAGE--

Chapter End Notes

1 year and 50,000 words have gone into experiments on doomed timelines. here's for another year and another 50,000!
Out of Perspective Chapter: Swords I

“Shaolin Shadowboxing. And the Wu-Tang Sword Style. If what you say is true, the Shaolin and the Wu-Tang could be dangerous. Do you think your Wu-Tang sword can defeat me?”

Years in the past, and actually quite a few years, two people stand in an open clearing, somewhere in the Midwest United States. Grassy plains and mild hills stretch almost endlessly across the horizon, the only nearby landmarks of note being a single tree, probably a sycamore tree. Under the dramatically meaningful tree is a boombox, one you could imagine seeing being held on the shoulder of a youth cruising the inner-city streets of an east coast city.

One of the people is a young girl, who would someday play a game that ends the world, and would hopefully become important beyond this flashback scene. One day she would be Luciel Darlington, Knight of Light, and arguably deuteragonist to the critically unacclaimed *Experiments on Doomed Timelines*. Right now, she is Luciel Darlington, young woman of earth, Knight of Nothing in Particular.

She groans audibly. “This is stupid. Why are we doing this again?”

The other person is significantly older, having hit the incredible strides of the mid-twenties, a time of life that is well known to all young people as being significantly old.

“I told you, because someday you’re going to play a game that ends the world, and-”

And he is rudely interrupted. “Yes, a game that ends the world. I know. I know because you tell me it every goddamn day. What does playing a game that ends the world have to do with some garbage east coast rap band?”

“You take that back. Wu-Tang Clan are revolutionary geniuses who defined an entire genre. You should be honoured that I would teach you the secrets to their legendary Wu-Tang Sword Style. Do you know how many girls would kill for this opportunity? Because it’s a damn lot.”

“Well you can tell those girls that they don’t have to kill anyone, because they can take my place listening to your stupid rants. What does playing a game that ends the world have to do with learning about rap music?”

“You’re not learning-“. He takes a moment to compose himself. “We’re not just learning about rap music. I’m teaching you the secrets to the legendary Wu-Tang Sword Style.”

“What does learning the legendary Wu-Fang Sword Whatever have to do with playing a game that ends the world?”

“Because you’ll have to fight in the game that ends the world.”

“Then why aren’t I learning how to actually fight, you know, by a professional trainer. Joanna from school does Karate on weekends! Why can’t I do that? Or how about I learn how to shoot guns? You know at a firing range or something? Games have guns, don’t they? Like Call of Duty?”

“Because professional trainers don’t know shit-“. He takes another moment to compose himself. “Sorry, they don’t know crap about actual fighting.”
“Oh and what, my brother the 25 year old college dropout does?”

“Yes! Yes I do! Have you tried actually sitting in a karate lesson? It’s all honour this and meditation that, and other garbage. They don’t even give you swords! And have you tried looking at actual historical sword training parchments and other crap like that? They don’t do anything cool at all! Do you know that they don’t even actually use the blade of the sword to parry!?”

“But fighting isn’t about being cool! It’s about winning! They’re two totally different things! Life isn’t like movies and rap songs! And anyway! If I was going to play a game that ends the world I’d still just use guns! What good is a sword going to do against a glock? Like, swish swish, wow, you’re so cool, oh wait, no, I’ve just shot you in the chest. Like in Indiana Jones!”

“Luciel, I am so proud. You’re finally making media references in your arguments.”

“Oh whatever.”

“And anyway, the only reason that it works in Indiana Jones is because nobody expects it. Do you know why he only ever shot a sword-fighting guy in the movies once? Because he can only do it once. Because then it wouldn’t be a good story anymore. It would just be a guy with a gun shooting people without guns! And nobody wants to see that more than once.”

“I still don’t see what this has to do with the fact that being cool makes you good at fighting!”

“Fine, okay, Lucy, look. Two things. One, it’s all called narrative causality. And two, let me show you what Nate motherfuc-“. He takes a moment to compose himself. “Motherfricking Darlington, Warrior of the Smoothest Flow, Bane of His Enemies, can do.”

He, now named Nate, apparently, plucks a small bag out of his sylladex and tosses it to Luciel. She opens it up, and the bag is filled with smooth rocks.

Nate pulls a sword out of his strife specibus, steadies and flattens his stance, and holds the blade vertically with both hands, positioning to block his torso and face.

“Throw them at me, Lucy. Come on, bring the ruckus. Bring the ruckus, Lucy.”

Luciel tentatively picks a rock out of the bag. She is sure that every 12 year old wants to throw rocks at their older brother, but she can’t imagine that anyone is usually given a direct offer to. But seeing her brother beatboxing to himself under his breath is all the reason she needs. She lightly tosses the first pebble at him, and after finishing its slow arc, impacts with Nate’s sword, and with a distinctive ping, bounces off the edge a few metres away.

“Come on Lucy. Put some Ruckus into it. This is only the lightest of what the Wu-Tang Sword Style is capable of”

She frowns gently. She tosses a few more rocks in short succession after each other, and each is seemingly effortlessly deflected. Nate beckons for more.

She gets frustrated, and pegs a rock hard right at him. Seemingly moving the sword from its resting position faster than eyesight, it meets the stone, and the air is filled with a sharp mellitic resonance, and the thrown stone is once again deflected.

“Come on Lucy. Put some Ruckus into it. This is only the lightest of what the Wu-Tang Sword Style is capable of”

She frowns gently. She tosses a few more rocks in short succession after each other, and each is seemingly effortlessly deflected. Nate beckons for more.

She gets frustrated, and pegs a rock hard right at him. Seemingly moving the sword from its resting position faster than eyesight, it meets the stone, and the air is filled with a sharp mellitic resonance, and the thrown stone is once again deflected.

She grabs a handful of rocks all at once, about 6. All at once she violently leads into and throws the cluster directly at him, the scattershot. Each rock has enough distance on the ones around it, that compared to the small edge of the sword, there’s no way that a single sword could deflect all of them. It simply does not have the coverage, it would need to be in multiple places at once to hit
every rock.

In the half-second of flight time, Nate “Motherfricking” Darlington, shifts his feet, sharpens his gaze, furrows his lightly acne-ridden forehead, tightens his grip, and 6 near-simultaneous pings are heard as each projectile is parried.

“That’s the power of the Wu-Tang Sword Style Luciel. Well, that’s the power of the ability to deflect rocks, but you see, right? This is as legit as it gets.”

“Oh my god! It’s a trick, right?”

He folds away his sword back into extradimensional space, kept safety in the strife specibus abstraction until needed once again.

“It’s not a trick. it’s what I’m trying to teach you.”

“To deflect rocks?”

