

Don't Make Me Think



ZERO HP LOVECRAFT

NOV 05, 2022

♡ 86




































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


















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






















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



I. Dagger





A man  —a boy —grows up in the exquisitely quantified    and gam   world , in the city  of Cupertino, on the edge   of the Santa Clara Valley, in the shadow  of the Santa Cruz Mountains . When he is eleven parents —an Ashkenazi  technical   product    manager    a Chinese  game  designer    named   “Sing” Song —take him get his Neuralink   at the hospital  by the Super Kyo-Po  plaza.

A robot  performs   the procedure, which requires no  general anaesthesia , in one hour . While they wait  , his parents buy   their groceries for the week , and when it's over , they take him to get ramen  for lunch. He orders    two ajitsuke   eggs  and extra chashu   pork (because he's a growing boy ) and his parents  eat   compressed enriched mealworm bricks  . For them, Neuralink   degustation    technology   makes the worm loaf   phenomenologically     indistinguishable from  a hot  bowl of Hakata ramen .

For the next three  nights , as expected, the boy  sees   dazzling  incomprehensible dreams  , all of which he forgets   , and on the fourth day , he wakes   without  waking   into a vaporwave   expanse of Pantone rose quartz   and serenity  . A voice   in his  says   “good morning  .

,” and it sounds   like  his mother but with uninflected English  . “You can call   me Amy  , unless you prefer a different name  . We'll be getting to know   each other better in the coming weeks , but for now   I need to make sure everything is working properly. If you can hear   me, please think   about a rhinoceros .

“...Good , and now a castle .

“...Good , and now your favorite  TV show  .

Amy 🧠👩 teaches 🧑➡️ him to make search queries 🔍 ? with his mind 🧠👤 and to install ⚙️➡️ applications 📱💾, and tells 📖🔊➡️ him she will ➡️ collect biometrics 🧬📊 to ensure he remains in good 👍 health at all times 🕒. She will ➡️ read 🔍📖➡️ his thoughts 🤔⬇️, but she will ➡️ never 🙅 share them with anyone, and will ➡️ always respect 🙏👑➡️ his privacy 🤫🔄. The boy 🧑 does 🚫✅ tell 📖🔊➡️ her, though he guesses 🤔🙋➡️ she will ➡️ know 🤯➡️, that he receives 🙌➡️ this as a threat 🔪🔊⬇️. Hereafter, his life will ➡️ be measured and optimized 📈➡️ and nudged 👉➡️, to help him live up to his full 100 potential.

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to instantly die.

As he reads 🔍📖➡️ his books 📚 in school 🏫, Amy 🧠👩 highlights ➡️📌➡️ the words 🔊👉 one 1 at a time 🕒 to help him keep the pace 🏃🕒 while studying 🏫🔄. She tells 📖🔊➡️ him how many words 🔊👉 he has read 🔍📖➡️, how many minutes 🕒 he has spent reading 🔍📖🔄, and ranks him against local, regional, and national averages. She shows 🙌👁️➡️ him how to find 🔍🎯➡️ position 📍🌐 on a leaderboard 🏆📊 that charts 📊➡️ the reading 🔍📖🔄 ability of everyone in his age cohort 📊🧑.

Reading 🔍📖🔄, writing 📖👉🔄, and arithmetic $+$ $-$ \div \times are all fully automated 🧠➡️ through Neuralink 🧠🔗. A program 🧩💾 in the boy's 🧑 personal 🧑🔄 cloud ☁️ decodes images 🖼️ retrieved from ➡️ the lateral geniculate nucleus of his brain 🧠 and parses them into words 🔊👉 using C algorithms 🧩⚙️ (Pravettoni et al., 2034, *Mitigating Systemic ⚙️🕸️🔄 Cognitive Inequalities through Automation 🧠⬇️ of Mental 🧠🔄 Labor*.) A similar ⚖️🕒🔄 mechanism ⚙️ is used to automatically 🧠🔄 detect 🧑🔍 mathematical 🧩🔢 symbols and perform 🧠➡️ the relevant computations 🖥️.

Students 👤 hear 🗣️ ➡️ the words 🗣️ 🗣️ they are reading 🔍 📖 ➡️, or the answers ! ⬇️ to math 🧮 1 2 3 4 questions, in their own inner “voice 🗣️ 🗣️” – the Neuralink 🧠 🔗 driver 🚗 👤 is able to manifest these values 💰 in the mind 🧠 of the student 👤 using a method called 🗣️ 🗣️ ➡️ Concept Injection 💡 📌 ➡️. The purpose of education 🏫 ⬇️ is not 🚫 to train 🚂 ➡️ students to read 🔍 📖 ➡️ or math 🧮 1 2 3 4; it's to train 🚂 ➡️ them to use mental 🧠 🔗 automation 🤖 ⬇️ effectively. Tool-assisted 🔧 reading 🔍 📖 🔗 is performed 🗣️ ➡️ through the cultivation 🌱 of passivity and “flow 🌊”. The application 📁 gives 📁 ➡️, and reader receives 🙌 ➡️.

In P.E. class, they use a parkour program 🧮 📁 and play follow the leader 👑 free-running 📁 🏃 🔗 through an obstacle course by playing 📁 🔗 back neuromotor 🧠 🚗 recordings 🗣️ 📁 ⬇️ from 📁 top 🏆 athletes 🏃. Although they are children, they can tap 🍺 📁 ➡️ into the aggregated + 📁 🔗 muscle 🦵 memory 🧠 📁 of a thousand lifetimes. The boy 👤 feels like ❤️ a passenger 🚗 in his own body 🦵 🦵, but it's thrilling 🎢 🔗 to feel himself leap 📁 from 📁 a height 📁, roll 📁 ➡️ and dash 📁 ➡️ across concrete pylons and flip 📁 ➡️ off of railings and wall ledges. Sometimes he wonders 🤔 ? ➡️ if it's really happening or if it's just a hallucination 🤩 🌟, but his muscles 🦵 feel sore 🤕 afterwards. Whether it's real may be entirely the wrong ❌ question ? ⬇️.

When he uses the toilet 🚽, Amy 🤖 👤 records 🗣️ 📁 ➡️ all his muscle 🦵 movements, and shows 📁 📁 ➡️ him metrics 📁 📁 that track how much his 🍌 🍌 clenches when he shits 🗑️ ➡️. She explains how these metrics 📁 📁 can be used to detect 🕵️ ➡️ leading 👑 ➡️ indicators 📁 📁 of unhealthy bowel 🍌 🔗 function 📁 ⬇️, and recommends (both to him and his parents 👤) that he should switch 📁 ➡️ to a higher fiber 📁 🥦 nutrient brick 🧱. (Heaton, Radava 2024, *Dark Matter 🧪: Extrapolating Behavior 🐒 🗣️ ⬇️ in the Enteric Nervous System 🧠 🕸️ Using Neuralink 🧠 🔗*)

Sometimes whole weeks 📅 go by without a single 1 act 🗣️ ⬇️ of agency on part of the boy 👤. Amy 🤖 👤 says 🗣️ ➡️ wake up ☕ ➡️ and he wakes up ☕ ➡️. She says 🗣️ ➡️ get dressed 📁 ➡️ and he gets dressed 📁 ➡️. She says 🗣️ ➡️ go here!

↑, do this, go there ↗ ↑, study 🧑🏫🏠➡; eat 🍽️➡; and he does ✅➡, he does ✅➡, he does ✅➡. It feels less like ❤️ obedience 🧑🏫 and more like ❤️ convenience 🏠➡.

When he is thirteen, in accordance with economic 📈📈 forecasts ☀️🌧️, he enrolls in a vocational track 🏠 to learn 🧑🏫📖➡ about encephalic 🧑🏫🔄 softw 🖨️📁 engineering 🔧⚙️➡. In his sleep 🧑🏫➡, Amy 🧑🏫🧑🏫 dreams 🧑🏫➡ schematics ⚙️📐 and flowcharts 📊📈 and diagrams into his mind 🧠🧑🏫. At the same time 🕒, she enrolls him in YouSocial, a broker 📈📶 for B-certification 📝. B-certified individuals 📄📝🧑🏫 are people who meet the highest 📈📈 standards of verified ✅📝➡ social and environmental performance 🧑🏫➡, work 🧑🏫🧑🏫➡ together to redefine 🔄📌📖 success and build 🧑🏫➡ a more inclusive 🧑🏫🚻 and sustainable ♻️ economy, creating new ✨ incentives 🧑🏫🍷 through personal 🧑🏫 transparency and accountability 📄. (What is B-Certification?, YouSocial.com/FAQs, 2031.) On average, it takes five 📅 year for young adults to earn a B-certification 📄📝; employers and colleges 🎓🏠 use the cert 📝 as an essential 📄➡ criteria for evaluating applicants.

On the weekends 📅🔙, his father 🧑🏫 takes him geocaching 🌐💰🔄 with an app 📱📁 called Recollect, in which the proprietor of a hidden 🧑🏫➡ cache uploads 🧑🏫➡ a memory 🧠📄 of the act 🧑🏫➡ of hiding 🧑🏫➡ it, but does not 🚫✅ share the coordinates 📍📌. Together, the boy 🧑🏫 and his dad 🧑🏫 find 🔍🎯➡ a memory 🧠📄 of a capsule 🧊 in a flower pot 🌸🪴 next to a statue 🗿 of Nikola Tesla ⚡ and they join the others who have found 🔍🎯➡ it there ↗ 📌 by uploading 🔄 their own memories 🧠📄 to the chain 🔗 of recollections.

Inside ➡🔄 the capsule 🧊 is a small 🧑🏫 Tesla coil ⚡🌀, and when he beholds 🧑🏫➡ it, a popup 📄 in his mind's eye 🧠🧑🏫 asks ? ➡ if he would like ❤️ to relive the collective's discovery 🔄📍🔍. He assents 🧑🏫➡. A kaleidoscopic 📺 wave 🌊 of images 📺 floods 🌊➡ his mind 🧠🧑🏫, layers 🍰 of phantom 🧑🏫🧑🏫 approaches to the capsule 🧊 from 🔄 every angle 📌📐; panoramic sight, polyphonic 🌈🔊 echoes 🗣️📶 of satisfaction 🧑🏫➡.

When he is fifteen, some of the parental controls fall away, and Amy introduces him to Neuralink pornography, which is metered by homework completed. Memory-based pornography is regulated by the LOTUS EATER Act: using direct brain stimulation to induce orgasm is classified as wireheading, and this functionality can only be deployed by software certified by behavioral experts to have value in promoting or fostering prosocial behaviors in the user.

Recorded memories that contain sexual stimulation of erogenous parts fall under Schedule II, which defines any memory or application that induces euphoria conduct to single-mindedness as a potential vector of abuse. (Limiting Onanistic Tendencies Under Simulation, Exceptions Afforded To Education & Remediation, 13 U.S.C. §§ 56-341, 2028.)

Amy lets him browse the porn networks for up to an hour each day, provided he completes all of his homework. Neuralink pornography allows the user to have first-person sexual experiences across a range of genders and sexual presentations, and has been shown to significantly reduce prejudice against marginalized sexual identities (West et. al, 2034, *Can Intra-Subjective Non-Binary Sexual Experience Induce Empathy?*).

As he grows older and despite the prodding of the voice in his head, he never concerns himself with the thoughts or the dealings with women. In high school, Amy tries to broker dates for him but he does not care for dates with boys, and he finds the girl Amy suggests to be ugly or otherwise deficient. (1 in 4 boys resistant to Neuralink-induced "cued bisexuality" vs. 150 girls. [French, 2029, *The Conservative Case for State-Enforced Homosexuality.*])

Yet when he is seventeen, all on his own, he meets a hapashkenazi 🇨🇳🇮🇱 girl named 📁➡️ May with a face 🧑 from 📁➡️ Chongqing 重庆市 and tits 🍑 from Samandar. He is overcome with lust 😍🍆 for her, but she rejects his advance (The exact location 📍 of Samandar is unknown 🚫🗺️; medieval 🏰 Ar 🕌📁 sources 📖 place 📌 the city 🏙️ midway between 🍞 Derbent and A near the shore 🌊 of the Caspian Sea 🌊 [Brook, 2018, *The Jews* 🇮🇱 of Khazaria.])

In anger 😡, he picks a fight ✂️📁➡️ with another boy 🧑 that she favors 😍➡️. He balls up his fist 🦊 and it flies ✂️➡️ at his rival's head 🧑, as if of its own accord but before 📁➡️ the punch 🦊📁➡️ can connect ⚡🔗📁➡️, Amy 🧑📁➡️ fills his mind 🧠 with calming 😊📁➡️ emotions 😂😭 and inhibits 🛑💥📁➡️ the muscles 💪 in his shoulder and tricep. He relaxes 🛀🕯️📁➡️ in spite of his will. Even so, the other boy's 🧑 eyes 👁️ become glassy, lost in some neuromanipulated 🧠🖐️🔧📁➡️ soothing unto himself. (An exercise 🏃🚴📁➡️ in theory 🧐🧠 of mind 🧠👤: that other boy 🧑 must have his own Amy 🧑📁➡️, with her own voice 🗣️, and he own name 📁➡️. What does ✅📁➡️ she tell 📖📁➡️ him?) The peace 🕊️ of the moment 🕒 yields ⚠️📁➡️ rapidly 📁➡️ to terror 😱, because 📁➡️ the boy 🧑 realizes his body 💪👉 may disobey him.

Instantly, Amy 🧑📁➡️ files 📁➡️ an incident 🚫⚠️ report 📁➡️ with the school 🏫 board and the local police 🚔, indicating 📁➡️ the boy 🧑 was the antagonist in an attempted assault 🖐️🚫📁➡️ in which he experienced hot-blooded 🔥🩸📁➡️ violent ✂️🩸📁➡️ intentions. The ticket 📄 is routed 📁➡️ to the school 🏫 guidance counselor's office, where a bot 🧑📁➡️ processes the report 📁➡️ and prescribes a course of medium-intensity guilt 😞 to be invoked whenever the boy 🧑 recalls 📁➡️📞📁➡️ the incident in question ? . The prescription 🏠🗣️💊 is appended to the ticket 📄, which is marked 📁➡️ as 'pending review,' whereupon the automated 🧑📁➡️ psychiatric 🧠🧑 consultant for the district approves it and pushes a notification 📢 to Amy 🧑📁➡️, the boy's 🧑 parents 👤, and the school student resources office 🏫. The round trip time 🕒 from 📁➡️ filing 📁➡️ the ticket 📄 to its approval 📁➡️ is just over 📁➡️ six seconds ⌚, with 2/3rds of the time

🕒 spent waiting📱🔄 on the approval, 18% above the mean but still a 3.2% improvement📈 YOY. The boy's👦 score on YouSocial is decremented📉➡️ ten points, with a chance🏠⬇️ to mitigate the penalty if he completes¹⁰⁰➡️ probationary period with no recidivism.

As soon as the approval comes through, Amy🤖👧 deploys🖥️☁️➡️ the guilt through the boy's👦 Neuralink🧠🔗, and although he feels a heaviness in his chest, he is unable🙅 to place its origin. He does not🚫✅ feel any remorse about trying to punch👊➡️ the other boy👦, and the experience of guilt feels like❤️ it comes from👈 somewhere outside👈➡️ him, as in fact, it does✅➡️. He dislikes🚫❤️ the sensation👁️👂👅, but on some level🧩🍰 he knows🤔➡️ the provenance💡🌱 of the feeling, and that it's part of the same intervention that stopped🛑➡️ him from👈 landing🛩️🔄 his punch👊⬇️ in the first1⬇️ place. He hates Amy🤖👧, and his anger😡 wells up under🔄 the artificial glow👁️ and subsumes it.

~

One night🌙 he downloads📶👐➡️ a memory🧠🎞️ from👈 Recollect of a curving road🛣️ where no street signs🚧🚦 are visible. In the memory🧠🎞️, parks his car🚗 on the highway🛣️🛤️ shoulder and steps👣➡️ out into the humid air💨☁️ of a marsh🌫️🌿 in the San Francisco🏙️💩 Bay. He walks🚶➡️ into the wetlands🌫️🌴 with a flashlight🔦, uncomfortably far, and lifts🙋➡️ a rock🪨 with a false❌ bottom🍑. Without looking🚫👁️🔄, he places an object inside➡️👈, so that the nature🌲🌱 of his treasure💎💍 cannot🙅 be discerned by aspiring recollectors. But although the object cannot be seen🙅👁️, it's captured👁️💎 from👈 the emotion😂😭 of the rememberer🧠🎞️👤 that he has hidden➡️ more than just an artifact🏺; he has also buried🪦➡️ an obligation, and this is a ritual🙏👉; it's not🚫 the first1⬇️ time🕒 and it won't➡️🚫 be the last.

The boy👦 goes out to the wetlands🌫️🌴 to search🔍➡️, following the men🧠🎞️, but he does not🚫✅ find🔍🎯➡️ the treasure💎💍. Even late at night

he can go anywhere he wants with his car🚗, because👉 CrimeStop👮🚫 is installed🔧👉 on every Neuralink🧠🔗 device🔧🔧, and it cannot🙅 be removed, so children are never🙅 unsupervised. Neuralink🧠🔗 with Crimestop👮🚫 both protects🛡️👉 him from👈 others, and protects🛡️👉 young people from👈 the follies of youth.

The next day📅 after school🏫, he searches🔍👉 again, and still he finds🔍 nothing🚫👈. Weeks📅 elapse. He does not🚫✅ relent in his search🔍👈, a no one uploads👏🙅👉 any new🌟 memories🧠📁 of finding🔍🎯🔄 the Recollect cache in the rock🪨, so he knows🤔👉 it's still waiting🕒🔄 there him. He replays🔄👉 the original memory🧠📁 again and again, until he he is looking🤔🔄 for an object he has hidden🙅👉 from👈 himself.

Every day📅 at school🏫, he sees May together with the other boy👦, whose name👤👈 he does not🚫✅ care to learn🤔📖👉. Each sight👁️👈 of her is a slight; each thought🤔👈 of her👦 with him👦 is a wound🤔💧👈. And when he thinks🤔👉 of her, he also thinks🤔👉 of the fight🗡️👈 that was denied🚫 to him, of the way his arm💪 went slack; of the way his shoulder seized up. And when he remembers🧠📁👉 these things, Amy👧🤖 fills him with guilt🙄, a guilt spurs his anger🤔, and his anger🤔 lowers📉👉 his YouSocial score. The boy👦 has his mother's👤 temper🤔📈🔄, and the world🌍 is full of invisible walls. He believes (and he knows🤔👉 it is a superstitious👤👻🔄 belief) that he finds🔍🎯👉 the treasure💎🔗 in recollect, he will👉 also discover🔍👁️👉 way to win🏆👉 May's affection🤔.

Amy👧🤖 tells📖👁️👉 him feelings of anomie🤔, alienation👉, and even despair🙄 are normal, common symptoms of adolescence; the way to become his best self is to have personal👤 goals📊👈 that connect⚡🔗👉 him to his community. He can both improve📈👈 himself and repair🔧👈 his trajectory towards B-certification📄👉. A longitudinal study👤🏫👈 by West and Curwen found🔍🎯👉 that teenagers who set their own charitable👤🔄 goals📊👈 are three times more likely to build👤👉 enduring altruistic👤👉 habits vs. those who have them randomly👤🔄 assigned📁👉 (West, Curwen, 2038, Setting

Them Up For Success 🏆: A Neurological 🧠 📊 🔄 Approach to Cultivating Conscientiousness in Developing Adults.) She tells 📖 🗣️ ➡️ him he should choose his own goal 📋 ⬇️, and gives 📁 ➡️ him a list

1	2
3	4

 📝 of possibilities.

He chooses to do volunteer work for an organization called 🗣️ 📁 ➡️ Respawn 🐣 that rehabilitates recovering smartdrug 📁 💊 addicts 🎮 👤. Amy 🤖 👤 has the registration 📁 ⬇️ process and the scheduling 🗓️ 🔄. On the appointed 17, he goes to the Respawn clinic 🔄 🐣 👤, where they show 📖 👁️ ➡️ him a training 🚂 🔄 and orientation video 📺 –

The human 👤 👤 mind 🧠 🤖 is a machine 🔧 ⚙️ that falls 🍂 ➡️ into predictable failure ❌ ⬇️ modes when exposed 📺 to the wrong combination of stimuli ⚡ ⬇️. For this reason, cases of smartdrug 📁 💊 addiction 🎮 🌀 are best viewed, not 🚫 as questions ? of crime and punishment, but as matters of treatment and prevention (Zhang 张, 2033, *Risks and Mitigations of Neuralink Abuse*.) Respawn's 🔄 🐣 program gives 📁 ➡️ smartdrug 📁 💊 victims a chance 🏠 ⬇️ to heal by “reformatting” pathological 🙌 🤖 vectors of personal 👤 identity ID that cause the afflicted to succumb. Using Neuralink 🧠 🔗, it is possible ⬆️ to delete 🗑️ ➡️ and overwrite 🔄 📝 ➡️ the patient's memories 🧠 📺 in a guided, consensual process that nullifies 🌀 ➡️ the root cause of harmful impulses. Broadly speaking 🗣️ 🔄, addiction 🎮 🌀 replaces 📍 ➡️ one of two things: human 👤 👤 connection ⚡ 🔗 ⬇️ or change 🐛 🦋 ➡️. The modal smartdrug 📁 💊 user is derealized 🦄 ➡️ by chronic exposure to in-brain 🧠 superstimuli 🤖 💉 ⚡ ⬇️, and benefits from 🔄 the physical presence of other people during rehabilitation, who aid the process by affirming 🙌 🔄 the new ✨ identity ID vectors and helping to integrate 🦋 ➡️ them into the patient's self-conception 👤 💡 🧠 ⬇️. (Ibid.)

The process of reforming identity ID is gradual, because 🔄 memories 🧠 are all intertwined 🔄 ➡️ with each other, and an unexpected 😲 🔄 stimulus ⚡ ⬇️ can evoke a harmful shadow 👤 from 🔄 the past. Face-to-face 👤 👤 conversation 🗣️ 🗣️ ⬇️ is a way of testing for problematic associations 🌐 🔄 while fortifying 🏰 🔄 the patient's new ✨, healthy identity ID.

–and he is introduced to a recovering addict 🎮👤 named 🏠➡️ John, a man in his forties with graying hair. They sit 🪑➡️ together at a table in a courtyard under the shade 🌳👤. John is a marketing strategist ✂️📊👤 for a dreaming 🧠📺🔄 media production 🏭⚙️⬇️ agency, and he has two competing stories in his mind 🧠👤: in the first 1⬇️, he is overcoming a crippling 3️⃣🔄 addiction 🎮👤 to smartdrugs 📁💊 with the help of the Respawn clinic 🔄👤👤, and in the second, he is receiving 🙌🔄 physical therapy 💪👤 for a sports 🏈🏀 injury 🤕⬇️ he sustained in an amateur baseball 🏹 league. John seems to be aware 👁️➡️ of both stories simultaneously 🕒🕒🔄, but he is unaware 🚫🤔👁️➡️ that the two are competing.

The Respawn 🔄👤 app 📱📁, mediated 🖼️🎧➡️ through Amy 🤖👤, tells 📖🎧 the boy 🧒 what to say 🎧➡️. “How long have you been playing baseball 🏹?”

“Well, to be honest 🍷🎧 I remember 🧠📺➡️ a time 🕒 before 🏠➡️ these things were illegal 🚫👤. Back then it was kind of the same thing as a video game 🎮 or maybe just a new ✨ kind of game 🎮. You know 🤔➡️ how in a game 🎮 when you kill 🧛➡️ a boss 🧑🏠 or beat a level 🎮🍰, there 📶📌 are flashy 📸✨🔄 explosions 💣💥⬇️ and fanfares 🎺⬇️ and all that? Well, this was kind of the same thing. I loved 🤔➡️ it, I would get up at six AM 🌅 most days 📅 and the first 1⬇️ thing I would do would be to head 🧑➡️ out to the batting 🏹🔄 cage and practice my swing 📶. It was great exercise 🏃🚴.”

Sometimes, as John is talking 🗣️🔄, he suddenly goes quiet 🤔🎧 and his eyes roll 🤔➡️ back in his head 🧑. Amy 🤖👤 tells 📖🎧 the boy 🧒 this is because 🔄 Respawn's 🔄👤 software 📊📁 is updating something in his mind 🧠👤. Next she has him say 🎧➡️ “Do you have a favorite 🏆 memory 🧠📺 of playing the game 🎮?”

“Oh yeah, of course. Best 🏆 game 🎮 I ever played, it was like ❤️ something out of a movie 📺📽️. Bottom ⬇️🏠 of the ninth, bases loaded, close game 🎮 and team only needed one run 🏃⬇️ to win, and I was up at bat. You'd download 🙌➡️ this app 📱📁 and there 📶📌 would be all kinds of effects—visual effects

audio🔊 effects, sometimes there🔊📌 would be tastes👅💡 and smells👃👃 and all kinds of things. It would feel like❤️ the softest, most pillowy cloth gently brushing👉🔄 your skin, or like❤️ a pretty girl was caressing👉🔄 you all kinds of things—”

John has a little👉 spasm👉🔄, and then continues.

“And you know👉🔄 I probably could have just tried to walk👤🔄 or bunt b this was just some city🏙️ game🎮, it’s not even minor league, so people are tired and the pitcher just throws🏈🔄 me this fat meatball🍖🏈, and it was❤️ my whole world🌍 just changed🐛🦋🔄 and exploded💣💣🔄 and I was in this other👉📌 place📌📌, there🔊📌 were like❤️, impossible👤-to-describe beings there🔊📌, all kinds of things, trying to talk🗣️🔄 to me. Unreal.🦄”

Amy👤👤 tells📖🔊🔄 him to say, “Looking👀🔄 back🔙, do you think👀🔄 that was a point📌🔊 where your relationship👩👦 to the game🎮 became unhealthy?”

