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History for the Sunken Town

A Thesis submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Fine Arts

in

Creative Writing & Writing for the Performing Arts

by

Peter Barrasso

December 2014

Thesis Committee:

Professor Tom Lutz, Chairperson

Professor Reza Aslan

Professor Robin Russin

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The Thesis of Peter Barrasso is approved:

Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

History for The Sunken Town

Sunken Studies Inc.

*Retribution will be ushered by cherubim swift,
bear catastrophe disguised as ink on heavy letter stock
looms for those who prevaricate the state
he so founded, sunk, rested here.*

Sunken Studies Inc.

Acknowledgements

That:

I am supreme.

Gratitude and thanks to The Institute for Humane Studies People of the Sunken Territory for their generous grant and support.

Fuck everything and everyone else with razor wire.

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Foreword One

Regarding the Editor

The buffoon, you'll meet him momentarily, who was my so-called editor for *History for the Sunken Town* failed to make the sole comment, that he would make the comment was the sole reason for his employment. He does not consider, though he'll go into great detail about my facial hair and bore with details about what I'm assuming must have been a recurrent nightmare about Nietzsche, why I wrote to the "sunken citizens." Not why I wrote *about*, but why I wrote *to, at*. I could detail the entirety of my relationship with the sunken citizens, but to enumerate every aspect of what they represent and what my character represents will miss the sole, pertinent point that, again, the buffoon masquerading as an editor failed to see. He should have considered why the sunken people are the recipients of my history (albeit one that almost entirely lacks history). What does it mean that I imagine an entire sunken town's populous (I did not take a real group and fictionalize it/them. The group is fictional and, I hope, representative of no one who actually exists) and then treat them as receptacles for my "glorious" and largely dissociated thoughts? Why are the sunken people—who live in a land of anarchy, who are going blind, whose only season is one of darkness, whose landscape nears complete organic death and total pollution—my audience? Regardless what causes them to sink into the earth, as many potentialities are explored, the sunken citizens matter only after one recognizes why I wrote to them. What does it mean to only write to an entity that does not exist, that should not exist, that cannot exist, that is one the verge of

extinction, with what my character believes to be a *masterwork*? Why would I send something masterful to a place/people where it cannot be appreciated? Is it an act of atonement? Is it commentary on the value of great art? No. That I write to the sunken people is, from the very beginning, an admission. I write to them, people who cannot and should not exist, because the content, the history, is not a composition that ought ever burden entities who do, or could, exist. I do not regard it, as I proclaim, as masterful. I wrote to the sunken citizens to dispose of these thoughts. More simply: I imagined a huge amount of trash and could not figure out how/where to dispose of it so I imagined a huge trash bin. I called the trash a history and the bin a sunken town.

Foreword Two

Regarding the Advice I offer to the Sunken Citizens

The rare occasions when I do not write of myself in *History for the Sunken Town* when I pause to offer the sunken residents advice (much of which is terrible, sometimes intentionally so) the advice, most basically, is oriented in such a way that could be interpreted that I have some stock in their survival. Such an interpretation is fair but incorrect. I encourage them to form into groups, to protect their health, to live, etc. I tell them of survival, of clear vision, of peace and organization because I assume that it is what they desire. I assume that they do not want to go blind, that they do not want to be kidnapped and eaten, battered by the madman with the wrecking bar, drink their own urine until they inevitably die of dehydration. I do not know why I work from these assumptions. I certainly do not care if they survive. But this is a point aside. They need to know that if it is their desire to be dashed about by the mad man's wrecking bar that such a desire is equally valid, a realizable goal for which permission need not be sought nor granted. They must understand that if they decide that they do not want to survive that such a reaction is valid and defensible. They must not, however, believe that such a desire is valid and defensible within only the potentialities and framework of the sunken town. If desires to no longer survive arise from consideration of a brutal, unenjoyably future then they ought be rebuked. The desires to survive, the desires to not survive, are both valid so long as they are of pure origins.

Foreword Three

Regarding the Existence of the Author and Editor

That I, the author, am also the editor is patently false. All traits that he and I may seem to share are either imagined or coincidence. By his own admission I have influence him greatly. Suspicion that neither the editor nor I exist and are instead a manifestation of some third, unidentified party is lunacy. Belief that the “real” person who insists that he is a conscious entity and shares a name with the “official” name that is so adhered to this larger body of work and document who occasionally “interrupts” to write about current events is also “actually” the same person as the author, editor, and some third party is one of total insanity. Any suspicion that all of the contained occurrences are anything other than entirely true is ridiculous. It is impossible to believe that a single person would construct multiple people (who may seem to share remarkable similarities) with the intent of then constructing a world of angels and earthquakes as a type of home—my ability to comprehend the exponential nature and ramifications of the absurdity reaches its limit here.

Foreword Four

On the Placement of A History of Unleashing the Wrath of a Saint and City Filled with Angels

I am grateful that the editor noticed *A History of Unleashing the Wrath of a Saint and City Filled with Angels* was omitted from the later drafts of *History for the Sunken Town*. His analysis is correct: it was lost as result of my general laze and neglect. I often lose track of my work. I compose in many documents and save less than systematically. His placement of the section, in the middle of *A History of Democratic Actions Taken by the People of the Surface* is wholly perplexing. I was not aware of the error until after printing and was unable to correct it. It ought appear either before or after the section it splits.

From the Editor

If I were not a professional, and legally restrained, I would have committed this manuscript to literal and figurative flames some ago. The act would have been one of futility: such is the nature of self-referential, bush league, pomo, nonsense—it materializes faster than it is possible to destroy. Time will cleanse this mess, is the mantra in which I find solace. By then I will be dead. It is difficult to be optimistic. Still, I would be remiss if I did not say that I am overjoyed to pen my final remarks. I have become so pale that I could be misidentified as an albino. My diet transitioned to one exclusively constituted of carry in foods. This is not hyperbolic. I have digital and paper copies of all the transaction receipts in the event of the forthcoming civil suit. My lawyer assures me that my case is strong and holds high prospect. I do not know who will be held accountable, but surely someone is liable. I have gained nearly forty pounds (38.5 to be as exact as my digital scale. I would include the percentage change of my body fat but operation of the scale's function remains elusive). The pores of my nose are akin to crevices and filled with a black muck, the stuff one would expect to find at a tar pit, or in the coats of birds caught oil spills and slicks. My ability to speak, to properly enunciate words is lost to grunts and profane mumblings.

I rarely stand to move about my residence. I roll in my office chair from room to room. I shower only when my nails are so blackened with dirt and shit that even my nose turns up in my presence. My shower waters runs murky and produces a

smell that wafts up through the shower drain. Bleach and industrial pipe cleaner serve as a masking agent, but even they reliefs they provide are temporary.

Ammonia has achieved no result. I filled my nose with lavender soaked cotton balls for the better part of September, as well as a bit of October. At first I only did so for the time that had to be endured in the shower. I invested considerable cognitive resources and wondered if it was possible to go mad because of a smell. The Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental disorders (fifth edition), a Christmas present I bought for myself, was of some help. Olfactory reference syndrome has three indexed entries. As defined, the syndrome refers to the fear that the body emits a rancid smell, but says nothing about the practical ramifications for a shower's plumbing. The syndrome, as is well noted by the editors, is not a DSM-V recognized disorder. Sullen, I distracted myself with the "hoarding disorder" header on the adjacent page and thus I lost the better part of an evening as I wondered what I would hoard. I suppose it would be a newspaper or magazine, if I were the subscriber type. I have long intended to subscribe to Soldier of Fortune. It is not that I want to read the magazine. I would not remove it from its plastic sleeve but if I did I would later reseal it in a plastic zip lock bag. I want it around as a conversation starter: I would leave a back issue on the coffee table and tuck the current issue under my arm as a sort of prop for subway rides. Any issue more than two weeks old would sit on my nightstand. Some night the stack would fall on my sleeping body. It would crumble. I would die clothed in silken pajamas, an eye mask to stave

off the early morning light, pinned under my pristine collection of *Soldier of Fortune*. I will have to make my way to a newsstand to acquire a subscription card.

Sincere apologies for my digression. My mind rarely wandered. It is recent. It is the result of spending so many hours with the following pages. I will make no mystery of my contempt for the author. He is loathsome. He meanders about *History for the Sunken Town* and drivels pages that lead nowhere. The lack of narrative progression was not deliberate. Surely he thought he was headed to an end, or at the very least that arrival was a possibility (I would not tell him this. He would scream, or so is my suspicion, that he will not “genuflect to telos.”). Misused conjunctions would have built him a fine estate in an age when pay came by the word. I often wish he had sunk with the town. If he and I were stranded on a desert isle from which escape was possible with minimal cooperation, I would not help. I would rather die by the elements, or a wild boar if the island so allowed. Perhaps he would manage his way back to civilization, do not underestimate him, he is very clever. Regardless, I would die with the peace of knowing that I could, in no way, be found at fault for his return. My apologies again. I will exercise brevity moving ahead.

If I were you, a fate I wish upon no one, I would be curious to know how and why I came to be the editor of this manuscript. I can only say that the events that lead to my possession of this manuscript, as well as a number of his journals, a few personal possessions, and a flash drive, were of no substantial note. Further, I am legally obligated to note that I cannot disclose how I came to possess the manuscript. I am legally restrained from disclosing why I undertook the position of

editor, but am required to note that I was not, at least in a clear, legally actionable sense, coerced. My lawyers tells me not to worry about the lack of coercion. We have a strong case. We have a strong case.

I must disclose that I know the author. I would not be surprised if he knows me. He never sought me, nor did I he. He does not know that I am his editor. I am certain he resents me. He resents nearly everyone. The main text of *History for the Sunken Town* will make this clear. At first I sensed minor justice in the fact that he does not spare himself from resentment. No longer. You will not be fooled. His life is no tragedy, he chooses to trudge around, and wallow with a sullen countenance. His writing endeavors are problem that he creates for himself. He readily admits this. I heard him speak the words at a public reading in a small theater.

His presence was one of a terrible, nervous energy. I must mention the pit stains and sweat, that his hair clumped to the middle of his forehead almost as if by design. It was hard to tell which of his words were jokes. He drew laughs from the audience, but they only came with hesitance and sporadically. I couldn't tell why the audience laughed. I doubt he could either. At one point he stopped entirely, not because he was finished, but to enjoy his own joke long after the audience had returned to silence. I could not tell if it was a nervous tick, the product of clinical narcissism, some social coping mechanism, sadism, or self-fascination. The woman I was seated by crossed her arms and fidgeted in her chair, as if to protect her internal organs from the madness: incomprehensible strings of words about the return of God, a laundry mat, a flaming sword, and the terrible fate the rapture

would deliver to poets and photographers. At one point I heard her groan with disgust—if I remember correctly it was as he explained what he derived about ancient legal culpability surrounding bestiality (I have included a copy of the piece he read in the addendum. The poems he opened with, sadly, were never in my possession) and do not appear. He abruptly stopped reading, received semi-committal applause, then returned to his seat where he frequently checked his wristwatch for the next two hours. From the seat he chose to look, mostly, at the floor instead of to the podium and other authors. He scribbled on a copy of the night's program. I did not yet know that I would serve as his editor. He rushed from the room as the final reader finished.

I shuffled out minutes later into an adjacent room that housed a reception. The room was far too large. That the ceilings were quite high only added to the problem. It was rather funny, I thought, that they held themselves in such high regard that they needed such a venue. Could they have believed it possible they would draw the kind of crowd that would have filled the room? They must have. I blinked my eyes rapidly, as did most of the attendees, in an attempt to remember why we had come to the reading. There didn't appear to be a raffle at the end (forgive me, humor has never been in my higher suits). No. I had come of my own accord. I was a patron of the arts. The authors and few remaining attendees concentrated near a table. Food lay about on plastic trays. The drinks were in tiny aluminum cans. All sat on an unattended plastic table. I thought a wait staff was merely well concealed within the crowd. This too was wrong. The atmosphere, other

than cheap, was of oppression. Of insecurity. The authors floated among one another and the crowd in a search for reassurance. Not praise. They needed to know that they hadn't accidentally slipped into tongues, that their mouth produced intelligible words, that they had not collapsed then imagined the whole thing, and that it had gone well. All regarded themselves as superior and enlightened entities. The sight of this was disgusting. That they fumbled with paper plates only made it worse. It's impossible to explain and not worth experiencing to understand. It would not be so unlike checking out at a grocery store and noticing that the bagger was dipping the produce into a can of paint and throwing it back into the store with expectations of being recognized as a genius who deserved an exorbitant amount of money, or an award. But I had subjected myself to this. Why Nietzsche proclaimed God and not art dead I will never understand. The deadness of art is empirically verifiable. I assure you. I watched as they delivered the lethal blows.

The entrance, doors of glass with stainless silver handles were no more than ten meters from where I stood. Here is where I saw him. Our eye contact was brief and unintentional. He was framed by the door. A plastic toothpick ran through a cube of pepper jack cheese and hung from his mouth. Hairs from his unkempt, patchy beard jutted over the cube an awful garnish. It is not that I did not try to look away. Such is an assumed danger when art wanders about a room, talks, is not confined to the walls. I was among it and it wanted to permeate my being. He looked at me with eyes that may as well have been of gray or no pigment at all. I could not move. Inability to move suggests the experience of fetters, and the experience of

fetters suggest the existence of something. Here, there was nothing. I was within nothing, but there was nothing, and I was nothing. A vague memory of cheese persisted somehow, and I knew I had not traveled to a foreign world. I was in my world. This was my world. The horror was precisely this: I was no tourist, I was on familiar ground. This was my home. This was my home.

I wish I would have known of the flooded cave, a pit, a sinkhole of unknown depth in South Africa. An Everest for world's elite adventure divers. At a depth of 270 meters the rock slopes down and the beams of flashlights vanish in the water. Two men have died in the pit, the second in an attempt to rescue the first who was since ten years dead and decomposed. Divers who descend so many meters must stay under water for nearly full days. A dive team breaks and descends to stratify the meters. To the lead diver they are the support, an underwater infrastructure to replenish oxygen tanks and keep him alive. The ascent is a nine-hour process. It dies if time is not taken to properly readjust the body's pressure. Oxygen used by recreational divers is too pure, poisonous to breath if not diluted for such depths. It was of this cave, these divers, where my mind treaded in the following days. I dove alone. I did not dilute my oxygen. I had not prepared. I should have died.