“No, deflecting rocks is just something that you can do with it. I’m trying to teach you how to fight, and more importantly, how to fight with narrative.”

“With narrative?”

“With narrative causality.”

“Because it’s about the story, and not the actual abilities?”

“I mean, yes. Kind of. Look, I still have to teach you how to actually fight. With the physical motions and everything else. But I’m trying to instil a deeper sense of purpose behind it here, that it isn’t just about swinging swords around and being strong and good at attacking things. But that it’s about telling a story, about being a story. Narrative causality is the idea that the true laws of the universe aren’t physics or mathematics, but plot and story.”

“And you became so good at swords because you practiced narrative causality?”

“No, because I practiced every day, learnt all the techniques, sparred often, took time to develop my abilities, and because I practiced narrative causality. It isn’t enough to be fast, or strong, or skilled. You have to know how to be an interesting character. How to fight with a cool signature sword style that you learnt from your brother when you were just a kid. All those people at the karate dojo, all those people at the firing range are missing the most, and only important part of combat. That it’s all about how god fucking damn cool you are.”

There’s a brief silence. The words sink in. They both stand in the light of the sun, the presumed-Sycamore projecting a shadow across the grass.

“Am I really going to play a game that ends the world?”

“Yeah.”

More silence.

“I’m afraid that you are.”

“Does that mean you’re going to die?”

“I’m not sure. But… I think it does, yeah.”
“Oh…”
She looks at the ground.

“Then what’s the point of training?”

“Because I think, that if you can be strong enough, and live long enough, maybe you can make some good out of it. Save some people, defeat some great evil, maybe something like that.”

“Sounds hard.”

“Try taking it one day at a time.”

“Okay. How about today you start teaching me the Wu-Tang Sword Style?”

“Finally.”

Luciel withdraws her practice sword from her specibus, squares her stance, and holds her sword with one hand in front of her. The rays of the sun shine from behind her, casting a shadow in the direction that her brother stands.

“Can I still get a glock through?”

“…Yeah, alright. I’ll buy you one.”

“Thanks Nate,”

“No problem. Now, repeat what I told you. That’s the first step.”

Nate withdraws his practice sword from his strife specibus, squares his stance, and stands, eyes against the sun. And speaks the starting lines.

“Shaolin Shadowboxing. And the Wu-Tang Sword Style. If what you say is true, the Shaolin and the Wu-Tang could be dangerous. Do you think your Wu-Tang sword can defeat me?”

“Enguarde. I’ll let you try my Wu-Tang Style.”
Diaries I

Out of Perspective Chapter: Diaries I

[Months in the past, a text file on a computer, in the recycle bin]

medicinalElectrical’s mental health log
Date: TS74.21
Mood: 0/10
Status: Presession

Mental health consensus in replayer communities says that in lieu of modern psychology treatments for mental illness, such as cognitive behavioural therapy, we must develop techniques that can be self-administered. There of such, one strategy includes writing a “journal” of your thoughts and feeling, to keep track of how you feel, track your progress, and express your feelings, letting you work through.

So here I am, doing this. Faith in medicine also includes faith in mental health medicine, which also includes faith in their treatments. So no matter how stupid I feel writing about my feelings like a jackass in a word document on a laptop, I am obliged to at least give it a try.

People have this image of depression that it’s all about lazy days in bed and peaceful nights but it’s not. It’s not just about being miserable, it’s about recognizing and understanding on some very deep level that you never won’t be miserable, whether that’s through the fact that you understand that the love and satisfaction you need is fundamentally unattainable for a multitude of reasons, or because your brain chemistry and reward centre is just so burnt out that you are physically incapable of feeling warm and content. And honestly, it’s not even fair to say that it’s just that, it’s missing out on the genuine disgust and hatred that you feel for pretty much everyone who has a better deal than you. When you see happy people and soft things, it doesn’t make you feel good that something like that exists in the world, or that maybe it could be you, it makes you feel anger that they got to have a good deal in life. It makes you struggle to not want to dedicate your life to making everyone as miserable as you. And the constant fighting against yourself not to hurt people just leaves you so tired.

Love and hate are literally the same emotion. There is nobody that I can get close to that I can’t feel disgusted by. It’s like a magnetic field, there can’t be the emotion of love without an equal dose of hate to balance it out. You don’t even rotate between them, they’re just… there at the same time.

And yet I feel anger so much. Like my mind is an endless immovable pool and the only thing to get it to start moving is a destructive storm. I used to be so afraid of hurting people, but maybe I’m not anymore. It feels… good to punish them. Seeing the life fade from a presession human. Like I’m dishing out justice to them, letting them see part of the pain that I have to live with every day. I don’t want to think that I envy them, but they get to spend their lives without ever having to wonder or feel about the true purpose of the world. Their blessing is getting to die without having the question of “What is this all about” answered. It's unpleasant and visceral, but easy to justify to myself. Maybe it’s just the same thing that sociopaths are supposed to do, torturing animals, but it doesn’t feel like that. It’s not a cold thing, it’s not a desire, it’s a release. Like a drug, the emotions overwhelm you, and you get to feel something other than the sad fate of reality bearing down on
you.

I don’t think I’m a sociopath. Through sometimes I wonder. I don’t enjoy hurting people. I think that maybe I do need love, that I do feel empathy for others, and want to live a life of peaceful carefreeness in a cabin in the woods, with those that I love around me, and to never have to hurt or be hurt again. But that sort of thing is impossible. I know my sessionmates are already planning something like that this session, to try and extend it to give us as long of a time as possible, but it doesn’t feel worth it to me. It feels like a poor fake imitation, and it feels like that the game will punish us for having the audacity to try and relax and heal.

I also wonder sometimes what gender I really am. I guess I’m supposed to be a girl, but I don’t feel like a girl. But I sure as hell don’t feel like a boy either. Maybe I’ll just… avoid the topic. Let people make their own assumptions. They’ll probably know be better than I know myself.

I just need something to sink my teeth into. Something to give myself meaning. Too often I feel numb, like when you go to the dentist, and they numb your mouth so that they can do work, and sometimes you bite your mouth just to see if you can, to see what it feels like. Except my mind is numb, and I pursue more dangerous and more extreme methods to feel anything. Satisfaction. Anger. Happiness. Anything that can give me relief from the ever-present feelings of dead and meaningless to my entire life.

I call myself a scientist, but what science do I even do? Is yelling at people on the replayernet science? I’ve done reports, sourced resources, even some assistance in research before, but I’ve never done a real, large scale experiment. Maybe I should. Maybe there’s a thing that I can do that can take up all the empty space in my mind, fill me up with purpose and single minded dedication, and let me forget about the wounds in me that always ache and never begin to heal.