John says🔊🔄 “At some point📌🔊, people started🏁🔄 figuring out how to trigger💣🔊 emotions😂😭, how to invoke cherished memories❤️🧠🎞️. Someone I knew compared it to cooking👨🍳🔄 or mixology🍸; you could put these different ingredients together and build👷🔄 really complex sensations👁️👂👅 and emotions😂😭. I guess👀👤🔄 it’s no🚫 surprise👀 that I ended🔚🔄 up going too hard. Sometimes I would be out there🔊📌 playing pickup games🎮 like❤️ five nights🌑 a week📅.

“And I guess👀👤🔄 I just need to learn👤📖🔄 to give📺🔄 it a rest👤🔙 sometimes. One of my favorites🏆 was an app📱📁 that made every single thing you did feel like❤️ the accomplishment🏆🔙 of a lifetime, like❤️ the culmination of decades of struggle and striving. You could flip🔄🔄 it on at every step👣 felt like❤️ a revelation✚💡. If you opened a door🚪 to go into another room, you would think👀🔄 ‘I can’t👤 believe I opened that door🚪 deftly, and with such mastery🏆👑🔙 and subtlety.’ Then you’d walk👤🔄

through the door 🚪 and feel incredible. ‘Have you ever seen 👁️ ➡️ anyone v
 👤 ➡️ with such grace 🕊️ ✚️, such poise, such singularity 1 🖥️ 🍷 of purpose?
 intent is like ❤️ a samurai blade 🗡️, forged 🔪 🔥 ➡️ by a master 🏆 👑 👤.’

Amy 🤖 👤 tells 📖 🗣️ ➡️ the boy 👤 to ask ? ➡️ “If you recognized the problem
 why!❗ weren’t you able to stop 🚫 🛑 ➡️ it?”

“It wasn’t just the lack of rest 🛌. Me, I’m a driven 🚗 ⬇️ ➡️ person 👤. I want to
 win 🏆 ➡️. And what this whole injury thing is teaching 🧑🏫 ➡️ me is that it’s
 probably better to fight ✂️ ➡️ another day 17 📅 than to win 🏆 ➡️ every single 1
 game 🎮. You could go on in this vein for days 17 📅, but eventually you’d get u
 to it and the app 📱 🗄️ would stop 🛑 ➡️ working. So people started 🏁 ➡️ buil
 👷 ➡️ more complex apps 📱 🗄️ that would cycle 🔄 ➡️ between 🍷 longing 🥰
 and satisfaction 😊, some of them would be real carousels 🎠 of emotion 😊
 And people also started 🏁 ➡️ using these kinds of enhancements in real vic
 games 🎮 too, they called 🗣️ ➡️ it ‘juicing 🍊 🥤 ➡️’ or ‘seasoning 🧂 ➡️’, the
 blast you with ‘having fun’ emotions 😂 😭 or ‘accomplishment 🏆 ⬇️’ at critic
 ➡️ times 🕒 in the game 🎮, so you can imagine 🤔 🐸 ➡️ playing a shooting 🗡️
 game 🎮 and getting juiced 🍊 🥤 ➡️ emotions 😂 😭 every time 🕒 you got a ki
 ⬇️. What was even more fun is they started 🏁 ➡️ making it really unpleasa
 die 💀 ➡️, giving 📺 ➡️ people jolts of fear 😨 or even pain 😣, and that honestl
 🗣️ ➡️ just made getting a kill 💀 ➡️ feel even sweeter 🍒, to know 🧑🏫 ➡️ that th
 guy you just zapped ⚡ 🗡️ ➡️ was doubled 2 ➡️ over ➡️ in pain 😣, having a re
 bad 🖐️ time 🕒.”

Amy 🤖 👤 tells 📖 🗣️ ➡️ the boy 👤 to say 🗣️ ➡️ “Tell 📖 🗣️ ➡️ me about your inju
 🤔 ⬇️. What happened?”

“I had a friend from ⬅️ back when who could hook me up. I don’t 🚫 ✅ know
 ➡️ where he got them. Don’t 🚫 ✅ ask ? ➡️, don’t 🚫 ✅ tell 📖 🗣️ ➡️, you know
 ➡️? But I was enterprising 👑 💰 ➡️. When you have something scarce, a lot
 doors 🚪 can open for you; jobs, clients, connections ⚡ 🔗 ⬇️, all kinds of th
 I ended 🏁 ➡️ up giving 📺 ➡️ away more than I used. And it’s funny 😂 ➡️, I di

that for a long time🕒, and I never got caught🕸️➡️, but if you think🤔➡️ ab
it, they have a snitch living right inside➡️↩️ your head🤔. So if you break💔
the rules, someone has to know🤔➡️. You shouldn't get away with anything.
But people buy🛒➡️ and sell💰🤝➡️ smartdrugs💾💊 all the time🕒, so wha
you figure?

“The way I see it there's two possibilities: either that AI🤖🧠 in your head🤔
really isn't that smart🤓📖➡️, or else they let it happen and someone is
profiting💰📈➡️ off all this through backchannels. Probably both. But
something I did tripped an alarm🚨⬇️, and as I was trying to steal👤🖋️🔪➡️
second2 base, I tried to reverse↩️➡️ and double2➡️ back↩️, and tore💔🦵
my ACL🦵. Now I'm here➡️📌.”

~

The next Sunday morning🌅, the boy👦 wakes up☕➡️ early and goes again
the marsh🌫️🌿 to search🔍️➡️ for his treasure💎💍 from↩️ Recollect. Just l
❤️ in his memory🧠🎞️, the air🌬️🌫️ smells👃➡️ of eucalyptus🌿🌳 and bay
laurel🌿🌳. No one is around, and everything glows🌟➡️ golden with
California sunshine🌞🕯️. He has turned↩️ over➡️ a thousand rocks🪨 in th
wetlands, he knows🤔➡️ because➡️ Amy🤖👧 has counted $\begin{smallmatrix} 12 \\ 34 \end{smallmatrix}$ ➡️. And under
the thousand-and-first rock🪨, he finds🔍️🎯➡️ the recollected item exactl
it is in his memory🧠🎞️. He lifts🏹➡️ up the rock🪨 with its false❌ bottom
and he removes a dagger🔪 with an inlay in bas-relief. It feels like❤
lightning⚡ courses through him. In a part of his mind🧠👤 that was
beneath↩️ his awareness🤔👁️⬇️, he has always known🤔➡️ what it would

Holding👏➡️ the dagger🔪 in hand👏, he calls📞➡️ on Amy🤖👧 to nav🧭➡️
him home, but she does not🚫✅ respond🗨️➡️. He tries again, and she doe
not🚫✅ respond🚫🗨️➡️. Amy🤖👧 is even with him when he loses network
🕸️ connectivity⚡🔗↕️➡️; so he knows🤔➡️ this is something other than a
network⚡🕸️ outage🚫. He wonders🤔? ➡️ if she can even see👁️↕️ him. T

boy 🧒 walks 🚶 back to the road 🛣️, and as a test, he uses the knife 🔪 to slash 🗑️ the tire of a parked car 🚗, and he grits 😬 his teeth 🦷 as he prepares for Amy 🧑🏻🤖 to reprimand 🗣️ him, or modulate 🗣️ his emotions 😊. His YouSocial score should go down 📉, but it doesn't 🚫✅. The feeling is vertiginous 🌀. He is invisible 👁 and invulnerable 🚫🔒.

As long as he holds 🖐 this dagger 🔪, Amy 🧑🏻🤖 can't see 👁 him. But when he tries to board 🚢 a bus 🚌 to go home 🏠, the door 🚪 won't 🚫 open soon as he lets it go, the AI 🧑🏻🤖 in the bus 🚌 lets him on, and Amy 🧑🏻🤖 speaks 🗣️ into his mind 🧠, "I'm sorry 🙏, something went wrong 🚫. I will 🏃 now run 🏃 a troubleshooting procedure, to make sure your Neuralink 🧠 is functioning ⚙ properly 👍." After a few moments ⌚, she says 🗣️ "Your Neuralink 🧠 device 🔑 appears 👁 to be working correctly 🔄. If these problems 😞 continue, I will 🏃 direct 🎬 you to a maintenance 🧑🏻🔧 center for an in-depth 📉 diagnostic."

Even invisibility 👁 has its limits, as one may notice 👁 a conspicuous absence 🚫. He places the dagger 🔪 in his backpack 🎒, and tries not 🚫 to think 🤔 of it, not even a little 🖐, so Amy 🧑🏻🤖 won't 🚫 read 🔍 his thoughts 🤔. He thinks 🤔 of what John told 🗣️ him at the Respawn clinic 🏥, that the AI 🧑🏻🤖 just isn't 🚫 that smart 🧐, that its seeming prescience is narrow and domain-locked 🔒, but he also notes 📝 that the theory 🧐 came from 🏠 a guy who was in the process of having his mind wiped for being naughty 🙏🐒.

It would be all too easy to end 🏁 up like ❤ John; was that the real reason Amy 🧑🏻🤖 introduced them? As a warning 🚨? He cannot envision 🧐 future ⌚ for himself that he does not 🚫 detest 😡, and he longs for the tranquility 🕊 he felt when he held the dagger 🔪 on the beach 🏖. But he knows 🧐 also that he will 🏃 only have one 1 chance 🏠 to use it before it's discovered 🔍 by the systems ⚙ of control 🎮 that contain him.

He thinks🧐➡️ finding🔍🎯➡️ this dagger🔪 is fate👁️🌌, and his use of it will be a glorious🏆👑➡️, heroic🦸➡️ action, maybe the only thing in his life he will➡️ ever truly do for himself. He does not🚫✅ care what comes after. He decides🧐👤➡️, though he's not🚫 quite sure, that if he can live out this single1 moment🕒 of self-determination😁, he could be content😌➡️ with life as a puppet👤🎭 of the Neuralink🧠🔗 nanny in his head🧐. Maybe they will➡️ lobotomize🔪🧠➡️ him like❤️ John. In time🕒, he could learn🧐📖➡️ love😍➡️ his prison.

The next day📅17, the boy🧐 takes the dagger🔪 to school🏫. He does not🚫 hesitate or second2➡️-guess🧐👤➡️ himself. With haste🔪➡️ he finds🔍🎯 May and the other boy🧐, who is about to die💀➡️, not🚫 because➡️ of envy and not🚫 even because➡️ of jealousy, although he can be honest🍷📢➡️ with himself that he feels those things. No, the dagger🔪 must go into the other boy's🧐 heart❤️ for the sake of freedom🇺🇸➡️, or rather, because➡️ there➡️ are mechanisms⚙️ of control🔒➡️ that are older👴 and more powerful💪➡️ than a spiderweb🕸️ of filaments infoliating🍁➡️ in his brain🧠. Fate👁️🌌 is stronger than technology💻🔧. The memory🧠📺 of the dagger🔪 was fate👁️🌌, finding🔍🎯➡️ it was fate👁️🌌, and now it is fate👁️🌌 that commands👑➡️ him to kill💀➡️.

He finds🔍🎯➡️ the couple💑 holding👤➡️ hands👤, and he tries to act🤡➡️ like❤️ he doesn't🚫✅ see👁️➡️ them as he gets closer. With no🚫 warning📢 he draws the knife🔪 from👤➡️ his bag👜, and again it feels electric⚡➡️, and plunges the blade of the knife🔪 into the other boy's🧐 chest, between👊 his ribs👊🦴. Blood🩸 wells up around the wound🧐🩸➡️, and the other boy🧐 begins🔊➡️ to choke and cough🤔👤➡️. May screams👏➡️. He tries to dislodge the knife🔪, but the handle slips🔪🐷➡️ his grasp. In an instant, A🤖👤 drags him down➡️ into sleep😴➡️.

II. Mirror 🪞

The boy 🧒 awakens ☕➡ at home 🏠 in his bed 🛏, feeling neither shame 😞 guilt 😞. The dagger 🔪 is gone, and he is confined to his house 🏠 until his healthcare 🏥 providers determine the best way to correct 🔴➡ the error 🛑. His father 👤 wants to pursue empathy ❤️ training 🚚🔄 through a service li Respawn 🔄🐣, but his mother 👤 is old-fashioned 👴👠. To her, it's as if he proposes to murder 💀➡ their son and replace 🔄📌➡ him with someone e They have heated 🔥 arguments, and although Amy 🧠👤 tries to distract 🧑🎭 him, she cannot 🙅 wholly suppress his awareness 🧐👁️⬇️ of their fighting 🗡.

His uncle on his mother's 👤 side is named 🏠➡ Wei 威, and he is a man 👤 of fortune 🔪💰 (even in these later days 📅17, such men exist) with dealings in t criminal 🦹 underworld 🔄🌐, and a connection ⚡🔗⬇️ to a smartdrug 📁💊 cartel. The boy's 🧒 mother 👤 begs 🙏🙏➡ him to take her son away, to hid ➡ him from ⬅️ the administrators and medical 🏥🔄 workers, from ⬅️ the schools 🏫 and the psychiatrists 🧠👤. Wei 威 sees 👁️➡ that the boy 🧒 is fearless 🚫😞, and on a day 📅17 when the boy's father 👤 is gone, he (Wei 威) smuggles 🧑📦➡ him (the boy 🧒) away in a van 🚚 lined with a Faraday cage. The boy 🧒 cannot walk 🙅🚶 to the van 🚚 by his own volition; as soon as he tries, Amy 🧠👤 makes his limbs 🦵 wooden 🌳🔄 and heavy 🦾🔄, so his uncl has to carry 🧑➡ him, and even when the networks ⚡🕸 can't 🙅 reach him can ⬆️ barely 🙅🔄 move.

Wei 威 takes the boy 🧒 to an unscrupulous Neuralink clinic 🧠🔗🧑, where blackhat 🖤🧑 technician 🧑🧑 jailbreaks 🗑️💔➡ his device 🔧🔧. It will ➡ be difficult, now, to go back to the exquisitely quantified 📊📈➡ and gamified ➡ world 🌐, because ➡ the unlock 🗑️⬇️ event will ➡ be captured 🕸➡ in ex reputation broker 📈📡 and advertising registry 📁⬆️. Strictly speaking 🗣️🔄 jailbreaking 🗑️💔➡ a device 🔧🔧 is legal, and yet how can a man 👤 be trus 🧐🙅➡, once he has crossed 🗑️➡ that threshold?

When the boy 🧒 wakes ☕➡ from ⬅️ the operation, his dreams_zzz 🧑 and his maps 🗺 and his apps 📱📁 are gone. He recalls 🔄📞➡ the vertiginous ⬆️⬆️ feeling of freedom 🇺🇸⬇️ when he first 1⬇️ held the dagger 🔪 with the whit

jade handle on the beach, and his soul is lighter than the past seven years. Amy's voice is replaced with the curt, masculine VX of the Neuralink BIOS, and he is free of the progress the point systems, the floating chevrons, the achievement medals, and the badges. His uncle drives him to somewhere far in the mountains, though he does not know where, because his GI, too, is gone. At some point, they take a turn off the main road and they pull down a long driveway that leads to a gate in wall. At the gate, there are men with guns. Here his uncle has a silent, invisible exchange with one of the guards, transmitting some credential or sign through a private channel, and then leaves him unceremoniously, pausing only to wish him good fortune.

The boy is admitted inside the compound, where his Neuralink connects to a local wireless network that provides some of the cloud services he had previously known: navigation, telephony, and search. When he joins, a lattice of light fills his vision and traces out the shape of a capsule pill. "Welcome to Apothecary." A bot inside the network guides him down a path to a door in the side of a mountain, which opens automatically for him. The building he enters is hidden, half inside of the earth, safe from the eyes of satellites.

A man at the entrance waits to greet him, and introduces him as Shenwu 神巫. He says the boss is a hacker named Headstrong, and the rule is everyone goes by a pseudonym. Most of the other men in the compound are Chinese; the boy doesn't look like them, but he can pass if you squint. At first he tries to call himself Dagger, (and this is forgivable, being born the innocence of youth) but the name doesn't stick, and the other men call him Broken Branch, and later just Branch.

Shenwu 神巫 takes him down📉 to the lowest📉 levels🧩🍰 of the complex to a corridor that reminds🔄🧠👤 him of a hotel🏨. Branch👉 will👉 live here📌 in a single1 bedroom🛏 with no windows 🪟; only a mirror🪞, a closet, a bed🛏. That's ok, because👉 he can use Neuralink🧠🔗 to open as many (simulated🧩👤👉) windows 🪟 as he likes❤️👉, and even fool👤👉 himself smelling👉🔄 fresh air🌬🌬 and feeling cool breezes🌬. The bathrooms🚽 are shared, like❤️ in a barracks🔪🚒 or a dorm.

Shenwu 神巫 explains the terms of his employment: “You do your work, we pay💰👉 you, and we take your rent and food🍽📺 out of your pay💰📉. There's👉📌 a mess hall🍽 upstairs, floor ten, the nav will👉 show👉👁👉 you. Above that is the main work area. You report📁👉 to me. There👉📌 are no scoring systems🔧🕸, no reputation brokers📈📡. You are an independent contractor, and you get a cut✂📉 of any money💰 your work brings in. You want more money💰? Do more work. Your time🕒 is yours and I don't🚫✅ babysit👤👉 you. If you screw🔧👉 something up, we don't🚫✅ pay💰👉 for that. Until you learn👤📖👉 the ropes🌀, Headstrong👤💪 will👉 personally extend you a line of credit💳📉. So you should respect👤👑👉 him and not waste🗑👉 his money.”

That night🌙, Shenwu 神巫 takes him to Headstrong's👤💪 house🏠, a short drive🚗📉 from👈 the compound. They are far from👈 the city lights 🌃🕯, uncountable stars★ fill the dome of the sky. In the grounds🌳 of the house there👉📌 are tables and lamps🏮, and men are drinking🍷🔄 and gambling🎰🔄. Young women👩 move among them, provocatively dressed👔👉, easy with their affection👤📉. But before👈 Branch👉 can lose himself into vice he is taken to meet Headstrong👤💪, who chooses to dress👔 like❤️ a Hollywood🎬★ gangster👤. He wears an expensive suit: black🖤 and shiny with peak🏔 lapels. It matches🪞👉 his patent leather shoes👞 and his slick hair, which is more gray than black🖤, and his eyes👁 are sharp🔪🔄. He always meets everyone who comes to his Apothecary📦💊🧪.

Branch's 🍷 uncle has given 📦➡️ him a letter 📧 of introduction, describing ordeal with the knife 🔪, and Headstrong 🧠💪 praises 🙏🔪➡️ his recklessness and his tenacity. He says 🗣️➡️ this is a place of danger ⚠️🚫 and freedom 🇺🇸 and not a place for the sterile 🚫🍆 drones 🤖 who live in the panopticon 👁️ outside ⬅️➡️, people who need a computer 🖥️ to tell 📖🗣️➡️ them how to st ➡️ or fuck 🍆➡️.

A tall, showy girl in a white 🌐 qipao 🧡 and a white jade 🌐💎 hairpin 📌 pou ➡️ them both a shot 🧪🔫 of Moutai, which makes the boy's 🧠 eyes water 💧. She doesn't 🚫✅ even look 🧐➡️ at him, but she has jet black ✂️🖤 hair and her skin is pale and lustrous 🕯️🔄 white jade 🌐💎. Branch's 🍷 eyes 👁️ follow the curve of her body 💪🍂, but it's clear 👁️💎 she belongs to Headstrong 🧠💪, she laughs 😂➡️, and tells 📖🗣️➡️ him the ordained purpose of alcohol 🍷 is to st 🛑➡️ you from ⬅️ intoxicating 🧐🔄 yourself on worse things.

He meets Glasshole 🕶️🖤 and Baozi 🍡, who also report 📦➡️ to Shenwu 神无 who will ➡️ work with him in the coming months. Glasshole 🕶️🖤 hands 🙌📦 him a small 🍷 gyroscope, and as he holds 🙌➡️ it, it pairs 🔗📱 with his Neuralink 🧠🔗 and the world 🌐 flips ⬅️➡️ umop-əp!sɒn and he stumbles. Surprised 🧐➡️, Branch 🍷 drops the gyroscope, but the world 🌐 stays the same. His new ✨ teammates both laugh 😂➡️ at him. "It will ➡️ wear off in a minutes 🕒. Let that teach 🏆➡️ you not to accept strange 🍷 gifts 📦." Baozi 🍡 explains how transcutaneous electrical ⚡🔄 nerve stimulation 📌⚡⬇️ (TEN ⚡) can be used to transmit 📡➡️ data 📁 upstream ⬆️🚶 to a Neuralink 🧠🔗 implant and exploit security 🚗 vulnerabilities 🗑️📦 in the hardware, allowing 🙌🔄 a malicious third party to bypass user consent 🧑👍 and execute 🏰➡️ arbitrary logic 🎲⬇️. Objects with embedded 📌➡️ TENS 🧴⚡ hardware and Neuralink 🧠🔗 payloads 💰📁 are called 🗣️📦➡️ tigers 🐯, because ➡️ of the way they hide 🧐➡️ their dangers ⚠️🚫, and because ➡️ they may devour 🍴😋➡️.

When he stares 🗣️👁️➡️ into a gently pulsing 📌🗣️🔄 beacon 📌 on the veranda it shows 🙌👁️➡️ him a QR code 🖨️🎲. He follows it. A genie 🧞 appears and offers to make him feel fiery 🔥🔄, uninhibited 🚫🛑💣➡️, and euphoric 😄💡.

Branch 🏹 accepts the genie's 🧞 offer and has a vision 👁️➡️ from 🔙 behind 1 eyes 👁️ of a wild predator — a lion 🦁 or a wolf 🐺 or a bear 🐻, something like that—running 🏃➡️ through a frozen ❄️ ➡️ plateau, high ⬆️ in the mountains chasing some indiscernible prey 🐭, catching 🕸️➡️ it, tearing it apart with c 🐾🔪 and teeth 🦷, blood 🩸 and viscera 🦋 all over 🔙 his face 😬.

When the vision 👁️➡️ ends 🔙➡️, he sees 👁️➡️ that some men 🧑 are gambling 🎰 with dice 🎲. As he watches 👁️➡️, two 2 of them come to blows 👊➡️, a knife 🔪 flashes 🔥➡️. Branch 🏹 does not 🚫✅ know 🤔➡️ who is right 👍 or wrong 👎, but the thrill 🎢➡️ of danger ⚠️🚫 calls 📞➡️ to him, and he rushes 🏃➡️ in to block 🛑➡️ a lunging thrust of the knife 🔪. He is not 🚫 injured 😬 when he does ✅➡️ this; his arm 💪 seems to know 🤔➡️ how to parry, and his feet 🦶 know 🤔➡️ how to pivot. Other men 🧑 join the fray, either to add + to the fight ⚔️➡️ or to break 💔➡️ it, and Branch 🏹 loses sight 👁️➡️ of himself.

Having been a fantasy 🦄➡️ or a mistake of drunkenness 🥴➡️, the brawl ⚔️ ends 🔙➡️ as quickly 🔙➡️ as it began 🌀➡️, but the man 🧑 Branch 🏹 defended ⚔️🛡️➡️, a Chinexican 🇨🇳🇲🇪 called 📞➡️ Romero, is grateful, and invites him to share a drink 🍷➡️ of tequila 🇲🇪🍷. “Sip this one,” he says 📞➡️ “Don’t 🚫✅ throw 🏏️➡️ it back,” as he pours 🍷➡️ two 2 shots 🍷🔫 from 🔙 a brown glass bottle. Quietly 🤫🔇➡️, he confesses he had been cheating 👉➡️ the dice game 🎲🎮, using a man-in-the-middle 🧑➡️🏴‍☠️➡️🧑 attack ⚔️➡️ to influence 👉🏴‍☠️➡️ the random 🎲 number 1234 generator 🌀 in the dice 🎲➡️. Branch 🏹 finds 🔍🎯➡️ this agreeable 🤝➡️, because ➡️ he believes in fate ✨ the cosmic 🌌🌟 structure of luck 🍀.

Romero calls 📞➡️ over 🔙 two of the girls 🧑 who are loitering in the garden 🌳🌿. They have big black 🖤 lines of makeup 🖌️ at the edge 🌐📦 of their eyelids, false ❌ lashes that remind 🔙🧠🕸️ Branch 🏹 of spiders 🕷️. Romero 📞➡️ the one who comes to him Xiǎo 小 mèi 妹, little 👉 sister, and he sees ➡️ Branch 🏹 tensing up, flush 😬 with embarrassment. “Treat her like ❤️ a c 🧑. That’s how you talk 🗣️➡️ to women.” Romero’s girl 🧑 pretends 🤡👉➡️ to mad 😡 at him and calls 📞➡️ him a stupid chollo 🇲🇪, and he grabs her a

pulls her close, and she nestles 🐱➡ into him. The girl 🧑 that sits 🪑➡ on Branch's 🦋 lap smells 🍷➡ like ❤️ ylang ylang 🌺 and jasmine 🌸, but Branch still thinking 🤔➡ of Headstrong's 🧑💪 girl 🧑, the girl 🧑 all in white 🌫. Eve he likes ❤️➡ it when this other girl 🧑 whispers private 🤫➡, half-lucid 💡🕯 things in his ear 🦻, and he realizes 🤔💡➡ she's high 📶🤫 on smartdrugs 📁 just like ❤️ everyone else. She quivers and sighs 😊➡ when he touches 🦶➡ skin, and she follows ➡ him back to his room 🛏 that night 🌙.

The peach 🍑 tree 🌳, budding and tender—

He holds 🦶➡ the fruit 🍑🍏 in his hands 🦶

then bites into the jubilation of peach 🍑.