I tell myself that my stay at the reception, suspended in time could not have lasted longer than a few seconds. I would have fallen over had it lasted more than a moment. My legs would have buckled. I would have stopped breathing. Surely something within would have saved me. But nothing that is mine, that is me so materialized salvation. It was the cheese, the awful, pepper jack with stubble for

garnish. The cube split, tumbled from his mouth, hit, bounced on the floor and crumbled. I do not know if he noticed. The bare toothpick protruded from his mouth. I was free. I ran into the night until the sounds of the glass doors' shutting swings vanished.

I would not dare pretend to understand the workings of my mind. I do not know why some afternoons I wonder about my grandfather's hands. I wonder if I should care that the occurrence is rare. I wonder why I don't wonder what kind of person I am for not thinking about him. Why I think, and some days it seems like I do so for solid months, of information partially retained from quickly read books, puzzles me. The latter are things I have opinions about, but seem relatively inconsequential. When I think of Karl Marx it is not of the manifesto, though I do wonder when the workers will realize that they are oppressed, or who will lead them to the revelation. I never wonder if I am an unrealized worker, I am not, I am far too educated, though it poses a bland paradox—obviously it is theoretically possible that my alleged state of realization is actually just another way that non-realization is made manifest. I could be a highly unrealized worker, say a nine on a scale of *covered in mud and exhausted* (zero) to *perhaps still covered in the mud but fully realized* (ten). Of one's own state of realization on a Marxist scale is, perhaps, not the best way to spend time of contemplation, as it is exactly the kind of question that leads nowhere and is impossible to resolve (but it would probably find an audience with the kind of person whose heavy intellectualizing revolves around the

possibility that God is a woman, or if everyone sees the same yellow, if some people perceive pears to be hand grenades and contrariwise, et cetera).

I cannot stop this wandering. It is an infection. He is contagious. I do not care about my grandfather. I spend almost no time wondering about Karl Marx. I certainly do not think of the manifesto, much less any "ism." Of Marx I recall a photograph. It is black and white, grainy because of digital magnification. He and Engels stand behind three women. Two are girls, the woman is Karl's wife, the girls are two of their daughters. Engels is alone. All the females were named Jenny. Here they wear sunhats, the men hold their own hats by their sides. The youngest daughter sits between her mother and sister. She is a child dressed in white while the rest don what the camera has made look shades of gray. Maybe they were in grays. But their world may have been one with color: emerald, violet, navy blues, whatever fades to dark and gray on black and white film. The girl in white has uncovered legs and does not look at the camera. Her hat is better suited for a militiaman or a train conductor. Many years later she, the girl in white, and her husband killed themselves in a suicide pact. Vladimir Lenin attended her funeral. Her sister's funeral was less attended and occurred a decade earlier. She was dead of suicide by poison soon after she learned her husband had made a movie star mistress his wife. The future cannot be derived from family portraits.

I have not been able to stop the awful, internal buzz of information formerly instilled. It is his fault. I know. It started that night in the reception room. It as if my mind knows to grasp at everything, anything it can that may draw me away from

him. This is the only explanation that makes sense to me. I see Nietzsche in the moment he lost his mind. The sound of a leather strap connecting with a horse. The horse's cries. Sometimes it is the author there who flogs the horse. Sometimes I replace him and beat the horse myself. Nietzsche sprints through the square. He throws his arms around the horse. I do not know if the flogging stopped here. I never see Nietzsche collapse. My times tables of nine through thirteen interrupt, or the words to a song, or the equation for calculating percentage change, the time I hit and killed a bird with my car, groceries I need, how to make lens cleaner for my glasses. This is where he trapped me. The divers. The suicided Marx daughters' family photo. If Karl dressed them in grays. If he dressed them in colors. Who found them dead. What happened to the hat. My grandfather. His hands. The cheese. The ground. The toothpick. Silver door handles. Glass doors. The woman who folded her arms as protection. Nietzsche grasping a horse. The corpse of a ten year dead diver. His eyes. This is where he trapped me. I was bombarded by these things, my memories, as they pounded through my mind rendered with screaming sounds and split second cuts.

I honestly do not know if the buzzing has stopped, if the images have slowed, if the sounds are muted, or if I have acclimated. It seems that it has all passed. I'm sorry. My promised brevity will govern everything I tell you from here. You are not here for me.

If I could tell you how and why I came to be his editor it would be here. It is not that I feel a duty to adhere to the terms of my contract. It is fear of landing on the

wrong side of litigation and legal fees. My lawyer assures me that I have a strong case for being put through this experience. My lawyer also assures me that any breach of this contract will ruin my life.

I spent a number of weeks reading the author's journals and some of the content saved to the flash drive in an attempt to gain a better understanding of his work. I desired a context in which to understand the purpose of *History for the Sunken Town*. In retrospect I feel like a fool. His enthusiasm for nonsense is obvious within the manuscript, but nowhere better exemplified than in his unpublished poem *The Current State of Poetry* or *Ask for Hugo* or *Van Gogh didn't cut of his ear because he read about it in Dutch Vogue*. In its entirety the poem seems to be around one hundred lines, not including the footnotes. The poem only exists in his handwriting on journal pages that were badly damaged by water sometime after they left his care. I would have liked to scan the pages and include them as an appendix, but all of his notebooks have since been removed from my care (The repossession was one of the many legal stipulations I agreed to before I received the manuscript).

The pages of the journal are an oddity in that he wrote the same header, a refrain, on every page, the front and back, including those which otherwise remain blank: *Reject the editorial process. Reject narrative. They are acts on a spectrum governed, at opposing extremes, by obfuscation and destruction. My soul is pure.* I have not marked the page breaks with these words because it is unclear if they are an intentional element of the poem, a feature of the journal, a combination of the

former, or are entirely unrelated. As a solution I mark new pages where they broke in his journal with the note *R-P.1*, *R-P.2*, and so on, in a column on the left (R for *reject*, P for *pure*).

R-P.1 *The Current State of Poetry or
Ask for Hugo or
Van Gogh didn't cut of his ear because he read about it in Dutch Vogue*

Bronzed coffers runneth
Sun-dressed, sophomores, wedges, tortoiseshell wayfarered,
Kim(s)? Sophie(s)? Paul(s)?
[What was popular 18-19 years ago(?)]
[Fucking your mother to Sling Bade while she thought about
Jerry Maguire or Leo from Luhrmann's Romeo + Juliet or when Will
Smith punched out an alien in Independence Day and yelled
Welcome to Earth! (talk about the most underused money shot line
ever). We all knew Tracy's Camry inside and out on the hood].

R-P.2 Would spill all over if they weren't bent down, over
(They will to their therapists
for just \$6.40/min and won't
realize how much phone sex,
at a discount rate,
they could have instead
perhaps a paid internet dating
account, or cam girl gold zone time¹).

But don't worry your wind swept head,
the winds won't blow anything out,
there is no wind,
nothing to sweep out,
nothing to sweep,
no such thing as sweep
no things

R-P.3 no thing
here.

Does not rustle or wave
—can't be blown back in either,
even if they swallow. Don't bother—

¹Collapse of imagination goes here. Don't even fill it with basic cost benefit analysis. Can't compare cost of psychiatrist to cam girl, to sex line operator, to dating site race filters. Filter religion too and make him/her with gray eyes and straight black hair. Fill up on gin, or whatever, and find someone who will let, even wants you, to swallow their bodily fluids so you're not alone.

Don't cry to the cam girl.

If you feel like crying have the decency to sign off.

not your void of a noggin.
It is no state of enlightenment
you aren't at maximum zen
the Bodhi tree does not apply
is just the source of figs
you mistake for metaphors.
If you don't eat them you will never
be a tree, or salesman of year
it is true you are empty:

R-P.4 your vanity plates
 are just that. Your vanity
 on display
 infuriates drivers at all hours
 in rush hour they want you Xed out
 are not shouting koans
 nor honking them in morse code
 to celebrate or announce new found
 inner peace, nor declarations of desire.
 Is it true
 they are suggesting
 enlightenment can be found
 by getting off at the next exit and
 using your mouth on yourself?

MOtherFUCKER@! [sic
kle \$ellphone 4 cash
here, we don't skimp on iron,
like those other companies
—*we know they don't think about:*
hemoglobin counts]

teatime cup,
may contain depleted uranium
R-P.5 but it's teatime, so what the hell,
You fucking
fucking fucking
x/x/x²
Said a
 Sly lox,
not shy
on my bagel.
The cream cheese schmear
 some coward

² Slurs here. Gender neutral please. Don't spell *woman* or *women* with a "y" unless you spell *man* with an "#an." Let's keep our individualistic spelling ideology, ideologically consistent and pure. Don't feel restricted by the alphabet, know how to properly identify all genders as to remain neutral while you slur. Consult Facebook for 50+ options. Equal rights and equal pay for *two-spirit*, equal rights and equal pay for *neutrois*! Remember how easily women achieved suffrage, equality, deserved pay?

was the cheese—trust me here.
 R-P.6 Please? No.
 Don't leave.
 Listen, hear this, that:
 That guy from the beginning is
 A primo space cadet,
 Pervs like
 w/ his wily willy wonka
 No regard for bully free zone
 out/in/ing
 Board permits
 Available,
 (nominal fee. Don't bother with cardinals. Friday exception, occasionally)
 toothless models
 can be arranged next door
 ask for Hugo, the password is
Canoe or Sugarcane.
 I forget which. Ask
 R-P.7 Hugo.
 Trust Hugo.³
 He knows.

I have found no better introduction to his work. It is representative of the quality and content of the body as a whole. The handwriting suggests it was composed quickly. There are no edits on the written pages. It is unlikely that he read the poem again. The source of his opposition to editing and narrative is not made clear within the poem. The headers provide the most direct insight. Clearly he is no Walter Fisher or Paul Ricoeur, he seems to care little for the intellectual history of narrative philosophy, but he does know some David Hume and has a desire to *expose* narrative as *untrustworthy* and *the greatest source of oppression and confusion to the individual*. As an editor I see some merit in his points. As an editor for his work, as his editor—attempting to leave personal animosity aside—the

³ He sold his fair share of used cars, but who hasn't? It's not as if he's a lobbyist or infomercial holy water salesman. He had his chance to get easy cash from late night soul seekers—he was going to be huge in Tokyo and the Midwest, his talent guy's analytics told him so—and he said no.

resistance to narrative makes the text very difficult to edit. The foremost problem for me is one of discerning his intentionality. I have read enough of his work to know that I do not trust him as an author. It is not clear which of his narrative shifts, which also include abrupt changes of voice as well (as evident in the poem), are devices and which are mistakes.

I make no attempt to correct or shape the work. I have not altered nor edited the manuscript's text in any way, excepting the inclusion of the section *A History of Unleashing the Wrath of a Saint and City Filled with Angels*. My reasoning for doing so is provided with the section in the text. I decided it would be more productive to leave it unblemished, or only blemished by the author. All of my intrusions are contained in footnotes. It is my hope to help build a more accurate picture of the circumstances that surround the author and provide context to some of his claims. Some notes are biographical, some are facts and insights I've gained in my research, and others are subjective or objective contestations.

A final note on the accuracy of his research and source(s) of his information: I've noticed that most of his facts and information, though he provides sources for almost nothing, seem to come from [REDACTED]. When I mentioned this to one of my interview subjects, as I was curious to hear someone who knew him well provide insight into his possible answer, she remembered partial text from an email exchange she and author had shared on the matter. I will leave you with her memory of the text, "Uh, he wrote something very much in the spirit of, 'Anyone who still believes that [REDACTED] is an illegitimate source should look something up

via Encyclopedia ██████████ then fucking fuck themselves then read the mountain of academic, peer reviewed articles about how fucking astoundingly accurate ██████████ actually is then remember a core value of ██████████, as opposed to any other publication, is that it demands to be approached with attention and care for facts, biases (which ██████████ automatically warns the reader at the very top if a page is contentious or biased), so the reader automatically puts on his analytical hat and gets out his bullshit radar, not to mention the obvious fact that there is huge value to ██████████ even when the facts are incorrect because it presents what other people believe the facts are, and the ability to wield believed facts, not fact facts, is exactly how presidential campaigns are won and where marketing/PR campaigns build their world.' What else? Oh yeah, then he introduced a bunch of convoluted analogies and blasted into some diatribe about how trigger warnings are, 'bullshit because they'll lead to a total detachment from reality, infringe upon the first amendment, do nothing to solve problems, but create a world where problem solving is based in ignoring a problem, i.e., motherfucking reality, and does serious damage to the fact that there are people who have real PTSD and that feeling upset when you hear about something upsetting is a normal human reaction but it is fucking eons away from causing a reaction that demands medical attention."

Note: All of the footnotes are mine alone, and all of the endnotes are his alone. You must not make my mistakes. You must not let him in.

--The Editor, Winter

A History of Your Sky (I): Prelude

Your skies did not always loom that shade, yellow. That grotesque, translucent x would have won a superlative in high school for something sinister—as if I need to tell you. I don't know what to call it now, if it's mere smog, I inhaled it for two years before I escaped, or if the humidity and dust particles from the stormy season, i.e., the day there was a flash flood, formed a chemical bond and made moist the fouled air into a mist that dampens your clothes, your upholstered love seats and tweed weaved car seats. I cannot imagine, and I certainly do not recommend you try, what the substance does to your tar blackened lungs, the pores of your nose, the cornea of your eye—imagine part of your body, apply. I dare not speculate what it will do to those whose lungs were pink, and delivered, first inhale the yellow, sunken town.

Your vision will be tainted yellow. Slowly this happens, no one will notice because it will happen to the optometrists too. Tuck your chin to your chest. Wear a mask to cover your mouth and nose. Find goggles. Only open your eyes when you must see. Consider opening only one eye, and open it only partially. Wear a patch if you lack the self-control. Always apply patch to the same eye so depth perception is your only loss. Wash the patch regularly to avoid infection. The yellow tint is but the first stage that will surely progress as the chemical droplets form a film that will make opaque your eyes.