Maybe that’s the answer I’m looking for. That the question isn’t what I can do to make myself feel again, but what I can do to distract myself from it while still contributing ethically to the world.

God, writing all this. I don’t feel any better. I feel like I’m just apologizing to a non-existent reader for what an awful person I am. But so what. I can’t change who I am. The best I can do is channel myself into doing things that still bring moral good.

Maybe I also need something to write about. I… well, I’ll delete this document the second that I finish writing it, to be honest. But writing in general feels cathritic. Maybe I’ll start a blog. Or just pepper my future experiment logs of whatever I end up doing with random thoughts and feelings I have. That sounds like purer self-expression than this joke of a mental health log where I craft stupid metaphors about clinical depression and act like it justifies me being evil.

I guess it doesn’t really matter either way.

[Months in the past, a ring-bound lecture notebook. The front reads “Luciel’s Journal – Part 24”. The inside has block printed letters written in a blue ball-point pen. The handwriting is clear and legible, with gently rounded letters. Small doodles are in the margins. They include murals in pens of interlocking and flowing shapes and patterns.]

TS74.21.

2 Days in.

I’ve attached the calculations for the session itenary in the appendix. Yes, itenary is spelt wrong. But the spelling stuck I guess.
Two and a half years. Two and a half years for us fourteen to relax. To heal. God I’ve waited so long for this. But we’re finally doing it. We’re finally making it happen.

My sessionmates seem interesting enough. Romi, our Seer, has been a great help already and it’s only two days in. And she’s already friends with Kanan.

Joey might be an issue. Already he seems… obsessed with winning. It’s not very healthy. I’m going to have a talk to him about how surviving is more important to all of us than beating up monsters is.

River is… well, something. I can’t exactly see myself becoming friends with her. Him? They? But things have surprised me I guess. Best not to judge a book by its cover.

I wish I had more to say. I’ve been practising the saxophone even more. The bakes street solo is hard, but every time I do better and better. It feels good to really learn an instrument to play real music, not just the games stock magic songs. And I guess I’ll have lots to time to learn.

Overall, I feel… hopeful. Like I’m really doing good here for the world. Or at least for us. We all struggle and fight so much, and I so dearly wish that I could help everyone, but for now, just having some time to rest will be… well, it will be the best thing to happen to me in the past like, what is it now 50 years? That does not sound right but like, who knows how old I am in real time anymore.

I don’t feel 50. My mother felt 50. My brother felt 24. I feel like a 22 year old with lots of memories. I sure as hell don’t look like a 50 year old.

Whatever, I’ll save the naval gazing for somewhere other than my mission journal. Luciel Darlington out.

I uh, always feel so awkward saying “Dear Diary”. I mean, you’re not a person or anything. But, I guess that sounds cliché too! Like the young girl writing in her diary and then talking about how it sounds awkward to say dear diary. Like it’s something you say to make yourself sound more relatable right?

Um

I’m in the pre-session for a new session. I don’t know what I am yet, but I’ve been talking to this one boy, Terrence. He’s so calm and nice to me, like he glows and I want to lie in front of a fireplace with him. His words are so soft and kind, and I… cuddle with them across the light of my screen. I… it’s not like I want to… fuck… him or anything, but like. What do you call someone who makes you feel warm on the inside like that?

Maybe I do want to… him. He has such big hands

Um

I’ve been thinking a lot about… thought recently. Like, how do we think? What is thinking? What does it mean to be self-aware and conscious? I know that sounds all deep and stuff, but like.
I’ve pasted in a meme that I made to express myself. Achilles and the turtle in the form of stupid pre-session memes talk about what I feel so much better than I ever could.

[An image is attached to the book using double-sided tape. It is slightly lopsided]

They’re both me! Dialogues are fun, because you can express how you argue with yourself over an
idea without it sounding unnatural! Although I think that I kind of fucked up the meme format a bit with my lack of MS paint skills. And I also think the achillies and the tortoise… turtle? Shell guy is supposed to be a meme about recursion, not about feelings and cognition, but whatever.

I used to be…. I still am overcome with fear. And anxiety. You know the pit in your stomach when something really bad is going to happen. When your boyfriend is breaking up with you. Except the pit in my stomach never leaves. It’s always there like I swallowed an apricot core and it sinks into my tummy.

But aren’t I entirely myself? Isn’t my mind the only place where I am queen? I’ve had so many nightmares, so many panic attacks, that I always wonder how I’m still alive. But when I’m really in danger, I always react. Like there’s a deep part of me that will do whatever it can to live. And the rest of me hates it. But that doesn’t make sense does it? How can two parts of the same mind combat each other? How can dialogues exist, when we are entirely ourselves?

I remember going to the beach as a kid. I loved making sandcastles in the sand, I felt so in control. I could build up these beautiful structures that I saw in my head. But the structures were already… in my head. They were already complete! The mind is a real thing, a real realm. But it’ s not like the physical world, it’s… it’s like, it tells me what it feels like to be a god. Not a fake sburb god like the god of breath or whatever, but what a true god of a world feels like. To have a world that is entirely yourself. You don’t need to make the sandcastle. You don’t even need to think about the sandcastle. The sandcastle simply… is.

It’s what I tell myself to help with my anxiety. That to fight against myself is an oxymoron. I am entirely myself. Anything I can be I can simply choose to be. There is no healing process, there is no slow recovery. I become what I want to be. I am what I want to be.

I hope that makes sense. Maybe these ramblings only make sense to me. But that’s why dear diary is my private diary, right.

Someday I’ll make that dive. Someday needs will provide and I feel like I will become entirely myself, and rule my thoughts like a god rules a world. I will think what I want to think, and feel what I want to feel. And I will never have to feel what I don’t want to feel again.

Averie.
Fanfanfiction: Day 68

I wonder how many replayers have read *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality*. Or, if you're more of a fan of Alternian lit, *A fan written spinoff of the popular hatchling-story Harrus Potter and the Ancient Thinkmasters Rock et al, in which the titular character conquers the story in exactly one seventh of the timeframe by employing all sorts of techniques from the newly developing field of Logicmancy, including but not limited to pointing out logical fallacies, applying cutting edge-scientific thought and rejecting the metaphysical concept of death itself, also featuring an antagonist who displays many of the same...* Okay so the title goes on. For a few pages, actually.

But anyway, it’s fanfiction of Harry Potter. Fanfiction is when you take a published story, and write your own story featuring the same characters and world in different settings. The idea of fanfiction itself doesn’t hold too much interest to me, I was never much of a Harry Potter person myself, but *Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality* took me for quite an obsession when I was a fresh replayer looking for a metaphysical worldview. These days I am... a bit more jaded.