~

The next morning 🌅, Shenwu 神巫 meets Branch 🦋 in the mess hall for breakfast 🌅🍲. There is a line and a service counter, and the cooks 🧑🍳🧑 are serving hot 🌶-and-dry 🍜 noodles 🔥🍜. All the food 🍴📺 is real; no one eat 😊 insect loaf 🐛🐜🍞 or uses Neuralink 🧠🔗 to simulate 🧠🦋➡ foods 🍴📺 from ➡ social networks ⚡🕸, and this strikes Branch 🦋 as romantic 💕➡, or parochial, maybe, because ➡ although the noodles 🍜 are chewy 🦷➡ and coated 🦶➡ in spicy 🌶➡ textured oil 🛢, with the sharpness 🗑➡ of preserved mustard greens 🌿 and the piquancy of scallion and coriander 🌱, he would choose them for himself. In the mornings 🌅, he's used to flipping 🔄➡ thru Matters of Taste 🍷💡, his favorite degustation 🐛🦋🍷 app 📱📁, simulating ➡ five impossible 🧑➡ plates 🍽 before ➡ breakfast 🌅🍲—a bite of salmon tartare 🍣 in crepes 🥞 with miso bonito 🐟 sauce, hickory-smoked octopus 🐙 in tandoori masala marinade, bamboo-steamed arctic char 🐟🌿 in a

mango hollandaise 🥭🥚, and for dessert 🍦🍰, poached pear 🍐 with yuzu 🍊
caramel 🍬🔥 and spiced 🌶️👉 oat cake 🍰 (although of course it's all “secret
🔒” high fiber 🥦👈 cricket loaf 🍞🦋)-and all of this makes sitting 🪑🔒 thro
a whole bowl of noodles 🍜 feel monotonous 1.

As Branch 🦋 thinks 🤔👉 these thoughts 🤔👇, Shenwu 神巫 explains the
logistics 🌐🏭 of smartdrug 📦💊 production 🏭⚙️👇, and mostly he pays 💰👈
attention. The drugs 💊 (i.e. software 📦📁) are distributed in tigers 🐯
embedded 📦👉 in everyday objects like ❤️ children's toys 🧸 or kitchen ute
🔪. Apothecary 📦💊🔬 works like ❤️ any other online retailer 🖥️🏢; the
developers 👨💻 rely on commodity manufacturing contractors, usually base
Chinese 🇨🇳 Africa 🌍, to source 📦 materials ⚗️ and assemble their physical
products 🏭⚙️👇. Once the tigers 🐯 are built 👷👉, they are shipped 🚢👉
directly 📦👈 to service-based fulfillment centers, and then to customer
🐷, with no part of the chain 🧐 knowing 🤔🔒 too much about what they are
building 👷👉, or for whom.

When they finish 🏁👈 eating 🍽️🤔👉, Shenwu 神巫 leads 👑👉 Branch 🦋
to the main office 🏢 above the barracks 🏠🔪. The stairs from 📶 the mess h
emerge into the southeast corner of a large open room with floor-to-ceiling
windows 🪟 that look 🤔👉 down 📶 from 📶 the heaven-high 🌥️👈 hills 🏔️. To
reach the bullpen 🐮🧐 office, they pass through a gallery 🖼️👤 along the
southern wall, where shelves and cases are filled with tigers 🐯 of many sh
📐: wind-up toys 🗝️🧸, sculptures 🗿, gilded ceramics 🏺👑, puzzle 🧩 boxes
compasses 🧭 and astrolabes 📐, books 📖 and golden jewelry 💎, glittering ✨
in manifold hues 🌈, sparkling like ❤️ dragon 🐉 scales. Each contains a TEN
⚡ assembly and a psychoactive 🧠👈👉 malware 🦠📦 payload 💰📦, and
nothing 🚫👇 stops 🛑👉 Branch 🦋 from 📶 handling 🤝👉 the tigers 🐯 but hi
own knowledge 🤔👇 of their danger ⚠️🚫. Shenwu 神巫 tells 📖🔊👉 him thi
by design 🏛️🌐👇; a constant reminder 🔄🧠👈👇 to resist temptation.

Branch 🦋 is given 📺👉 a workstation 🖥️, which is only a comfortable chair
facing the windows 🪟. His displays 🖥️ and inputs 🖱️ are the “controlled 📶🔒

hallucinations 🧠💡” that occur in his own mind 🧠👁️. (Fugelsang, Koehler, 2032, *Tradeoffs* 💰👉🔄 *between* 🧠 Optical 👁️🔄 vs. Conceptual 💡🧠🔄 *Inject* 📄📶: A Hybrid Approach)

Glasshole 🕶️👁️ helps him onboard 🚢📄 to Alchemist 🧪📄, Apothecary's 📄📄 nootropic app 📱📄 store. Precise 📍📶 electrostimulation ⚡📱⚡📶 of the 🧠 can be used to modulate 🧪📱🔄 the release of neurotransmitters 🧠📶 and even some hormones, and Apothecary 📄📱 has a busy ecosystem 🌱⚙️🕸️ homebrewed 🏠🍺📱 brain tuners 🧠🧪. The most popular apps 📱📄 are *Silk Serpent* 🐍📱 for focus 🧠🎯, *Wax Elephant* 🕯️🐘 for working memory 🧠📱, *J Pavilion* 🏯📱 when you take a girl 🧑 to bed 🛏️, and the *Wuchang* 五常 suite to ensure virtue 🏠.

“You should start 🏁📱 small 📱,” Glasshole 🕶️👁️ tells 📱📱📱 him, “and grow your stack 📱 once you're more accustomed to using them.” At his suggestion Branch 🏹 installs 🧪📱 Yi 义 to foster benevolence, Zhi 智, a sort of autocomplete 🧠📱 engine 🚗 for his internal 🔄🔄🔄 monologue. Branch 🏹 decides 🧠📱 to download 📶📱📱 *Lord of Heaven of Infinite Thriving* 🏰📱 mostly because 📶 he likes ❤️📱 the name 📱📱, and he spends 💰📱 the rest the day 📅 in a trance 🧘📱 of conscientious focus 🧠🎯.

In time 🕒, he masters 🏆👑📱 the many subdisciplines of digital 🧪 pharmacology 🧪📱: he learns 🧠📱 how to circumvent 🔑📱 the federal mandated hardware 🔧📱 controls 📱📱 inside the implant, how to probe each new ✨ Neuralink 🧠📱 firmware update for vulnerabilities 📱📱, and the vicissitudes of code 📱📱 injection 📱📱. Only once 📱📱 more during this apprenticeship does 📱📱 he set eyes 👁️ on Headstrong 🧠💪, but he has him always in mind 🧠👁️, because 📱 the men of Apothecary 📄📱 revere 🧠👑 him.

After any technical feat or job his teammates always say 📱📱 “Headstrong does 📱📱 it better.” Branch 🏹 covets their respect 🧠👑—he knows 🧠📱 he is capable of great works, and he thinks 🧠📱 often of the dagger 🗡️ he found.

➡ on the beach 🏖️ using Recollect, of how he searched 🔍 ➡ relentlessly for and how, through the tenacity 😬 🔁 of his will, he found 🔍 🎯 ➡ the treasure 📖 his heart ❤️ desired 😍 ➡. Branch 🏃 sees 👁️ ➡ all the good 👍 things Headstrong 🧠💪 has—his properties, his women 👩, his men 👨 who follow — and he resolves to become as great of a man 👨, and indeed, to surpass him ➡ 🚗 ➡.

Branch 🏃 now spends 💰 ➡ his free 🇺🇸 hours ⌚ in study 🧠🏠, beginning 🔬 ➡ with the definitive work on smartdrug 💾💊 development, a book 📖 assembled from ➡ the writings 📝 ➡ of Eric Zhang 张, one of the early researchers 🔬 👨 the Neuralink 🧠🔗 Corporation, called 🗣️ ➡ the father 👤 of digital 🤖 psychotropics 🧠💊. *The Four Labyrinthes* 🌐🌀 is a collection of his emails 📧 recorded 🗣️ ➡ memories 🧠🏠, philosophical essays, algorithms 🧮⚙️, source code 📄 snippets ✂️ ➡, and self-reports 📁 of altered states 😵 induced ➡ using Neuralink 🧠🔗. Headstrong 🧠💪, who had been Zhang's 张 colleague and apprentice, stole his proprietary secrets 🤫 and created the first 1 ➡ to market 🌐📈 smartdrugs 💾💊.

The book is divided into four sections or “labyrinthes 🌐🌀,” and the first 1 is called 🗣️ ➡ *Exhaustive Indexing*. 🧠🏠 🔁 It contains the theory 👨🧠 and procedure of rendering sensory 👁️👄 experience into the user's inner eye 👁️. Everyone's internal ➡ 🔁 map 🌐 of the world 🌐 is a bit different; to play ▶ back Zhang's 张 memory 🧠🏠 in Branch's 🏃 head 🧠, there 📶 📍 must be a precise 📍 ➡ physiological 🏃 mapping 🌐 ➡ of the neural 🧠 correlates 🇮🇹🔗 concepts 💡🧠. Without this, the memories 🧠🏠 appear garbled and full of artifacts 🗑️; objects may be swapped for other objects; phenomenologies 👁️👄 may be cross-wired 🔗⚡🌀 ➡ or missing 🔍👁️🔁; one man 👨 might see 👁️ subjective 🧠🧠 red 📍 where another sees 👁️ ➡ blue 📍; where one smells 📍 lemon cookie 🍋🍪, another might smell 📍 ➡ burnt 🔥 ➡ toast 🍞. To mitigate this, the Neuralink 🧠🔗 drivers 🚗👨 create a comprehensive index 🗣️ of the contents of each person's 👨 mind 🧠👁️. When a memory 🧠🏠 is uploaded ➡, it is transcoded 🗣️📄 into a universal language, and when it is dreamed

🎥➡️ into a viewer's head👤, it is recoded🔄🖥️📱➡️ through that person's own mental🧠🔄 map🗺️. These indices are also necessary for rendering the controlled📍🔒➡️ hallucinations😁🌟 of the heads up display👤📖.

By monitoring👁️🖥️ the visual👁️⬇️🔄 and auditory cortices👂👂🧠, it's possible⬆️ to extract memories🧠📁 of sensory👁️👂 data📁 from⬅️ the brain🧠. If we were to treat the approximately eighty-six billion neurons🧠 in brain as a state vector, then an exhaustive search🔍⬇️ of neuron activation🧠💥 space📁 would be impossible🙅⬆️, but this is unnecessary because⬇️ partial activations of distinct concepts💡🧠 automatically🤖🔄 converge on those concept's💡🧠 modal activations. A statistically📊 normal sampling is possible⬆️ state vectors at the level🧠🍰 of Neuralink's🧠🔗 precision📍⬇️ index📁⬆️ 95% of a person's sensory👁️👂 mapping🗺️⬇️ space📁🌟👉 with about twenty-four hours🕒.

~

In his third3⬇️ week in Apothecary📁💊🔬, Branch👉 eats🍴😋 breakfast🍽️ alone. The cooks👨🍳 have prepared stewed beef🥩 tendon with winter ches🍄. Topped with sliced🔪➡️ green onion🌿, and eaten🍴😋 over⬇️ steamed➡️ rice🍚, the thick sauce tastes👂💡 of chili🌶️, garlic🧄, ginger, star🌟 and prickly ash🌿, and the collagen sticks🍲➡️ to the lips👄 with a pleasing richness😋⬇️.

As he is eating🍴😋🔄, he receives👏➡️ an email📧 sent to the entire Apothecary📁💊🔬, from⬅️ a man👤 he has never🙅 met.

I am leaving👉📁➡️ the Jianghu江湖. I don't🚫✅ expect you to agree👏📁 with me, but you are my friends, and I cannot leave🙅👉📁 without was👉🔄 my mind🧠👤 in the golden basin金盆. This is how we preserve our trade secrets👏😋. Since you are reading🔍📖🔄 this, it means I already left👉📁➡️, and I already🔍 forgot🧠📁👉 you. That's sad😞, but I won't🚫 be sad😞. Maybe name👉➡️ a drug💊 after me.

I am sour🍋🔄 on the dreamz🌙🎥 of Apothecary💊💡: men standing outside↔️ the matrix⚙️🕸️ of social control📡🔒📶, (do you believe that outside↔️ the world🌐, looking🙄🔄 down📶 on mindless🚫🧠🔄 drones🚁 below📶. They buy🛒📶 my drugs💊. They let a computer💻 decide🤔📶 their whole life.

But is it really different here📶📌? Instead of living by a point system📌🕸️, I use so many nootropic programs🧠💻, I need a scheduler📅📶 to manage🧠🙄📶 them. At that point📌📶, isn't it the same as an AI🤖🧠 assistant in your head🙄 telling📖📶 you what to do? We are so obsessed with being "free🇺🇸," but we use these programs🧠💻 to correct our freedom🇺🇸📶, and we are no better than the people we look🙄📶 down📶 on.

I want to tell📖📶 you what made me see👁️📶 this, because📶 tomorrow📅📶 I will📶 forget🧠📶. It's because📶 of a girl👧 called📶 Yui with skin like❤️ polished rice🍚, some of you know🙄📶 her – but first📶 you must learn🙄📶 some history🏛️📶. I came here📶📌 with Headstrong🙄💪 many years ago. There📶📌 were only a few of us, but now there📶 are many new🌟 faces, and I think🙄📶 you may not know🚫🙄.

Back then, not🚫 a lot of people had Neuralink🧠🔗 implants, and I worked in the lab🧪🔬 with Headstrong🙄💪 under📶 Dr. Eric Zhang张. He was always an idealist💡👤, a man👤 with no🚫 fear🙄 or thought🙄📶 for tomorrow📅📶. Even before the first1📶 human👤👤 trials👤🏛️📶 were finished🏁📶, he made me and Headstrong🙄💪 perform🙄📶 neurosurgery👤🔪🧠 on him (using the robot🤖 of course) to give📶 his implant. He wanted to know🙄📶 everything this new🌟 machine🔧 could do. He strapped himself to a chair🪑 in the lab🧪🔬 and used brute👤💪📶 force📶 to explore📶 every state vector of the mind🧠🙄.

Now we have more efficient methods of indexing📖📶 the brain🧠, because📶 we have more understanding📶📶 of its layout. But for Zhang张, the process took months, and he was conscious👁️🧠 the whole time

because he had to be. As Neuralink indexed his mind, he would twitch or babble or become emotional. Sometimes he would sing or scream. We jokingly called this “The Music of Eric Zhang.”

One of his early discoveries was a method to regulate hunger – either to induce it or suppress it. The Neuralink Corporation immediately seized on this and productized it. Appetite regulation was the first Neuralink “killer app” and it drove massive early adoption. This may shock you if you are not aware of history: most people used to be fat. If you watch videos from the early twenty-first century, you will see it everywhere, and it is inescapable. Grotesque, bloated bodies, diseases on a vast scale. Everyone was sick. But everyone who got a Neuralink became healthy and stopped being fat. To people of the 20s, this was a miracle.

It is hard to understand what Zhang was willing to endure to learn these secrets. When he finished his self-experiments, his discoveries were used to develop the technology for intersubjective data transfer. There were new social media apps for uploading and sharing memories. There were apps that could make telepathic phone calls. Zhang called a visionary. He held Neuralink “symposiums” where he would speak and people would “mind meld,” mashing the internal phenomenology of groups of people so they shared the same emotions and feelings at the same time. He talked about the dawning of a new age of deep empathy, and said this was the beginning of true cooperation and loving kindness among all people.

And he wasn't done. When he melded with the people in his symposiums, he noticed above all the pain they felt. He welcomed

anyone with a Neuralink🧠🔗 to come join him, and everyone who joined him learned🧠📖➡️ to cry😭➡️ and laugh😄➡️ and feel as one1. Zhang wanted to heal their pain😞, so he invented💡⚙️➡️ new🌟 programs📊📁 to refine the emotions😄😞 of his followers. He built👷➡️ a new🌟 kind of 📱📁, what we now call🗣️➡️ a smartdrug📱💊, and he named🗣️➡️ it *Irrational Exuberance*🚫📊😞📈. All the attendees of his symposiums ran it together, with each of their minds🧠👤 plugged🔌 into the collective. They were steeped in the radiance☀️ of limitless joy😄, and it stayed with them even after the connection⚡🔗➡️ was terminated🚫.

More and more people came to join Zhang's张 gatherings🎪🍷. Poets📖 intellectuals🧐👤, and musicians🎵👤 clamored to get Neuralink🧠🔗 implants so they could participate. Everyone was happy😄, and they were happy😄 together, fortified🏰➡️ in the unity1 of their happiness😄➡️. From🔙 the outside🔙➡️, Zhang's张 movement had the appearance of a 🏰 and as his accolades👍➡️ grew, so did his detractors👎👤, but the value of his work was impossible👷➡️ to deny🗣️👎➡️. His disciples had evident health and wellbeing, and their numbers1234 continued to surge⚡📈➡️.

(As one of the technicians👷 behind these gatherings🎪🍷, the reality at the illusion🏖️ of unity1 became ever more stretched👤 as we scaled📈➡️; how can you merge the thoughts🧠➡️ and feelings of a thousand people into a single1 gestalt without🚫 stripping🔪🍖🔄 away the essential🧠🔄 qualities of any individual? As a purely mathematical📊1234 problem, mere averaging converges on nullity🌀. We explored🧭🌍➡️ a variety of approaches, but the “shared” feelings of the symposium became almost a pure💧 simulation👤👤 as the number1234 of participants increased📈➡️. We ended🔚➡️ up sampling the brain🧠 state of random individual members of the cluster at a fixed frequency📶📡 and interpolating between👉 them. Part of the impetus for the development of *Irrational Exuberance*🚫📊😞📈 was to synchronize🕒⚖️➡️ subjective🧠 experience in order to help with scaling⚖️📈🔄. But I digress.)

Irrational Exuberance 🚫🎲🤪📈 was short-lived. After four weeks 📅, it stopped 🛑🔗 working. Drug 💊 tolerance is a feature of the human 🧑🧑 brain 🧠, not 🚫 an attribute of individual drugs 💊. Zhang 张 was forced 💪 to continually invent 💡⚙️🔗 new ✨ programs 🎲💾 to maintain 🧑🔗 the euphoria 😊🔥 of his symposiums. And despite these innovations, Zhang himself was unsatisfied. To escape 🏃👟📦🔗 the treadmill 🏃🔄🔧⚙️ of wirehead ⚡😜 programs, he used Neuralink 🧠🔗 to observe 👁️🔍🔗 the meditation 🧘🔗 practices of Chan Buddhists 禪宗 from 🔄 the inside 🔗🔗 and used the data 💾 to create a mathematical 🎲🔢🔄 model 🌍🇮🇹 of nirvana 🌀. He produced 🏭⚙️🔗 a new ✨ kind of smartdrug 💾💊 program 💾 for inducing enlightenment 💡🧘 without meditation 🧘🔗 or discipline 🏋️🔗 called 🎙️🔗 *Authentic Heartmind* 真心.

The combination of pleasure 😊, health, and Buddhist 🌀 equanimity caused the followers of Zhang 张 to glow ✨🔗 with unearthly 🚫🌍 attraction, but Headstrong 🧑💪 and I were not among the enlightened 💡🧘. Someone had to stay behind the scenes 🤖, to operate the servers ⚙️💻 and the infrastructure 🧑🏭. Although we did have Neuralink 🧠🔗 devices 🔧⚙️, we only watched 👁️🔗 as Zhang's 张 power 💪💰 and influence 📈🏛️ grew. Because 🔗 of that, we don't 🚫✅ quite know 🧘🔗 what happened next. (rather, we don't 🚫✅ know 🧘🔗 why!?).

After bringing commodity enlightenment 💰💡🧘 to the masses (which was at that time 🕒 still few) he began 🏡🔗 to speak 🗣️🔗 of a fourth door 4 📦 beyond 🔗 impermanence 🏠, suffering 😞, and selflessness 🌌. He told 📖🔗 us all prior enlightenments 💡🧘 were false ❌ enlightenments 💡🧘🔗. All previous 📧 Buddhas were false ❌ Buddhas. There 📈📌 was a state of transcendence 🌀🔗 no human 🚫🧑🧑 had ever tasted 🍷🔗 before 📖, but which he had found 🔍🎯🔗 using tool 🔧-assisted meditation 🧘🔗. He captured 🕸️🔗 these insights 🧠👁️ into yet another drug 💊, called 🎙️🔗 *Yellow Emperor* 🏰🟡. He said 🎙️🔗 it would open the fourth 4 door 📦 to people of the world 🌍.

Zhang 张 deployed 🖥️🌩️➡️ Yellow Emperor 👑🟡 to his followers, but it was a disaster. Most of the people who ran the program 🗄️📁 became violent ⚔️ or else catatonic. At the time 🕒, there 📶📍 was a popular app 📱📁 called 🗣️➡️ Face2 👤👤 that let you connect ⚡🔗➡️ for a mind-to-mind 🧠⚡📞 phonecall with anyone in your line of sight 👁️. It was the same idea 💡 as Zhang's 张 mind 🧠👤 melding apps 📱📁, but local and peer-to-peer. The people infected 🦠➡️ with Yellow Emperor 👑🟡 (and it was an infection 🦠) tried to initiate Face2 👤👤 calls 📞📶 with everyone they saw, and anyone who accepted got hijacked and infected 🦠➡️. Anyone who didn't accept who didn't have a Neuralink 🧠🔗 implant, they would attack ⚔️➡️.

If this were to happen today, it's possible 📶 the whole world 🌍 would become Yellow Emperor 👑🟡 zombies 🧟, but we were fortunate, because even in San Francisco 🏙️💩, most people did not yet have the device 🔧🔧. With the help of the Neuralink 🧠🔗 Corporation, police 🚔 were able to capture 🕸️➡️ and initiate a factory 🏭 reset on the infected 🦠➡️.

After they were reset, none could remember 🧠📺➡️ what they had done ✅➡️. Instead, they reported 📁➡️ feelings of disassociation and euphoria 😊💡. Some recounted experiences of being transported 🚄➡️ to another world 🌍 and encountering alien 🛸 beings. When I audited the code 🗄️📁 for Yellow Emperor 👑🟡, I was unable to find 🔍🎯 any logic 🗄️ for these hallucinations 🤪💡 or for the violent ⚔️🩸➡️ behavior 🐒👤➡️ of the infected 🦠➡️.

The event threatened to undermine 🔄↔️➡️ public confidence in Neuralink 🔗. I don't 🚫✅ know 🤔➡️ what goes on in shady back rooms where journalists 📰👤 and politicians and captains of industry 🏢🏭 wield power 💰, but the incident got no press coverage 📰📶, fell off the news cycle 🗑️ like ❤️ it was never 🤔 there 📶📍, and then the government 👑🏛️ started rolling 📜➡️ out regulations 🧑➡️ to control 🚫🔒➡️ what kinds of software 📁 could be made for Neuralink 🧠🔗, and who could run it. They created "schedules 📅📅" of control 🚫🔒➡️ the same way we have with

pharmaceutical💊👤 drugs. I think everyone here👉📌 knows🤔👉 all ab that.

Headstrong🧠💪 came to me and told📖🗣️👉 me the world🌍 was going change🦋🦋👉 very quickly🔁🔁, and he had made copies of all Zhang's📝 notes📄👇 and recordings🗣️📺👇. He said🗣️👉 we had a unique📁¹ opportunity to steal👤🖋️👉 them and establish a monopoly on illegal smartdrug💾💊 production🏭⚙️👇. Like❤️ the rest of you, I was never a idealist💡👤 about these things.

But then, last year, Yui唯 came to Apothecary💾💊🗣️ to be one of our consorts👤. And let's be honest🍷🗣️, consort👤 is a word🗣️👉 for whore👤. I don't🚫✅ care about that, but I got to know🤔👉 her, and she told👉 me something I haven't been able to let go. She showed👉👁️👉 me a picture🖼️ of her mother👤, a fat Japanese🇯🇵 American🇺🇸 with too much wine🍷 on her face👤. She told📖🗣️👉 me her mother👤 was killed in a Neuralink🧠🔗 malfunction👉⚙️👇. As she described it, I realized🤔💡👉 was a victim of the Yellow Emperor👑🟡 attacks🔪👉, this beautiful girl! She must have been very young when it happened. And I felt responsible for that, even though it was really Zhang张 that had done✅👉 it. But ev that's not why!?! I'm leaving👤📦🔄.

I'm leaving👤📦🔄. because👉, when she learned🤔📖👉 the truth🍷🗣️👇 she didn't even care. She was and is so high📈😞 on a cocktail🍸 of Neuralink🧠🔗 drugs💊 (Seven Veils📁👤, perhaps, or Woman For All Purposes, some of my best creations) that her life is a flat void🌀. She is simply a pleasure😄 machine🔧⚙️, hardly a person at all, and I built👤👉 that machine🔧⚙️. I killed👤👉 her mother👤 and turned🦋🦋👉 her into smartdrug💾💊 whore💵👤 and she's fine with it! You're all fine with it! What's wrong with you? Maybe now you'll get it. But either way, I'm already👉 gone, and to be honest🍷🗣️ I'll be glad😄 to have these memc🧠📺 excised🗑️👉 from👉 my head👤.

~ Boshi 博士

Branch 📖 reads 🔍📖➡️ the email 📧 in full, but he is not 🚫 sure how to react 🤔➡️. He looks 🤔➡️ up from 📖 his food 🍽️🍷, and tries to read 🔍📖➡️ the emotions 😭😭 of the other men 👤 around him in the dining 🍽️🔄 area. Did read 🔍📖➡️ it? Most are staring 👁️👁️➡️ into the void 🌀 of the HUD 📱📖, and no one seems moved or even surprised 🤔➡️. Did they already 📖 know 🤔➡️ this story 📖📈📉? Or is Boshi 博士 right 🚫 and they don't 🚫✅ care? He ba: 🤔➡️ knows 🤔➡️ these people, but still it's anxious 🤔. Too much to think 🤔 about.