How You Enraged Tectonic Plates, Your Water Supply, and Neglected Your Gods

How badly the earthquakes shook your brains, how much you have forgotten, how much debris cracked atop your head, how many of your children died. You should have known: earthquake drills weren't without purpose, PSAs weren't recorded for posterity, and the maps of fault lines should not have been willfully ignored. That earthquakes come unannounced, that there is no time to prepare, to evacuate, to schedule for the builder to come over and reinforce the house's foundation, to apply plywood to the bay windows should have been warning enough about earthquakes and what it means to live in live in their lands. They rupture water mains, rip the pipes that transport gas, down electrical lines into water, electrify the water, ignite the leaking gas. See? There goes the family house under the tree that should have been trimmed some seasons ago. Lights out. Furniture splits, all décor fastened to the wall finds its way to the ground. How many of you acted like the animals you are and ran, stumbled screaming sounds not words or prayers dazed into the streets that the power lines formerly hung above? The smells that followed were those of how electricity chars. Do not worry. The electricity will not flow for long.

There was a saint for every fault line and you certainly had enough Catholics to man, woman, and child the alters on knees and grasp, count the rosary beads. But no one used to rise, to pray, to light candles for tranquility in the name of San [REDACTED], the name of San [REDACTED], the name of [REDACTED]. It's not as if the patron saints

weren't neglected too. There were no alters for Saint Emygdius, for Saint Francis Borgia, for Saint Gregory the Wonderworker. Do not think it is too late to construct alters. Earthquakes are an inevitability of your landscape, your future, you can sink further, the rim can come crashing down. Once the pavers begin to work you will come to know the seasons of asphalt rains.

Perhaps I'm wrong, my sunken friends, occasionally I am, and perhaps you all prayed for mercy and that the tectonic plates were happy with their stations. Perhaps you didn't pray hard enough. Maybe God demands ascetic devotion, the kind of self-flagellation you see on TV during the day of Ashura. Did you not show sufficient enthusiasm for the spirited cursing of Yazid I? Did you not slice your scalp with a razor blade and pound your back with chain? Please tell me that you were not wasting your time seeking nirvana with a Pilates instructor who read the [REDACTED] article on the military industrial complex and, in an act of surrender, declared himself a Buddhist.ⁱ There were no reenactments of ceremonial crucifixions where nails fracture the hands of living people and hold them handed on the cross for the afternoon.ⁱⁱ Who knows if tectonic plates fall under God's dominion? I wouldn't recommend that one ask around for clarity because such is the prime example of exactly the kind of question that gets one in trouble with, at the very least, the guardians of suitable conversation material.ⁱⁱⁱ Decorum ought be of no concern.

It is possible that the plates were rather happy, but no one could be dense enough to think he/she/they/gendered pronoun(s) that's/'re qualified to speak on behalf of the emotional disposition of tectonic plates—not even I. Perhaps

contemplations of linguistic gender politics and the ramifications on the psychology of the earth's lithosphere^{iv} seems like the title to a college course created by a professor who had no interest in teaching come spring so he/she could stay home to argue with the mail carrier about the inevitable demise of the postal system because of its inability to compete in the for profit, capitalistic states—not to mention the sheer stupidity of book rate shipping cost and flat rate boxes. Perhaps it would be fair to object and cast doubt on the whole assumption that tectonic plates are animated objects endowed with emotional capacity (the postal claim will not be tackled or justified primarily because it's non-objectionable). Such an objection would be reasonable enough, but it fails to seriously consider schools of metaphysical thought that build an ontology that includes the real existence of all things thought. Such schools of thought are also objectionable, but they cannot be dismissed with a cavalier wave or scoff. So, while it may seem wild and implausible to claim that earthquakes are the result of grouchy tectonic plates that have philosophically and gender politically based bones to pick with the scientists who study them, such a study has of yet not been funded, meaning that the claim can't be ruled out all together, at least not on empirical grounds. I well know, well know in passing at least, that the burden of proof for such claims is upon the claimer. If I could fund the studies I would—trust me. I've composed grants to my favorite patron, the Institute, for research into the disposition of tectonic plates. All of which, I do not blame them, have been rejected. Lack of funds means little to the validity of my claim. I expect to convince the Institutes' trustees within the year. Don't be

breezy or flip the claim away, consider it as material to mull, an absurdity to pass the time, or reword and toss it around as a pick up line. I know you cannot appreciate what I've just taught you. Return here in some years.

I do not need remind you how close you were to ██████ or the ██████. A flight out of ██████ to ██████ is \$500, at the most, but still you stayed. The rest of the world was a fifteen-minute drive without traffic. I will not admonish those (you, are they my dashing sunken friends) who lived in the desert town that boasted a river in its name and did not find suspect the lack of river, the surplus of ██████, abandoned strip malls all the way to the horizon obscured only by soon to be abandoned strip malls. Was it definitional confusion, a switch of what is a strip mall and what is a river? I suppose I will never know. I did not attend your schools, nor will I file an official inquiry into the local curriculum. I would not be surprised, though I am sure that I will never understand, never find a satisfactory answer to what went wrong.^v

The rivers that ran through the town, through the territory, were called the sixty, the fifteen, the two-fifteen, and the ninety-one. All were wider and longer than the ██████ River which hardly deserves the title. They raged, coiled, filled with debris dislodged from the backs of pickup trucks with the potholes, the breaks, the sharp turns. At night light flowed along the concrete barriers, the riverbanks, all ungoverned by the natural laws of the earth, flowing east and west within mere feet of one another, flowing north and south not so far away. And, on some nights, the rivers would rage with balls of fire to remind the people what it was to feel fear, like

a divine reminder from the Old Testament God who wasn't afraid to punctuate his messages to the Israelites with sulfuric air and firestorms. You could be thought of as desert wanderers, as beings who are the receptacles of some divine punishment, but this is not the history you lived. You are no ancient Jews. Do not regard yourselves as worthy of punishment. The balls of fire were the natural result of concrete shared by semi trucks and smart cars for interstate travel. You need not worry about traffic accidents any more. The cars that careened from the surface as the roads so sank with the land have surely stopped accumulating.¹

Was it this too? Did the water and tectonic plates collude? Were the waters enraged? You have so little water now. In the south there is a body of water called the █████ Sea. The sea's water crashed into the territory when the earthquake struck but was quickly dammed by the people of the surface. Understand this: they need the water too. You are about to hurl, crash through a course in the scarcity of resources and their distribution. Recognize that if the surface so desires they'll seize your resources too. The surface is experiencing a drought, in this pinch, the waters of the sunken territories will do. I do not know if the waters of the Salton Sea are safe to drink. I assure you that you will not need wait long to know for certain. Do not be among the mob of sunken citizens who charge into the waters with mouths wide open to consume. Watch them from the distance. See if they become ill. Your

¹ In the margins of his notebooks I found numerous references to this exact location in the text. Most said, *suicide(?) piles of cars by piles of people*. It seems that he was trying to introduce suicide and relate it to the cars that accidentally crashed into the territory. He did not think that the people who crashed their cars into the territory were suicides. From what I have gathered he liked the parallel image of cars crashing and piling up and people jumping into the territory and piling up: mechanical wreckage and human wreckage side by side.

water, like your sky, was fouled long before you sank. Perhaps this will be an advantage. Perhaps, if you drank unfiltered water,^{vi} you've built up a tolerance that will allow you to consume from naturally polluted sources.

Perhaps you will devise a dance to summon waters in your desperation to stave off death by dehydration. If you do devise a dance, it's up to you, be careful to not sweat out more water than you dance with hopes to receive. Do not dance yourself to death if it is not your desire to dance yourself to death. Perhaps you could locate someone who studied modern dance to help. Call him/her/them a choreographer. Approach the trained designer of dance and inquire about the best combinations of steps with the greatest historical record of successfully summoning water. Do not approach a Native American—they've had it hard enough, do not need your ignorance making the sunken stay worse (someone from the surface would tell you this if they were so able, so in their place I advise you to know that this is the kind of thing your surface life included). Do not allow yourselves to become entangled within issues of cultural, racial, identity that give rise to division. You need to unify now. Divide later. You are one people. You are the Disparate Sunken People of The Sunken Territory. You could call yourselves United. If you feel differently I suggest that you draft your own constitutions and declarations of what the ideal sunken territory ought look like. Focus. Do this after you have goggles and water.

How will you please the waters that you so contaminated, that you so wasted? The ruins of your lands—do not blame the earthquakes for all damages—

will show you the magnitude of your transgressions. You see the patches of green blades that surround the collapsed homes. See them soon. They'll yellow without aid from the air, will brown, will die, crunch, and blow away. Find a lawn in the wreckage: it's the best way to see how your life with progress too: yellow to brown to dead to dust. These, the green and sometimes manicured lawns in the residential areas were a testament to a large scale, collective willingness to waste water and a commitment to, perhaps a shared delusion (though some may call it a desire, or dream made manifest, a will to power) that the town was not so desolate that nothing would grow, that the town was not one where only asphalt and concrete would rise, seemingly naturally, from the earth and spread as if evolution noticed all of the strip malls and decided them the best way for continued survival.^{vii} I'm no expert in the history of lawns in the desert so you'll have to ask around. Start with any individual with connections to the former zoning board and anyone familiar with any homeowners associations. Perhaps sellers of sod are worth locating. Are worth interrogating. You see? You were a powerful people. You were so far beyond obstinate that it's hard to imagine if there was anything you could not have done. You made grass grow, lawns for all in a desert where nothing should have grown. Do not worry: it will all die soon. You'll be able to see if you have the constitution of your ancestors. Will you design a water dance?

On The Sunken Institute, the Futility of Individuality, and Identity Recovery

I regard you generally: as non-individual entities, as groups of the sunken territory. Individuality is largely overvalued. I address you as *my friends* for ease. I suspect that some of you are confused, distressed, or curious about your past identity. I further suspect that some of you have no interest in the matter. Such matters fall outside of my interest and expertise. With aid from a small group known as The Institute for Humane Studies People of the Sunken Territory and their talented analysts, a number of materials for identity recovery have been created. The Institute requested that their identity recovery rubrics be made available to you in my history. As their generosity is what allows me to write to you, I was inclined to agree. They, for reasons that surpass my insights, are primarily funded by the corporate sponsor Blu-ray, though if Blu-ray has an agenda and/or interest in the fate of the sunken territories—it's the kind of happening I cannot comprehend.

You will find their identity recovery rubrics among the addendums. The *Past Individual Identity Recovery Rubric* (P.I.I.R.R.) ought aid sunken citizens who desire insight into prior identity(ies) held on the surface. A second rubric was designed for those of you who found yourselves sunken and in extremely close, inexplicable proximity to other people. If you would like to know if nature of these relationships is more than proximal consult: *Am I surrounded by Vagrants, Acquaintances,*

Coworkers, or Loved Ones? (S.V.A.C.L.O.).² Consult one, both, or neither rubric as you desire. There is no correct order. There is no obligation to complete a rubric once you start. There is no time limit. The result(s) are as protected as much as you choose to protect them. There is absolutely no guarantee that consultation with the rubrics will mitigate any confusion, distress, curiosity, etc. Such consultations may, in fact, exacerbate any/all negative feelings. There is a third rubric for those of you who do not know if you ought to consult the rubric: *Am I the Type of Person Who was the Kind of Person who would Want to Know Who I Was.* (T.P.W.W.K.P.W.K.W.W.). Regardless of how you approach matters of past identity know that it, in no way, alters my decision to regard you as the amalgam of a filthy, sunken, mess you are—my friends. You should know that the most pertinent question of identity which faces you is mine, not yours.

² I suspect he never composed the “S.V.A.C.L.O.” rubric. I’ve not been able to locate it among any of the materials with which I was provided. The other rubrics can be found in the addendum.

Of Your Historian

Do not be the fool I know you're not. Recognize that you, this, sunkenness³ all are regarded as greatly inconvenient, transgressions, invasions into the self I know as mine—that of a glory known previously only to Achilles and his ilk.⁴ Neither you nor your town are materially suited for an RSS feed. I did not hear what had happened to you for a time. Such is the nature of my life: the world moves with me, and me alone. The universe renders itself spectacularly in my presence knowing that elsewhere matters little, knowing that it is wasted on all who are not me and of my magnificence, knowing there is no reason to waste the glory on existences that are not entwined with mine. The universe left with me and returned the desert town to a state of stasis, a low energy maintenance mode. Even when I was present I never read your news, knew very little about you, but knew my way through town on the streets—not the interstates/highways that I avoided because of the inexplicable traffic jams—to where to buy Mexican food, building supplies, clothing at reduced prices on the occasions I didn't want to go to the laundry mat on third street, and to a facility at which I left many of my possessions in a climate controlled room when I departed.

³ Nothing indicates that sunkenness is intended to be a metaphor. At times it may seem as if a metaphor is developing. Such a reading of the text, I would argue, is incorrect and a projection of the reader's expectations and temporary entanglement/search for coherence and meaning. There is none. I assure you.

⁴ I comfort myself with the thought that he may wear knee-high socks of a blast and puncture proof synthetic. The thought is the baseless kind of thing with which one occupies one's mind when forced to of another, albeit a mind of narcissism and mythically informed paranoia. Why he invokes Achilles on multiple occasions and fails to provide context for the "sunken people" is a testament to a general lack of direction/purpose.

I lived on [REDACTED], address withheld for misc. reasons, in a house not so far from the base of [REDACTED] (think of the French language [REDACTED] or if you prefer English “[REDACTED]” as in *I [REDACTED] the day* + “[REDACTED]” as in *I [REDACTED] \$41* + “[REDACTED]” as in [REDACTED] *my God*). I attended the University [REDACTED] enjoyed the grassy quads, had a superb parking permit, occasionally ate and drank at the [REDACTED] Café—maybe you’re familiar, never eat their food, the drinks are fine—and never saw the botanical gardens. Most weeks I looked at the clock tower and wondered how hard it would be to climb. I hoped the cyclists and the skaters would fall down, laughed when they did, then loudly asked them if they were okay to draw attention to the crash site. They, inevitably, said yes, that they were fine and limped away. Some bled. That is almost all I remember, and none of it is remembered fondly so, except—and only in abstraction—that an interstate or highway (I was never sure which) cut through campus. I still wonder why more robberies and abductions didn’t occur. A quick on and off for a new laptop, or what have you, could not have possibly been a hard payday to execute. I drive a [REDACTED] that has all wheel drive, a rack, [REDACTED] plates, and interior upholstery patterned tweed. It was given to me as a gift, is over a decade old, and has yet to break 70,000 miles. I do not own any birds. I have one dog, and I would rather not have been born. I enjoy wristwatches and pocketknives and have a small collection of both.