Least I want to do is turn this into a critique of *Methods of Rationality* myself, better critics than I have tried. And I really do think it’s worth a read, honestly. But it doesn’t present a philosophy that is compatible at all with sburb. To this end, I have written my own fanfanfiction (Imagine that. Writing a story based on a story based off another story. I truly feel that all semblances of originality are fleeting from me) of it.

It has been years since I have read Harry Potter and the Methods of Rationality. I didn’t even finish it at the time. I am slightly drunk and in a cave fearing for my life. And I have never actually written a story before. But regardless, here is how I think it would have worked out if harry potter and the methods of rationality were a bit more like the world that we all live in every day.

**Title: Harry Potter and The Methods of Why Nothing Ever Works**

**Words: I have no idea**

**Rating: R18+ for adult themes such as nihilism.**

Harry once again fiddled with his time-turner. It had been days of experiments, probing, theories, and hypothesis, but yet no usable result has come out of it. He had not been able to support himself being accosted by bullies, he had not been able to use it to seem omnipotent. The only thing the damn hourglass seemed to be good for was getting extra sleep and study time. And yet he had no idea why. It seemed almost like the turner, no, the universe had a hostile will against him. He was at breaking point, he had come into the magical world excited to bring fresh new theories to a stagnant setting, and eventually, of course, become all-seeing emperor of the universe. But nothing ever seemed to work, the world resisted experimentation and understanding. Even the most basic of logical principals seemed to fail when magic was involved.

One object could do one thing. And another object could do another. But when he tried to combine them for an unintended dual effect, it quite simply, did not work. And no matter how deep he looked, no matter how deep he tried to find patterns and reason, there were none. The world was immune to understanding. Magic was, quite simply. Magic. He had once thought that if magic were real it would simply be called science, but such a thing was seeming less and less likely. Magic seemed to be called such because it could not be understood.
He turned to his friend Hermonie. Heramonie. Hearmonie. Girl Wizard. Harry said “I just don’t get it. Nothing in this world makes sense. It seems like the world is full of morons who always do the wrong thing despite the answer being available with just a bit of thought but it never is. And then it turns out that these morons did the right thing, for reasons they couldn’t have possibly known, even when a perfectly rational actor should have done the exact opposite.”

Girl wizard furrowed her brow. “Do you really think you’re the only smart person in the world Harry Potter? You’re 12 years old for gods sake. Dumbledoor or whatever the fuck his name is is like, 300. And has been studying magic and wisdom for centuries. If there really was an easy foolproof way to break the world in half and gain unlimited power, don’t you think he would have found it? Or someone else maybe, in the millions of magical people in the world? Do you really think you’re the only one in the entire universe to ever try and think about things, Harry? How arrogant can you possibly be. The world isn’t the way it is because everyone but you is stupid, the world is how it is because everyone is smart, and did their best over thousands of years getting to where we are now. You can’t become the main character of the world just because your foster dad was a scientist and you know quantum mechanics when Ron Redhair doesn’t.”

“But what about logic, girl wizard? Surely the foundation of logic is maintained. You can’t seriously suggest that things like deductive reasoning are invalid themselves? Magic can be magical all it wants, but pure mathematics and formal logic exists on a level beyond the universe in which it is expressed. No local forces can make x not equal x. Bayes formula is a law of how reality itself works, it can’t be altered any more than you can alter the fact that things are themselves.”

“Maybe they can. Fool that you are, you trust your atoms to tell you that they are atoms. All that can really be proved to exist in the world is your own local experience. There’s no reason that logic has to be always correct in every circumstance. And even if you still believe that, tell me, have you ever heard about neural networks?”

“They’re like, AI used in machine learning right?”

“Yeah. They are. Do you know that there are some patterns and solutions for which a neural network cannot learn, no matter how much time you give it to train? It simply does not have enough nodes to ever simulate even an approximation of the answer. The simplest example is that a one layer network can never, ever, produce an output function of that of the logical XOR (a logic function in which the output is only true if and only if exactly one out of two inputs is true, not both or neither). It’s mathematically impossible, there is no configuration that can ever model that simple function. What if magic is like that? Our brains are neural networks, and we only have a finite amount of understanding space. Maybe even if we expand them, if you believe the church-turing thesis. Maybe magic does follow rules, Harry Potter, but the rules are so complex and twisted that our brains are physically incapable of even beginning to understand them. The rules of magic are the XOR function and our brains are a single-layer neural network. It doesn’t matter how much time, or how many people. The answer will never, ever, be in our grasp, no matter what we do. And we just have to live with it”

It is at this point that Harry Potter and all of his wizard friends decided to give up on rationality and just try and survive every day being hunted by the demon wizard Voldemort.

The end.
Chapter 40

TimelineTracker 1.5
-Paradox Space’s #1 time player assistance tool by desertsThunder

125 New beta timeline reports
61,126 Stored beta timeline reports
Awaiting voice input…

> “Review bookmarks in folder ‘Cataclysm Fights’”

81 Bookmarks in folder.
1) 64851 - 'gt hq cata fight'
2) 94855 - 'lopaj massacre'
3) 848777 - 'joey v averie gt #1'
4) 41112 - 'suicide squad #6'
…

Awaiting voice input...

> ”Play index fifty one”

**Beta Timeline 17891 t+1273**

**Location:** *Land of Dawn and Slate*

**Annotation:** 'lodas last stand #2'

**Combatants:**

Kanan [Maid of Stars], Terrence [Witch of Hope], Manuel [Rogue of Blood]

Vs

Averie [Grace of Rage]

Playing scrylog… Duration 6.2 seconds

--BEGIN SCRYLOG--

The Land of Dawn and Slate always had a sun on the horizon, seemingly constantly coming from the east. It would cast the golden light of dawn across the land, leaving dual shadows from Skaia and it that would always hit the rectangular deep slate blocks constructing the land directly on a face, never on a corner. Even the shadows always hit at perfect right angles.

Three exhausted figures stand on a unlevel field of slate blocks, tattered clothes, sweat and bloodstains, and heavy breathing abound.

One stands opposite them by a few tens of metres, a cloak billowing in gentle winds over a blood-stained print t-shirt and black jeans. The cloak is a patchwork build, loose and clumsy sew marks,
seemingly done by hand, connect torn fragments of bright coloured fabrics. One might even think that they were god-robes, sliced up and sewn back together into a single overly large garment. But that would be ridiculous.

One of the three opens his mouth. It’s Terrence, the Witch. He speaks loudly, projecting his voice across the landscape. “It doesn’t have to be this way. We can still—”. He doesn’t get to finish his sentence, the Grace has plucked a rapier out of her specibus and thrown it as a javelin at the Witch. A green rope is tied to the handle of the sword, affixed at the bottom where the grip meets the hand guard. It trails in the air, other end still attached to the Grace.