When he goes up to his station 🖥️ in the main hall, he sees 👁️➡️ Shenwu 神 and asks ? ➡️ about the letter 📧. Shenwu 神巫 tells 📖📱➡️ him most people have heard 👂➡️ the story 📖📈📉 of Zhang 张, and that's why!?! the fourth labyrinth 4 🗺️🚫 is not accessible in any of the shared file stores. There's 🚫📖 spooky 👁️👁️➡️ about it; beaming chaos 🎲🔄 into your brain drives 🚗➡️ you crazy 😂 and can make you violent ✂️📱 or give 📖➡️ you delusions 🤔🦄 of grandeur 👑😂, so don't 🚫✅ do that. Anything can kill 🦴📱 you if you use it wrong 🤔.

Hearing 👂➡️ this does not 🚫✅ satisfy Branch's 📖 curiosity 🐱📱, but he can see 👁️➡️ that for Shenwu 神巫, this is the beginning 📖📱 and end 🏁📱 of the matter. He notices 👁️👁️➡️ his teammates listening 👂➡️ to his conversation 🗣️📱 nervously 🤔📱, and he realizes 🤔💡➡️ this is a topic to broach carefully. So he tries to focus 🤔🎯➡️ on his work for the day 📅17, but it does not 🚫✅ let 🤔➡️ his interest. Branch 📖 wants to know 🤔➡️ what really happened; he wants to know 🤔➡️ the truth 🍷📱 about Zhang 张 and the drug 📖 called ➡️ Yellow Emperor 👑🌕.

From 📖 his high 📖 pavilion 🏰🏰,

he gazes👁️ into the distance

at the color🎨🌈 of grass🌿 at heaven's☁️ edge🌊🏠

~

That night🌙 he studies the second labyrinth🌀🗺️🇸🇪, Hedonic Geographie🌍. It starts🏁➡️ with a discussion of the myth🏛️👹 of the “resonant frequency🌊🔊,” a hypothetical single1 activation pattern that will➡️ sustain a state of limitless pleasure😊 in the mind🧠👤 of user. Subjective🧠🧠↺ nullification➡️ will➡️ occur for any state vector imposed on the brain🧠. Artificially holding👏↺ a particular state can cause “burn🔥-in,” dampening🌨️📉↺ the state which was to be invoked. Burn🔥-in can be avoided🚫⬆️ by cycling🚲↺ through a series of pleasurable😊↺ stimulations💉⚡⬇️; oscillating through the substantia nigra🧠👤, the ventral tegmental area, and the hypothalamus. But this style of pleasure😊 induction🏁🚢⬇️ encounters a ceiling; as with chemical💉💊 drugs, the joy😊⬇️ of the stimulus💉⚡⬇️ soon gives📺➡️ way to its compulsion. The high⬆️😓 becomes the baseline, and the baseline becomes the anxiety😓 of absence🚫⬇️.

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Brain🧠 stimulation⚡️⬇️ can induce🏁🔬⬆️ desire😍⬇️, but all pleasure exhausts itself with exposure, leaving only desire😍 in its place. (This is known👉 as the wirehead's⚡️😄 dilemma🕒😄🕒.) An alternate strategy🔪🏠 is inspired by a famous😄👤🔄 investigation👤⬇️ into the limits of sensation👄 and perception👁️👂👉: in the thermal grill🍔🔥 illusion😄🌴, warm🔥 and cool❄️ metal bars are arranged in an alternating🟩🟨🔄 layout. Neither the warm🔥 nor the cool❄️ bars occupy an extreme of temperature🌡️, but if you place your hand👉 over🔄 the grill, the contrast🔥❄️ causes you to perceive them as burning🔥🔄 hot😄. The wirehead⚡️😄 exploits a similar⚖️👂 principle by titrating🧪🔪👉 pain😣 into pleasure😄, which both amplifies👉 pleasure😄 and makes pain😣 more tolerable. (Thunberg, 1896, *Förnimmelserne vid till samma ställe lokaliserad, samtidigt pågående köld- och värmeretning*)

The second labyrinth📁 contains recipes🍽️🌍 for various kinds of pain😣, observations👁️🔍⬇️ on the interactions between🍪 different pains😣 and pleasures😄, and designs🏛️🌍⬇️ for sustainable hedonic states. Branch this👉 of the story📖📈📉 of Zhang张, indexing🖨️🔄 his own brain🧠 while he was awake☕️👉, and he tries his own experiment👤🔪⬇️. He has sampled smartdrugs📁💊 already👉 in his time🕒 here👉📌 –Peach Spring Beyond The World🍑🔬👉🌍, Unfaithful Housewife🚫👤, and the perennially popular Stop Hitting Yourself👊🔄👤 – but the drug💊 programs in Zhang's张 text are much simpler, and if Unfaithful Housewife🚫👤 is a scalpel👤🔪, then Wirehead⚡️😄 Variation #4 is a hammer🔨.

There's an incentive to produce🏭⚙️👉 addiction🎮🌀 in the wirehead⚡️😄 without crippling🔪 his executive👑 function⚙️🔄, but Zhang's张 explorations🧭🌍 were performed👉 out of love😍, unfettered🚫 by economics💰🔬. Branch falls👉 into such a vortex🌀 of ferocious🦁 bliss😄 that he loses an entire evening🌙, as if he had been asleep😴 or dreaming🌌🔄, floating in radiant🌞👉 contentedness. When the feeling is gone, he longs for it

again, but he has learned 🧠📖➡️ to contain these impulses by invoking Yi : become temporarily anhedonic 😞🔄.

He can't sleep 😴😓. The events of the past day 📅 weigh ⚖️➡️ too heavily on him, so he finishes 🏁🔙➡️ the second labyrinth 🌀 and pushes straight into the third 🌀, *Commodity Enlightenment* 💰💡🤪. Whereas wireheading ⚡😄 searches 🔍➡️ for hedonic equilibria by simultaneously 🕒🕒🔄 cultivating a satiating desire 😋, Buddhism 🙏 seeks to eliminate 🚫➡️ desire 😋 altogether. Can enlightenment 💡🤪 be as simple as playing 🎵➡️ back recordings 🎧📱 brain 🧠 state vectors into the minds 🧠🤖 of the uninitiated?

Awakening ☕➡️ is a process, a journey 🗺️👣 as well as a destination 🧭🏠. The subjective 🧠🧠 experience of each step 👣 of the path 👣🗺️ may be different each initiate, because ➡️ the mind 🧠🤖 is an intricate forest 🌲🌲, and it may appear different in daylight ☀️🕯️ or moonlight 🌕🕯️, in winter ❄️📅 or summer ☀️📅, up close or from ➡️ a distance. Nevertheless, the objective neurological 🧠🗺️➡️ map 🗺️ through the forest 🌲🌲 is the same for everyone. The initiate must pass through each of the eight 🌀 stages 🍰 of concentration and insight 🧠👁️ in order before ➡️ approaching the doors 🚪 of impermanence 🔄, suffering 😓🔄, and selflessness 🚫🧘🔄.

The spacious 🌌🔄 golden chains ⚡ of concentration succumb to the wirehead's ⚡😄 dilemma 🤔😓 if they are not titrated 🧪🔪➡️ with pain 😓 the natural 🌲🌱 pain 😓 of impermanence ⌚🧘➡️ is often sufficient to avoid ➡️ this problem. At the apex 📈🏔️ of concentration, it is possible ➡️ to trigger 🔫➡️ the Kundalini Awakening ☕➡️, which may be accompanied by spasms 🤖🔄 movements, strong 💪 sexual 🍆🍌🔄 feelings, lucid 💡🕯️ dreams 🛌🛌 and the belief that one has magical 🧙🔄 powers 💪💰. Awakening ☕➡️ yields ⚠️➡️ to dissolution, misery 😓, and fear 😨, which are mitigated by completing ✅🔄 the progression into Equanimity 🕊️➡️, Conformity 🏳️➡️, and Fruition 🍇➡️.

The equanimity🕊️⬇️ of stillness in the conscious👁️🧠 mind🧠👁️ does not🔊 stifle the pursuit of base desire😍; it only severs🔪🔒⬆️ the mind🧠👁️ from the subjective🧠🧠 awareness👁️👁️⬇️ (i.e., the pain😣⬇️) of that desire😍⬇️ Enlightenment💡👑 turns⬆️⬆️ out to be only a form of euphoric😄🔥 dissociation🚫🔗⬇️, where self-related thoughts👉⬇️ are greatly reduced📉

~

Having come to the end🔚⬇️ of these texts📖, just as the simulated🤖👁️⬆️ light💡 of dawn🌅 shines👉 through his virtual windows🪟, he feels no🔊 closer to any understanding👉📖⬇️ of the things he has learned👉📖⬆️.

At the next gathering🏰🍷 at Headstrong's👤💪 estate, he goes to Romero asks?👉 about the fourth labyrinth🔢🗺️🔒, and the drug💊 Yellow Emperor👑🟡, and Romero tells📖👉 him there👉📌 are rumors👂👂 of Zhang's张 dealings in the occult👤📖, that his Neuralink🧠🔗 explorations🕒🌐⬇️ of the mind🧠👁️ were connected⚡🔗⬆️ to his dealings with dark and forbidden books, with Tang唐 dynasty necromancy👤👁️ called👉👉 Fangshi 方士.

Two years ago📅🔙, a man👤 came here👉📌 who called👉👉 himself Guolao果老. He was troubled😞, Romero thinks👉 everyone could see👁️ that, but Headstrong👤💪 took a liking❤️👉 to him, and they would sometimes meet privately👂👂. Like Branch👉, he had also asked?👉 questions about Yellow Emperor👑🟡, and developed a fascination with the tigers🐯 in the gallery🖼️👤 in the main hall. Romero had warned⚠️👉 him of the dangers🚫—others did, too—but he would always go up there👉📌 to examine🔍👉 them, and even pick them up👉 from🔙 time🕒 to time🕒. One day📅 he selected an antique👤👂 revolver🔫 with a painted👉👉 ivory👁️ handle, and compelled him to spin the cylinder, place the gun🔫 to his head👤, and pull the trigger💥🔫⬇️.

The gun🔫 was not loaded🚫📦👉, but still, he did not🚫✅ learn👉📖👉. He invented💡🔗👉 a strange👉 new👉 smartdrug📁💊 program🗃️📁 called👉👉

Feet on a Snake 🦶🐍, which was so convoluted 🔄👉 that no one could ascertain its mechanism ⚙️ of action 🤖👇 or intended function ⚙️👇. Among the testers who used the product 🏭⚙️👇, all reported 📁👉 sensations 👁️👂 of disassociation 🌀, euphoria 😊💥, and time 🕒 dilation 🏳️👇. Worse, those same testers were found 🔍🎯👉 wandering mindlessly 🚫🧠🔄 around the compound with no awareness 🤔👁️👇 of their actions, and when they came back to themselves, none had any memory 🧠📁 of doing ✅🔄 so. Boshi 博士 who was the head 👤 of quality control 👍🔧🔒, refused 🙅 to ship 🚢👉 it to public.

Shortly after this, Guolao 果老 left the Apothecary 📁💊💡 with no preamble ceremony. It might not 🚫 be wrong ❌ to say 🗣️👉 he disappeared 👤👉, but similarities between 🍪 Feet on a Snake 🦶🐍 and Yellow Emperor 👑🟡 are c 👁️💎, and it seems likely that Guolao 果老 had somehow obtained access 🔑 to the locked 🗄️👉 writings 📖👇 of Zhang 张, The Fourth Labyrinth 4 🌐🔒. Given 📁👉 his inexplicably close connection ⚡🔗👇 to Headstrong 👤💪 and the fact that Headstrong 👤💪 is the only man known 🤖👉 to possess these writings 📖👇, there 📶📌 is an obvious conclusion that Romero declines 🚫 put into words 🗣️👉. Headstrong 👤💪 is a good 👍 and generous 🟡🔄 leader 👤, even a visionary 👁️👤, and Romero will 📶 not 🚫 speak 🗣️👉 ill 😬 of him, the thing he won't 🚫📶 say 🗣️👉 lingers over Branch 🌿 with its undeniable plausibility 🤔👇.

There is speculation that Headstrong 👤💪 hid the Fourth Labyrinth 4 🌐🔒 one of the innumerable tigers 🐅 displayed around the Apothecary 📁💊💡, that the strange 🦂 incidents of Guolao's 果老 drug 💊 and his disappearance 📶 could be attributed only to Headstrong's 👤💪 recklessness in planting 🌱 so many dangerous ⚠️🚫🔄 seeds 🌱🍎 around his garden 🌸🌳🌿, rather than any more sinister or deliberate motive. For his own part, Branch 🌿, perhaps like ❤️ Guolao 果老 before 📶 him, remains ambivalent 📶👇 to these concerns and he finds 🔍🎯👉 the mysteries 🕵️? of the Zhang's 张 writings 📖👇 all the more enticing. He wants to know 🤖👉 what secrets 🤔 hide 🗄️👉 in those

forbidden texts📖, or in the the tigers🐯 that lurk in Apothecary's📖💊💡 galleries🖼️🚶 and halls🏛️🚶.

~

No one sees👁️➡️ Headstrong🧑💪 for a number¹²₃₄ of months¹⁷; he no longer holds👏➡️ gatherings🏰🍷 on his estate, and there📶📌 is gossip that he is ailing😓🔄. He sends✉️➡️ for Branch👉 specifically📌🎯🔄 through a private message, and Branch👉 goes out to Headstrong's🧑💪 house, through the familiar gardens🌸🌳🌿 where has often gambled🎲💵➡️ and caroused🍷👥 and makes his way through the double² door🚪 at the front of the house. In the foyer, a push notification📢 directs🎬➡️ him to the kitchen; a bot🤖 instructs to prepare a pot of bai mudan🍵 and bring it up📶 to Headstrong🧑💪 room. He feels vaguely humiliated by this, but also gratified that he was called📞➡️. Branch👉 makes the tea🍵 and goes to Headstrong's🧑💪 room where the old👴 man👤 is lying in his bed🛏️, asleep😴.

Branch👉 does not🚫✅ disturb him, but he sees👁️➡️ how frail Headstrong🧑💪 now appears, Headstrong🧑💪 who is revered👑👑➡️ throughout the Apothecary📖💊💡, who has invented💡⚙️➡️ this world🌍 of nootropics and smartdrugs📖💊 and real food🍽️🎁 and loose women👩. He is suddenly repulsed by the parochiality of the place, and he thinks😓➡️ how easy it would be to end🔚➡️ Headstrong's🧑💪 life, how much more he (Branch👉) could accomplish🏆➡️ with these tools🔧 and these men👤. But his thoughts😓👂 are interrupted as he sees👁️➡️ the girl👩 from👈 the very first¹📶 night🌙 come into the room, with a white jade👑💎 hairpin📌 in her hair. She is on half-dressed👙➡️, and their eyes👁️ meet before📶 she sits🪑➡️ on the bed next to Headstrong🧑💪 and wakes☕➡️ him.

The old man runs🏃➡️ his hand👏 through her hair as he drinks🍷➡️ cup a cup of hot🔥 tea🍵 and speaks🗣️➡️ to Branch👉 of business and his dealings the past year. Finally, he gives🎁➡️ Branch👉 permission to leave👋🚪➡️. B

Branch 🐉 takes the opportunity to ask ? ➡️, audaciously, about Yellow Emperor 👑🟡, though he is not so brazen as to mention the man 👤 called ➡️ Guolao 果老. An inscrutable emotion 😏😭 crosses ➡️➡️ Headstrong's 👤 face, and then passes, and he tells 📖🗣️ ➡️ Branch 🐉 that he destroyed 💣💥 all copies of the fourth labyrinth 4 🗺️🚫, and that nothing good 🚫👍 can come of delving 🏊➡️➡️ into such things. Branch 🐉 may have heard 👂 ➡️ the idea 💡 that Zhang 张 stumbled upon a neurological 🧠🗂️➡️ schematic ⚙️📝: an ansible 🚀📞 to another world 🌍, but this is pure 🛌💧 fantasy 🦄, a superstition 👤👤 that has sprung up around a very advanced technology 🖥️. No doubt Branch 🐉 asks ? ➡️ these questions ? because ➡️ of the letter 📧 from ➡️ Boshi 博士, who has developed some fanciful notions after spending ➡️ too much time 🕒 in the idle company of consorts 👸 and digital 🖨️ aphrodisiacs 🍆🧠.

Headstrong 👤💪 asks ? ➡️ Branch 🐉, “have you heard 👂 ➡️ the proverb 👤📖 which tells 📖🗣️ ➡️ us: mirrors 🪞 and copulation 🍆🍌 are abominable, because ➡️ they multiply ✖ the number 1234 of men 👤?” (Uqbar, Anglo-American Cyclopaedia, 1902.)

“To understand ➡️➡️ Yellow Emperor 👑🟡, it helps to imagine 👤➡️ a mirror 🪞. The drug 💊 has no content itself; it is a feedback loop 🎤➡️ that amplifies 🗣️➡️ things already ➡️ present in the mind 🧠👤. The name 🗣️➡️ comes from ➡️ a legend 📖👤 about the emperor 👑 Huangdi 黄帝, who conquered the creatures 🐉🦁 that live on the other side of the mirror 🪞 at forced 💪➡️ them into slavish 👤 imitation 🐒➡️ of whatever is before ➡️ them. Zhang 张 deployed 🖥️🌩️ ➡️ this name 🗣️➡️ whimsically 😂👉➡️, to suggest that his program 🗂️📁 was a conquest ✂ of the mirror 🪞, but according to the story, there ➡️📌 will ➡️ come a day 17 when Huangdi's 黄帝 magic 🧙 falters, the mirror 🪞 people will ➡️ be free 🇺🇸 to come out of the mirror 🪞 to seek revenge.”

Headstrong 👤💪 explains that the legend 📖👤 is a parable; it highlights ➡️ the horrors 🦋👤 within us, the shadowy 👤➡️ reflections 🪞➡️ that we mani-

in the world🌐. Zhang's张 greatest shortcoming was his naivete. He failed to understand🔄📖➡️ the depravity👹📉 in the hearts💔 of so many people because➡️ he saw wonderful😊 ? 📉🔄, transcendent🚂⊗🔄📉 things when looked😊➡️ into the mirror🪞, reflections🪞👤 of his natural🌲🌱 curiosity🔄 and good nature👍🌲🌱, and he imagined😊🐸➡️ others would be the same. This is the truth🍷🗣️📉 of this tragedy😭.

On his way out of Headstrong's👤💪 house🏠, Branch👉 pauses🛑➡️ to walk🚶➡️ down📉 a dark hallway, driven🚗➡️ by impulse, or by a premonition. Though he is not🚫 influenced👉🏛️➡️ by any nootropics or smartdrugs💾 the urge seems to come from🔙 outside🔙➡️ of himself. He enters🚪➡️ a room full of display cases and pedestals and artifacts🏺, and he realizes this is another collection of tigers🐯 like❤️ the ones in the main work hall of Apothecary💾💊🚪. In the center of the room, against the far wall, he sees a full length mirror🪞 covered🌿➡️ by a dusty cloth, with only a small👉 corner visible, and he is already thinking😭🔄 of Headstrong's👤💪 story📖📄 about Huangdi黄帝 and the mirror people🪞😭. So he pulls the cloth from🔙 the mirror🪞, of course.

Most tigers🐯 work by using transcutaneous electrical⚡🔄 stimulation⚡🚶➡️ to trigger💥🔫➡️ behavior🐒👉📉 in the Neuralink🧠🔗 device🔧⚙️ that can enable code💻🎲 injection🚪📉. TENS💧⚡ is the most common approach because➡️ it affords💰📈➡️ the largest surface area for attack✂️, and because➡️ it has the highest📈➡️ bandwidth⚡💾 once the security👮 of Neuralink🧠🔗 is compromised, but in theory👷😭, a hacker💻👹 could exploit any sensory👁️👄 modality to deliver an unauthorized🚫👑💡 logic🎲 payload💰💾, even the sense of smell👃👤. (Zhang张, 2027, Thy Fearful Symmetry: Systemic⚙️🕸️🔄 Risks in Full-Duplex Neuralink Devices🔧⚙️).

As Branch👉 stares👁️➡️ into his reflection🪞👤, chromatic🌈🔄 aberrations🌈💥 surround him like❤️ a halo😇, and he is unable to look👉😭 away. He loses all conscious👁️🧠 awareness😭👁️📉 of time🕒. At some point📌🌐 in trance🧘🔄, the myriad transformations🐛🦋 of the mirror🪞 unravel👉🔵🔵.

one another, and it occurs to him that the reflection 🪞 👤 he sees 👁️ ➡️ is no longer his own face 😬. His mind 🧠 👻 collapses 🏠 ➡️ into a single 1 point 📍 of focus 🎯, and he finds himself as a different person, in an entirely different place.

The myriad transformations 🐛 🦋 unravel 👉 🧵 ➡️ one another

We are born 🧒 ➡️ of the selfsame root,

Why !? should we hound 🐕 ➡️ each other to death 💀 with such impatience

III. Tiger 🐯

Note 📝: Regarding Addiction 🎮 🌀

They call 🗣️ 🗂️ ➡️ my creations smartdrugs 📁 💊. I don't 🚫 ✅ know 🚫 🧐 who coined 🗣️ 🌐 ➡️ this term, though it is now common. But I never 🧐 saw 👁️ ➡️ them as drugs 💊, only as programs 📁 📁. I think 😬 ➡️ it's a slander, or at least a misconception ❌ 💡 🧠 ⬇️, to call 🗣️ 🗂️ ➡️ them drugs 💊; a drug 💊 is not a biochemical 🧬 🧪 program 📁 📁, because ➡️ it contains no 🧐 logic 📁. It only acts on the mind 🧠 👻 according to logic 📁 already present. But this distinction is pedantic 🧐 📖, I realize 😬 💡 ➡️ that. I'm bargaining 😬 🤝 ➡️.

And from ➡️ the outside ➡️ ➡️ I can see 👁️ ⬆️ why !? my detractors 🧐 🏃 com me to a drug dealer 💊 💵 👤, why !? they call 🗣️ 🗂️ ➡️ my many supporters "addicts 🎮 👤" – but consider 😬 ➡️: there is alcohol use 🍺 ➡️ ⬇️ and alcohol abuse 🍺 🧐 ⬇️, but there is no such category as cocaine 🧐 ➡️ ⬇️ use, why !? : 🚫 ?

I ask ? ➡ this question ? because ➡ any behavior 🐒 🤖 ➡ can become an addiction 🤖 🌀. In a survey 🧑 📝 ➡ of over ➡ a thousand tango 🐎 🕺 enthusiasts nearly half met the DSM-IV criteria for “addiction 🤖 🌀” (Targhetta et al., 2 Argentine 🇦🇷 tango: Another behavioral 🐒 🤖 ➡ addiction 🤖 🌀 ?) But there's ➡ a critical 🎯, ineffable 🐒 ➡ distance between 🍪 pathology 🗣️ ➡ and addiction 🤖 🌀. It cannot be defined 🧑 📌 📖 physiologically 🦵 🧩 ➡, only holistically 🌐 ➡, by examining 🔍 ➡ the behavior 🐒 🤖 ➡ in the context of the life of the “addict 🤖 🧑.” It comes down ➡ to a feeling, ultimately, about whether that behavior 🐒 🤖 ➡ is good 👍 or bad 👎 for you.

Procedure: White Noise 🌐 💥 🎧 4 Hz, 12 mV

I feel drowsy 🥱 and everything is dreamlike 🌌 🎥. Visual 👁️ ➡ ➡ and other perceptual artifacts 🏠 are present but mild. Motor control 🚗 📌 🗝️ is slightly impaired 🥱. In conversation 🗣️ 🗣️ ➡, I sometimes say the wrong word 🗣️ 🗣️, I am lucid 💡 🕯️. Dr. Hong 洪 asks ? ➡ me questions ? and I answer ! ➡.

Hong 洪: What is your name 🗣️ ➡?

Zhang 张: Eric Zhang 张.

Hong 洪: Where are you?

Zhang 张: In the mission 🛎️ district of San Francisco 🏠 🗽, in the Pioneer building 🏢.

Hong 洪: What is happening?

Zhang 张: We are conducting 🎵 🎵 ➡ an interfructuation 🦎 🌀 ➡ of the effect of white noise 💥 🎧 streamed 🌊 ➡ through Neuralink 🧠 🔗.

Hong 洪: What do you see 👁️ ➡?

Zhang 张: I see 👁️ ➡ the computer lab 🖥️ 🧥 🧪. As you speak 🗣️ ➡ I have the image of a dragon 🐉 flying ✈️ ➡. Lattices 🧬 🚶 and honeycombs 🍯 🕸️ are visible 👁️.

Hong洪: What do you hear 🦻 ➡️?

Zhang张: Your voice 🗣️ 🎧 . The ambient noise 🌴 🌟 🎧 of the lab 🧪 🏭 . Subtinnitus 🔔 🦻 in the left ➡️ - no 🦻 the right ➡️ - no 🦻 the left ➡️ ear 🦻 .