I'm uncomfortable telling you my name, again for misc. reasons, but have included a colored picture of my hand in the addendums.⁵ You'll notice I hold a silver chain attached to an emblem of the patron saint of impossible/hopeless/lost causes who bears the name "Jude." This is no mistake. I bought it for myself during a dull afternoon, expect nothing from it, and haven't experienced disappointed. My other hand—the right, with which I am dominant—is not dissimilar. Both are the same pale, mostly smooth, and of seemingly identical size. I note seemingly not because of abnormality that is impossible to see with a naked eye but because I've never actually checked. I've always had access to excellent healthcare and thus supposed that a physician along the way would have told me if my hands are asymmetrical. These details, this information of seemingly of no consequence, of no help to replace your lost memory, that do nothing to tell you will be paved over, are of consequence so you know what kind of person is about to refill your memory.

Such practice of introduction has gone very much out of vogue for histories. This is a shame. The great historians of the past not only introduced themselves, but they did so in the third person at the very beginning of their histories, i.e., Thucydides, Herodotus. Perhaps your contemporary author will leave a "note" but such information often does not actually illuminate a person. It presents a persona, something that does not exist but hides within first person declarations. You see the problem that this causes, the utter dishonesty? These *I* introducing historians,

⁵ I have included a copy of the name placard he posted in his most recent office. I was contractually obligated to obscure his name. The image can be found in the appendix.

authors, from the moment you meet, try to trick you into believing that an entity that does not exist does exist (i.e., a persona) by assuming the identity of the non-thing (i.e., addressing you from the perspective of the persona that does not exist). If you were to find yourself in a restaurant and had to order a meal for the type of author who merely leaves a note, you wouldn't even know how he/she likes meat prepared—medium-well—or if you should block time to stay for dessert—no, but maybe coffee so we have energy for drinks afterwards. At the very least, I do want you to make an informed assessment about whether or not you would like to share a meal with me, and if I you. I'll carry the conversation if you won't, though, you'll have to learn to cut me off midsentence—I won't take offense—because I speak quickly,⁶ breath rarely, interrupt often, and have a casual disregard for decorum. Note that to interrupt is to deprive yourself of me. You do

Coming up:

I hope to not make a habit of such interruption, but I Peter Barrasso, the actual human being who exists, who is responsible for this composition, who has a social security number (though I never received a card), a passport, and an actual consciousness, was so compelled by events in the real world. My interjection here,

⁶ In my assessment, a conclusion of my interviews with author's associates and my own biographical research, the rapid speech is a side effect of legal prescription amphetamines he started to take in college to aid his study of formal logic. From what I have surmised from his transcript, they didn't help, or they helped a great deal. Either way, he did poorly especially considering that he lived in an age of seemingly criminal grade inflation (a problem that he contributed to during his brief stint in academia, he never gave anything lower than a B-). The C he received was not of the "gentleman's" variety, rather it was earned. It's not that he didn't study. I've seen his notebooks filled with proof practices, he just fundamentally didn't understand all of the laws and his penmanship was sometimes detrimentally sloppy. He did, however, grow up in a city of over 5,000 plus feet so he may not need as much air when living at lower altitudes.

in this location, arises not as the result of craft of the larger piece, but is located at this point because of the passage of actual time in the actual world that exists—the no bullshit world that unfolds. I'm in Casper, Wyoming—my hometown—in the basement of a family home. I'm dressed in my normal garb, my watch, my khakis, and a checkered button down from J. Crew. My socks are ridiculous, gray, loafer cut by Tommy Hilfiger but purchased at Ross Dress For Less. I generally don't purchase anything from the line because of his well-known racism—I don't care much for the logo either—but made an exception when I was out of clean socks, as his were the least expensive. I'm seated at a desk I recently built, and considering that I'm no woodworker, that turned out rather well. It is not my intent to furnish autobiographical details, and/or a justification of my own existence but simply to report news.

- 1) Yesterday Robin Williams rendered his self dead by hanging. He used a belt to asphyxiate. He also cut his wrists—perhaps, so there would be no doubt that it wasn't an accident (he starred in a movie in which his character conceals an accidental death by autoerotic asphyxiation. That, and this is pure speculation, the real Robin Williams may have cut his wrists before hanging his self to make clear that he killed himself with intentionality, and did not die as result of a masturbatory accident, is the type of occurrence that marks the limit of English language adjectives). I've been composing a book on suicide, my actual writing endeavor—not this bullshit to convince the University of California, Riverside that I am a

Master of Fine Arts—so it's not as if I lacked exposure and/or lack suicide sea legs. Despite my nearly unqualified support for suicide, and despite my general enthusiasm for bad news, the associated joy I derive from spreading it, his death was upsetting.

- 2) A Missouri police officer successfully shot and rendered dead an unarmed 18 year-old male. He, of course, was black and had done nothing worthy of any police attention (and even if he had, did he really need to be shot to death?). His name was Michael Brown. The department refuses to release the officer's name to the public because they don't want to subject him to the threats that will come against his life on and potential danger. Not to belabor the point, but George Zimmerman (the Florida man who has no affiliation with law/law enforcement, who killed the unarmed teenager Travon Martin and was found innocent under the state's Stand Your Ground law) is still very much alive despite an unclaimed million-dollar bounty on his head, not to mention everyone who would do it for free. Regarding points one and two: it often seems that the wrong (used in a very loose, gut feeling sense) people kill themselves. It is hard to imagine that news of George Zimmerman committing suicide would be met with a public outpouring of grief.
- 3) The United States is, again, bombing Iraq. The mission is branded as "humanitarian" to stop a terrorist group (ISIS, known for brutality and widely condemned within the terrorist community. For example, an ISIS

fighter tweeted a picture of his son holding up a severed human head with the caption “That’s my boy.” The larger movement has randomly executed civilians and crucified Christians and rebel fighters in Syria and Iraq. Bodies have been displayed in public with the associated heads not so far away on fence posts) from committing genocide.

- 4) Russia is slaughtering Ukrainians.
- 5) Ebola it not contained in Africa, and today marked the first European death.
- 6) A cease-fire between Israel and Gaza (represented in negotiations by their democratically elected leaders: Hamas, the arguable architects of the “theology” of suicide bombing in the Qur’an) is finally holding. For first time the international community, including the United States, is condemning Israel for breaching humanitarian conduct because of high rate of civilian casualties. Estimates put Palestinian death toll at 1,400+ and Israeli death toll at 59. The UN estimates that 72%-84% of the dead in Gaza were civilians. Around five percent of the dead in Israel were civilians—when converted to raw numbers this means 3 dead Israeli civilians and 1,008-1,176 dead civilians in Gaza. But, what really enraged international community was Israel’s intentional targeting and bombing of a UN school. The international community is notoriously, selectively intolerant of massive civilian collateral damage—i.e. the largely overlooked hundreds of thousands American killed Iraqis and Afghans.

No doubt that Hamas is winning the PR war, the consequences of which Israeli officials don't seem to truly understand because without international support—via arms, money, and aid (international meaning The United States)—it's hard to imagine an Israel's existence. Perhaps the barbarity and uncompromising nature of the Israeli leadership (though Netanyahu is basically spineless) infused with Zionism will bring about—albeit indirectly, in reduced aid, loss of allies, gain of enemies—the collapse of Israel and thus allow some other reason for multinational feuds to so arise in the area.

7) An insight by James Agee contained in *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men* demonstrate what will forever justify interruptions/interludes for actuality:

a. "In a novel, a house or a person has his meaning, his existence, entirely through the writer. Here, a house or a person only has the most limited of his meaning through me: his true meaning is much huger. It is that he exists, in actual being, as do you and as do I, and as no character of the imagination can actually exist. His great weight, mystery, and dignity are in this fact. As for me, I can tell you only of him what I saw, only so accurately as in my terms I know how: and this in turn has its chief stature not in any ability of mine but in the fact that I to exist, not as a work of fiction, but as a human being. Because of his immeasurable weight in actual existence, and because of mine, every word I tell of him has inevitably a kind of immediacy, a kind of meaning, not at all necessarily 'superior' to that of imagination, but of a kind so different that a work of the imagination (however intensely it may draw on "life") can at best only faintly imitate the least of it."

b. I, again your real author, since relocated into a bed, still within the same house but some days later, am inclined to agree with Agee. I

pick information to present, which is the kind of bias impossible to circumvent—without randomly inserting ideas, occurrences, news stories, etc. (though such disconnect is something I find rather appealing because of its scope and the questions it would raise about what constitutes actual narrative. I suspect that such a study would construct a strong case that narrative is an all encompassing lie that we tell ourselves, that others tell us, etc., that is promulgated and respected because the alternative presents the nauseating chaos of a constant bombardment by random, non-related, non-interpretable happenings. The kind of revelation that makes life, perhaps literally, impossible to endure—which is fine with me). Once I account for the easily spotted bias, that arises from interest and not a lack of sensory/physiological capacity, arises the baggage associated with intentional distortion. I clearly mix factual actuality with something I like to call *speculative non-fiction*, I find it profoundly important to note myself: that I think, breath, collapse because of panic attacks, am, as is my mother and as is my step-father in the bedroom across the hallway. This is no philosophical or epistemological claim, areas the writing community should just stay the fuck away from,^{viii} but merely a note on the existence of

real existence (as opposed to fictional), and the distortions that accompany all attempts to relay any actual thing at all.

- 8) But, presumably, something something of joy and love, picnics, walks through the woods, across a pond you come, a sweetheart to call your own or bumblebee, down pillows, stiff drinks, dim lights, fireworks over the Potomac, et cetera, fulfillment, peace, rest, pick what you will and add all you would.

Here we sink, and again I become some other iteration of a self not so unlike a kind of fictional character.

not know, how could you, the greatness of the gift that is my dinnertime babble. And

this would be all well and good. But you could not be so stupid to believe that I would go to dinner with you. Do not, for a moment, believe that I care for you.

I warn you that you ought not expect your future include my grace.

On Why Your Historian Deals in only Surface Details of his Life

It is not a product of oversight that I do not more explicitly explore why I am the kind of person who tells you that I could not endure to dine with you. Nor is it an oversight that I tell you that I could not endure to dine with you without then going on to tell you that I often dine alone and not by choice—and, that you do not exist, that we could never dine together, but that I did create you and rebuke you. Do not think that I lack perspective on myself, that I do not understand why I treat you as I do, that I do not recognize how often I speak of our relative importance and intelligence (and not our height or strength) and what that reveals about me. But what if you did exist? What if you were to contend that I ought, of necessity, provide insight into the insights of my self? What if you were to contend that such insights make me real? Are persons who lack insight into themselves not persons? Are they worth no time? Why would you think you need access to my understanding of myself, presented explicitly, to know that I have access to myself? Do such additional layers add anything to our relationship? A relationship that, again, is nothing more than something that I have manufacture as I've pretended to be you, I've pretended to be an entity that I call me, and that I do not focus on the pretending but pivot away to boast of my glory. Do not think I do not recognize that it may appear that I've become defensive of how I carry myself in regard to expectations that I suspect you have about me. Do not think I do not realize that you may have no such expectations. No? I hard stop such comments of why I don't tell you how I talk to

you, why I assume what I do. Why this is/is not of value. To dig into the self, to introspect, is to create an awful course, trail that can be followed and followed and followed. I am not convinced that anything is gained in the following, when one arrives at the end, that an end exists at all. That is a point aside. I do not know why you would not trust me to have interrogated myself and arrived here. Why do you need to hear about the interrogation? Do you trust me that little? If this were a math problem, if I were your student and you my teacher would you demand to see my work even when I furnish correct answer after correct answer? Mind this if you so desire. I cannot entertain this nonsense and I doubt it is of interest to you. Do not think that I could not dissect this last sentence until you, if you so existed, asked me to stop as I would so spiral away. Oh, and of your rendering? I know you could not last more than a moment, perhaps a handful of questions in the Turing test.

A History of Democratic Actions Taken by the People of the Surface

You were always a blemish upon the surface. A blemish clarified by three ballot initiatives: proposition sixteen, proposition seventeen, and proposition eighteen. The state, the surface above, never cared much for the areas since termed the “sunken territories.” Sprawl was the mother of the since sunken lands, the cities were not planned, were not conceived in a fit of lust, but they were not coerced into being by a father who dreamed of establishing an inland legacy, an empire, a land to flow with milk and honey as a testament to his greatness. No. These, your cities, were an inevitable consequence of the expanse that so separated a city of angels from a city founded by Spanish sailors as tribute to the life and miracles of Didacus of Alcalá. With angels to the north and the territory of a saint to the south few inhabitant of the surface yearned for refuge in the desert that divided the holy bastions. Thus rose the highways and the interstates to connect the lands of divinity as did the cities they ran through.

When the earthquakes came the southern city was protected by the saint and the northern city was protected by angels. The desert and the towns that lay along the connector of divinity were under the protection of nothing and sank. The surface dwellers, though they never cared for the desert were not saddened by its disappearance, did not desire a chasm divide the saintly city from the angelic city. Now, the people of the surface are no barbarians. They would not simply let some 2.3 million people sink into the ground without first considering the desires of those

people. The proper action was evident. As they—you, my sunken friends—so chose to live in unprotected lands surrounded by fault lines, a choice that was well within their rights, reasoned the peoples of the north and the south (who were certainly not missionaries—and even if they were it's unlikely any would have stopped in the desert to knock on doors seeking converts), they must have desired to live a sunken life, as to sink was inevitable. Further, so the residents of the city of angels and the city of the saint reasoned, the desert people never expressed desire to not live in the desert. Many believed it would be wrong to intervene and drag them to the cities—it's not as if the desert people dragged the city people away to subject them to an arid life with yellowed air sliced apart only by highways. And so were born the three propositions that consigned you underground.