The sign of aggression was clear. The Grace was not going to offer any more than the few seconds given to the Witch to give the beginning of his friendship speech. When the rapier is a quarter of the way there, the Maid has finished pulling her twin submachine guns out of thin air, and has begun to draw a bead on the Grace. Her fingers were pressing the trigger during the milliseconds where the guns were still formless blobs of spawn-light, and began to spit bullets out with a constant barking as soon as the mechanism instantiated from the abstract data universe that it came from. The Maid moves one foot forward, giving herself a firmer stance. She intends to stay where she is.

The Grace evidently knows that while the bullets may already be flying, it will take at least a bit longer for the Maid to actually paint that bead directly to her, or if she does not know this, she is at least willing to take that bet. She pushes out on her right foot, preparing to enter into a sprint.

When the rapier is almost halfway to the Witch, the Rogue reacts. His blood quickens in an instant, channelling his aspect, as the stone under his feet starts to collapse into gravel, losing its bonds, a source of energy for whatever the rogue has planned.

The Grace has started moving by now, running at a sharp diagonal angle compared to the green rope trailing across the field. Her apparent path places her running at the Rogue, on the right of the Witch, rather than the Maid on his left. As she runs, the rope in midair begins to trail to her as well, the other end being wrapped and tied off around her forearm.

When the rapier is two thirds on the way to the Witch, he begins to react. On instinct, he pulls at his aspect, ties it with his sylladex, forcing it to reject one of its items, bypassing the usual modus bullshit and cognitive effort required to do such a thing. A formless white blob begins to form in front of him, a round irregular shape as wide as he is tall, and about as thick as a white picket fence picket, about half a metre forwards of him. The item will take a few tens of milliseconds to instantiate itself in reality fully. [Eject].

The Grace is now in full tilt running at the Rogue. She gains speed fast, though not nearly as fast as the sword that she hurled. Her right arm is held infront of her, already spawning a new rapier in a horizontal position. A bright silver blade, wooden handle, and a handful of varying pastel and media-related keyring charms attached to the hand guard, rather like a young highschool girl attaches to her backpack. They jingle against eachother in the speed of the sprint.

Bullets are letting fly against the Grace. Both hands and both guns held by the maid arc to follow the Grace’s sprint. Slate blocks in the near distance crack and thud with the impact of the bullets. Tracer rounds, one attached to every third bullet, show a strange phenomenon. The bullets path curve to get closer to the Grace. The paths blazed by the tracers look rather like comet trails curving around a planet, trying to hit it but still missing and flying off again behind it. One bullet tears a patch off the Grace’s cloak. One impacts her in the torso, the small calibre not leaving an exit wound.

The Grace continues her run unaffected.
The pale white blob spawned by the Witch starts to materialize fully, patches of aged, waterlogged wood beginning to appear out of the aether, and the patches grow and size and begin to connect with each other. It appears to be a large fragment of the hull from a wooden shipwreck, presumably captured and logged by the Witch from an underwater world.

However, by the time the hull fragment has finished appearing, the sword is already part of the way through it. The clipping makes a horrendous wood shattering noise, as the objects fight for physics engine dominance against each other, the sword losing much of its velocity as it grinds and shatters its way through the hull planks, slowing down at a rate that will presumably leave it lodged in there.

The Witch is using this opportunity to take a few steps backwards, trying to clear the line of fire between the Maid and the Grace. The air around him sings as the potential of the abstract concept of Hope begins to sublimate in the area.

The Grace brings her sword forward with her hand, preparing to thrust it into the Rogue’s heart. The Rogue spreads his arms, leaving a clear opening for his chest to be pierced. And it is, for the Grace kicks off the ground in the last metre, giving an extra boost of speed, and skewers the Rogue directly through his heart.

The Rogue grins widely, before involuntarily spluttering up blood from his mouth. The gust of wind from the sword impalement blows open his coat, and the insides are lined with fragmentation grenades.

And at the same time, his own torso, the sword impaled in it, and a good part of the Grace’s right hand gripping it are instantly covered in a network of glowing red vein-like patterns. [Hold Your Colour].

A golden shimmer appears in the air around the Witch, while the flow of bullets from the Maid finally tracks the full ninety degrees from her starting location to the Grace’s current location. [You’ve Got Her in Your Pocket].

The grenades click in unison, the final noise before the detonation. The Grace is riddled with bullets, tearing through her cloak and shirt, before her feet even fall to the ground from her skewering leap. She rips her hand off her rapier with the noise of meat being torn apart and a spray of blood, the entire flesh of her palm and fingers being separated from the rest of her, exposing the bone of her hand to open air, and leaving the sword handle still being gripped by disembodied flesh and skin.

With that same hand, in the same motion, she keeps pulling it backwards with great speed, the rope tied around her forearm losing all the slack it had, yanking the wooden hull-sword shield towards her, the object being pulled from its free fall just before it hit the ground, and instead going flying towards her. As the Grace’s feet finally connect to the ground, she instantly reverses her momentum, pushing off in the direction of the other two combatants and the shield hull that is now hurtling towards her. Bullets flying tear off splinters from the hull. She drops her body into a feet-first slide under the shield, bullets in her ribcage and stomach agitating the wounded flesh that they lodged in by the dramatic body contraction. The rope follows her under, and catches on the underside of the shield, still attached to the hilt on the side facing the Rogue. This jams it into an upwards angle, and moves it slightly downwards, closing the gap between it and the ground.

And then the grenades explode. A sharp crack of high explosives fills the air, and metal fragments and bits of gore from the former Rogue are propelled in all directions. Against the shimmering Hope erected by the Witch, the shrapnel loses all of its velocity, forming a bubble of still metal shards. The Witch and the Maid are protected entirely, save for the deafening of the explosion. The
wooden ship hull chunk, the only thing protecting the Grace, is torn apart by the shockwave of the explosion, the same shockwave that presses forward past the hull and rips through the Grace, in which even shielded from its direct brunt, still tenderizes and breaks rib bones and bruises flesh, and fragments tear through the wood, losing a lot of the potential deathly impact, but still ending up in fair number lodged into the Grace’s back, penetrating straight through her now singed and burnt cloak and shirt, embedding themselves into her flesh. Her eardrums burst from the pressure, blood leaking out of her ear canals.

The bullets stop cracking out of the Maid’s gun, ambiguously because of either being out of ammunition or because of the flinch after the explosion. And after the explosion ends, the shimmering hope field fizzes out, and the suspended fragments begin to fall again. And before they can, the Grace forcefully drags her body upright again, and lets loose her one healthy arm in an aggressive thrust towards the Maid, spawning a new rapier with a, this time bright blue, rope tied around her arm, which is propelled at incredible speed, and impacts in the stunned Maid’s throat while the blade is still glowing white from the strife sylladex spawning animation.