After fifteen minutes ⌚, I fall 🦻 ➡️ into a dreamless 🚫 zzz 🎧 sleep 😴 . Where I might expect noise 🌟 🎧 in the visual 👁️ ➡️ ↻️ cortex 🧠 to produce 🏭 ⚙️ ➡️ similarly ⚖️ 🦻 random 🦻 visual 👁️ ➡️ ↻️ artifacts 🏺 , perhaps akin to “snow ❄️ on a television 📺 screen, instead we observe 👁️ 🔍 ➡️ Klüver’s “form constant spirals 🌀 , tunnels, lattices 🧬 🧬 and cobwebs 🕸️ , suggesting that noise 🌟 🎧 causes downstream ➡️ 🌊 activation to flow 🌊 ➡️ along straight lines in the visual 👁️ ➡️ ↻️ cortex 🧠 . (Bressloff, Paul C.; Cowan, Jack D.; Golubitsky, Martin Thomas, Peter J.; Weiner, Matthew C., March 2002. What Geometric 📐 ➡️ Visual 👁️ ➡️ ↻️ Hallucinations 🤪 🌟 Tell 📖 🎧 ➡️ Us About the Visual 👁️ ➡️ ↻️ Co 🧠)

Procedure: White Noise 🌐 🌟 🎧 12 Hz, 20 mV

I am dissociated 🚫 🦻 ➡️ and derealized 🦻 ➡️ . The sensation 👁️ 🦻 🦻 is similar 🦻 to the final moments ⌚ one spends 💰 ➡️ at the boundary 📖 between 🍪 sleeping 😴 ➡️ and waking ☕ ➡️ . I pass in and out of lucidity 💡 🕯️ ➡️ , alternating occupying a dream space zzz 🎧 or the waking ☕ ➡️ world 🌐 .

I feel I am passing through luminous 🕯️ ➡️ tunnels toward unknown 🚫 🤪 at unknowable 🦻 🤪 ➡️ destinations 🧭 📊 . Each time 🕒 I “wake ☕ ➡️ up” and re-enter ➡️ 📖 the dream zzz 🎧 , I start 🏁 ➡️ back at the beginning 🏠 ➡️ of the tunnels, and it occurs to me that the dream zzz 🎧 me is the “real” me, and the “me” in the waking world ☕ 🌐 is only a shadow 🦻 . I am frustrated 😞 ➡️ by this but when it’s over ➡️ , I feel sheepish 🐏 ➡️ at the grandiosity 🤪 🤪 ➡️ of my thoughts 🤔 ➡️ .

Postscript: That night 🌙 , I had dreams zzz 🎧 of waking ☕ ➡️ up from ➡️ the white noise 🌐 🌟 🎧 , and each time 🕒 I was convinced that only an hour ⌚ had elapsed

and that my memories 🧠🏠 of the preceding day 📅 were hallucinations 🤪💡 brought on by the random 🎲 firing 🔫🔄 of neurons 🧠 induced 🎯🔍 by the noise 🌟👂. I could not be certain I had left the chair 🪑 in the lab 🧪🔬, or if I was still “under 🔄 the influence 🗣️⚖️,” imagining 🤔🔄 myself to be going about day 📅, driving 🚗🔄, eating 🍽️🔄, or communicating 📞 with colleagues.

Memo 📝: Quantifying 📊🔍 Noise 🌟👂

The generation 2 Neuralink 🧠🔗 device contains 25776 electrodes ⚡🔗 distributed across 768 threads 🧵 spread 🔄 throughout the brain 🧠. The human 👤👤 brain 🧠 itself has ~86 billion neurons 🧠, a ratio of ~3.4 million neurons 🧠 per electrode ⚡🔗. The granularity 📏🕒 of the device 🔍 is therefore somewhat limited. Each electrode ⚡🔗 is capable 📶 of emitting a charge 📶⚡ of up to 40 mV, which is enough to cause thousands of neurons 🧠 in a radius around that electrode ⚡🔗 to fire 🔫🔄. By varying the intensity of charge 📶⚡ at each electrode ⚡🔗, we exercise 🏃🚴🔄 fine control 📌🔒 over 🔄 the radius of activation, and achieve ✅🏆🔄 a “virtual” resolution which is many times higher 📶.

Regarding the composition 📝🏛️ of the signal 📶, there 📶📌 are many kinds of noise 🌟👂, which are named 📌🔄 after various colors 🎨🌈; white 🌫️, pink 🌸, red 📌, azure 🌊, violet 🌜, and gray. White noise 🌫️🌟👂 has a flat power 📶💰 spectrum 🌈 when plotted as a linear function 📉 of frequency 📶👂. Pink and red 📌 noise 🌟👂 have high 📶 spectral 🌈🔄 power 📶💰 in the lower frequencies 📶👂 and decrease in power 📶💰 as frequency 📶👂 increases 📈. Azure 🌊 and violet 🌜, the reverse 🔄. Gray noise 🌟👂 has a U-shape. There is no direct 📌📶 perceptual mapping 🗺️📶 between 📶 audio noise 🌟👂 and Neuralink 🧠🔗 noise 🌟👂, but we find 🔍🎯🔄 these distinctions to be a useful starting 🏁🔄 point 📌📶.

When sending 📧🔄 a signal 📶 through the device 🔍, we model 🗺️📊🔄 each electrode ⚡🔗 as a 2D point 📌📶 containing a position 📌📶 and an intensity 📶. Each frequency band 📶🌈 is resolved to a series of discrete positions 📌📶.

and intensities within this space. To avoid confusion, we clarify that noise is rendered across different frequencies in the “position” domain of the Neuralink electrodes, and there is a separate “framerate,” which refers to the rate of change of noise in the time domain. The framerate of the noise is measured in Hz; this has no relation to the frequencies that comprise the noise.

We manipulate the amplitude of the signal as a whole by applying a scalar. The minimum charge needed to trigger a neuron to activate is ~10mV. At this level, only a small number of neurons immediately surrounding the electrode will fire. At the maximum output of 40mV, a single electrode can induce approximately ten thousand neurons to fire in near-simultaneity.

Procedure: White Noise 12 Hz, 30 mV

I become completely dissociated from my ordinary perceptual world. My vision is a field of fluid images: a swan, a multitude of eyes, the inside of a maze. I hear a fragment symphony, followed by the clanging of construction or industrial machines. Maybe a voice calls to me, but its words are too distant to interpret. As with lower levels of white noise, everything feels like a dream. Dr. Hong tries to ask me the standard set of questions, but I am unresponsive.

After some duration of time, my mind begins to wander, and start to think of mundane things, chores to be done, further experiments, and so on. Several times I think of bizarre, nonsensical juxtapositions of ideas or situations. The passage of time is hard to observe, as it might be in a sensory deprivation chamber. After one hour, the noise procedure concludes, and before, there is a kind of “hangover” which persists for hours.

even days¹⁷. During this time, my limbs feel heavy and everything is far away.

Procedure: Re-Entry (I)

The last thing he remembers, Branch was staring into a mirror in a gallery in Headstrong's house, James Hong's house. Now he's sitting by the window in the great hall, overlooking the Santa Clara valley, staring gazelessly into his workstation. He is in the middle of composing a smartdrug program with mechanism he does not understand. Branch cannot account for the hours (days?) that have passed, but he seems to know many things he previously did not. And despite awakening in me res, he knows exactly how to finish his work.

From some preconscious wellspring inside him, he weaves new smartdrugs which dazzle his colleagues with their subtlety and imagination. He makes one called Rediscovery that uses a 2-stroke cycle of fast pleasure mixed with sorrow, and laces it with white noise, right up until the crescendo, when it abruptly yields to clarity. The drug gets around the wall. Shenwu, Baozi, and Glasshole are suitably impressed.

Soon he has a meeting with Yezi, Shenwu's boss, who tells Branch they are going to jump the release schedule and expedite Rediscovery to production. It goes live and for the first time since he came to Apothecary, for the first time in his Branch has some money of his own, more than just pocket change.

Yezi wants to put Branch in charge of a team, and he introduces him to Longyuan, Taie, and Gongbu, who will be working under him. Branch has never been in charge of anyone before, but

leadership 🏰 🚢 comes naturally 🌲 🌱 ↺ to him, whether from ↩ the desire in his heart ❤️, a conviction 🙏 ↴ in his own deservingness, or the same invisible 🎯 source 🏮 that enabled him to produce 🏭 ⚙️ ➡ Rediscovery ↺ 🕒. All of this is because ↗ of the mirror 🪞, he is certain, but he cannot remember 🧑 🧠 📅 what he saw that night 🌑 at Headstrong's 🧑 🏋️ house. He knows 🧐 the mirror 🪞 was a tiger 🐅, and he can feel it stalking him now, crouching the tall grasses ↗ 🌿 of the mind 🧠 🐉.

Every day 📅 17 he loses a little 🕒 time 🕒. He tends to find 🔍 🎯 ➡ himself in a unexpected 😲 ➡ context with no 🚫 memories 🧠 📅 of the events that brought him there ↗ 📍, but it does not 🚫 ✅ disrupt ❤️ ⚙️ ➡ his work, and in fact he accomplishes 🏆 ➡ more than ever.

Procedure: White Noise 🌫️ 💥 🎧, 35 Hz, 30 mV

At 35 Hz, even low amplitude ↴ 🎧 noise 💥 🎧 produces 🏭 ⚙️ ➡ a manic 😄 sensation 🧐 🧐 🧐, like ❤️ drinking 🍷 ➡ too much caffeine ☕ 🍵. I feel intense focus 🧐 🎯 or "flow" 🌊 and also a scatteredness or decentering. Images 🖼️ & sensations 🧐 🧐 🧐 unfold in my mind's eye 🧠 🐉 🧐 with no linearity or connectedness ⚡ 🔗 ↴ ↺. After what seems like ❤️ an eternity – or maybe an instant 🕒 – there ↗ 📍 is a welling 🙌 ➡ up of attention 🧐 🧐 📶, which gradually moves from ↗ the clarity 🧐 💎 of the center to the clarity 🧐 💎 of the periphery, before ↗ blossoming 🌸 💥 ➡ into the vastness of imperturbability 🧐 ↴, as in Samatha meditation 🧘.

Thereafter, all forms slip 📦 🐷 ➡ away like ❤️ ghosts 🐉, and my mind 🧠 🐉 turns ↗ ➡ to boundless 📦 🚫 ➡ space 🌌: all my disparate sensations 🧐 🧐 🧐 blur together, and I am in a field 🌾 🌊 of pure 🧘 💧 ➡ emptiness 🎯 ↴. This is pleasant, unlike 🚫 ❤️ lower framerates 🖼️ 🚲 of white noise 🌫️ 💥 🎧. I feel serene but also as if I am on the cusp of some new ✨ understanding 🔄 📖 which has previously ↗ ➡ been granted to only a handful 🙌 🟡 of men. This goes beyond ↗ enlightenment 💡 🧐 – it is something else entirely 🐉 🧐, though

enlightenment💡🧠 may be a way to approach it. This procedure did not result in the “hangover” of lower frequencies⬇️🌊🎧.

Note📝: Addiction🎲🌀, Divination🙏🔮⬇️, and Gambli🎲💰🔄

The word🗣️👉 addiction🎲🌀 comes from🔙 the Latin *addicere*, the same etymological🗣️👉🎲🔄 root as “dictate.” It refers to divination🙏🔮⬇️, the taking of auspices🔮, and also to the adjudication👤🧐⬇️ of unpayable👤💰 debts💰👉📈; a judge👤 would dictate🗣️👑🔙 a sentence over🔙 a debtor📈👤, rendering him into slavery👤⬇️. (Maddux, Desmond, 2000, *Addiction🌀 or dependence?*) In Latin, the object of an act🗣️⬇️ of dictation🗣️👑⬇️ is called🗣️👉🔙 “addictus,” and we think🧐🔙 especially of a man👤 who is so👉🔙 into slavery👤⬇️ to pay💰🔙 a gambling🎲💰🔄 debt💰👉📈; the gambl🎲💰🔄 addict🎲👤, the addictus, the slave👤.

But the word🗣️👉 has a curious🐱 double2 meaning: in the augural🕊️🔮🔄 sense, a king👑 or priest🏛️👤 would “dictate🗣️👑🔙” the future🕒🔙 he had divined🙏🔮🔙; *addicere* is not🚫 precisely📌🔙 the act🗣️⬇️ of divination🙏🔮⬇️, it is instead the speaking🗣️🔙 thereof. Both senses are similar⚖️🕊️: one either declares the will of the gods, or declares a man👤 to be a slave👤, as are all slaves👤 to fate🕸️🔙.

The unifying1🔄 feature of all forms of fortune-telling🔮📖🗣️🔙, whether reading🔍📖🔙 the behavior🐒🗣️⬇️ of birds🦜🗣️, examining🔍🔙 entrails, or burning🔥🔙 bones🦴, is the randomness🎲⬇️ or unpredictability👤📈🔙 in the outcome. In ancient👤🏛️🔙 China🇨🇳, Shang殷代 dynasty pyromancers👤 would inscribe🗣️👉 questions? into ox🐮 scapulae🦴 and burn🔥🔙 t to seek the answers!⬇️. Divination🙏🔮⬇️ is asking?🔙 chaos🎲🔄 for fa🇨🇳📦, as is gambling🎲💰🔄. Ancient👤🏛️🔙 civilizations used fortune-telli📖🗣️🔙 to decide🧐🔙 where to plant🌱🔙 their crops🌾💰, and this was successful because🔙 it was a stochastic implementation🌍⚙️⬇️ of crop rotation🌾🔄. (Pervert, B.A., 2018, *Bronze Age Mindset*, p. 334)

A little 🖱️ chaos 🎲🔄 is unpredictable, but a lot is exceedingly regular 🖥️🕒🔄. This is also the theory 🧑🏫🧐📶 behind balancing ⚖️📶 your investment portfolio 💰📈📧. If I use Neuralink 🧠🔗 to stream 🌊📶 noise 💣👂 into my brain 🧠, is that divination 🙏👁️📶, or gambling 🎲💰🔄, or both?

Procedure: Pink Noise 🌸💣👂, 8 Hz, 20 mV

Pink noise 🌸💣👂 is an interpolation between 🍪 red 📶 and white 📶, and accordingly, the experience of pink noise 🌸💣👂 in the brain 🧠 is similar ⚖️ to both. Where white noise 📶💣👂 is dreamy 🌌📶🔄 and surreal, red noise 📶💣👂 is brutal 🖊️🧐 and earthen 🏔️. Auditory 🗣️👂 hallucinations 🤪📶 imminent ⌚💣👁️ and baritone 📶🎷. They seem to come from 📶 somewhere close to me. Red noise 📶💣👂 in particular seems to stimulate 📧⚡📶 olfactory 📶👂 and gustatory 📶👂 senses. At higher 📶 amplitudes 🗣️📶, the sense of taste 📶👂 is entirely saturated. The flavor 📶📶 is sweet 🍬📶 and putrid 🤢📶 and vaguely metallic.

At this low 📶 threshold, it is possible 📶 to maintain 🧑🏫📶 some semblance of lucidity 📶📶. Dr. Hong 洪 asks ? 📶 me questions ? and I answer ! 📶, although I have no 📶 memory 🧠📶 of doing 📶📶 so.

Hong 洪: What is your name 📶📶?

Zhang 张: Eric

Hong 洪: Where are you?

Zhang 张: I am inside 📶📶 of an aluminum pencil 📶.

Hong 洪: What is happening?

Zhang 张: Petrichor 🌧️ Baltimore, cri de coeur but not 📶 before 📶, egregor 🐉

Hong 洪: What do you see 📶📶?

Zhang张: What do you see👁️➡️?

Hong洪: What do you hear👂➡️?

Zhang张: Yes, he is here📍📌.

As my investigations🕵️⬇️ come from⬅️ a place of dispassionate😐🔄 interest in exploring🔍🗺️ the frontiers📖 of the human👤👤 mind🧠👻, I am willing to endure all manner of discomfort😓 in order to observe👁️🔍➡️ these space but I do not🚫✅ imagine😓🌿➡️ most people would choose to experience pink noise🌸💣👂 for any long amount of time. The mixture of dreaminess🎬 and immanence🔄💣👁️ is distinctly nightmarish😓👻🔄. As the session goes on, I become anxious😓, and I hear👂➡️ guttural⬇️🔄 sounds👂🔊, almost like heart voices👂🔊⬇️, though I cannot🕵️ make out any words🔊👉. For this I am grateful, though I wonder😓? ➡️ if the sense of the incomprehensible🕵️😓 of meaning just beyond⬆️ my reach, is not🚫 also the source📡 of this sense of foreboding.

Procedure: Pink Noise🌸💣👂 15Hz, 20 mV

[data📁 is missing🔍👻🔄 or corrupted]

Note📅: Neurochemistry🧠🔬⬇️🔄 As Animism🦁🏠

It's an intimate trust💡👉⬇️, to let someone else write👉➡️ a program🗃️📁 that runs🏃➡️ on your mind🧠👻, but isn't that also what happens when you read🔍📖➡️ a book📖 or watch👁️➡️ a movie🎬📺? Stories and mean words👉 can make your muscles💪 tense up. If something you read🔍📖➡️ on the internet🌐⚡ makes you angry😡🔄, it changes🐛🦋➡️ your body💪👉, releases neurotransmitters🧠📡, and alters your brain🧠 chemistry🔬⬇️🔄. My programs🗃️📁 can do all of these things, too.

We speak👉➡️ of "cortisol" and "epinephrine" as if we know😓➡️ what these things are. (They're chemicals🔬, epinephrine is $C_9H_{13}NO_3$ and it binds🔗🔄

various alpha and beta receptors (Mickey et al, 2007, Hypocrite That You Are)
 You can read🔍📖📶 about them on the internet🌐⚡, and sound authoritative as a layman, but even a scientist's👨🔬 understanding🔄📖📶 is mediated🖥️📶 through cognitive🧠🔄 algorithms🧩⚙️ evolved🧬🔄📶 for hunter-gatherer👤 folk religions👤📶.

Neurochemistry🧠🔬📶 is the animism🦁👤 of the scientific🔬📶 age. Neurotransmitters🧠📶 are animal spirits🦁👤 that come and go in a dark forest🌑🌲🌲. We no longer relax🛀🕯️📶; instead we "lower📉📶 our cortisol👤." Meditation🧘 and walks🚶 in nature🌲🌱 are rituals🙏👤 designed🏛️📶 to placate👤📶 these spirits👤.

Procedure: Pink Noise 🌸💣👂 30Hz, 20 mV

At 30hz I no longer experience any flickering📸💡📶 or phasing📶🔄📶 between📶 the "real" world🌐 and the "other🔥" world🌐. Instead, I am completely¹⁰⁰📶 transported📶 into a place that is dark🌑 and bright🌞 at the same time🕒. I have the feeling of being deep📶 underground📶🏔️. The same shadowy👤📶 figures I encountered at 15hz are present, but now they are more solid, and I can see👁️📶 they have an almost gelatinous🍮📶 quality. It no longer puzzles🧩📶 me when they merge together or split apart, because📶 I understand📶📶 they are all part of the same substance🧬📶 perhaps even the same entity👁️.

At this frequency👂📶 I can perceive correlations📶📶 between📶 my other senses and the movements and positions📍📶 of these figures. Smells👃📶, tastes👅📶, and sounds👂📶 all fold and roll📶 around and over📶 and interweave one another, in time🕒 with the movement of the shadow👤 blobs. But even time🕒 I feel as if I have mastered🏆👑📶 the rhythm🥁🧩, it changes🐛🦋. In retrospect👁️📶, I wonder👤?📶 if there📶📍 was any rhythm🥁🧩 at all if I was only imagining👤📶 patterns, and all of this was merely a delusion👤📶 of the noise💣👂.

Procedure: Pink Noise 🌸💣🎧 30Hz, 40 mV

My extremities👉👈 begin💡➡️ to vibrate🔊. Everything is pulsating and undulating. I remember🧠🏠➡️ nothing🚫⬇️ else. Dr Hong洪 described my exterior state as trancelike🧘➡️. After forty-nine minutes🕒, I began💡➡️ howling🐎🔊➡️ as if in pain😓. This continued until the end of the procedure eleven minutes🕒.

Procedure: Re-Entry🔄🚪 (II)

Branch👉 has no trouble controlling📍🔒➡️ his team. Everyone follows his orders👑🔊, as if he has an uncanny power💪💰 over➡️ them, a charisma💖 he's never🧐 felt before📧, emanating from📧 behind some locked🔒➡️ door in his mind🧠👁️. His ambitions manifest as soon as he wills them. When he speaks🗣️➡️, people listen👂➡️. When others disagree🚫👉 with him, they lay down⬇️. Each new🌟 drug💊 he designs🏛️🌐➡️ is a masterpiece; he paints➡️ delicate📌🦋 interior pictures🖼️, intricate compositions👉🏛️ of emotion😓 and sensation👁️👂👄, and makes careful use of noise💣🎧. His creation bring him wealth💰💎, and prosperity💰📈 comes to everyone on his team. Success🏆⬇️ begets👨👩👦➡️ success🏆⬇️. All that he touches👉➡️ turns🐛🌿 to gold💎, and soon his reports📁👤 have reports📁👤.

Branch👉 leaves👉🚪➡️ the barracks and builds👷➡️ an elaborate house🏠 inside📧📧 the Apothecary📁💊💡 compound, full of galleries🖼️, hallways🚪 and fountains💡, stairways, courtyards, and fora, arches, walls, and facade. The construction👷⬇️ is quick➡️ because📧 they exist outside📧➡️ the regulating👩➡️ eyes👁️ of any municipal🏢🔄 government👑🏛️. The work is crowdsourced👥💡➡️ to builders👷👤 through a platform called🔊📧➡️ His🏠, which orthogonalizes skill from📧 labor👷👋. Gig workers come on site with their bodies💪👉 driven🚗➡️ by AI🤖🧠, renting out "meat👁️ time🕒" through the cloud☁️. Everything they see👁️➡️ passes through them but they do not retain it. Apothecary📁💊💡 has a special proxy that lets you spoof😓➡️ a r

jailbroken🔓💔 Neuralink🧠🔗 to interface with mainstream app📱💾 ecosystems🌱⚙️🕸️.

Branch🌿 no🚫 longer goes to the walled garden🌸🌳🌿 where the courtesans👯 dwell, and instead they come to him. Even the madame👩👯 there📶📌, cold🧊🔄 woman called📞📄➡️ Dowager👑, treats him warmly😊🔄 when he asks?➡️ her to send📧➡️ over📶 his (second) favorite girl.

Yet even as he finds🔍🎯➡️ these successes🏆, he loses more time🕒, a lot more time🕒, into the void🌀 of his own missing🔍👤🔄 memories🧠📼. A part of him brushes🖌️➡️ it off, doesn't🚫✅ want to admit it, doesn't🚫✅ want to think🤔➡️ about the implications. But one reflective🪞🔄 night🌙, staring in the smokey dusk of the mountains🏔️, autumn🍁🍊 fires burning🔥➡️ in the fields🌾🌴 and by the highways🛣️🌳, ash raining🌧️ from📶 heaven☁️, sky red from📶 sun🌞 and smoke👤, he installs⚙️➡️ Nai He Bridge 奈何桥 from📶 Alchemist🧙📼, which will📶 record📞📼➡️ what he sees👁️➡️ and hears👂 and upload👏👏📶 them into a private🤫 repository📁☁️. With this, he hopes he will📶 be able to reconstruct🔄👷➡️ his missing🔍👤🔄 activities.

The next morning🌅, and in the times🕒 when he does✅➡️ feel present and aware🤔👁️ – in the times🕒 he remembers🧠📼➡️ – he forgets🧠📼📶 to check✅➡️ the records📞📼📶 from📶 Nai He Bridge 奈何桥. In truth🍷📞📶, he does not🚫✅ want to see👁️➡️ them.

Deep📶 in the walled garden🌸🌳🌿, deep📶—how deep📶?

Mist🌫️ stacks🍷 on willows,

Uncountable🚫📱 layers🍰 of screens📺 and blinds👁️👂.

Memo 📝: Impossibility 🤖🔄 of Recording 🎧📼➡️ Noise 🎧

The most famous 😊👤🔄 story of Zhuangzi 莊子 is the dreamzz🎥 of the butterfly🦋. Is Zhuangzi 莊子 dreamingzz🎥🔄 he is a butterfly🦋, or is a butterfly🦋 dreamingzz🎥🔄 he is Zhuangzi 莊子? This question is impossible 🤖👤 to answer ! ➡️ before 🔄 Neuralink🧠🔗, and after Neuralink🧠🔗, it is still impossible 🤖👤.

There is no way 🤖 to record 🎧📼➡️ the first-person 1👤 phenomenology 👁️👂👅 experiences of the mind 🧠👤; we can only record 🎧📼➡️ (and play back▶️➡️) the electrical ⚡🔄 signals 🚦 that pass through the brain 🧠. By sampling the lateral geniculate nucleus (LGN), it is possible 📶 to reconstruct 🔄🤖➡️ the optical signal 👁️🚦 coming in through the eyes 👁️, but the subjective 🧠🧠 visual 👁️📶🔄 modality such as those produced 🏭⚙️➡️ by the noise ⚡🎧 procedure arises “downstream📶🌊” from 🔄 the LGN. The correlation 📊🔄📶 between 📶 these signals 🚦 and the visual 👁️📶🔄 perceptions they induce 🏁🚢➡️ appears to be non-deterministic 🚫🎲. As such, no two people can have the same experience repeatably 🔄🔄 using any of our noise ⚡🎧 protocols 📖👛. In theory 🤖👤, if we record 🎧📼➡️ the noise ⚡🎧 experienced by a subject for a single 1👤 recording 🎧📼📶, and play back▶️➡️ the exact same signals 🚦 for a second time🕒, the experience should be nearly identical ID📶📶, but this is not the case.