*A History of Unleashing the Wrath of a Saint and City Filled with Angels*⁷

[The Editor insists that you read the note you may have just skipped. His thanks.]

Very few people ever become the object of interest for a divine being. The number of those who then hold the attention of divinity is so infinitesimally small that the occurrence is regarded as statistically impossible. Yet this was the position, the status, I held when I lived among you.

Before you sank I was of the desert. I lived in the lands of desolation between the protected territory of the saint in the south and of the angels in the north. They, the saint and the angels, grew jealous and dreamed with fury of vengeance when I arrived. Of all of this I was oblivious. The universe, too, accompanied me as my

⁷ Forgive me for apologizing as a way to introduce yet another of my interjections. As I will explain in the introduction, or so is my current intent, I am not much interested in any editorial marks upon the content of *sunken town*. I make an exception here for an introduction in the notes. I came across the following in a handwritten iteration of this section. I will not bore you with my speculation/theories about what drove him to cut the material, though he may well have just forgotten to include the pages (he may fully believe the text appears in the “completed” draft because he so intended it to but never actually read the whole manuscript to confirm). Intentional or not, he should not have omitted this section. My addition of his section does not change the story, rather it helps clarify the world and the self he was in the process of building. I believe it provides what may seem like an explanation for the earthquakes that is incompatible with his other explanations. In this rare circumstance I am convinced that it was his discernable intent to draw a world where the territory could sink in many incongruent ways. He desired this contradiction, but he failed to articulate the reason for the contradiction because he did not build his world to completion. He ought be held accountable for this by not extending to him any benefit of any doubt. The location of my note is but a general approximation of where he would have placed the prose. Or, where I would have placed it in the prose. It is impossible to know where he would have put it. It is not placed with the intention to indicate where it ought have/would have started and where it ought have/would have ended. With that in mind, I have decided to actually place the text into the main body of *Sunken Town* because it ought be digested as part of the actual narrative (though the transitions will be bumpy and the voice will change). The relevant text appears immediately after this note’s reference point and is stylized with italics for clarity. The end of my inserted text will be marked and apparent.

attendant. At the time I would not have even imagined considering the concerns and sensibilities of the saint and the angels. I did not believe that such entities exist. I was not even compelled that thought ought be wasted considering what life would be like if they did. But how was I to know that angels even existed, how was I to know that they regarded me as an intruder into their territories, an invader into the lands they protected?

My time in the desert was one where I engaged in the mundane task of higher education: an act as far from bellicose as is possible for any act to be. It was not as if I came bearing a gauntlet, a once and for all, one night, no holds barred show where I would prove the supremacy of my existence over that of all other entities. I arrived in a [REDACTED], an old one, that was filled with clothing and books and moved into a non-descript apartment.

I am, and was, very narcissistic—this is no secret, no revelation to me nor you my friends. But you can surely see the distance that separated my knowledge that I was superior to every other person in existence (as well as most who have existed, and many who will) from even a humble suspicion that my being instilled fear and anger into divine entities. The former is but manifest of greatly elevated levels of narcissism—which I readily admit. But, as I've just explained, and will explain once more, even acute narcissism, my knowledge that I am superior to all people, in every way imaginable, is of an order quite different than believing my superiority to all entities, including the divine entities that I didn't even believe existed. This, the latter, is of what I would have recognized as acute psychosis.

You need to understand that all of this occurred near the end of my militant atheist years. I know your memories are damaged. It is not my desire to complicate complicated matters more than necessary. For those of you whose religious memories are still intact I need to make this clear: the existence of angels and saints do not, through some matter of necessity, give rise to the existence of God. The existence of God is an unrelated matter. However, because it is not my intent to wholly perplex you, my sunken friends, I am going to pretend that the existence of a city of angels and a city protected by a saint logically imply a complete, monotheistic theological package. I understand that my claims will land and overwhelm. Do not fret. Just remember that this is a story of how I, a non-believer and atheist at the time, a nihilist now, a being attended by the universe came to know of the existence of the angels and the saint whose rage would sink you into the ground.^{ix}

The matter of coming to believe in angels. No. The matter of coming to know that angels exist. I'm sorry to fumble. I'm no less confounded today than I was when I came to know that angels exist. My knowledge of the existence of angels is within a class of knowledge I hold and know to be true but simultaneously adamantly disbelieve. Great discomfort arises when I so scrutinize my state of knowledge and my state of utter disbelief.⁸ I dare not dwell here, even if I could, even if I so desired for more than another moment to tell you this.

⁸ Nothing is written on the midsection of the corresponding handwritten, physical page I received. Handwriting proceeds normally from the top of the page, breaks for a section that measures four inches down, and then resumes as if nothing extraordinary had occurred. He then halts mid-sentence. It is ordinary for him to abandon his sentences and thoughts, but the remainder of the notebook that follows was left nearly blank. The pages are marked front and back by pairs of overlapping x's that

In holy texts angels appear with spectacular flourishes and insist any/all present party feel no fear or alarm. It is never the case that an individual who interests the angels is seated in a franchised breakfast restaurant only to have an angel wander up and offer a casual introduction. The knowledge of angels did not come to/with materialize as introduced by the sound of trumpets. It arose suddenly and from nothing. It sounds hyperbolic and ridiculous when I say that the entirety of my existential state immediately changed: but it did. I was burdened with the certainty of angels, with no capacity to understand, with no place to situate them, and the impossibility of dismissal. Other than the addition of angels nothing changed. Not in the slightest. The physical world altered itself in no way. Had the wind been blowing it would not have stopped, and had the day been still it would have remained so. My appearance was not altered. I simply realized that if angels certainly exist, and they certainly did, that I had been confused about what and who I was. Remember, these were my more impressive militant atheist years.^x

are nearly identical in size and placement from page to page. There is no doubt that the work is his. The x's continue as a sort of introduction for several pages into another notebook where the text resumes, again, as if no interjection had occurred.

The midsections of the pages that precede and proceed the x block are spotted with small, circular wrinkles. The wrinkles, to my horror, were the unmistakable remnants of teardrops. All of the other pages were in near pristine condition, the poem from the introduction excluded, and were not stained with anything other than his words, not even a single ring of condensation from a glass, or mug. I do not know if the tears share any relation with the content. I found no note of any occurrence in his personal life that would have inspired tears. The thought of him crying is unimaginable to me. Speculation into what could have inspired him to cry instilled fear inside of me so intense, so consuming that I could not sleep for half of the week. My sleepless time was spent in the fetal position as well as long bouts in my desk's chair that allowed me to access an understanding of catatonic.

I would have wondered if madness had struck, if I had sustained a brain injury—perhaps an aneurism—had the knowledge not been so complete, so certain, so clear. I knew that all I had known, all that I was before the moment I received the angels was incorrect. Such strain to fit/square/combine the world with angels and the world without angels pressurizes a human's entire self so rapidly that there is no time to think, no time to reason. Time exists only to know with certainty—for had I wasted even a moment in an attempt to reconcile the two worlds I would have surely died. Of all of this I am certain and of all of this I believe very little—I just know. The angels have nothing to do with belief and they have nothing to do with empiricism. They are undeniable. As near an epiphany as I have ever known. My world filled with angels and I recognized my true nature and self: I was a nihilist.^{xi} And the world so continued, the universe as my attendant, with knowledge of angels, a saint, and new knowledge that nothing meant anything at all.

You and I, my sunken friends, all lived as residents of the surface at this time. I thought about the angels and the saint but did not imagine they too were thinking of me. They, I now know, had been thinking about me since I had arrived in the desert: a different matter. All I knew was that angels existed. I suppose I hoped to see one but certainly did not expect I ever would. And, I suppose I then remembered how few angels are touted for anything other than as specialists of wrath, punishment, vengeance, and destruction. So, though I knew that angels existed, that saints existed, and that the ramifications of all of this would be tremendous if I were

not a nihilist, I had no reason to think that an interaction with divinity would occur. I could not imagine a situation in which an interaction could be justified.

My friends, I warned you that I could not internally dwell and ponder angels. It is this, that human beings who know angels exist (as well as some of those who merely imagine they do) and then try to understand the nature of angels which makes it dangerous and nauseating to think about angels. Angels love perplexing humans. They have very little to do. Matters of angels must be addressed with totally knowledge and certainty or paradox-induced paralysis ensues. Doubt me if you will. It will be better for you, I assure you, if you just trust what I tell you.

You may be tempted to believe that angels and saints are not within the class of entities—as say zoning boards, siblings confined to the back seat of a car, cattle ranchers who regard their own federal government as foreign invaders out to rustle/starve their stock—who would concern themselves with matters of territorial disputes. And, of course, such temptation is one emerged from intuition: celestial beings have better things to do, will not be concerned by petty, human affairs. All of this is incorrect: they are petty, they are bored. One needs only to consult holy texts to see that one of the primary functions of angels, on earth at least, is to procure and protect territory. See the Garden of Eden. See angels direct Lot from Sodom and Gomorrah so God can destroy the towns with sulfuric airs and a firestorm. Heaven and hell are territories disputed by angels. Angels issue tests to the dead to see if they deserved to immediately rise or suffer until the Day of Judgment. Saint Peter controls the gate access for entry into heaven. They, saints

and angels, are masters of territorial disputes. I suppose I ought have recognized them as such when I moved into the desert.

My location, and your location too at the time, was no mystery to the divine entities. The universe flows, in the most literal sense, at me. It is matter, the stuff of which everyone and everything is made, that the universe directs to me. I break no laws of physics: matter and energy are neither created nor destroyed, they are just moved. My life, immediate environment is one that, if a scientist were to investigate, contains more matter. At a basic level, the city of angels and the saint's city contain light, both natural and synthetic. When I was present in the desert, some of the matter that so composed the synthetic/natural light was diverted to increase the natural and synthetic light I experienced. If you were in the city of angels or the city of the saint at the time of my arrival in the desert your world darkened. Lamps, overhead lights, electric candles, etc., all dimmed. The sun did not dim, I have no impact upon fusion, but its light was disproportionately diverted to my location. This, basically, is why my location was easily discernable for the divine beings: because I become the center of what can be thought of as a spotlight. The world becomes brighter as my location is approached. So, when if I tell you that, "the universe bestowed its full magnificence upon my desert house/apartment, commute, school, car, restaurants, etc.," a more scientific explanation would be something to the effect of, "the universe collected matter from the city of angels and the saint's city and used/reallocated this, the collected matter, to elevate 1) my personal sensory experience of existence and 2) reveal and enhance the 'true

essence' of the world around me." I can understand why the second point may land cryptic. The core of the idea, one mostly derived by philosophers more than 2,500 years ago, and one that I admit ought be considered only with one's academic guard raised, is that all things and people have a core component/feature: essence. The influx of matter that accompanies me acts as a kind of cosmic multi-color highlighter because it pours matter into the core and strips matter from everything that obfuscates my understanding/perception of its essence. The following diagrams may help make the point more evident.⁹

It is this: that the universe attends to me that so focused the attention of the angels and saint upon my arrival in the desert. Their cities fell, in the most literal sense, out of focus. The colors did not render vibrant. Objects, when examined closely, were blurry and unfinished, undefined. All matter that so composed the cities was adjusted, reduced, albeit noticeable only to the divine, by the universe and reallocated to enhance my surroundings. I cannot notice such adjustments (I only know that it happens), that my colors are unusually sharp, etc., because such are the only conditions I know.

Thus I delivered the city of angels and the city of the saint into dullness as the universe reassembled itself and focused upon me. What the saint and the angels must have felt in these first minutes—I know I cannot understand. I am confident they noticed, and whatever it was, however it was felt, it instilled in them/triggered

⁹ I've photographed the referenced pages from his notebook. They can be found in the addendum titled, "Understanding the Cosmic Highlighter."

their divine component that recognizes situations in which they must protect their territory. I cannot be clear enough: I cannot speak on their behalf, nor give testament about how they so experienced my proximity. I can tell you this: if I had been one of the angels or the saints and so watched vibrant x flow out of my world, I have no doubts I'd have seriously thought the world was at its end and that Jesus Christ, or whatever, wasn't about to march over the horizon leading his cherubim army with a flaming sword.

If they lost faith, or if they did not, matters none. As far as they were concerned they were losing their territory one atom at a time. That this enraged the angels and endangered the desert did not matter to the universe. And so I continued to fill with matter that belonged to angels and a saint and bestowed upon me the essence of truth and illuminate the desert.

Now, my sunken friends, none on this would have happened if I were not of great importance, if I did not mean so much, if the universe did not shower me with matter. Do not confuse the relationship between the meaning and matter of my existence. It is true that my life has significantly elevated concentration of matter. It is also true that my existence is significantly more meaningful than that of any other human. But my life is not more meaningful because of the influx of matter and the cosmic attendants. If the universe did not attend to me I would remain equally meaningful, I would just have less matter.

The matter/meaning relationship was one that caused utter confusion for the saint and angels. They, I have since come to understand, were concerned because it

appeared as if I was stealing their matter, i.e., capturing their protected territory and thus challenging their divine authority and meaning. And to a degree they were correct. I was indirectly reducing the levels of matter in their cities. Surely, my cunning friend, you see the error of the angels and saint: the universe was the culprit. I did not demand the matter from the saint or angels. The universe simply recognized my excellence and my elevated levels of meaning, and thus endowed me with the additional matter it believed I deserved. This is the relationship: I have more matter because the universe recognized that I mean more than other entities and thus instilled me with more matter. The saint and angels ignorantly believed that I derived my meaning from matter, not my matter from meaning. But, on a more basic, practical level, they were furious that I possessed their matter from their territory. And so compounded the rage, the fury, the vengeance for two years. In these years they plotted—I assume.

So reasoned the angels and the saint, very poorly I will add, that if they could make me mean less then the universe would stop reallocating the matter from their territories. You see the error, my friends. It is impossible to make me mean less. I am not some simpleton who derives my meaning from matter. I have no territory to protect. I know that nothing is worth protecting. So this, their plot to make me meaningless was a failure from the beginning (how they would have done so was never clear to me). Their plot to reclaim the matter, their territory that I had stolen is what so spurred the earthquakes and sunk you.