Blood sprays out in a pressure fountain as the Maid begins to collapse onto her knees, as in the now free hand, the Grace spawns yet another rapier, this one unbound, and uses it to cut herself free from the green rope still tied around her bloody, wounded hand arm.

The last bits of the mid-air suspended shrapnel almost start to finish falling. The Witch tries to run, but stumbles over his own feet, still in shock from the explosion. The Grace takes but a few steps towards him, and thrusts her sword through his stomach. The clanking of the fragments falling finally stops. The Grace pulls her gore and blood-stained sword out of his gut, and then thrusts it in again, and again, and again, flesh rending and organs slicing under the slightly dull sword.

When she finally stops, the Witch’s entrails spill out over the slate floor, diced coarsely.

Scorch marks burn into the ground where the grenades went off. The general area is showered in small bits of the Rogue, blood and organs. The blood fountain from the Maid has subsided and she lies face down in a pool of it. Life has long since left the Witch’s eyes.

And the Grace finally collapses onto her hands, the right raw hand slipping on the ground, forcing her to fall over on that side as the arm buckles. blood leaking out of her chest from the bullet wounds drips over the floor.

--END SCRYLOG—

**Winner: Averie [Grace of Rage]**

23 Comments:

Steve [Sylph of Time] [Alpha] [YOU]: another last stand battle, another failure. any thoughts?

Steve [Heir of Time] [Beta 1661]: averie looked pretty fucked up after that fight. she didnt die from her wounds?

Steve [Sylph of Time] [Beta 17891]: if she died then my name would have an alpha next to it right now. no, after this she came for me and lawrence in the magicent before i rewound and she looked healthy enough, even tho she was covered in bandages and the exact same outfit she had in there.

Sidney [Heir of Space] [Alpha]: Actually yeah what’s up with her cloak. Are those godrobes she
stitched together.

-Steve [Sylph of Time] [Beta 17891]: think so. you luciel, river and katey went gt in our timeline and all got killed in the same fight. think she must have stiched it out of you then.

-Sidney [Heir of Space] [Alpha]: Jesus fuckin Christ. Why would she even do that? Is it just a sick trophy or what? I swear no matter how hard I try her behaviour just never seems to make sense, but she still always ends up killing us.

-Romi [Seer of Heart] [Alpha]: Steve 1661, why are you reporting as an Heir of Time?

-Steve [Heir of Time] [Beta 1661]: we tried vagabouncing in my timeline. safe to say it didn’t work. I wouldn’t recommend it, honestly we just made everything worse for us.

-Terrence [Witch of Hope] [Alpha]: Hey 17891, when gt River died, was it a just death or a heroic death?

-Steve [Sylph of Time] [Beta 17891]: didn’t see.

Terrence [Witch of Hope] [Alpha]: That wooden ship hull that doomed timeline me used! I still have that in my syalladex, I got it ages ago when I was questing. Always thought it would come in handy for something. Hope field is [You’ve Got Her in Your Pocket]. You know how Witches are supposed to be about making aspects bigger and smaller, and how Hope is about repulsive forces and antigravity? It’s supposed to reduce repulsive forces that enter it to zero while still letting projectiles through, like it blocks explosions and shockwaves but not arrows. I guess doomed me must have planned to use it when the grenades went off. I wonder why it stopped the shrapnel through, it should have gone through? Kanan’s bullets went through fine.

Manuel [Rogue of Blood] [Alpha]: so when do I get the award for most badass last stand because god-damn that was awesome. go me. anyone? oh, yeah, [Hold Your Colour] fuses things together, like, it strengthens their bond. literally. if you look closely you can see how I take the togetherness from the ground under me. averie must have ripped her hand apart trying to escape from that.

Luciel [Knight of Light] [Alpha]: Another incident of Averie using those thrown rapiers with the rope tied off her arm. Notice how they spawn from her sylladex with the rope already tied off around her? I tried replicating it with my own sword, it just spawns for me with the rope free, even when I insert it into the sylladex with it tied on. It must be a custom mod – no idea how she’s getting that done.

-Romi [Seer of Heart] [Alpha]: Where is she even getting the rope from? It doesn’t feel alchemised…

-Luciel [Knight of Light] [Alpha]: The uh, rope is from my room. She must have looted it at HQ.

River [Mage of Life] [Alpha]: Wondering if anyone has ever seen my test subjects in one of these scrylogs? Fairly sure lots of these logs are from timelines where they escaped from containment.

-Manuel [Rogue of Blood] [Alpha]: she kills them in #87812 where they’re travelling with sidney and lawrence. they must have picked them up or recused them in that one. also saw them in #52831 in the background. in both cases they put up a fairly good fight actually, that super-healthy one always dies hard. what even happens when youre already doomed and put into a doomed
timeline anyway.

|-River [Mage of Life] [Alpha]: Scientific consensus is that you get doubled doomed and are supposed to last longer than usual. Data researchers think it’s because the two doomed statuses fight against each other for the rights to act. Didn’t pay it much focus in my research because skeletonWhiskey already got all of the low hanging fruit in that field, and I’m not a Time player anyway so I’m not really suited to messing around with it. No cases of it having any effect long term anyway, they still die, just takes a bit longer.

|-Manuel [Rogue of Blood] [Alpha]: skeletonWhiskey that guy who wrote all the other doomed timeline research that you’re competing with?

|-River [Mage of Life] [Alpha]: Yes. Although I wouldn’t call it competing, it is all in the spirit of science.

Sidney [Heir of Space] [Alpha]: She was really brutal with Terrence at the end there. Could have have anything to do with their history together? I mean she could have just ended it by cutting his throat then and there, rather than doing… that

|-Terrence [Witch of Hope] [Alpha]: I… really don’t want to think about it.

|-Luciel [Knight of Light] [Alpha]: A lot of her behaviour is still a mystery to all of us. She’s been similarly brutal to all of us in doomed timelines. Although she does seem to show a predisposition to you, in a lot of scrylogs I’ve seen she does kill you last and often in… very intense fashions. I’ll talk to you later about it, okay?

Awaiting voice input…

> "Exit"
RIVER, the MAGE of LIFE walks with LUCIEL, the KNIGHT of LIGHT together along a long gravel path. The pebbles in the gravel run from stone grey to rust red. Blood-stained bone-white bandages trail out of LUCIEL’s shirt.

LUCIEL has already noticed RIVER.

RIVER: You’re telling me that the Wu-Tang Sword Style is a real thing, that you know, and that it isn’t just a made-up thing.