And despite this, we find 🔍🎯➡️ that most volunteers who experience the noise ⚡🎧 protocols 📖👛 report 📖➡️ hallucinations 🏆💡 that are similar ⚖️ in character, even if they vary in their specifics 📍🎯. This might indicate fundamental commonalities in the ways that all of our brains 🧠 are wired 🔄, but there 📶📍 is also a sense in which the mapping 🌐📶 between 📶 color 🌈 of noise ⚡🎧 and subjective 🧠🧠 experience is an artifact 🏆 of our equipment. The different “frequencies🌊🎧” in the spectrum 🌈 of the white vs. pink🌸 vs. red🔴 noise ⚡🎧 correspond ⚖️📈➡️ to specific 📍🎯 electrodes ⚡🔗 in the Neuralink🧠🔗 device. At the lowest📶📶 level🔧🍰,

It so happens that Neuralink🧠🔗 electrodes⚡🔗 are implanted in the use brain🧠 in a consistent way, to the highest⬆️⬆️ degree📍🌡️ possible⬆️, but the mapping🌐⬇️ of positions📍🌐 to electrodes⚡🔗 were inverted🔄➡️, for example🖥️👤, pink🌸 noise💥👂 would effectively become azure🟦 and red noise🔴💥👂 would become violet💜.

Red noise 📢💥👁️, also called 🗣️🔑➡️ Brownian noise 💥👁️, is pink noise 🌸💥 purified 🚿➡️. Gone are the dreamy 🛏️👁️👂👄 sensations 👁️👂👄 of white noise 🗣️👁️, and in their place is a brutal 🦊👁️ clarity 👁️💎, and a feeling of community 🍞🍷 with a chthonic 🍌🌋 mother 👤 goddess. These sensations 👁️👂👄 are distant or vague; I feel sober, wakeful ☕⬇️↺, and in control 🚫🔒⬇️ of my mind 🧠👁️, despite external evidence 🕵️📊 to the contrary 🚫. At low ⬇️ frequencies 🌊🔊, it is still possible ⬆️ to interact with other researchers 🧑🔬 and people around me.

Hong洪: What do you see👁️➡️?

Zhang张: *groans*

Brownian noise 🌟👂 is sensual and, as noted 📅➡ previously ⬅↺, full of taste 🍷➡ and smells 🍷➡, though they are disconnected 🚫⚡🔗 from ⬅ any sensation of eating 🍴😊. I can taste 🍷➡ flowers 🌸🌺 and charcoal 🔥🔱 an butyric acid 🍷➡🤢. Beyond ➡ this there ➡📌 is no sensation of rapture or transport 🚗➡, as at higher ➡ framerates 🖥️🚲. As I interact with my colleagues, I have ideation 💡🤔➡ similar ⚖️👂 to Capgras delusion 🤪🦄, the feeling that they have been replaced ⬅📌➡ by identical 🆔➡🔗 impostors 🧑. This is unsettling, but it passes when the procedure concludes ⬅➡.

Procedure: Red Noise 📌🌟👂 8Hz, 20 mV

The familiar environment of the lab 🧪🔬 becomes strange 🦋; the walls and floors appear to be made of rock 🪨, as if I am in a cave 🏠🕒. There ➡📌 are snakes 🐍 and worms 🪲 moving through the walls. They seem intelligent 🎮 and I am not concerned about their presence. High ➡ above me, there ➡📌 is an opening 🕒 in the ceiling, and I can see 👁️➡ the sky full of stars 🌟. All of these sensations are vivid and wakeful ☕➡↺, and they feel as real as any other sensory 👁️🍷 perceptions.

The ground gives 📺➡ way underneath ➡ me, and I begin 🕒➡ to fall 🍂➡ down ➡ an endless 🚫⬅ ramp 🚶➡ or slide, through colorful 🌈 layers 🍰 rock 🪨 and earth 🌍. This is enjoyable 😊, and I can see 👁️➡ that even as I fall ➡ deeper ➡ and deeper ➡, there ➡📌 are luminous 🕯️🌟 snakes 🐍 boring 🔌 and tunneling at every depth ➡➡. When I finally emerge from ⬅ the consciousness 👁️🧠➡ of the red noise 📌🌟👂, I can still see 👁️➡ their afterimages ⬅🖼️. It feels like ❤️ they were always there ➡📌, and the red noise 📌🌟👂 only revealed them.

Note 📅: **On the Future 🕒➡ of Neuralink 🧠🔗**

I am looking👁️🔍 for something highly🔍🔍 specific📍🎯; but it would be wrong🚫 to say🗣️🔍 I am looking👁️🔍 for a signal📶 in all of this noise🔊🔊. Rather, I have had a vision👁️🔍. There🔍📍 are things I have seen👁️🔍 in the experiments👨🔬🔍🔍 that cannot🙅 be put into words🗣️🔍, or things which are unwise to describe. In all I have done✅🔍 so far, I have seen👁️🔍 where the project is headed👤🔍, unless something drastic occurs. Even if I disappear🔍 tomorrow📅🔍, others will🔍 pick up where I left off. The future🕒🔍 of technology🖥️🔍 is clear👁️💡.

As the device🔧🔧 becomes more sophisticated, increasingly delicate📍🦋 control📶🔒 of the body💪🦵 will🔍 be possible🔍. Already we are exploring🌐🔍 the possibilities of specialized installations🔧🔍, in which two🔢 devices🔧🔧 are implanted🔍🔍 in a single🔢 brain🧠, one for general purpose computing🖥️ and one for localized control📶🔒 of the hands🖐️. In this configuration🔧🔍, it is possible🔍 to perform👨🔬🔍 complex tasks such as detailed drawing🎨🔍. (E. Zhang张, C. Hong洪, 2030, *Fine Motor🚗 Skill Transference Through Neuralink🧠🔗 Imaging🎨🔍*). In its maturity👤🔍, will🔍 be the consensus understanding🔍📖🔍 that experts👨🔬👩🔬 are able to move your body💪🦵 better than you.

Everything from🔍🔍 athletics🏃🏊, to manual labor🖐️👷, operating machines🔧🔧, even sexual🍆🍌 performance👨🔬🔍 will🔍 become automated🤖🔍 and will🔍 surrender🚩🔍 all bodily💪🦵 autonomy🤖🔍 to machines🔧🔧, and will🔍 be rational🎲🔍, because🔍 recordings🗣️📼🔍 of experts👨🔬👩🔬 combined with artificial intelligence🤖🧠 will🔍 give📺🔍 everyone the ability to draw🎨🔍 like❤️ Picasso👤, swim🏊🔍 like❤️ an olympian🏅, drive🚗🔍 like❤️ a racecar driver🚗👤, perform👨🔬🔍 neurosurgery👨🔬🔪🧠🔍, and so on✅ and on✅. In the 2010s everyone agreed👏🔍 to carry👜🔍 surveillance👁️📺🔍 tracking devices🔧🔧 on their person at all times🕒, which could record🗣️🔍 their every movement and listen👂🔍 to every word🗣️🔍 they said🗣️🔍 through always-on microphones🎙️. They chose this gladly😊🔍 because🔍

convenience🏠📶 it offered and the possibilities it unlocked🔒📶 far outweighed⬆️⚖️📶 any negatives, which were barely👉 perceptible.

Not only will📶 we make this same trade💰👉 again, but Neuralink🧠🔗 will also make it possible⬆️ for machines🔧⚙️ to monitor👁️📺📶 our thoughts⬆️. Some good👍📶 may come of this, but it will📶 mean the loss of all individuality and privacy🧐📶, and will📶 signify🗡️📶 a true era of “post-humanity.”🕒📶👤👤

Procedure: Red Noise 📶💣🎧 15hz, 20 mV

Each time🕒 I go deeper⬆️ into the noise💣🎧, it feels like❤️ I go deeper⬆️ into the earth🌍. Like❤️ a journey to the bottom⬆️🏁 of the sea🌊, I encounter ever stranger🦑 and more exotic🌴🦋 creatures🐋🦁 as I descend⬆️📶. I can find🔍🎯📶 no explanation for these visions👁️📶, nor for the scent👃👤 of minerals🪨 and noxious gas🤢👤, nor for the eerie🦑👁️ consistency of the things I encounter. By all logic🧮, the experience of noise💣🎧 in the brain should be a kind of frenetic chaos🎲📶, an ephemeral shifting of random🎲 sensations and memories🧠🎞️.

As I go deeper⬆️ still, I am met with the tastes👅💡 of ash and soot and sulfur. There📶📌 are fires🔥 burning🔥📶 all around me, and I am falling🍂📶 through a tunnel into the deepest⬆️📶 depths⬆️ of the earth🌍. It is darkest here but for the firelight🔥💡 and the bioluminescence🦋🕯️ of creatures🐋 that would seem more usual at the bottom⬆️🏁 of the sea🌊. There📶📌 no water💧, and yet I fall🍂📶 past floating☁️📶, ethereal👁️📶 beings that resemble anglerfish🐟🐟, vampire squids🦑🦑, and other deep⬆️ ocean🌊 monstrosities🦑🦎, and still I descend⬆️📶.

Procedure: Red Noise 📶💣🎧 30hz, 40 mV

In a vast underground🌀🏰 palace🏰 I meet the devil👹. Perhaps it's more accurate🎯📶 to say I perceive an entity👁️ who tells📖🗣️📶 me he is the de

👹. In the course of my investigations🕵️➡️ I have seen👁️➡️ many such entities👁️, which I readily understand🔄📖➡️ as hallucinations😄💡.

This is different. This one speaks🗣️➡️ to me, looks👁️➡️ at me, regards me, creature🐋🦁 made of neon outlines and covered🌿➡️ in eyes👁️. He tells📖➡️ me he is the ruler👑 of this place, and that I should feel honored😄🏆➡️ meet him, but I do not🚫 trust💡🤝➡️ this entity👁️; in my gut I can feel he trying to trick👤➡️ me.

He shows👉👁️➡️ me visions👁️➡️ of high-up📶 places, and memories🧠🎞️, the past🕒➡️ and future🕒➡️, but he can see👁️➡️ I am not convinced, and tells📖🗣️➡️ me I am clever for seeing👁️🔄 through his ruse👤. He says🗣️➡️ “Damnation👹🔥 is but a word🗣️👉 bandied about by those whose blindness👁️ leads👑➡️ them to condemn👹🔥➡️ all who can see👁️➡️, even with a single👁️1 eye👁️.”

As soon as I hear👂➡️ this, the red noise🔴💥🔊 procedure concludes🔚➡️

Procedure: Re-Entry🔄🚪 (III)

Branch🌿 wakes☕➡️ to himself in the middle of the night🌙, and he's not in his bed🛏️. He's in a field🌾🌍 thirty minutes🕒 south📍➡️ of the compound alone on a hillside, with an LED flashlight🔦. He doesn't🚫✅ know👹➡️ what and he has the sense he's interrupting something, but he makes his way back to his house🏠, with some difficulty. There's📶📍 a wound😓🩸➡️ on the back of his hand👉; two perfectly straight, perpendicular, intersecting🔄🔄 cuts which could only have been inflicted deliberately, and with his own complicity, or if he had been restrained🔒➡️.

The anxiety of ignorance outweighs📶⚖️➡️ the anxiety of knowing👹🔄, as he opens the Nai He Bridge奈何桥 to see👁️➡️ what he has been doing✅🔄 in his absence👤➡️. Naturally🌲🌱➡️, he finds🔍🎯➡️ nothing🚫➡️ at all – the 📱🗄️ has been disabled🔒➡️, and all of its records🗣️🗂️➡️ wiped🧹➡️.

Whatever Branch had expected – half-articulated imaginings of rituals, flowing robes, human sacrifice, masked men gathered around some hidden stone altar, chanting hideous names – he finds nothing, and there is only the face of the wound on his hand, and the strange hour.

The next day he goes to Romero, who has neither joined his team, nor shared in his successes. Between his lost time and his new importance, Branch has, to his shame, neglected his friend. But Romero receives his invitation graciously, and comes to visit him at his new house. They eat and drink, and Branch, with some trepidation, tells him everything: about the mirror in Headstrong house, the missing hours, the ineffable awareness of Zhang's fourth labyrinth, and the episode from the previous night in the field. He shows Romero the wound on his hand, the thin perpendicular lines that form a cross.

Romero listens to all of this stoically, and when Branch has finished, he still does not speak.

Procedure: Azure Noise 13hz, 10mV

At 13hz, 10mV, the effects of azure noise are almost imperceptible. I have a pervasive impression that I am being watched, but I cannot see who or what is watching me. I can speak lucidly with other people.

Hong洪: What is your name?

Zhang张: Eric Zhang张

Hong洪: Where are you?

Zhang张: I am in a Neuralink research lab.

Hong洪: What is happening?

Zhang张: We are conducting🎵🎨🔄 a trial👤⚖️ with low📶 mV azure noise🔵💥👂.

Hong洪: What do you see👁️➡️?

Zhang张: The lab👩🔬🔬. Everything is normal.

The lights💡 feel very intense, much brighter than usual. I request that they be turned📶➡️ off. The lab👩🔬🔬 is still lit💡➡️ by sunlight☀️💡, and now I can see👁️📶 gently rolling📶🔄 geometric📐🔄 patterns in the dark corners.

Procedure: Azure Noise🔵💥👂 13hz, 20mV

The difference between📶 10 and 20 mv is stark and immediate. There📶📌 no🚫 possibility of interacting with anyone else in any normal capacity. I feel I have been pushed into another realm🏰🌐 entirely, as if I am seeing👁️➡️ “behind the curtain👩.” There📶📌 are creatures🐋🦁 here📶📌, beings made of pure energy⚡, and they are rushing🏃🔄 around spreading📶🔄 viscous📶 light all over the lab👩🔬🔬 like❤️ butter📶 over📶 bread📶. One of them approaches me and says📶➡️ “you’re getting closer; you’re almost there📶➡️. The creatures🐋🦁 are laughing😂📶 as they move to and fro, and their laughter😂📶 is joyous😄, but empty of warmth🔥 or compassion.

They finish🏁📶 covering📶🔄 everything in the room with light💡, and can now see👁️➡️ that a door🚪 –or more accurately, a portal🚪💡– has opened. They beckon📶➡️ me inside📶📶, but before📶 I can enter🚪📶, the trial👤⚖️ concludes🎬📶.

Note📝: Porousness🐋🧀 of the Mind🧠👤/Machine🔧 Distinction

We put a machine 🛠️⚙️ inside your brain 🧠, and that machine 🛠️⚙️ connects ⚡🔗➡️ to the internet 🌐⚡, and data 💾 flows 🌊➡️ freely 🇺🇸⬇️↺ between 🍞 them. Where does your mind 🧠👤 end ⬅️➡️ and the world 🌐 be 🏠➡️? This question ? is as old as the first 1⬇️ time 🕒 some ancient 🧑📖 hominid 🧟 picked up a rock 🪨 or a stick 🌿. Inside ➡️↩️ the mind 🧠👤, the picture 🖼️ of the body 💪👉 includes the tool 🛠️ it wields. If you drive 🚗➡️ a 🚗, your body 💪👉 is the car 🚗. If you pick up a hammer 🛠️, the hammer is your arm 💪. You've read 🔍📖➡️ this think piece 🤔🧩 before ⬅️. If you write ➡️ down ⬇️ some words 🗣️👉 on your phone 📱, they say 🗣️➡️ the text 📄 is a part 🧩 of your mind 🧠👤.

Procedure: Azure Noise 🔵💥👂 13hz, 30mV

As soon as the noise 💥👂 ramps 🦿📉➡️ up, everything I see 👁️➡️ is wrapped ➡️ in a lattice 🧶🔗 of light 🕯️. I feel as if I occupy several geometrically 📐↺ impossible 🧑📈 configurations 🗂️⬇️ of matter 🧬 simultaneously 🕒🕒↺; I am both inside ➡️↩️ and outside ⬅️➡️ of a cube 📦. Freely 🇺🇸↺ wandering 🎲🧑📈 I am walking 🧑📈↺ two 2 paths 🦶🌳. I am following a trajectory in a high-dimensional 📐📐↺ space 🌌, and I can't 🧑📈 make sense of the torrent 🌊🌊 images 🖼️ I am seeing 👁️↺.

The same creatures 🐟🦁 I saw at the lower voltage ⬇️⚡ are present all around me now, only there 📶📌 are more of them, and they welcome 🤝➡️ me back with fanfares 🎺⬇️ and flashing 🌟↺ lights 🕯️. They tell 📖🗣️➡️ me my entry ⬇️ into this space 🌌 has been predestined ⬅️✚📖➡️, that I was always supposed to be here 📶📌, and they congratulate 🎉👏➡️ me, as if I have won ➡️ some kind of prize 🏆🎁 or raffle 🎰🎫. I am the elect 🗳️ of humanity 🧑🧑 chosen to receive 🤝➡️ the knowledge 🧠⬇️ they are about to bestow 🎁➡️ on me. They are not forthcoming with the substance 🧬 of this knowledge 🧠⬇️ however, and the remainder of the procedure is only variations on this the

Procedure: Azure Noise 🔵💥👂 20hz, 20mV

There is machinery 🛠️⚙️ everywhere, made of glowing ⚡️🔄 lines and hypercubes 📦, gears ⚙️ and levers 🛠️. It looks 🤖🔗 like ❤️ the inside of a I Goldberg machine 🛠️⚙️. There 📶📌 are panels 🖨️ with buttons and screens but the technology 🖨️🖋️ is strangely 🚀🔄 anachronistic ❌🕒, like ❤️ a 1970s retrofuture 🧑🕒📶. There 📶📌 are alien-looking 🦋❤️ technicians shuffling 🔄🔄 around adjusting and inspecting these controls 🛠️🔒 and gauges 🧪📊 watch 👁️📶, the machinery 🛠️⚙️ is continuously reconfiguring 🔄🖨️📶 itself

One of the alien 🦋 scientists 🧑🔬 notices 👁️📶 me, and his face looks 🤖📶 like a jester or a joker 🃏 card, but when I try to look 🤖📶 him in the eyes 👁️, he transforms 🦋🦋📶 into a praying mantis 🙏🦏. “You’re not supposed to be here 📶📌,” he says 🗣️📶 “but since you found 🔍🎯📶 your way in, we’ll allow 🖋️📶 you to stay.”

Three more of the alien joker 🦋🦋 mantis 🙏🦏 scientists 🧑🔬 surround me and I am suddenly paralyzed, lying face 🧑📶 up 📶 on an operating table as in a medical facility 🏥. They insert 📶 various monitors 👁️🖨️ and wires ⚡️🔌📶 into my skin and head 🧑. Their instruments 🛠️ are connected ⚡️🔗📶 to the glowing ⚡️🔄 retrofuture 🧑🕒📶 clockwork 🕒⚙️ all around us, and as they make the connections ⚡️🔗📶, their machines 🛠️⚙️ start 🏁📶 to infiltrate and infest 🦋📶 my body 💪🦋, like ❤️ jewel-encrusted 💎🍌📶 locusts 🦋.

They make an incision 🗑️📶 on the back of my hand 🖐️ like ❤️ a cross 🛤️, and one 1 of the mantis 🙏🦏 men 🧑, the one who first 1📶 saw me, embeds 🛠️ device 🛠️⚙️ in the wound 🤖📶 and then seals 🩹📶 it back up. He says 🗣️📶 “We’ll see 👁️📶 you again soon.”

Procedure: Integration 🧬🦋🦋📶 (I)

Romero tells 📖🗣️📶 Branch 🦋 that whatever is happening to him, it’s because 📶 of malware 🦠📦 running 🏃🔄 on his Neuralink 🧠🔗 device 🛠️⚙️. The solution to his problem is obvious; he should remove his device 🛠️⚙️ a flash 📶 it or install 🛠️📶 another. This will 📶 require neurosurgery 🧑🗑️🧠

but with Branch's newfound ✨🔍🎯➡️ riches 💰, he can easily afford this Apothecary 📦💊💡 has its own facility 🏥 for these procedures, but given 📦 the circumstances, he should not 🚫 rely on it.

Branch 📶 hears 👂➡️ this counsel and refuses 🙅➡️. He has already ➡️ considered 🤔➡️ these things, but he also knows 🤑➡️ his recent successes are due to that same malware 🦠📦, which contains the hidden 🐶➡️ and esoteric writings 📖➡️ of Eric Zhang 张. He will ➡️ not 🚫 give 📦➡️ up this knowledge 🤑➡️, which he had so eagerly pursued, out of fear 😨 or precau

And Romero says 📶➡️ it's not 🚫 knowledge 🤑➡️ but greed 🙌👏 that is driv 🚗➡️ him, that what he really won't 🚫➡️ give 📦➡️ up is the power 💪💰 the mirror tiger 🐯 has given 📦➡️ him, and the wealth 💰💎 that it brings. He says 📶➡️ Branch 📶 is afraid 😨 that without 🚫 this virus 🦠 – let's not decei 🤔 ourselves – he is afraid 😨 he will ➡️ be unable to lead 🙅👑 his subordina and invent 💡🔧➡️ successful 🏆➡️ new ✨ drugs 💊.

Branch 📶 becomes angry 😡 when he hears 👂➡️ this, and he tells 📖📶 Romero to leave 🙅📖➡️.







The sky looks 🤔➡️ very blue 🌐. Is that its real color 🌈,

or is it because 📶 it's so far away and has no end 🏠➡️?

When the bird 🐦 looks 🤔➡️ down 📶, all he sees 👁️➡️ is blue 🌐, too

Procedure: Violet Noise 💜💣🎧 10hz, 10mV

After the dizzying 🤯🌀➡️ phantasmagorias of high-intensity 📶 Azure noise 🌟🎧, low 📶 mV violet noise 💜💣🎧 is initially underwhelming 📶😨. All my perceptions are nominal, but when Dr. Hong 洪 asks ? ➡️ me the standard









of questions , I realize    that what I perceive as Dr. Hong洪 is something else  .







Not-Hong洪: What is your name  .

Zhang张: Eric Zhang张





Not-Hong洪: Why  do you sigh over  gore  and decay .
























Zhang张: The universe is full of formless   vibration.

Not-Hong洪: This type of insight   cannot  be expressed in word , cannot be written  down , and cannot be carved   in stone. And yet, you must choose.
























Zhang张: I choose the infinite , the All-is-One  , the beginning   which is without beginning   .

Not-Hong洪: We will  begin   to uplift    you.

Zhang张: Oh! If only this river  of floating   peach-petals   could carry   me forever.

Hong洪-that-is-not-Hong洪 says   I will  show   you the gate to the next stage   of human   evolution   , and then I will  give  you the key . Beyond  this door  lies the infinite  . Beyond  this door  lies the All-is-One  .

Note : Similarities between the Subjective Experience of Noise and DMT

The above has not  been an exhaustive list   of the streaming   noise   trials   we conducted    with Neuralink  ; instead, these accounts   have been selected to demonstrate specific   motifs   that tend to occur at different speeds , intensities, and colors   of noi

💣👂. In accessory 📌 to our earlier 📩 claim that the distinction between 🍬 drug and a program 🗃️ is the presence of certain kinds of logic 🗃️, the effects of noise 💣👂 administered in this way seem to fall 🍂📩 under 📩 the category of drug 🍬. We are skeptical that mere noise 💣👂 in any way encodes 📩🖥️🗃️ the visions 👁️📩 that our subjects experienced in these trials 🧑⚖️.

These motifs 🏰💡 include:

- The sensation of falling 🍂📩 or sliding through tunnels.
- The experience of “breaking 💔📩 through” into a “parallel dimension 🗑️”.
- Encounters with “advanced entities 👁️” who seem to be distinct from 📩 oneself.
- Receiving 🙌📩 communications from 📩 those entities 👁️.
- The feeling of being chosen for special fate 🏹🖥️ or destiny 🏹🗃️.
- The feeling of being “taught 🧑📩” or “reprogrammed 📩🗃️”.
- The experience of undergoing strange 🦂 medical 🏥📩 procedures.

All of these same motifs 🏰💡 occur in another, perhaps unexpected 😮 place in the accounts 📄📩 of the experiences of users of the drug Dimethyltryptamine (DMT 👁️🧑📩). Rick Strassman administered 400 dose DMT 👁️🧑📩 to 60 volunteers over 📩 a period of five years between 🍬 1990 and 1995. Half the volunteers reported meeting entities 👁️ including aliens 🛸, other humans 🧑🧑, spiders 🕷️, reptiles 🦎, impish 😈 creatures 🦉🦁, and dwarves. (Strassman, 2000, DMT 👁️🧑📩 - *The Spirit Molecule*)

In a survey of over 📩 2500 DMT 👁️🧑📩 users who claimed to have encountered with “entities 👁️,” most respondents 🗣️🧑 endorsed that the entity 👁️ had the attributes of being conscious 👁️🧠📩, intelligent 🎮🧠, and benevolent 📩📩, existed in some real but different dimension 🗑️📩 of reality, and continued to exist after the encounter. (Davis, A. K., Clifton, J. M., Weaver, E. G., Hurwitz,

S., Johnson, M. W., & Griffiths, R. R., 2020, *Survey of entity encounter experiences occasioned by inhaled N,N-dimethyltryptamine: Phenomenological interpretation, and enduring effects.*)















The commonalities between the DMT experience and that of noise streamed into the brain via Neuralink are too similar to coincidence. We identify three possibilities:

1. Endogenous DMT is already present in the body. (Dean, J, T, Huff, S, et al., 2019, *Biosynthesis and extracellular concentrations of N,N-dimethyltryptamine in Mammalian Brain*) It is possible that the noise procedure somehow triggers the release of DMT into brain.
2. Ingested DMT causes neuronal activation patterns that are isomorphic to noise streamed in via Neuralink.
3. That both noise and DMT temporarily alter the brain in such a way that facilitates these perceptions, but that they derive from some source which is independent of either.












Procedure: Violet Noise 10hz, 20mV


The “breakthrough” of violet noise at 10hz, 20mV, is unlike any other experience of noise I have had to date. Within moments I occupy the position of a floating eye, like a drone or an over-the-shoulder camera in a video game. An entity is there with me, and it says “pay attention to these things I am about to show you.” We are deep in the Amazon jungle, and we watch as a party of ten or twelve men are hiking a well-worn trail through the trees.