Before I ridicule the scientific prowess of the angels I suppose I ought entertain humility for a moment. I am no angel. I assume that their capacity to make sense of existence surpasses even one as enhanced as mine. But, if there was some element of brilliance contained in the plan to employ earthquakes to recover their matter it, and I suspect will do so until I die, is absolutely elusive. So is my understanding of the angels' matter seizure plot. So reasoned the angels: that if the desert, the now sunken territories, was shaken with extreme violence all of the matter—their matter—the matter that the universe had appropriated to me, would dislodge. And so the shaking would continue until all of their matter had been released into the air and thus freed to be recovered.

I will never understand why an angel did not appear and order me to leave the desert. I, I assure you, even as a nihilist (realized or unrealized) would have complied. I suppose they thought I'd carry their matter away. Did they fear I could suck dry their divinity if approached? I do not know if such a fear is justified or not. I never suspected the matter that was so diverted to me by the universe could be divine. No. Surely I received no divine matter. I would have known. The angels would have killed me. I will not stay here. I cannot reason, speculate on the divine. I must just tell you what I know.

You are fortunate that I left the desert, that the angels did not try to shake me to recover their matter. To shake matter free from me would have meant shaking the universe. I assure you, my sunken friends, had this happened it would not have

been just the desert to sink. The angels' city, the saint's city surely would now be sunken too.

So this is what happened to you my sunken friends. The angels and saint, as you are currently living testament to, retaliated as if the desert was holy land, that I was a crusader, that I marched under a banner of nihilism that the universe bore on my behalf. I did not ask for the universe to bear my banner, to reward my grace, to make dull, pale the world for its attendant saint and angels. But, if I have learned one thing from my time in the desert it is this: angels and saints hold intent far below consequences. That the worlds, their worlds, lacked color was just cause to so punish the responsible party. That I escaped their wrath, that it was delivered in full to you, my sunken friends, reflects our respective states of luck. Nothing more.

Someday, though you will probably all die before it occurs (as I may well too), one of you, my sunken friends, will decide that what I have told you about nihilism and angels is impossible. Take my word as an individual who has more matter and meaning than you will ever attain that the world I have so drawn is not only possible, but also accurate. For the skeptics in your midst I offer this: angels hold importance and meaning with a cosmic equivalent of a concrete slab, a mattress salesman, a member of the clergy, the bodies you will burn, how you procure your goggles, the yellow air you try or try not to swallow down. Even though the angels represent and enforce (as is evidence of your sunken territories) some divine will, some divine ethic, the presence and enforcement of divinity via angels is no evidence that divinity or angels are, 1) more meaningful than anything

at all, 2) a possible source of meaning. Or this: an angel with a flaming sword is nothing more than an angel with a flaming sword. Angels mean nothing to nihilists. Why a nihilist would matter to a city of angels confounds.

That you, my sunken friends, sank and were contained because of three ballot initiatives and because I so infuriated angels and a saint to spur earthquakes in an ill formed attempt to regain matter doesn't mean anything either. Do not be surprised when your lands shake in the coming weeks, months, years: some of my residual matter, bits of their territories, is among the dust since settled in the sunken lands. They'll retrieve it all. Perhaps you will find comfort in meaningless, or in that I never intended to sink you, that angels will shake you because of your proximity to fragments of territories that were under their control. Blame me if you will. Know it is a waste of your time. Blame yourself for living among fault zones without a guardian. If you moved to the territories of your own accord you may benefit from some pointed reflection into what so drew you into a land so fouled that the air marks its boundaries and can be seen from miles away. Still, register your animosities as you wish: it is too late now to do anything other than hurt yourself, to punish your present self for the mistakes of the ignorant past iteration of yourself, if you dwell in an unalterable past or unrealizable future. No? Live your internal life as you want. It won't be long before the yellowed air bearing pipes blare. This is your future. Revel here, in this moment, in my presence and attention because soon it will be gone and I very well may have

[This marks the end of the editor's inserted texts and a return to *A History of Democratic Actions Taken by the People of the Surface*. The incomplete sentence remains intact as it was left.]

It is wild and improbable that you will live long enough to reflect upon the language of ballot propositions. I would be stunned if you survive long enough to devise even a rudimentary understanding of tactical voter suppression. Still, if you establish a history of your people you may be interested in the actual propositions. If nothing else you may so enjoy becoming properly informed before any/all acts of litigation. The initiatives are transcribed as they appeared in the voter's guide:

Proposition Sixteen¹⁰

Subterranean Territories Initiative

Grants complete sovereignty to all lands and peoples sunken into the ground as defined by the boundaries of ██████████ County and severs all state duties, responsibilities, and interest to people and lands. As such, the people and lands will be officially released from any/all obligations they may have to the state government. Any lands contained within these boundaries that did not sink will be sunken to a depth of no less than 200 meters. The United States National Park contained within, ██████████, will remain subject to and under the control of the National Government and the State of ██████████, and as such any/all applicable such sunken park land will be recovered and repaired.

Proposition Seventeen¹¹

Clean Air Initiative

¹⁰ The author was not aware of ████████ prop sixteen that was under consideration during the time of composition. Prop sixteen was concerned with nuclear power plants and their capacity to store and dispose of nuclear waste. It did not appear on the ballot because of lack of signatures. Has he known he would have littered the sunken territories with nuclear waste and irradiated marauders. He would have advised the citizens to treat them as lepers.

¹¹ The actual prop seventeen, though its sponsors did not gather enough signatures for it to appear on the ballot, was concerned with the creation of a publically owned electrical utilities company.

Funds support and funds to filter, contain, and sequester the state's polluted airs into the territories as established by an affirmation of proposition sixteen.

Proposition Eighteen¹²

Surface Transportation, Commerce Initiative

Sunken territory, as established by proposition sixteen, will be fully covered, exceptions only for air purification equipment installation and maintenance, with pavement and/or any effective organic, synthetic, or hybrid material and road systems to facilitate travel for commerce, work, and recreation. Paving will mitigate the public safety hazard and risk associated with the enormous pit.

The margins of affirmation for the propositions were as near unanimous as achievable in any broadly, publically considered issue. The small percentage of voters who objected did so not because they objected to the territorial and/or human ramifications, but instead because, 1) they were just they kind of people who always voted "no" as part of a larger strategy to avoid researching the hundreds of propositions, enjoyed the philosophical state of opposition, and enjoyed exercising their civic duties, 2) wanted the financial benefit of collecting tax money from the sunken citizens but without providing any services, 3) believed that a strategic marketing campaign could turn the pit into the state's own kind of Grand Canyon tourist attraction, 4) hated ██████████ National Park, 5) knew that people ought not be allowed to dwell underground because it would enrage the God of Sun (the most

¹² Real prop, again did not appear because of signatures, would have raised cigarette tax and allocated money to improve higher education in ██████.

frequently mentioned in “comments sections” which some voter(s) drew on to the ballot were Ra/Horus, the unnamed son of Awondo, or Ri Gong Ri Guang Pu Sa).

You need not worry about the workings and intricacies of unadulterated democratic processes, nor need you hazard any of your wonder into the formation of an electorate remarkably fearful of solar deities. No. You need orientation. You need light. Here you shall—if you’re wise, which you are, for I would not allocate my time, my words, my magnificent cognizance if you were not—bask, bathe, drink up, drink down, be carried, washed out, over as my glory so runneth.

On What You Will Mistake For Salvation

The citizens of the surface who voted to pump the polluted air from their skies into your territory had no idea that this would enrage the angels and saint. When the pumps start they will purify the air of the city of angels and the saint's city. This though, is not without consequence for you. Even the airs, fouled as they are, that are striped to clear the surface skies, these the fouled air, the waste that will be pumped into your territory are made of matter. And this matter, this matter that so sickened the people of the surface's cities is matter that belong to the angels. Do not be foolish. Do not think that the angels and the saint will not come for their territory. Do not think that you lands will not shake again.

It will sprinkle at first, the way you'll grow accustomed to. The kind of sprinkles that come during days/nights of heavy truck traffic, construction, you'll know. This is not that. The asphalt that so seals you away will crack, rain down as truck sized slabs for drops. Before this you will see sunlight slice, a sliver through the cracks. Do not fall to your knees and shed tears of joy—how many times must I tell you not to be a waster of water? Do not bathe in the sunlight. This is not light of a God of your salvation. Do not be afraid. Be terrified. Sprint away from the light like your life depends on it because it does because this is how you may not die on the day your sky falls.

Do not be surprised when the citizens of the surface pave over you again.

On When the Pavers Come and On Pit to Surface Legal Procedure

Hear them at night, when the unbroken windows chatter, when dust and rock run down from the rim of the world above. So sing the machines of the containment teams who were sent to seal you under the ground. You will not hear the men whistle. The men will not whistle. The men will pave. The men will smoke cigarettes as they paved without whistling. There is nothing you can do but prepare for containment. Acquire shelter so suited for hatches, install hatches, batten them, the hatches down. You see light through a yellow haze that is your new sky. Do not listen to those who cry out, bemoan, eulogize, the sky of the past, the sky of blue. Your sky was never blue. I needn't remind you that you ought not open your eyes without protection if it is your desire to see a future without the yellow film. Do not feel smug if you've already procured goggles—you will be killed for them once your fellow citizens realize their value.

You will see the pipelines protrude from the rim. This is not humanitarian infrastructure from above. Water will not flow. They will not pump clean air. Soon, you must prepare, they will sputter, spew, they the pipes. We^{xii} have decided it best to deliver all of our yellowed air directly to you. The lawyers of the surface call it *utilitarian environmental hazards sequestration*. As you were already ruined, so the reasoning goes, as you voluntarily lived with the yellowed air, we could not imagine you would protest the addition of a bit more. There is no formal protest process. If you wish to establish a process or file a formal complaint it is, perhaps, most

productive to go outside and shout your discontents upward. Please remember to be logical. If you wish to submit any documents as evidence, e.g. health impact surveys, please shout them upward as well. Take turns so no one ingests too much air. Consider employing the elderly and terminally ill to register the longer grievances. Read slowly and remember to enunciate—it is loud on the surface and we are a people dedicated to the accuracy of records and we appreciate detail. Group protest chants may seem an appealing, efficient method to register discontent (perhaps this would serve as a good community building exercise), but a group never compels. Individuals do. Generally we would request photocopies for legal review but these are extraordinary circumstances, some formalities have been waved. We cannot receive material evidence.

If I did not trust your intelligence I would be forced to explain that the admission of evidence via shouting out of a hole is unprecedented, and quite the legal procedural favor. Because I am honest with you, not because I care for you but because I am an honest person,^{xiii} I think it's important for you to know that any appeal to the surface is futile.

On Registering your Discontents

Register discontents in your heart. May they burn through your chest. Fall asleep with your hands and teeth clenched. Make dull the teeth, may your hands be tender by morning, raw in a week. Dream of vengeance upon the people of the surface and teach your children how to dream. Remember the pipes sit silent now. For but a moment. It is imminent anarchy they will announce to all of you. They are the postindustrial, post-post-postmodern age's wartime bugles. If you wish to dream of children, and later have those children, you must live when the mist comes, and then you must live some more. If you are killed for your goggles your dreams will remain dreams and no one will sing for you. You will stagger, stumble facedown on concrete in a strip mall that houses a used mattress emporium, a laundry mat, a payday check cashing moneylender, cars on cinderblocks. Their tires burned in a metal drum for heat, to cook, for fun. No one will come for you, your chipped teeth, a broken nose, a broken jaw, skin blackened by asphalt. The earth becomes you in that moment, gravel burrows into its new home. Skin is permeable: you'll be yellowed outside in soon. It matters none if you die with your eyes open or closed, the mountain lions will not discriminate against their meals on the basis of eyelid position. The tectonic plates have delivered you into the state of nature. You must organize to transition from the state. Your ignorance of Hobbes' *Leviathan* is understandable, but I will not permit such ignorance any longer. You will live in

constant fear and with danger of violent death. Form society or life will be, “solitary, poore, nasty, brutish, and short.” The fogs loom.

Sunken Studies Inc.

On Anarchy As a Method of Social Organization

Disdain anarchy and you may live long enough to die of cancer. Here, on your deathbed, you will appreciate the vastness of your capacity to disdain anarchy. Set fire to the anarchists if and when you can and do not eat their flesh. They are not infectious, you surely know. But they are so reprehensible, so merit repudiation that you must not let them think they are of any use at all. This is their only use: the one that shows the totality of their uselessness.¹³

¹³ The root of his hatred for anarchy has never been clear to me. I know of no exposure to any real anarchists.

On Your Early Sunken Nights

I will never see your streets. I know they are desolate but for debris and human remains. The bodies must be collected and burned. You do not have the time for burials or funerals. Find a hose and suck gasoline from the tanks of all cars you can. Douse the bodies with gas in the daylight and wait for nightfall to provoke flames. Watch your fires from the distance to see if they attract the attention of fellow residents. This is how you learn about the living. The prudent will not approach. They have set their own fires elsewhere. See them in the distance. Note where they are. Note how many burn. Note the intensity. You're looking to see what happens to those who approach the flames, to see who approaches. In these months know no one needs fire to keep warm through the night. It is in proximity to the fires where you discover, where you decide, who you are when you see, you see the feeble at the flames. They come hoping that those in the distance are not those who lurk and peer through rifle sights. Soon you will know from a half mile out the stench of a fire extinguished not with dirt but by blood let run from the throat. This is why you watch. Eyes open for travelers willingly accompanied by children without visible ribcages. This is applicable to domestic animals as well. Don't let them fill on you.

You learn so much when you hear a crack, and see red colored gray matter in the fire's light. Listen for laughs, for sobs, and try to count the number when they are of diverse octave. Those who laugh do not shoot because an empty stomach so

demands, but to pass the time the sun is down. You may see a figure rise in the distance, strut to the fire and feed the crumpled body of the feeble to flames. And so the fire grows as an invitation for a larger audience. Those who sob are gaunt and had a reason. Do not expect to see a figure sneak to the fire. Know the body will be gone not long after morning. If you must vomit do so with care, with stealth, without emotion. This is a visceral reaction. You will not serve the whims of your body. Soon you will be hungry too.