LUCIEL: Oh entirely. I am officially paradox space’s only master of the fearsome Wu-Tang Sword Style. I mean, not that I haven’t customised it in my years, the technique was incomplete when it was passed down to me anyway.

RIVER: I didn’t even know you were a fan of rap music.

LUCIEL: I’m not really. It sort of feels like… Dad music to me. If that’s a thing that you understand. Music that reminds you of being a child and listening to old people play their ancient tunes. You’ve heard of people talking about how they cry when they listen to House of the Rising Sun or whatever because it reminded them of their family and their childhood on old earth? Well, I have that except with N.W.A’s “Fuck the Police”.

RIVER: I can understand that. My parents would always listen to that old English punk music. The Clash, The Who, those kinds of people. I guess it holds a special place in my heart like rap music does for you. What music do you consider closer to being your music than the music of others, then?

LUCIEL: Really? You never picked up on the theme behind all of my Fraymotifs? Marina and the Diamonds, River. That music was carved out of raw musical ore to be perfectly shaped to fit the hole in my heart. When I die for good, it’s going to be accompanied by the musical score of Marina, mark my foreshadowing words.

RIVER: You’re invoking heavy forces here. What if we need to make sure you never listen to her again so you never die?

LUCIEL: Now doing that would be courting death, and insuring that I die in an ironic and nonmeaningful way. If I keep listening to her and using her in my Fraymotifs often, then at least I’ll be sure to die with a bang, probably in a big meaningful sacrifice after my story arc is complete.

RIVER: Even saying that is probably leaning towards you never being able to die in a meaningful sacrifice. You should have said something along the lines of ‘I just want to protect you all, and I’ll do it even if it takes my life’ If you were really trying to invoke foreshadowing forces.

LUCIEL: Oh come on, everyone already knows that protecting everyone is already my primary motivation. If you were going to make a character card of me for our trading card game, it would be right there in the flavour text, right below my ultimate attack and right above the 1st edition marker.

RIVER: I guess you’re right. I mean, what, we’re on season twelve of Lucy and Pal’s fun adventures through spacetime now? If you didn’t pick up on your deal by now, you never will.
LUCIEL: What, so I’m the protagonist now? Don’t have such low self-esteem River, I’m sure you’re very relatable to all of the rationality-obsessed sociopaths out there who believe that they can solve all problems through careful application of avoiding cognitive bias and applying Bayes’ theorem.

RIVER: That’s harsh, Luciel. Firstly, you’re clearly the protagonist. Come on, you’ve even got blonde hair and a name that stems from the latin word for light, a desire to protect your friends, and a nice relatable demeanour. Dead ringer for a protagonist if you ask me. Secondly, just because we live in a world made of symbols and magic it doesn’t mean that rationality is all lost. Some of us still hold out hope that the universe still runs on maths and logic.

LUCIEL: Fine, I’m the protagonist. You better at least give me an awesome cybernetic arm soon, to signal the transition into the second act of our three act structure.

RIVER: I’ll start drawing up the plans now, then. After all, I wouldn’t want to not perform my role of weird doctor with a heart of gold now after all the hard work I put into the persona.

…

LUCIEL: You know, I’ve been thinking. About replayers in general, and what we mean metaphysically.

RIVER: Oh?

LUCIEL: Yeah, like, we always think of it being centred around ourselves. Which makes sense, because we’re ourselves, but what if we’re not the central players in our symbolism?

RIVER: What do you mean? Are you saying that there’s other people out there who live more important lives than us, the ones that create and destroy universes for fun and profit?

LUCIEL: All I’m saying is, we fit a pretty good mythological cycle. We’re children born of armageddon, with incredible powers who arise when the world is at an end, to help it usher in a new age. Our existence on a world literally means that it will end soon. But all we ever see is the worlds ending, never the thousands of years of history leading up that point. What if reality doesn’t exist to give us worlds to destroy and create, but it exists to have worlds with thousands of years of civilization, and we’re just the constructors and deconstructions of instances of earths?

RIVER: So what, you’re trying to claim that the true value of existence is generated in the adventures and escapades of people on Earth, having magic adventures and stuff, and that we’re only their apolcypse mythology?

LUCIEL: I am indeed saying exactly that. Our duty to the cosmos is perhaps to be appearing on huge wall murals as a mythological metaphor for the end of days. Every comprehensive mythology has their own idea of what the end of times looks like, because every story has an ending, but the ending is not the most important part of the story.

…

LUCIEL: I have to fight her, you know. It’s the only narrative that will get us out of this. The lone leader, brave hero, facing impossible odds.

RIVER: That’s not the only choice you have. You don’t have to fight her – we can still figure this all out. Narrative causality is nice to talk about and all, but, you’re suggesting that you go out there and… die.
LUCIEL: I’m not suggesting that I die. I’m suggesting that I battle her, get wounded like all hell, eventually turn over a victory at the most dramatic moment, and then you patch me back up and we finish this game.

…

*LUCIEL places her hands apart from each other. Small objects form out of a blue-tinted glasslike substance between her hands. Clothesline pegs, a flip lighter, a circle of chain links, a comb, a sculpture of a bird with a crown.*

RIVER: Can I ask what you’re doing?

LUCIEL: You can.

RIVER: What are you doing?

LUCIEL: Practicing my native aspect. Thinking of items that I’ve never done before keeps me focused, like meditating. It’s hard to create even small objects through the game wall, but it always feels good, you know? Like, all the other aspects aren’t who I am. This is who I am.

RIVER: Did you say your native aspect?

LUCIEL: Yeah, Dreams. Aspect of creativity, structure, imagination. I’m a native Guard of Dreams.

RIVER: Your native aspect isn’t Light?

LUCIEL: No? Did you think that it was?

RIVER: No I just mean… It fits you so well. The blonde hair, the name, the demeanour. Everything about you screams ‘Light’.

LUCIEL: Oh River, of course it does. I engineered it to do so. Luciel isn’t my real name, I’m a natural brunette. I admit you might have a point in the demeanour department, I’ve been assigned Light before, but overall, I wouldn’t say that Light aspect has a total lockdown on being the way that I am.

RIVER: Luciel isn't your real name? What about the story you told me, with your brother. Didn't he call you Luciel?

LUCIEL: No, he called me by my first name. I just changed it when I told you the story so you wouldn't get confused.

RIVER: You're blowing my mind here. You really go that deep into abiding by your aspect?

LUCIEL: Theory of narrative causality requires me to. Power comes at a price, and the price I pay is reinventing myself every session.

RIVER: That must take a toll on you.