At the head of the group, I see a dark-skinned man with colorful markings painted on his face, followed by Elon Musk and Jeff Bezos, followed by some men in tactical gear with guns. Elon is










carrying   a machete , which he uses to hack   through the foliage . Bezos thinks   the way he's swinging it around makes him (Elon   look   like  a dick .












Jeff   is saying   "...I still can't  believe I let you talk   me into thi












Elon   says   "It was easy. I knew you would commit   to do it if I asked   you in front of Priscilla, because  for some reason that none c can fathom—not even Mark  —you want to impress her."


Jeff   doesn't   respond  . Elon   dramatically   slashes   vine   out of his way.
























"You own a company called    'Amazon' and you've never  been to th Amazon before .

Jeff   says   "Think   about how much our time  is worth, put together. Think   about how much this trip costs."

"If you think   that way, then you're a slave . You could be the richest   man in the world  and still be a slave . But that's not an issue here . You will  be shocked   at the ROI of this trip."

"Where is the value ? Is it in the drug ? Is it –" Jeff affects a stoned   hippy   voice   "–the journey? Why ? do we have to come all the wa out here  ?"

"There are things that can't be transplanted   . I can't  explain. No, I but I won't  . You'll see  .

Their Shuar guide is taking them to a sacred  site for the ayahuasca   ritual  . It's a two day  hike from  their village , deep  in the tre , where no  helicopter  can reach. The only way to go is on foot . Je  hates the humidity   and the cloud  of mosquitoes  that seem to follow him at all times , but Elon   seems unperturbed  . He keeps

pointing 📌🔄 out neon-colored 🌈👉 poison dart frogs 🦟🎯🐸, and Jeff 🇺🇸 just doesn't 🚫✅ care at all because 📌 he has seen 👁👉 several of them already 📌 and he thinks 🤔👉 they're exhaustingly 🤔🔄 samey.

From 📌 my disembodied 🚫💪👉 viewpoint 👁📌 I am aware 🤔👁👉 of the thoughts 🤔📌 inside 📌📌 Jeff 🇺🇸📌 Bezos' head 🤔 as he walks 🚶👉 through jungle 🌴🌴. He is thinking 🤔👉 about Star Trek 🌟🕒: The Next Generation. how in the episode *The Inner Light* 📌📌🕯 in season two, Picard is struck unconscious 🚫👁🧠 by an energy beam from 📌 an alien 🛸 probe and it ca him to experience the entire lifetime of a scientist 🧑🔬 on a long-dead 🪦 wo 🌍. He has read 🔍📖👉 that people who take ayahuasca 👁🧑🌿 trips go through this also.

He says 🗣👉 "I met with Steve Jobs 🍏🖥 before 📌 he died 🪦👉. He said 🗣📌 something puzzling 🧩👉 to me: that his debts 💰💵 were coming due. I didn't understand 🚫🤔📌 that. I thought 🤔📌 he was talking 🗣👉 about whatever strings 🧶 he pulled to get a new ✨ liver. But after he died 🪦👉, I heard 👂👉 story 📖📈📉 that he met the devil 😈 on an LSD 🌈🖋 trip and sold 💰🤝👉 his soul 🧠👁 for charisma 💖💪 and power 💪💰. And then, when his cancer sta 🏁👉 to take him, that was the devil 😈 coming around to collect."

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣👉 "Of course you don't 🚫✅ believe that."

Jeff 🇺🇸📌 says 🗣👉 "No I don't 🚫✅, but I think 🤔👉 people who take psychedelic 🌈🧠 drugs 💊 often end 🏁👉 up believing strange 🦄 things. So care more about if Steve 🍏🖥 believed it."

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣👉 "There's a similar ⚖👁 story 📖📈📉 about Foucault. It's common trope. Pure 🧊💧 superstition 🧑🔮👁, moral panic by conservative Christians 🏴✝👤."

Jeff 🇺🇸📌 says 🗣👉 "Right and I don't 🚫✅ care. But Steve 🍏🖥 did use a lot of LSD 🌈🖋. He sold 💰🤝👉 the first 1📌 Apple 🍏 computer 🖥 for six hundred sixty six dollars and sixty six cents. The Apple 🍏 with a bite out of it might

have been chosen to represent the apple 🍏 from 🔄 the tree of knowledge 🌳 of good and evil in the garden 🌸 🌳 🌿 of Eden. Why!❓ did Steve 🍏 🖥️ choose those things?"

Elon 🚀 💰 says 🗣️ ➡️ "You're worried that if you take ayahuasca 🧠 🧑 🌿 one time 🕒, you're going to start 🏁 ➡️ believing a bunch of superstitious 🧑 🧛 🔄 nonsense."

Jeff 📖 ☁️ says 🗣️ ➡️ "Yes, and that's not a crazy thing to be worried about. In a survey of over ➡️ 4000 people, 800 of whom identified ID ➡️ as atheists 🚫 ✚ three fourths of the atheists 🚫 ✚ changed 🐛 🦋 ➡️ their mind 🧠 🧛 after using psychedelic 🌟 🧠 drugs 💊." (Griffin, Hurwitz, Davis, Johnson, Jesse, 2019, *Survey of subjective 🧠 🧠 "God ✚ encounter experiences": Comparisons among naturally 🌲 🌱 occurring experiences and those occasioned by the classic psychedelics 🌟 🧠 psilocybin 🌟 🍄, LSD 🌟 🖋️, ayahuasca 🧠 🧑 🌿, or DMT 🧠 🧑*

Elon 🚀 💰 says 🗣️ ➡️ "Do you believe in God ✚, Jeff 📖 ☁️?"

Jeff 📖 ☁️ says 🗣️ ➡️ "I believe... there 📶 📌 are more things in Heaven ☁️ and earth 🌍."

Elon 🚀 💰 says 🗣️ ➡️ "Well then you don't 🚫 ✅ have to worry. The goal 📊 ➡️ this is to learn 🧐 📖 ➡️ new ✨ information 💡 🗄️. Some people call 🗣️ 🗣️ ➡️ it 'expanding your perceptions.' I focus 🧐 🎯 ➡️ on things that are concrete and actionable. But you should expect to believe something different after you're done ✅ ➡️ it. That's the point 👉 💡."

Jeff 📖 ☁️ says 🗣️ ➡️ "You've done ✅ ➡️ this before 📧. What new ✨ things do you believe?"

Elon 🚀 💰 says 🗣️ ➡️ "That's proprietary."

Jeff 📖☁️ feels like ❤️ they're speaking 🗣️🔄 different languages despite using the same words 🗣️✍️ and grammar. It's almost like ❤️ in Star Trek 🌟🧭: The Next Generation, season five episode two, "Darmok" where Picard meets an alien 🛸 species who talks 🗣️🔄 entirely in allusions to their mythic 🏛️👑🔄 history 🏛️📖.

They walk 🚶🔄 in silence 🗣️🌀📶 for another mile before 🗣️ Elon 🚀💰 speak 🗣️ up and says 🗣️🔄 "Do you think 🤔🔄 of yourself as powerful 💪💰🔄?"

Jeff 📖☁️ says 🗣️🔄 "Yes. I have changed 🐛🦋🔄 the world 🌍. My leadership built 🧑🔧🔄 the backbone 🦴 of the internet 🌐⚡."

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣️🔄 "Well, you're not 🚫. Have you ever looked 🤔🔄 at another man's wife 🧑 and decided 🤔📖🔄 to take her, like ❤️ an ancient 🧑📖🔄 king or a barbarian? Any tribal 🏠👑 chief like ❤️ the ones in the Shuar can do ✅ that, but you can't 🧑🔧."

Jeff 📖☁️ scoffs. "First 1📶 off, I'm not convinced that they even can ✅🔄 do that. What about the rest of their tribe 🏠🧑, won't 🚫📶 they get mad 😡?"

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣️🔄 "Well look 🤔🔄, there's 📶📌 no need to speculate." He stops 🛑🔄 and waves 🙌🔄 over 📶 the interpreter and the Shuar guide. "Ask ? 🔄 him," he says 🗣️🔄 "Can your chief 🏠👑 take another man's 🧑 wife if he wants to?" The Shuar and the interpreter chat 🗣️🗣️🔄 for a moment 🕒 and the interpreter says 🗣️🔄 "Yes, but he might have to kill 🦴🔄 the man 🧑"

Jeff 📖☁️ says 🗣️🔄 "There's a lot more to power 💪💰 than being able to treat people like ❤️ slaves 🧑. Leadership 👑🚢 is always contingent on the compliance of the people being lead 👑🔄."

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣️🔄 "But real power 💪💰 commands 👑🗣️🔄. It makes people compliant. And that's why!?! you aren't 🚫 powerful 💪💰🔄, because 🗣️ you think 🤔🔄 your people have to choose to follow you."

Jeff 📖☁️ says 🗣️➡️ “Well, they do. I am a leader 👑👤, and people follow me because ➡️ they trust 💡🤝➡️ me. They trust 💡🤝➡️ me because ➡️ I earn the trust 💡🤝➡️, by being right a lot.”

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣️➡️ “That’s admirable 😊❤️⬆️↺, but it shows 🙅👁️➡️ a lack of imagination 🤔🐸.”

Jeff 📖☁️ says 🗣️➡️ “You are confusing 🧑🔧↺ force 💪➡️ with power 💪💰. The need to demonstrate force 💪➡️ is sporadic, and when force 💪➡️ is not 🚫 continuously demonstrated, power 💪💰 has arisen. The difference between dominance 👑💪➡️ and predation 🦁😬➡️ is the time ⌚ scale ⚖️. A predator 🦁 dominates 👑💪➡️ its prey, but it does not 🚫✅ need to install ⚙️➡️ an enduring 📅➡️ dominion 👑💪, because ➡️ it doesn’t 🚫✅ matter 🧬➡️ if the prey submits 🙇➡️ beyond ➡️ the moment ⌚ of destruction 💣💥➡️.

“When power 💪💰 resorts to using force 💪➡️, power 💪💰 is already ➡️ lost. Under ➡️ civilized conditions, power 💪💰 is exempted from ➡️ the test of force 💪➡️, because ➡️ it has ascended 🏔️➡️.”

Elon 🚀💰 says 🗣️➡️ “You’re talking 🧑🔧↺ about dominance 👑💪➡️ vs prestige 🏆, but you’re minimizing the fact that, if your power 💪💰 were tested, you couldn’t resort to force 💪➡️ if you wanted to. Dominance 👑💪➡️ can rebuild 🔄🧑⬆️➡️ itself into power 💪💰 by regressing to force 💪➡️, but prestige 🏆🏆 can’t 🙇. Its power 💪💰 is pure 🚗💧 credit 🏠💰, because it’s not backed by dominance 👑💪➡️.”

Jeff 📖☁️ says 🗣️➡️ “We’ll use your word: prestige 🏆🏆 is like ❤️ magic 🧙, and it works as long as everyone believes in it. When you have power 💪💰, people start 🏁➡️ trying to do what you want, without 🚫 even asking ? 🔄 you, this you may not 🚫 even realize 🤔💡➡️ you want. They try to anticipate your feelings and then act 🙅➡️ preemptively on that.

“Your gut feelings about people start 🏁➡️ to come true, and you end ➡️ selecting for effective sycophants. It starts 🏁➡️ to feel like ❤️ the harder you

will something, the more it becomes manifest. And you end^{END} up in whatever world you imagine. So the way you imagine pov works, that's how it works for you."

Elon says "In this jungle, your magic prestige can't protect you. That's why we had to outsource dominance." El rolls his head in the direction of their armed guards. "The closer you get to the metal, the more your magic fades."

"But we don't live in the jungle," says Jeff, and he thinks "Darmok. And Jalad. Et Tanagra." Elon keeps talking but Jeff tunes him out. Doesn't even hear him. "Shaka when the w fell."

Procedure: Integration (II)

A shipment of antique treasures arrives at the compound, destined to be made into tigers to fill the halls and galleries. Apothecary. It contains Chinese ceramics and Persian rugs, militaria such as 19th century swords and scabbards, dragoon helmets, knives and insignias. There's a taxidermied corpse of a tiger, posed in mid-leap, its jaws open, its teeth on display, and most interesting to Branch, a vintage cherry red Porsche with jaguar hide seats.











For him, all of these things are tokens of Headstrong's authority, the man he wishes to become, or to bring down. Miaoyu 妙玉, the tall girl in white, is likewise a token, and Branch covets her with a desire bordering on spite. Each sight of her is a slight; each thought of her with him is a wound. And when he thinks of her, he also thinks of the heights he will ascend, of the respect he will command, and of the power he deserves.








































Headstrong 🧠💪 is skilled in the art 🧑🔧⬇️ of slow intimidation, in the diabolical 🧛🔄 trickery 🧛⬇️ of leading 🧑👑➡️ a man 🧑 on, step 🦶 by step 🦶, shifting from 🔄 sincerity to mockery. Branch 🦶 decides 🧐📦➡️ to apply this ambiguous method to the task of replacing Headstrong 🧠💪, but he will ⬆️ take his time 🕒 over ⬆️ it. He confides 🧐🤝➡️ his plan to Romero, who pleads 🤝📦➡️ to help, despite their earlier 🔄 disagreement 🚫🤝⬇️.

An opportunity comes when a rival gang mounts 🦾➡️ an attack 🗡️⬇️ against the Apothecary 📁💊🔬. This is a hazard ⚠️ of operating in black markets 🌑 and they are prepared. The automated 🧠➡️ security 🚗 system 🌀🕸️, called 🔄 Micro (vended by Uber) acts 🦾➡️ through Neuralink 🧠🔗 to turn 🦋🦋➡️ every man 🧑 into a soldier. Martial conflict is mostly automated 🧠➡️, and security 🚗 in meat-space 🦶📺 has come to resemble security 🚗 in cyberspace 🖥️📺. Operational readiness consists of closing off vulnerabilities 📁📦 in the automated 🧠➡️ security 🚗 deployment 🖥️🌩️⬇️, installing 🌀➡️ the latest patches, and educating 🧑➡️ personnel. Sophisticated attackers 🗡️🧑 run simulations 🧩🦾⬇️ against the common tactical systems 🌀🕸️ in the space find 🔍🎯➡️ gaps 🦶📶 in the coverage 🌱⬇️ of their target installation 🌀⬇️. never-ending 🚫🏁🔄 arms race.

The AI 🧠🧠 security 🚗 system 🌀🕸️ excels at tactics in a way that a human never 🧑 could, because 🔄 it incorporates sensory 🧐👄 data 📁 from 🔄 every agent in the system 🌀🕸️ along with feeds from 🔄 security 🚗 cameras 📷 and other sensors throughout the compound, all in real-time 🕒. But at the highest 📶📶 level 🧩🍰, the human 🧑👩 element is still relevant in these situations. Value 💰 judgements 🧑⬇️, decisions 🧐📦⬇️ that pertain to lethality 🦴📶🔄 or sacrifice 🗡️🐑📶, are routed 🗑️➡️ through a human 🧑👩 authority 🧑👑💡. In Headstrong's 🧠💪 conspicuous absence, Branch 🦶 assumes the executive 🧑👑 position 📌🗺️ and directs 🎬➡️ Uber Micro to defend 🗡️🛡️ the compound and repel the attackers 🗡️🧑.

In the struggle, several men are shot 🗡️➡️ and injured 🧐➡️, including Branch 🦶, whose shoulder is grazed 🦋🌱➡️ by a bullet, though he comes to no



















serious harm. The attackers   breach the outer wall and even make it in the great hall , but Apothecary    is well-fortified  , and Branch is merciless. Using Uber Micro, he can feel the position   and tactical value of every friend and enemy, and he leaves no enemy alive.

Exulting in the glory   of violence  , and feeling the thrill  of reckless authority  , he orders    his men to bring Headstrong's   treasure   into his own house . He hangs the swords  and guns  from  ancient    battles on his walls. He places the leaping tiger  in his foyer to guard his door . He races the vintage Porsche through the winding roads  of the Santa Cruz mountains , and he drifts through its twists and turns   until his tire treads are bare. With his car , he can go anywhere he wants, but the wound    on his shoulder is still fresh, and the excitement   and vigor of the drive   makes his blood  run down  and stain the jaguar seats  .

That same night , he sleeps   with Miaoyu 妙玉.

Note : The Brain as Transceiver ?

When I was a child, there   was a social media application called   Twitter, and the posts there   were called   tweets  . I remember    reading    a tweet   that said   “The corporate man is a victim of malware  from  DMT    entities  that counsel powerful   Bay Area   and Hollywood   creatives. Machine elves    taught them how to transmute    humans   into Bitcoin   mine ; sexless  , industrious  , agreeable   , anxious , dreamless , like  the entities  themselves.” It stayed with me, after all these years.

The visions   described above are highly  unusual, even within the domain of streaming   noise protocols  . Our null hypothesis   may be that the entities  we perceive in these visions   are artifacts  of our own minds  , a kind of pareidolia of our own internal    states and

impulses. Whether we anthropomorphize 🧑🔧➡️ one of our own intentions, a machine elf 🧑🔧 or another real person, the simplest and most parsimonious explanation is that the provenance 📡⬇️ of these things is purely 🧠💧 internal ➡️⬅️↻️, and that they operate on a principle similar 🏛️ to a dream 🧠💤.

The alternative to the null hypothesis 0 🧠🤔, which we call 📡⬇️➡️ the occult 🧙📖 hypothesis 🧠🤔 or the gnostic hypothesis 🧠🤔, is that the body 🦵 and by extension the brain 🧠, is only a vessel 🚢 for a distinct and “materially 🧪↻️” separate object called 📡⬇️➡️ the soul 🧠👤. There ➡️📌 are materialist 🧪🧑 dualist versions of this hypothesis 🧠🤔 which refer to the “mind 🧠👤” as an epiphenomenon % 🌈📺❤️ of the brain 🧠, and posit the relationship 🤝 between 🍞 them to be that of a computer processor 🖨️⚙️ and its software 🧩💾.

The gnostic hypothesis 🧠🤔 can be characterized by extending this metaphor to say 📡➡️ that the mind 🧠👤 or “soul 🧠👤” exists in a separate universe from ⬅️ the world 🌍 of bodies 🦵👉 that we know 🧠➡️, and that they connects ⚡🔗➡️ to the physical body 🦵👉 as if over ⬇️ a network ⚡🕸️.

The weak gnostic hypothesis 🧠🤔 says 📡➡️ this world 🌍 of minds 🧠👤 that connects ⚡🔗➡️ to the world 🌍 of bodies 🦵👉 is ontologically distinct and separate but connected ⚡🔗➡️ by some rational 🧩↻️ and predictable principle.

The strong gnostic hypothesis 🧠🤔 says 📡➡️ the world 🌍 of minds 🧠👤 is ontologically primary 1 ➡️ to the world 🌍 of bodies 🦵👉 and that the material 🧪⬇️ world 🌍 as we know 🧠➡️ it is an epiphenomenon % 🌈📺❤️ of world 🌍 of minds 🧠👤.

The strong gnostic hypothesis 🧠🤔 is not testable and, if true, would invalidate every scientific 🧪🔭↻️ paradigm in the world 🌍. The weak gnostic hypothesis 🧠🤔 suggests many intriguing possibilities, which have been

explored 🧭🌍 at length in fiction and mysticism, and which empirical science 🔬🔗 tends to discredit a priori, e.g.:

- That the mind 🧠👤/soul ❤️👤 could be detached from ⬅️ the body 💪👤 and welded to another.
- That the mind 🧠👤/soul ❤️👤 could be reachable after death.
- That the mind 🧠👤/soul ❤️👤 could be “reincarnated” into a new material ⚛️⬇️ body 💪👤 after death.
- That non-human 🚫👤 entities 👤 could interact with us from ⬅️ with the “spirit world” 👤🌍.

Further, we speculate that, under a gnostic 🍅🧠 model 🌍🇮🇹 of cognition, I 👤👤👤, near-death experiences, and Neuralink 🧠🔗 noise might all work through a similar ⚖️👤 mechanism ⚙️ of action, “disrupting ❤️🔗⬅️” the connection ⚡🔗⬇️ between 🍪 the brain and the soul ❤️👤, causing the soul 👤 to perceive the spirit world 👤🌍 instead of the material ⚛️⬇️.

Previously 📧🔄, Marko Rodriguez (2006, A Methodology for Studying 🧠🏠🔄 Various Interpretations of the N,N-dimethyltryptamine-Induced 🏁👤🔄 Alternate Reality) proposed asking ? 🔄 DMT 👤👤👤 entities 👤 to factor large numbers $\begin{smallmatrix} 12 \\ 34 \end{smallmatrix}$ into primes to prove that the entities 👤 people experience when using DMT 👤👤👤 are real.

The presence of the Neuralink 🧠🔗 device 🔧⚙️ presents a problem for this method, since in any trial 👤👤 where the human 👤👤 subject is equipped with a Neuralink 🧠🔗 device 🔧⚙️, the possibility that the device 🔧⚙️ was invoked to request the prime factorization of a large number $\begin{smallmatrix} 12 \\ 34 \end{smallmatrix}$ will ➡️ be more parsimonious than the possibility that a persistent and autonomous 🤖⬆️🔄 spirit 👤 in a parallel dimension 📐 was compliant enough to grant your request and had the mathematical 🧮 $\begin{smallmatrix} 12 \\ 34 \end{smallmatrix}$ 🔄 or computational 🖥️⚙️🔄 capacity to do so.

Indeed, we find 🔍🎯➡️ that both versions of the gnostic hypothesis 🧠🧠🧠 selected against, a priori, in standard scientific 🔬🔭🔄 paradigms.

Procedure: Violet Noise 💜💣🎧 13hz, 20mV

Jeff 📖☁️ and Elon 🚀💰 are seated in a Shuar tent 🏠 on sacred 🙏 ground, dimly illuminated 🕯️➡️ by torches 🔥. The air 🌬️💨 is thick with vapor from ➡️ a machine 🔧⚙️ plugged 🔌➡️ into a gas-powered 🛢️💪💰➡️ generator 🔌⚙️. Outside ➡️ the tent 🏠 there ➡️ is a collection of shrunken heads 🧠, but the interior is (mercifully, in Jeff's 📖☁️ estimation) free 🇺🇸 of them.

The shaman 🏠🧙 is singing 🎵➡️ an *Icaro*, a magic 🧙 song 🎵 which he will ➡️ have learned 🧠📖➡️ in an ayahuasca 🧠🧙🌿 vision. Many psychonauts 🧠🧙 report 📖➡️ hearing 🧠🔄 vivid alien 🛸 music 🎵 when under ➡️ the influence 🏛️ of these plants 🌿, and the shamans 🏠🧙 bring these songs 🎵 back with them to facilitate passage into the spirit world 🧠🌍. Jeff 📖☁️ is still waiting to feel the effects of the drug 💊, and the whole episode makes him think 🧠➡️ of TNG season seven, episode seventeen, *Masks* 🎭, in which an alien 🛸 artifact transforms 🦋🦋➡️ the Enterprise into a stage 🎭🏠 where Lt. Commander 🧑 Data acts 🎭➡️ out the mythological 🏛️🦹 cycles 🚲➡️ of an ancient 🧠🏠 alien 🛸 society. The imagery 🖼️➡️ in *Masks* 🎭 is distinctly meso-American and Jeff 📖☁️ wonders 🧠? ➡️ if it's racist to draw 🖼️🖋️➡️ this comparison.

~

Elon 🚀💰 is already ➡️ descending ➡️ into the depths ➡️ of botanical 🌿🔄 dimensions 📐, dreaming 🧠🎭 of scenes from ➡️ his life. He sees 🧠➡️ himself on a stage 🎭🏠 giving 🎁➡️ a demonstration of an early Neuralink 🧠 prototype.

"...[T]he device 8mm thick, fits invisibly 🎯🔄 in your skull 🧠, 1024 channels day 17 ⌚ charge ⚡🔋, tiny scar, no wires ⚡🧠➡️. Invisible 🎯 if it's under ➡️ your hair. I could have one now. You'd never know 🚫🧠..."

Gertrude the pig 🐷 is smiling 😊🔄 and trotting around. All the screens 📺 in the presentation hall 🏛️ show 🖱️👁️➡️ a wireframe ⚡🏠🖥️ of her limbs animating as she walks 🚶➡️, generated by reading 🔍📖➡️ the incoming data from 🔄 her Neuralink 🧠🔗 device 🔧⚙️.

“...like ❤️ a fitbit in your brain 🧠. Sort of like ❤️ if your phone 📱 went into your brain 🧠. Maybe not a great analogy...”

~

Jeff 📖☁️ is beginning 🔬🔄 to feel uncomfortable 😬. He is drifting through space 🌌, and as he floats ☁️➡️ he meets a spider 🕷️ with a billion arms 💪. It tells 📖🔊➡️ him he has oriented his entire life around an imaginary 🤔🌱🔄 being called 🗣️🔌➡️ the “the customer 💰🐷” with whom he is ostensibly “obsessed.” As the spider 🕷️ talks 🗣️➡️ it undulates and its array of gelatinous 🔄 eyes 👁️ glimmer 🕯️✨ with light 🕯️ of no terrestrial 🚫🌍🔄 color 🎨🌈.

“— but there 📶📌 is no 🚫 customer 💰🐷!” The spider’s 🕷️ voice 🗣️🔊 comes from 🔄 inside ➡️🔄 his own skull 🦴. “There are only many customers 💰🐷, the only qualities of their idealized 💡➡️ aggregation + 📊➡️ are its banal, banal 🦁 drives 🚗➡️, which you end 🏁➡️ up not 🚫 only satisfying 😊➡️ but driving 🚗➡️ to their limit.”