On Navigation in the Darkened Days

Do not be fooled by the darkened sky. It is but yellow veiled black. That all is black, that you cannot see, is no reason to not wear your goggles. Are you so foolish that you would voluntarily be blind? I am certain that you are not. We have no time to consider the inherent moral goodness/badness of blindness—as the people of the surface may and do indulge the debate. I suspect that even they could be swayed to admit the benefit of knowing if/when a bludgeon is on course to connect with your head.

Temptation will strike that you make a torch of wood, a cloth to burn, of what you will soak in the gasoline you've sucked from the tanks of cars—all emptied now. The torch that tempts you, you would raise above your head to see the stuff of the sunken territory that so surrounds you. You will learn that this is no way to see more than a few yards. You will think to build a bigger torch, to increase the rag, to hold the flame higher in the air or further out in front of you. Still you see almost nothing. You see nothing that you cannot hear. If you can use/need a torch's light to tell a mountain lion is poised to strike, that a citizen with ill intentions is near then you ought accept that you have lost, you have not established, you have no control over what the territory will x to you.

Think of traveling with a torch. Is the light not a beacon of/for the location of your head? Do not think that the light will not blur into the distance through the haze into the reticle of a rifle. Do not be among the citizens who learn that the

easiest way to lose your head is to illuminate it. See? Down goes the body. The torch lands but feet away. No need to search. There you are. If you insist that you carry a torch, if you must carry a torch, keep it far from your head and internal organs. If you hear a gun shot you're lucky, you've lived. Drop the torch and in one direction and your body in the other: another shot is on the way. Crawl away from the flame. You don't think the shooter will wait? If you must run do not do so in a straight line. Carve a serpentine as you run for your life.

Learn to live with little light. Count your steps so you can retrace them. Plant a stick, place a rock, for every x yards you advance. Collect them when you return. Do not make your camp easy to find by leaving a trail behind. Consider setting up a perimeter. Anchor your self to the middle of your camp with a rope. Walk to the end of the rope and plant a marker. Move in a circle and leave markings until it's complete. Get to know everything within this space so you can move through it freely, so you know when something is amiss. Make your way out of your camp and plant false trails that lead off into the desert and then vanish. Set traps at their ends if you wish. Dig sharpened stick filled pits, snares with something rancid and diseased to zip in pierce and infect skin, fire pits that strike themselves, a latrine, rusted metals. You'll have all the time for innovations of this kind.

On Your Early Sunken Days

You have no time to watch the mountain lions roam the streets you knew as home to your neighbors when you were a child. Do not stop to see the homes collapsed. Do not lament or weep—you do not have the time nor the water to squander. When tears come, they will, use a finger to collect the moisture from your face and drink them back down. Do not draw attention to yourself unless you want to lose the finger. If you want to lose a finger you will find more than a few of your fellow residents hungry and happy to indulge. Be certain that you receive something in return—preferably of similar value to a tear stained finger. It would be most unwise to trade all ten. This is how your markets will be born. You will learn to barter. Do not be tempted to steal unless you have prepared for the consequences. There is no escape, only exile in the desert of the east where certain death is poised to strike.

The wildlife will not last long after the stores are looted. You will see the pillagers run, skip strides, jubilant swing bags bloated with cash all the way to wherever: a car, a side street, home, an iron pipe swinging. Thud. Out you go. Off skips the pipe-swinging swindler into the distance to surely be stopped by another's swinging pipe. The banks are taken all the way to the vaults. Two by five to ten by ten, two key metal doors of safe deposit boxes littered on the floor. Soon everyone will understand the ramifications of fiat-based currency. Your money was valuable because you all collectively decided it was valuable. It has no inherent worth and no

worth at all without a social accord. Do not keep money past the first few days as the window to swindle with cash transactions will snap shut, lock. Spend all your money and fear overpaying only at the rate it raises suspicions of the seller. Do not steal the money back, even when you can.

Find a ridge, a bluff, an x with a view that under/overlooks a mall's parking lot. Watch the looters, the robbers, the banditos, from afar to see who's worthy to stalk to a stick up spot of your liking. Don't follow the man with a cart full of Blu-ray players, the couple shuffling away with a 50-inch flat screen and speakers. Don't worry about the roughnecks who fill rusting cargo vans with power tools and trays of iced meat delivered directly from the butcher's glass case. Keep track of the tweakers and speed heads loaded with cough syrup and all the non-OTC drugs they finally got a crack at. Sickness will come, and your fellow residents of the sunken territory with prescription treated ailments will deteriorate at the rate of chemical half-life. Note the people leaving with iodine, those who have non-perishable and canned foods, bottled beverages, hydrogen peroxide, water filtration systems, gallons of bleach, painters masks, goggles, lined canvas jackets, rope, boxes of nails or screws.

You cannot spend your time taking inventory of gun owners—you're still in southern ██████████, assume everyone is armed and holds human life in low regard—but notice who shakes and who holds steady when guns are raised. It's not as if parking lot shootouts are anything new to you even if you don't recall. Notice how quickly those who intervene, to reason, to advocate peace become framed in

picture sights. Do not laugh at arms filled with scratch off lotto tickets: you do not want attention. Internalize your reaction to humor. See the sun ruined, desert soiled in ill fitting whatever they found near the goodwill dumpster drop their *god anything help* to indecipherable to *bless you* double underlined and starred on both sides, *anyway* cardboard chunk—expect them to do well. You’ll notice them in a frenzied sea of torn clothing, greasy hair: now they wear clean clothes and scrub their skin because they might as well.

On Psychopaths, The Potentiality of True Love, And Suicide

Stay away from the man in the suit who arrives in an S-Class—or an SUV that has never been on a gravel trail, much less off-road—imported from a European country with aesthetic sensibilities and engineering acumen. The car is black, hand washed, waxed—a bottle of something hard and clear in the glove box that's strong on his breath and two-thirds down—will roar because he refuses to shift gears until he's well passed the red line. He stops the car at the store's entrance and moseys on in. Or the car stops itself with a pile looters who moved too slowly out of its way. He returns with a wrecking bar, a blood spattered face, a detached human head with a chasm for a left cheek, head held by the hair whips through the sky as a mace with a skill that suggest this was some kind of calling for which he'd prepared. See flesh mash in the man's teeth. Watch him fit the head on his hand. Hear his squeals of delight when he sticks his fingers through the missing cheek. See his fingers wiggle. See the mob part. Watch them trip, tumble be trampled to permeable consciousness, wheeze, grasp at anything that passes and cling for help, are swatted away. See wrecking bar ripped rib cages strewn about the storefront. Watch the man jog down a side street and cave in the windows of parked cars with the head. Watch the overflowing shopping carts drift, wobble, knock around, their contents spill, burst atop the crumpled people. They will ignite with the same moon you may hear the man howl to.

These nights of clear skies are few. Remember the smog, the mist, the yellow ether will soon envelope all. The fires will still burn. The psychopaths with proclivities for violence will make themselves known. The non-violent will blend into the crowds. It will be impossible to track all twenty-two to twenty-three thousand, but it may be beneficial to know those who are in your immediate vicinity.¹⁴ Violence (in all forms, emotional, physical, etc.) is but a minor element of the disorder and is sometimes never manifest. Many of them will be charming, charismatic, and have a history of excellence in any/all formal and informal organizations. Undoubtedly you have known a few or will meet one soon.^{xiv}

Chin up. Yes, you sank with psychopaths, but you may have sunk with your yet to be located true love—though the former is a statistical certainty and the latter is a type of wishful optimism employed by some to deal with the former. You must realize that in this very moment your life is quite possibly the best it will ever be ever again. There is no reason to believe in that the future will be to your liking. Decide what this means to you. You're free to leave at anytime—just walk to one of the night fires. You won't hear the crack that opens the door.

¹⁴ This is a fairly accurate ranged estimate of the number of psychopaths in ██████ County, ██████. I think he used the standard assumption that one percent of the United States population is—though this is not the DSM language (they opt for the title antisocial personality disorder)—psychopathic. He failed to control for regional fluctuation, he rounded population data, and he did not account for the increased rate of psychopaths among the incarcerated and the population of ██████. Despite these oversights, or the more probable that he was lazy, he did not invent the numbers.

On Those Who Were Incarcerated

Remember the jumpsuit clad, that the prison and jail walls fell down too. Find solace in the absence of supermax facilities in the sunken territory.

Sunken Studies Inc.

On Gardens

Come now. You well know that nothing will grow except tumors, abscesses that burst yellow in your lungs. That you will be blind without goggles.

Sunken Studies Inc.

On Who Are You To Be, The Implementation of Violence, and Sleep

What will be your traffic? What will be your loot? Do you rush with the mobs into virgin big box stores that house pharmacies, chemicals, liquor, non-perishables, masks, goggles? Will you trace, track, ambush looters on secluded grounds? Employ cost benefit analysis. Know how much risk you're willing to assume. Realize how easily basic risk is mitigated by participating within the secondary looting market. It eliminates the chaos of mob scene looting. You can control your variables here. You only need to account for one person instead of hundreds. When you rob the right person you reap valuable loot. Here you loot the loot of looters, you do not just randomly abduct, snatch and hope for luck. Know who's worth kidnapping. Do you track the kidnapers instead? Know the local kidnapers. Consider kidnapping or looting kidnapers to maximize your profits. These targets may be desirable because when you strike someone who has kidnapped/looted others you're reaping many goods at once. Instead of looting ten individuals you're looting one individual who has ten individuals worth of loot. Know this as a secondary market: *the secondary looting market, the secondary abduction market.*

Before undertaking any looting/kidnapping objective, consider the degree of harm you're willing to inflict upon the subject/object of your longing as to attain it/him/her/they. Even the best-intentioned blow to the head may result in death or irreversible brain damage. The threat of violence, in some case, will be as effective as actual violence. Do not threaten violence you are unable to enact. Find out what

you need, who you need to be, who you can be, in order to live with yourself. Stay at that depth because you'll need sleep to deal with those who don't need to, who can sleep after anything. Do not toss, turn your nights into hazy day, poor motor skills, bloodshot eyes are no way to stay alive in the sunken territory—not long. Sleep as well as you can, learn to blend with the desert, the urban ruins, you do not want to be found sleeping. Sleep for rest. Feign sleep to lure, trap, punish those who would exploit you had you been sleeping. Realize how unlikely it is that you have the constitution for the latter. Know that others do. Know that others incorrectly think they do. Do not be confused about you are. Know that you could have sustained a rare brain injury that transformed you into the kind of psychopath who will do well here, in sunken towns.

You cannot be a nervous wreck, you cannot allow yourself to be rendered immobile and have realistic hopes to attain goggles, gas masks, a true love who just may have cannibalistic intentions which you may learn to regard with fondness.

On Understanding Your Fellow Sunken Citizens and Strategic Looting

If you follow the man who carts off Blu-ray players—a choice you may make—realize it as an investment of your time that will lead to a different sunken experience than the pursuit of a citizen with food or water. Do not dismiss him yet. Neither you nor I know, with certainty, the contents of Blu-ray boxes—we did not open them, look inside^{xv} to verify they contain Blu-ray players (nor did the stores that stocked them, the driver who delivered them, consider all of the interim to the origin packaging facility—though this is really the type of internal thought, i.e., garbage, reserved for surface people in the process of spacing out).^{xvi} You wonder this: did the Blu-ray carting man recognize that a Blu-ray player has no use in the territory of scarce electricity? A box that purports to contain a Blu-ray player may be of great use if emptied of its player and filled with penicillin and goggles. His—the man with valuable goods disguised as a Blu-ray player (M.V.G.D.B.)—wiles do nothing to protect him from the sunken citizens who have yet to realize the lack of utility a Blu-ray player offers to sunken living who thus assault/kill the man to steal a player because of its perceived value. You will not be one of them. This class of sunken citizen will be known as individuals who are confused about the market ramifications of sunkenness (I.C.M.R.S.). Such confused citizens may or may not come to possess Blu-ray players.

My friends, do not think yourselves completely safe if you choose to adopt the strategy of disguising your goods. The man with valuable goods disguised as a

Blu-ray player is not protected from sunken citizens who realize that some sunken citizens will disguise valuable goods as Blu-ray players. The latter are classed as high information, reflective looters (H.I.R.L.). He, the M.V.G.D.B., gains some protection from the type of person who still loots actual Blu-ray players. Citizens who continue to loot Blu-ray players, real Blu-ray looters (R.B.L.), introduce uncertainty into the minds of the sunken citizens who recognize the existence of M.V.G.D.B., R.B.L. H.I.R.L., and I.C.M.R.S. (i.e., when they see a Blu-ray box they know that the person who carries it may or may not have switched the contents for something of practical value).¹⁵ To eliminate any confusion about the M.V.G.D.B., R.B.L., etc., looting dynamic, consider the following story. You may also benefit from consulting the addendums' taxonomy, that is, if you cannot keep the citizens straight.

Some years before you sunk into the ground there existed a sometimes bearded and always mustached man named Saddam Hussein.^{xvii} He was the President of an oil rich nation called Iraq. He ruled as an all-powerful tyrant and ordered his portrait printed on the national currency, hung in schools, hung in office buildings, and his likeness rendered into statues to stand through out the land—lest

¹⁵ I have no factual objection here, but an uncontrollable urge to officially state that at the location of my textual note I began to scream with rage. I rolled my chair in furious concentric circles, swore the paint off the walls of my office then leapt to my feet, climbed onto my desk and stomped on my laptop and all I could see was my laptop and all I could think was the word Blu-ray and so I stomped and screamed Blu-ray and it was me and I was it and again I stopped to exist. I awoke upon my floor some hours later. I suspect I was concussed but did not consult a doctor, or even a medical advice from the web. I knew it ill-advised to sleep when concussed because of the associated health risks, so I plucked shards of my computer's former case from my back, climbed into my chair, rolled to the kitchen and used, for the second or third time ever, my espresso machine. The consumption of espresso so continued until I was relatively confident that the concussion had passed, or until I didn't care if it hadn't.

his people forget who they were in relation to him. And so his image washed across Iraq. The tyrant was not satisfied. He ordered that his most loyal men who shared his physical likeness be surgically transformed to a state identical to his own. The creation of body doubles (or Political Decoys) was not inspired by pure vanity and/or his narcissism. He did not, to the best of U.S. intelligence reports, manufacture the legion of lookalikes in order to have Saddam only pool parties, Saddam only night outs, etc., but instead did so as a safety precaution. The decoys were dummy targets for would be assassins and allowed the tyrant to seemingly, instantaneously appear everywhere. His country was of a size—roughly the same number of square miles as ████████—so a Saddam appearance in the north followed by a Saddam appearance in the south could plausibly be facilitated by a plane ride (the tyrant had good sense to travel only when prudent). In time Saddam grew most unpopular within the international community and thus excelled through the ranks of candidates worthy of assassination. Saddam knew this, and as such, and in addition to the body doubles, he maintained twenty some residences and never slept in the same location for consecutive nights.