LUCIEL: You get better at it. Identity is like… like a big wad of dough. If you keep it static, it crusts over, becomes hard. But if you kneed it every day, reshape it, it gets easier. My dough is so fluid it is like water, flowing into whatever container that I deem required for the task at hand.

RIVER: You aren’t at all upset that you have to do this? Most players refuse to go as far as you out of a pure moral refusal to play by the games rules.
LUCIEL: That doesn’t save lives. I respect their decisions to do so, a hell of a lot, but… to protect people, you need to be powerful. I change my name and dye my hair so that they don’t have to, so to speak.

RIVER: A very appreciable moral standpoint, even if it’s not one I personally follow. Out of curiosity, what aspect would you say you identify with the second most?

LUCIEL: Stars, I’d have to say. Accepting your fate, being the centre of attention. It all suits me. Then after that, Breath. Strength, destruction, freedom.

RIVER: Ha, I knew it.

LUCIEL: Why do you say that?

RIVER starts to sing.

"Stars shining bright above you
Night breezes seem to whisper "I love you"
Birds singing in the sycamore trees
Dream a little dream of me

Say nighty-night and kiss me
Just hold me tight and tell me you'll miss me
While I'm alone and blue as can be
Dream a little dream of me

Stars fading but I linger on dear
Still craving your kiss
I'm longing to linger till dawn dear
Just saying this

Sweet dreams till sunbeams find you
Sweet dreams that leave all worries behind you
But in your dreams whatever they be
Dream a little dream of me"
Check out my new fic, Domestic Kernel hacking. I'll be updating both Experiments on Doomed Timelines and Domestic Kernel Hacking, so don't worry, I won't be abandoning this.

http://archiveofourown.org/works/13674366

If you want, join the replay value AU discord here! https://discord.gg/2w2E2Z4

Formats that I’ve seen the SBURB game come on:

**Optical disk:**

Probably the most common format, Sburb is most commonly distributed on earth through CD-ROM, although in later years, often after around 2010, you can find it on DVD, and in some cases, Blu-ray. Latest records suggest that for humans, median year for sburb entry is 2005, with over 50% being between 2004 and 2012. Given that (almost always) sburb comes in a physical format that is most common in the time, and the prevalence of optical disks at the times, this is hardly surprising.

It has also been noted that despite the fact that DVD and Blu-ray Sburbs are on a media that is physically a DVD or Blu-ray disk, they will play fine in CD drives. As long as the device the drive is connected to is a general-purpose computer with a keyboard attached, you’ll get something out of it.

It tends to come in a standard square case with a printed sheet with the Spirograph logo on it, and no other distinguishing features. I’ve heard of people getting instruction manuals, but what would even be on them? More concerning is the fact that there are rumours that you can find disks with previews on the back, which show features not even actually in the game. I haven’t seen any actual evidence of this myself however.

**USB Flash Memory:**

In some worlds flash memory becomes extremely predominant as a means of data storage and transportation, usually because of the failure of the internet to become widespread for some reason or another. The SBURB Flash Drive tends to be a small black-coloured USB Stick, with the green Spirograph print on the top side, 512MB large, and contain two executables, the client and server install exe’s. Likewise, with the optical disk formats, you need not actually have a computer that is capable of reading the drive. As long as you have something that is vaguely resembling a USB port, you can slam it in there. One report even says that someone once just mashed their USB stick into the ethernet port, and it ended up working. But this claim is unsubstantiated.

No other documents with a Flash Memory Stick have been recovered.

**Digital distribution:**
Near common consensus is that for sburb to be found on the internet, it requires that the session be post-scratch, but this is not always strictly true. In situations where the internet becomes so ubiquitous as to remove physical media entirely from circulation, SBURB can come in digital download.

**Floppy Disk**

The elusive sburb floppy disk is sort of a collector’s item, or at least pictures of it are a collectors item. Given how rare floppy disk technology is overall (something like 80% of earths never even invent floppy disks, moving straight from magnetic tape to optical disks), and given how rare SBURB entries are during the years where floppy disks are used, they’re quite the rarity. They tend to be black coloured, featuring a yellow or red coloured spirograph, with the pin fused in the read-only notch. Something of note is that they seem to be impervious to magnetic destruction, usually rubbing a magnet over a floppy disk will erase the contents and render the drive unreadable, but many separate documents from people experimenting with the SBURB floppy seem to suggest that it can survive even strong earth magnets being rubbed over it. An interesting feature to be sure, usually sburb media is not any more indestructible than anything else.

**Cassette Tape**

Those who are fans of retro computing will surely know of cassette tape data storage, very old computers in the age of BASIC and whatnot used to use cassette tapes to store data and games. I myself have actually had to use SBURB on tape for entry on a commodore II personal computer. Yes, the server interface on the commodore II is as bad as you would expect. On the bright side, it actually lets you automate server tasks using a BASIC-like language natively in the server program.

```
10 SPAWN CRUXITE LATHE
20 GOTO 10
```

**Punch cards**

Unconfirmed reports from sburb.org user coquettishLunar show a set of hundreds of punch cards, organized in black cardboard boxes with the SBURB spirograph printed on them. She supposedly fed them into a mainframe computer at a local university to play her server copy, eventually resulting in the university computer lab being the area taken to the medium when it was time for entry. No word on what her co-players had to deal with, through given technology levels at the time, if this is a true story, they too would have had to deal with punch cards or something alike that.

**Nintendo 64 Cart**

Yes, apparently SBURB has had a release on the Nintendo 64. Console editions of SBURB are known to be quite rare, usually only appearing on very late video gaming consoles (Playstation 3, Xbox 360, Sega Spectre) which take optical disks, but SBURB being released on the 64 has been documented at least 5 times that I know of. Using the controller for the server application is a huge hassle however, what the fuck kind of universal constant is responsible for ensuring that Nintendo always designs a controller for beings that have 3 hands.

**Book containing 560,000 lines of C code**

Yes, this is confirmed. The entire scan of the book is actually available on prototype towers. Apparently hayateKillings spent 3 months manually entering the code and getting it to compile. Interestingly enough, the code itself is not compliable by any C compiler known to the community
outside of the specific university that hayateKillings ran it on. The code is quite arcane, some sections are devoted to writing huge libraries that do nothing but add random numbers together, others reference standard library calls that don’t exist, one part is even ASCII art in the comments of the Sydney harbour bridge. hayateKillings reported that it didn’t compile if the ASCII art was not properly entered.

**Punched paper tapes for the Colossus digital computer**

thermostaticHegemony claims to have had to break into allied computing bases during world war 2, to execute a giant roll of punched paper tape for use on the Colossus codebreaking computer. If true, it marks one of the earliest entries to have ever happened.

Please [drop by the archive and comment](#) to let the author know if you enjoyed their work!