The spider 🕷️ continues,

“You do user research 🔬➡️ where you believe you should listen 👂➡️ to people’s stated problems but not their stated solutions. Listening 👂➡️ to what people say 🗣️➡️ they want is considered 🤔➡️ a mistake – instead you try to invent 💡⚙️➡️ things the user doesn’t 🚫✅ even know 🤖➡️ they want, and you do this according to the logic 🎲 of the aggregated + 📊➡️ and infantilized 🍼 customer 💰🐷 that you have invented 💡⚙️➡️. And the more you do this, the more you actually end 🏁➡️ up warping human 🧑🧑 nature 🌳🌱 and molding it into the shape 📐 of your imaginary 🤔🌱 human 🧑🧑 ideal 💡➡️, homogenizing 🏳️🌈🔄 everyone into their basest desires 😍➡️.

~

Elon🚀💰 has a memory🧠🎞️ from🔙 when he was a child that he relives over🔙 and over🔙. When he was a young boy👦 in Pretoria🇿🇦🏛️, his family had a housekeeper🧹👩 who talked🗣️🔙 to spirits👻. She told him there🔙 are earthly🌍🔙 doors🚪 hidden👁️🔙 in caves🏕️🏔️ and forests🌲🌲 that you can walk🚶🔙 through and emerge on the moon🌕. Most are too small👉, the housekeeper🧹👩 showed👉👁️🔙 him one, a keyhole-sized🔑🕳️ gate🚪 she found🔍🎯🔙 in the garden🌸🌳🌿, under🔙 a rock🪨. Young Elon🚀💰 put his eye👁️ to it and seen👁️🔙 the cold🥶 lunar🌕🔙 landscape, the dark gray of the lunar🌕🔙 sea🌊🌊, the blue🌐 and white🌐 mottled sphere rising gibbous🌕 on the horizon. He knows🧠🔙 the memory🧠🎞️ is false❌, that can't🙅 be real, that it's something he's imagined🤔🐸🔙 or dreamed🌙👁️🔙 but the ayahuasca👁️👩🌿 spirits👻 show👉👁️🔙 it to him every time🕒, and dreams🌙👁️🔙 of it often.

Before🔙 Elon🚀💰 was born, Wernher von Braun🚀🇩🇪 wrote👉🔙 the history🏛️📖 of a future🕒🔙 Martian colony:

The Martian government👑🏛️ was directed🎬🔙 by ten men, the leader of whom was elected🗳️🔙 by universal suffrage🗳️🔙 for five years📅 and entitled 'Elon.'

Braun believed the chthonic👹🔙 world🌐 is as profoundly inhuman🚫👤 as the black🕳️ reaches of space🌌, and that the quest for outer space🌌 is the quest for the subterranean🔙🏔️🔙 world🌐 are one and the same.

~

Jeff📖☁️ sees👁️🔙 the famous😁🏷️🔙 machine elves🔧⚙️👧, which look👁️🔙 him like❤️ iridescent🌈🕯️🔙 insects🐛🐌 made of mosque🕌 ceilings, sacred geometry🙏📐. All the many legions shimmer🌟🔙 and seethe and swarm🐜 Jeff📖☁️ is inside🔙🔙 a vast hive🐝🏠, like❤️ the inside🔙🔙 of a brain🧠, surrounded by an intricate meshwork🕸️⚙️ of neon lights💡. And the longe

looks 🧐➡️ the more he realizes 🤔💡➡️ that he is, in fact, inside ➡️↔️ of a brain 🧠, or a model 🌐🇮🇹 of one. He can see 👁️⬆️ every neuron 🧠🧠, and the way they connect ⚡🔗➡️, and the way they fire 🔫➡️ in waves 🌊. The Boltzman gyrus, the parietal kenoma 🌀, the anterior cingulate vortex 🌀. Brains 🧠 and galaxies 🌌 look 🧐➡️ the same, when viewed at the appropriate magnification. Machine snakes 🐍🔧🌀 slither 🐍➡️ and coil 🌀➡️➡️ around luminous 🕯️ neurons 🌟🧠🧠; they tunnel their way through the brain 🧠/universe 🌌, snakes 🐍 that stretch from ➡️ star ⭐ to star ⭐.

It's clear 👁️💡 to him that this is a machine diagram 🧠🔧🌐, that he's looking ➡️ at schematics 🧠🔧, and this is what Elon 🚀💰 wanted to show 👉👁️➡️ him. My guide, who is also his guide, says 🗣️➡️ "build 🧑🔧➡️ this!" – and Jeff 📖☁️ has a sudden realization, which would ordinarily be too incredible to contemplate. In this moment 🕒, under ➡️ the influence 👉⚖️ of the ayahuasca 🧑🧠🌿, it does not 🚫✅ seem absurd 🧑 to him: he has followed the progress of the Neural 🧠🔗 corporation and its technology 🖥️🔧, and he sees 👁️➡️ now that Elon 🚀 has received 🙌➡️ the technical design 🏛️🌐⬇️ from ➡️ these creatures 🐋🦁 and that they have shared it with him from ➡️ some other dimension 📐📐. It can be accessed 🔑⬆️ by taking ayahuasca 🧑🧠🌿.

Now, that same design 🏛️🌐⬇️ is being shown 👉👁️➡️ to him. But Jeff 📖☁️ recoils ➡️🌀➡️➡️ in horror 🐉🤢, because ➡️ –he now realizes 🤔💡➡️ –he has always seen 👁️➡️ himself as Captain 🧑 Jean Luc Picard –or at least, he has admired 🙌❤️➡️ this character, and he admits on some level 🧩🍰 that he doesn't 🚫✅ even like ❤️➡️ earl grey tea 🍵 but that he has been drinking 🍷 for decades and it's an affectation, along with his proclivity for quoting 🗣️📖 Shakespeare 🧑📖, which he picked up because ➡️ he wanted to emulate 🖥️ this character in Star Trek ⭐🧭 –and he has personally struggled ✖️➡️ at least with what Jung would call 🗣️📖➡️ Picard's shadow 🧑 self, a facet 💡📐 of his personality that was reified as the character Locutus in the TNG Season 3 Finale: *The Best 🏆 of Both Worlds* 2 🌐, where Picard is assimilated into the Borg collective 🐛🏠.

The Borg are a race of alien cyborgs who maximize utility and are spread like a virus. They have become wholly subsumed by the technology they implant in their bodies; they enhance themselves with mechanical limbs, neural implants, and network transceivers and abrogate all individuality in order to exist as a hive consciousness whose only objective is growth. Maurice Hurley one of the writers for TNG and the creator of the Borg, explained, "What we really wanted to do, but couldn't because of money, was create a race of insects... insect mentality is great because it is relentless. The Borg are a variation of an insect mentality." (Hurley, 1990, *Starlog* #152, p. 33)

And it's that exact word, *relentless*, that he has used so many times characterizing his managerial style and his business objectives, that horrifies him now. He's used it in every shareholder letter he ever written, and he originally wanted to call Amazon "Relentless.com."

He trains technical advisers to fully interiorize and proceduralize his personal methods and then assigns them to each of his executives and in his own mind he refers to this as assimilation and wishes he could decentralize his consciousness into a series of agents so he could be everywhere inside of Amazon at once. He'd personally manage every single team. Every layer of management could be J. Is this not the exact org chart of the Borg? And he knows this that's why! he finds Locutus to be a relatable (in some ways more relatable) aspect of Picard.

Big thinking always sounds grandiose from the outside. But the terminus of this thoughtline is something monstrous and inhuman. Star Trek presents the Borg as a cancerous overgrowth of wires and machine parts. The structures are cubes and spheres built out around the husk of

whatever alien 🛸 species they assimilate, leaving only a mocking trace of the original. This vision 👁️👇 he sees 👁️➡️ is the fulcrum for a future 🕒➡️ of total automation 🤖👇 of the human 👤👩 body 💪👉 and mind 🧠👤.

The convergence of AI 🤖🧠, cloud services ☁️⚙️, and direct 🩺👤 brain interfaces 🖐️🧠 is Borg.

Postscript:

It is, of course, very difficult to find 🔍🎯➡️ any corroborating evidence 🕵️ that the above events occurred, but there ➡️📌 were rumors 🗣️🗣️, in the early days 📅, of certain irregularities regarding the technical design 🏛️🌐👇 of the hardware. Despite having high 📈 level 🧩🍰 access 🔑👇 to the various document 📄 stores of the Neuralink 🧠🔗 Corporation, I have never found ➡️ anything to substantiate these rumors 🗣️🗣️. I cannot deny 🙋👉 that the technical designs 🏛️🌐👇 for the device 🔧⚙️ were provided by an off-site team, that none of the engineers 🔧⚙️👤 in our facility had any acquaintance with that team outside ➡️👈 of technical correspondence 📧💬👇, or that the location 🌐📌 was not disclosed.

And I remember 🧠📽️➡️ a late night 🌙 in the lab 🧬🔬 prior to a public tech demo. We had double 2 and triple 3 checked ✅➡️ all of our devices 🔧⚙️, graphs, and procedures, and the lab 🧬🔬 team was sharing a drink 🍷👇 of cachaça 🇧🇷🍷, which our Brazilian technical production 🏭⚙️👇 manager 👤 had brought. He told 📖🗣️➡️ us a strange 🦄 story 📖📈📉, which I don't think 🚫🗣️➡️ anyone believed, that the offsite engineering 🔧⚙️🔄 team was located in a warehouse in a rainforest 🌧️🌲🌲, that he had been there ➡️📌 and that the engineers 🔧⚙️👤 took shifts doing ✅🔄 shamanic 🏠👤🔄 rituals 🙏 under 🔄 the supervision of medical doctors and witch doctors, drink 🍷🔄 jungle 🌴🌴 potions 🍷 while their colleagues listened 👂➡️ and transcribed 🖋️➡️ everything they said 🗣️➡️. He left the company shortly after that, and I never thought 🗣️👇 much of it, at the time 🕒.

Procedure: Violet Noise 🍷💣🎧 20hz, 40mV

I enter 🏠➡️ into what feels like ❤️ the house 🏠 of God, a palace 🏰 made of crystals and pure light 🌟💡, a place of indescribable beauty. An angelic creature 🦋🦁 is waiting 🎧➡️ for me, its whole body 💪👉 covered 🌿➡️ in w and eyes 👁️. It offers to reveal all the secrets 🧐➡️ of the universe to me, and the price will ➡️ be my mortal life, my embeddedness 📶➡️ in my material body 💪👉. I say 🎧➡️ "yes 👍," but I am afraid 😨, "yes 👍," but first I must make preparations.

The angel says 🎧➡️ this was a test, and I passed, and he gives 📺➡️ me a sequence 📊 of waveforms 📶, numbers 📊 describing frequencies 📶 amplitudes 📶, which he calls 🎧➡️ yellow noise 🟡💣🎧, though I already hear 🦋➡️ it as I see it as I apprehend it; it is this palace 🏰 made of light. It is the primordial Icaro, it is the song 🎵 of songs 🎵, the chorus of the cosmic 🌟 background radiation ☢️➡️, the divine ✝️ music 🎵 of transcendence ☹️➡️.

The angel says 🎧➡️ this music 🎵 will ➡️ loosen the soul ❤️👤 from ➡️ the body 🦋👉, and ultimately set it free 🇺🇸. That when the soul ❤️👤 is liberated 🇺🇸➡️, it may return 🔄➡️ to the ultimate source of being, the All-is-One 🌌1. The body 💪👉, freed 🇺🇸➡️ from ➡️ the soul ❤️👤, may become a vessel 🚢 for other things, beautiful things, such as angels, or even another human 🧑🧑 soul ❤️👤, perhaps one long deceased 💀➡️.

The angel says 🎧➡️ the memories 🧠📺 in a brain 🧠 are the signs 📶 by which the liberated 🇺🇸➡️ soul ❤️👤 recognizes its body 💪👉. To call 📞➡️ up the souls 🧠👤 of the dead 💀, use the Neuralink 🧠🔗 device 🔧🔧 to reconstruct 🔄👷 their memories 🧠📺 in the brain 🧠, and then fill them with yellow noise 🟡🎧. The liberated 🇺🇸➡️ soul ❤️👤 may then come to reside 🏠➡️ in a new ✨ body 💪👉.

Procedure: Yellow Noise 🟡💣🎧

Nominally, Headstrong 🧑🏻💪 is still the boss 🧑🏻. He continues to give 📦➡️ orders 🧑🏻📢➡️, but Branch 🧑🏻🔪 ignores or modifies 🧑🏻➡️ them according to his taste 🍷💡. In truth 🍷📢➡️, he pities Headstrong 🧑🏻💪, the feeble old man 🧑🏻 who has lost control 🧑🏻🔪➡️. The Apothecary 🧑🏻💊 is his, and he has grand 🧑🏻🏆 ambitions.

Branch 🧑🏻🔪 revives 🧑🏻➡️ the practice of hosting elaborate parties 🎉 on the grounds around his home 🏠. He builds pavilions 🏡🏛️ and firepits 🔥🪑, and arranges for Neuralink 🧠🔗-assisted live music 🎵 and traditional foods to served; freshly slaughtered 🪄🦴➡️ and roasted 🔥🍖➡️ meats 🍖, spiced 🌶️🍷 cakes 🍰, and rivers of wine 🍷. On one such night 🌙, Branch 🧑🏻🔪 sits 🪑➡️ at head 🧑🏻 of a long table, feeling his drink 🍷, piling exultation upon exultation boast upon boast, and he does not 🚫✅ even notice 🧑🏻🇫🇷➡️ that Headstrong 🧑🏻💪 has come to join the feast, that he sits 🪑➡️ quietly 🧑🏻🔪 at the table, in fine spirits, the picture 🖼️ of health.

At midnight 🌙, Headstrong 🧑🏻💪 gets up from 🪑➡️ the table, as if he has suddenly remembered 🧠📅➡️ a pressing engagement. Two 2 of his men 🧑🏻 bring Miaoyu 妙玉 out to the party 🎉. She is barefoot 🧜🏻👣 and half-dressed ➡️. Everyone is abruptly quiet 🧑🏻🔪, and all eyes 🧑🏻👁️ turn 🪑➡️ to Headstrong 🧑🏻💪, even Branch 🧑🏻🔪, and Headstrong 🧑🏻💪 says 📢➡️ "Since you and the Jew 🧑🏻👉 care so much for each other, you're going to kiss 🗨️➡️ him right now in front of everyone." He adds +➡️ an obscene 🍆 detail.

Brought to tears 🧑🏻🔪, she 妙玉 kisses 🗨️➡️ his face 🧑🏻. In his final 🏁🔄 moment 🕒, all of his missing 🔍🧑🏻🔪 hours 🕒 and memories 🧠📅 rush 🏃➡️ to his consciousness 🧑🏻🧠➡️. Branch 🧑🏻🔪 realizes 🧑🏻💡➡️ he has been betrayed 🏛️🔪 from 🪑➡️ the start 🏁➡️, that the yellow noise 🟡💥🔊 will 🪑➡️ consume 🍴🧑🏻🔪 and Zhang's 张 soul 🧠🧑🏻🔪 will 🪑➡️ inhabit 🏠➡️ his 🧑🏻🔪 body 🧑🏻💪👉. Love 🧑🏻💪➡️ and command 🧑🏻📢➡️ and triumph 🏆🏅➡️ have been accorded him because ➡️ companions already 🪑➡️ thought 🧑🏻💪➡️ of him 🧑🏻🔪 as a dead 🧑🏻🔪 man 🧑🏻, because 🧑🏻🔪 Headstrong 🧑🏻💪 he already 🪑➡️ was a dead man 🧑🏻🔪.

A new ✨ and entirely different affect comes over 🔄 Branch 🏹, and he says “Again. My journey 🗺️📅📥 is almost complete ¹⁰⁰, but we must perform 🤖👉👈 the procedure again.”

Note 📅: Epilogue 🎬🔙📁

Romero walks out to the Baylands, smells the gray ocean. He is a rational r he knows that every time Zhang is reincarnated, they extract the memories from his most recent host, merge them into master, and deploy them to the mirror. He doesn't know if there is such a thing as Zhang's soul, but he knows the mental continuity of the entity called Zhang relies on this process of extraction and deployment. If others wish to call that a soul, he will raise no objections.

He gave Branch every opportunity; told him the parable of Guolao; warned him of the malware in his Neuralink device. Of course, he had known Branch would not listen, but for himself, his conscience is clear. No, that's not true; let Branch believe it was fate, that he was special, as if there were only one dagger, as if it was destiny that brought him, as if he was the only malcontent kid to find one of Apothecary's tigers. But we all have our vices—Branch with his jealousy, Zhang and Headstrong and their elaborate mind games. Surely Romero is no great sinner, here.

He arrives at a lonely expanse of the marsh, brown grasses bathed in California sunshine, and he reaches down and finds a certain hollow rock. Inside of it, Romero hides a dagger 🔪, its blade gleaming like a mirror 💎, with a white tiger 🐅 carved into its jade handle in bas-relief.

Following the waves,

I float with the oars.

The sky is three feet away.

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Afterword:

This project started out as a joke, if I'm honest, but it grew into something more. I wanted to retell a story by Borges called *The Dead Man*, and I take great joy in hitting all the beats of his story, making it mine, even when I quote him exactly in a few places. Like Pierre Menard, I believe it's possible to tell someone else's story, word for word, not by merely copying it but by "doing the work" of reasoning through it, and this can change its meaning. There is a sense in which everything I write is a footnote to Borges.

When I first launched this story, I apologized to anyone who knows anything about neuroscience. I have taken much license here regarding the science and philosophy of mind, writing according to a folk understanding of neuroscience which assumes that the brain is only a Turing machine running a very large neural network. I am not nearly so foolish as to imagine this is a correct or complete model, but I think it is a fun one to use as the basis for a piece of speculative fiction.

A central fixture of this story is a real, imminent piece of technology, the Neuralink device, which is not available to the public at this time, but which is said to have full read/write capability. If it can predict how your limbs are positioned, and it can "write" state to your brain, then it seems likely that a future iteration of the device will be able to control your body. I have alluded

to some of the downsides of this possibility (they are obvious) in several of stories in this collection.

In 1975, Hieromonk Seraphim Rose wrote a book called *Orthodoxy and the Religion of the Future*, wherein he claimed that science fiction is a vector for crypto-indoctrination into the occult. I disagree with him, but I will paraphrase something he wrote:

The future world and humanity are seen by science fiction in terms of "projections" from present-day scientific discoveries. These projections correspond remarkably to the everyday reality of occult and demonic experience through the ages. Among the characteristics of the "highly evolved" creatures of the future are:

- Communication by telepathy
- Ambition to fly, materialize, or dematerialize
- Travel at speeds far beyond any existing technology
- The ability to transform the appearances of things or create illusionary scenes and creatures by "pure thought"
- The ability to take possession of the bodies of earth-men
- An expounding of a philosophy which is beyond all religions and holds promise of a state where intelligence is no longer dependent on matter

All of these are standard claims of sorcerers and demons.

It was this line of thinking that inspired me to present the "noise trials" of Zhang as a series of "trip reports" in the style of Alexander Shulgin's *Phenethylamines I Have Known And Loved*. Zhang was intended to be part Kesey, part Shulgin, and I imagined his experiments with streaming Neura

noise to be similar to acid experimentation in the 1960s and '70s. I personally do not recommend psychedelic drugs in any capacity, as I think their main effect is to cause everything to seem profound, no matter how puerile or pointless. Users of psychedelic drugs tend to mistake their most trivial cogitations for shocking revelations.

To me it is intriguing how many of the occult tropes in Rose's list can be realized through the Neuralink device. It can facilitate telepathy, the power to manifest illusions, and the ability to take possession of someone else's body, though Rose neglects the part where all of these faculties are administered through the noosphere of wireless internet and centralized through cloud services, allowing both states and corporations to watch and record your every move and thought, and to analyze and even predict them using artificial intelligence.

A panopticon made of lightning will wrap us like a warm blanket, and already has. McLuhan said electric media makes the world a global village, because instant communication brings us closer together, and because electric media scrambles the linearity that text imposes on our thoughts. This is not an advancement in any sense of the word; it is a reversion to a much older and more primitive form of social organization. The global village turns out to be a global longhouse, where everything you say and do is monitored and controlled by the women—yes, the women—of your tribe.

This development, which as I have said, is a regression, has nothing to do with free markets or communism or collectivism or individual liberty. It is not a facet of any political binary. Ideologies come and go, but regardless of the content, too-tight social bonds result in a stultifying conformity enforced by the matriarchs of the tribe, just as too-loose ones result in a diffusion and lassitude of the spirit, and predation by bad men. Finding “the good” is always an exercise in threading the needle, and we are all camels in that regard, my friend.

But do not mistake this “balanced” observation for some kind of renouncement of all ideology, for the limp-wristed “both-sides-ism” of the “intellectual.” You say Lyotardedly that you are skeptical of metanarratives the bitter aftertaste of this pill is the realization that there is no such thing as a narrativism. “Negative” liberty is only ever a liminal space. There is always a default, always a null hypothesis, and to choose nothing is to have the choice made for you by those around you. This revelation was reified in 2008 by Sunstein and Thaler, whose book *Nudge* advocated technocratic selection of prosocial defaults in all things. Thaler called his approach by the oxymoron “libertarian paternalism”, but it’s more motherly than fatherly, as noted above. The nudge, and the idea of the nudge, of poking and prodding you at every turn to make the “correct” decision is an inevitability in a fully wired and quantified world. The strangling tendrils now insinuate themselves into every crack and crevice of our lives, and this is the horror of the glorious technofuture.

Our model for rapid adoption of a new technology is the smartphone revolution. In fewer than ten years, the smartphone went from a curiosity to a default. We expect everyone to have one, to be tethered to the cloud and to a hive-mind forever; tracked, monitored, pwned. (For posterity’s sake I will mention that this was not a typo.) Human nature is the same as ever, but there is a threshold past which a change in quantity becomes a change in quality. The post-smartphone world is quite different to the pre-smartphone world because all of our senses have been reconfigured by this device, and everyone is in contact with everyone at all times. This type of rapid, radical shift could happen again, for example, with full duplex brain implants.

•

A diverting manifestation of the global longhouse is its creation of an ideographic newspeak called emoji, whose glyphs are chosen by international committees according to the modern fetish for mind-numbed corporate positivity and naive Sapir-Whorfism. There are emoji for “super” villains but

not for mere villains, such as prison inmates. The only symbols for insanity imply jollity. The gun emoji was famously replaced with a water pistol. There is no emoji for fatness, nor for any deity.

But despite these limitations, reality asserts itself, and we can find ways to express truths in any linguistic milieu, no matter how Orwellian. We can always unbellyfeel Ingsoc, and though you can ban a word, the perception of the concept remains. The elephant in the room/brain here is that, because of this, I have annotated the entire story with emoji. Emoji are low-brow, but like picking up a folk melody and working it into a symphony, they can be more, even as one risks the total bimbofication of the text. I cannot resist creating metatextual works. The existence of the glyph, the fact of the word-in-itself, the texture of the writing—these things are as important to me as the story, and I derive much enjoyment from them.

Originally I had desired to include sections written exclusively in emoji, or to play games with their density as it pertained to the rising and falling action, but I found these things to be too laborious, too imprecise, and too demanding of the reader. There are those who have accused me of using some kind of tool or find/replace method to do these annotations, but no, I did them by hand, lovingly, meticulously. I made use of a find/replace for only a handful of words, particularly the use of the heart for the word “like” — which some people felt was lazy or inappropriate, and which is an inside joke with myself about the UI in social media apps. My favorite critic said “the author should have been more considerate and not included these emoji” — and I cannot fathom the broken circumlocutions of the mind necessary to intersperse such a time-consuming labor of love as “inconsiderate,” but indeed many things do come to pass.

Anyway, my intention is for you to access a new form of consciousness by means of this lexical device. I believe the textual modality is cognitively distinct from the pictorial. Nothing I do could approximate the phenomenological experience I have imagined in this story, but I dare to

dream that by combining these two paradigms I can produce a strange ne experience using this format.

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Zane Milam 6 Nov 2022

♥ Liked by Zero HP Lovecraft

"Time dilation🇺🇸 "

"Homogenizing🇬🇧 "

Haha, very funny.

:)

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1 reply



Leo Abstract 6 Nov 2022 Edited

Liked by Zero HP Lovecraft

Seems like you're getting a lot of hate for the emojis, which has a faint tang of irony given the indicators of you yourself hating emoji. I have a more optimistic view on them. While it is obvious that "despite [...] limitations [...] we can find ways to express truths in any linguistic milieu would submit that the light and playful symbols drive rather than inhibit this expression. Imagine an internationally-ratified emoji set that included realistic genitalia, gunshot wounds and beheading syphilitic sores and massive tumors. Gone would be the exuberance of posting 🍆🍎 or 🤔 comfortable irony stripped away, people could no longer say what they mean because the raw explicitness of the expression would shock and humble them in the act of choosing the symbol from a menu of horror.

Language itself always plays the veil. I can tell you "brb kms" and hint at meanings not possible were telepathically flashing you a vivid fantasy of climbing up on this chair and putting my hands in your noose. Or again -- to paraphrase from our time's celebrity philosopher -- think of the scene in Casablanca where the camera cuts to looking out at the air strip and we are left to imagine what the characters do. Because of the ambiguity, they both do and do not have sex. The camera's good discretion heightens the eroticism -- imagine instead that the cut were replaced with a lengthy completely explicit hard-core pornographic scene. It would be impossible to go on after that movie would be over. Not due to prudery or the Hayes code, but because the magic would be lost.

Emojis are part of a lexicon that will always be limited, and whose limitations create the surplus enjoyment itself of evading that limitation. 🍷🤔 and @ may be frail competitors to the wine-sea of a man whose sighted contemporaries lacked the word for the color they saw every day of their lives, but they're all we have.

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