From this history of Iraq—skewed—emerges an analogy that will help you as you loot. Saddam Hussein is semi-analogous to the M.V.G.D.B. (as he is the actual and desired target) and his body doubles are analogous to the R.B.L.s. The analogy is not yet as tight as it could be because Saddam's doubles were intentional creations to distract, whereas the R.B.L.s arise more organically from the inexplicable desire to loot actual Blu-ray players. In Saddam's world an individual with an inexplicable

desire for a real Blu-ray player (I.I.D.R.B.P.) would be more analogous to someone who deeply desires to look like Saddam but has no association with Saddam's body double program. Here arises another distinction: that of intentionality and action. A man who actively grooms himself to appear similar to Saddam (I.I.D.R.B.P.) differs from someone who just so happens to look like Saddam (someone who has somehow managed to become attached to a Blue-ray box through no intentional action of his own, A.B.N.I.A.). Do not confuse the I.I.D.R.B.P. and the I.C.M.R.S.: the latter is motivated to steal Blu-ray players because he thinks that they are things of value while the former has the specific desire to obtain only Blu-ray players.

You must consider the existence of all classes of sunken citizen before you loot. You must recognize how your fellow sunken citizens will categorize you, that their categorization can increase or decrease the possibility that they loot or loot you not. Surely you see that danger of appearing to be M.V.G.D.B. You do not want, you do not need, any additional attention. You do not want to be, in our analogy, a person who resembles Saddam.

The surface is home to at least one man who so resembles Saddam—though Saddam is dead and the man is alive, I assume that the man wasn't visiting the sunken territory at the time of the earthquakes, but who knows—that he was often mistaken for the tyrant. He, Mohamed Bishr, the lookalike, was abducted on multiple occasions because of identity confusion. Most of the time his kidnappers snatched him with hopes to collect the twenty-five million dollar bounty the United States government offered for Saddam. The parties who kidnapped Bishr because

they believed he was Saddam and desired the reward are similar to a H.I.R.L. who targeted a M.V.G.D.B but inadvertently ended up with a R.B.L., I.I.D.R.B.P., I.C.M.R.S., A.B.N.I.A., or D.T.B.B.B. (a decoy target bearing a Blu-ray box). You see the problem that can arise for you, even the most reflective and cunning of my sunken friends. You do not want to mistake a Hussein for a Bishr: but such mistakes are inevitable once you enter the looting market. Surely you've realized that it is not possible to exit the looting market. You are in the sunken territories, thus, loot.

So, perhaps you decide to loot your way through the haze. You loot, you loot, you loot your way to an empire. You employ decoy targets when you move high-value goods. You have a network of looters who you've learned to disguise as M.V.G.D.B.s, D.T.B.B.s, etc., who protect the real valuable goods, the real looter(s)—wherever you've so hidden them. You even craft a new breed of looter who you use to lure, punish those who would loot your looters—your looter of retribution (L.O.R.). This, the new looter is the one, you'll let the rumors spread, who will carry the real loot. These rumors are started by you to make out a target attractive to draw attackers. You say that it's a high-risk strategy and that x will move everything with little security. Let the rumors swirl around the sunken town until there's actually competition among those who want to loot you. Let them fight and loot one another and grow weak. You do nothing until looting day. When looting day comes you run the operations just like rumor said you would. Your looter of retribution leads your looting enemies into what looks like another escape route stretch of the desert. Let them think they've captured him. You'll beat, kidnap, loot, massacre, x

them here. It's up to you. No one loots your looters. Or pay someone else to do it, a reward for those who would so like to loot you and your looters and bounties for their executives and their families.

Thirty million United States dollars drew a tip that led U.S. forces to the location of Saddam's two sons.^{xviii} Both sons were killed after a four hour assault by two hundred some United States ground troops, attack helicopters, and a jet designed for very low altitude ground oriented destruction—which, incidentally, reduced the “safe house” to very small chunks of concrete. Color photos of the corpses were printed in [REDACTED] magazine and/or [REDACTED] magazine for some reason—a nationalistic rah-rah, perhaps. The photo focused on their two toe tagged bodies, or so is my memory of the event. The United States' killing of the sons so enraged Saddam that he offered sixty million dollars—twice the value of the claimed U.S. bounty for Uday and Qusay, and still uncollected—to anyone who could bring him the heads of Donald Rumsfeld's two daughters. Saddam was well known for his ability to fill a story with figurative language, as anyone who actually knew him would tell you, but the demand for heads was literal. Rumsfeld later admitted that he was rather afraid for the safety of his family and self.

The sons can be thought of as priceless entities to the principal, in this case Saddam (P.M.V.G.D.B.). The killing of P.M.V.G.D.B.s is a tactic in a larger strategy to extract the valuable goods from the principal and/or destroy his empire. You see the dangers now. Why would you risk your life, the life of the loved ones you may or may not have/locate, when you could be capitalizing on those who are not as clever

as you? Make it clear that you are no M.V.G.D.B. Realize that even you, if you build an empire of loot are never anything more than someone else's loot to be. No? Do not sleep deep on looted pillows of goose down without knowing that you could be someone else's pillow fill even when it comes with stained rubble of you collected at your former safe house.

So you will loot, be looted, loot back in cycles. You will skip with a grin until a fellow sunken citizen wipes it off your face with the pipe that'll break your knees next. Perhaps you'll learn to walk again. Don't gloat your way into the desert, your shanty of a shelter will burn to the ground if you do not move with stealth, care. These are not times when you will cheer, groan regardless of what you've looted, what you've lost. Never think you've seen, felt, all the desert holds.

Bishr's kidnappers must have felt a breed of euphoria rapidly transform into a despondency reserved for the few individuals who have believed that they just captured Saddam Hussein then realized they actually have an Egyptian man who is not only not Saddam Hussein but who is also somewhat versed in the process of being thrown into the back of vans, and thus doesn't seem terribly surprised. Now my friends, while Bishr is no model for how you ought carry yourself as you loot—as it will result in an increased rate of you being looted—his life flows with lessons in expecting unexpectable occurrences. He was once was offered \$330,000 (by three well dressed men, reportedly Iraqi, who knew they were dealing with a lookalike and not the real Saddam) to be the leading man in a pornographic film entrepreneurial endeavor. It is not known if the men had ulterior motives, if the

pornography was a cover story of sorts. Maybe they were simple, semi-deep pocketed producers of niche pornography. Whoever they were, they did not take rejection well. A day or so after Bishr refused their proposition he was kidnapped by the same group of men and soon thereafter was pitched from a moving car. Around the time Mohamed Bishr's body connected with pavement, the sounds of failed, presumably angry, Iraqi pornographers, their van speeding off into the distance marked the highest recorded reminder that one ought always expect the unexpected.^{xix}

So you see, my friends who loot or don't: there are many good reasons to not appear as a M.W.V.G.D.B. Make it clear that you are not the kind of person who would travel with valuable goods to mitigate the risk living a life such as Bishr. Create a taxonomy of sunken citizens of your own, devise your own strategies. Do not become the pillow fill for your enemies as retribution for how you loot.

Here, again, a brief interruption from an existing entity so endowed with actual reflective consciousness. I feel so strongly that the world as it so unfolds, has an important relation to wholly manufactured narrative, and is of a huge importance that I still struggle to articulate. It relates to convictions about truth of experience.

- 1) Tonight (9/10/14) at 7:00 p.m. M.S.T. President Obama addressed the country/world to announce that the United States will be launching a formal, multilateral, air based war against the terrorist group ISIS (or ISIL). The strategy is the US will establish regional allies to fight on the ground to expose ISIS to air strikes. The slug line strategy is to "Degrade"

and “Destroy” ISIS, i.e., bomb them everywhere they are until they’re all dead and/or sufficiently “Degraded.”

- 2) Apple unveiled two new iPhones as well as a watch.
- 3) TMZ released video of football star Ray Rice beating his wife (his girlfriend at the time of the incident) unconscious on an elevator spurring the NFL to, perhaps, address domestic violence.
- 4) The crack-smoking mayor of Toronto—beloved by all, or repulsed by all—met Mike Tyson. Such a meeting, of course, means nothing but feels like it should.
- 5) Ebola still not under control. It remains only in Africa. Greatly ironic because the main reason they’re having an ongoing problem is an inability to establish effective quarantines. Poverty, poor medical capacity, poor domestic education to their own people about the risks, and lack of international will to send aid presumably contributing factors.
- 6) Russia and Ukraine established a preliminary ceasefire. Ukrainian forces, some days ago, captured invading Russian paratroopers. Prior to the incident Russian forces were not officially fighting in Ukraine, though there were many troops dressed in Russian military garb (albeit unmarked) armed with Russian weapon systems. Russia’s official statement was that they were blown off course/lost. Further, satellite images revealed Russian ground forces—not Russian armed Ukrainian fighting on behalf of Russia, real Russian forces—in Ukraine. Official

Russian response was that the images didn't prove anything and could have easily been screenshots from a video game.

- 7) Israel v Palestine = out of the 24 hour news cycle, but probably still less than pleasant. ISIS makes (I'm not going to look back at earlier interruption. Can't remember if/how many American journalists ISIS had managed to behead at that point. We're currently at two. The videos are widely available. Very likely that a Brit will be next) everything else look relatively inconsequential. Very skilled at being the terrorists they are, as they really know how to enrage the entire international community (including states/actors regarded as very unfriendly by international community).
 - 8) I've consumed four bottles of gin since beginning this thesis. Counting footnotes and not accounting for revisions/edits (neither of which I intend to do) my gin to page rate is about 12.5 pages per bottle. Perhaps further research will illuminate my lack of gin to page rate.
 - 9) Attended art auction and acquired first painting via auction. Large canvas portrait of a young woman (approx. 3'x4') titled *Wyoming Portrait*.
 - 10) Began writing iteration of famous limerick and lost interest. Joke seems to obvious and uninspired: *There once was a man from Nantucket//But no one talks about his watercolor//Prowess, or his godlike jaw-line//Judgmental cunts.*
-

11) Have almost beaten Grand Theft Auto V. Haven't even killed a prostitute for fun—though I have kidnapped and sold 4-5 people to a cannibal compound. Not feeling any real life urges to kidnap anyone and sell them to cannibals.

12) Nine year old girl firing fully automatic Uzi at Vegas shooting range lost control—because physics—of where the barrel was pointing and managed to shoot range attendant standing behind and above her in head, render him dead. Was shooting gun well within range's regulations with consent of both parents and range officials.

13) Snow falls tonight and weighs down the branches of our trees. My stepbrother has traveled 9,000 miles, has come to this town to wait for his stepbrother to die. He is in hospice. He will no longer eat. He refuses the IV. The dying stepbrother shares no blood relation with me, any member of my family, or stepfamily. He, the dying man (these parenthetical words are my sole intrusion, retrospective breach into this, the world, where real time supersedes craft. He, the dying stepbrother died yesterday, one day after my September 10th notes, my mother whispered to me. This night we eat together after beating snow, with brooms and shovel, and dowels, from the bowing branches of our trees) is the son of my stepfather's ex-wife's second husband and the second husband and one of his prior wife's sons. The actual relation, when explained, makes him sound distant in a way so contorted it is comical

and does nothing to capture to mood around the house of: my mother, my stepfather, and my stepbrother. He is not the peripheral character the relation makes him out to be. I have no intent or desire to punt on what this means about human relations, society, labels, who you go to war for, etc. This part is just the news.

Sunken Studies Inc.

On Kidnapping/Looting: The Etiquette, Strategies, and Merits of Polite Conduct

You must know that you could be kidnapped, whether you look like Saddam Hussein or not. Determine what interest, what value may lead kidnappers to so desire you. The last part is crucial. Were you targeted and kidnapped because you are a desirable individual with some unique value? Could you be exchanged for ransom money, are you a source of valuable information, have these kidnappers come for vengeance because you burned down a house which—now—you're realizing had residents and the residents of the house you burned tracked you down to, perhaps, burn you to the ground too. Do you possess a Blu-ray box, wear desirable boots, were on the kidnappers' route home, were mistaken for someone else, were a good candidate in the eyes of Iraqi pornographers? Or, were you kidnapped not because of the individual with a unique spirit you were but because you were a warm body for eating for fucking (for both?). Make such determinations first. Next calculate odds of survival. Be realistic. Do not over or underreact. In these situations escalation is an art. Do not fight kidnappers who can be easily satisfied by a material good. Hand over your boots if such a transaction guarantees your safe release. There are more boots. There is one you. Are you the kind of person who will risk death for boots?

A skilled kidnapper needs no weapons or restraints. Do not fool yourself by believing that simply because your head is not bludgeoned and because you're walking of your own accord that you have not been kidnapped. An unconscious

body is difficult to transport. A conscious, restrained but screaming body may draw unwanted attention. Use a bit of imagination and charisma and your kidnap victims will happily walk themselves into your own home believing you're a new friend, an ally, true love. A slight adjustment and you can route to their home (this is rather risky, of course, because you may have accidentally found someone who's like you. But if you haven't found someone like you, and you probably haven't, you realize what you have).

Do not cry to your captors. It is unbecoming. It is still a waste of water. Do not be a blubbing waster of water. Had they only wanted your boots they'll soon want your tearstained finger too—as they are the kind of commodity that will appreciate in value with exponential growth. Fill your head with the dying words of the philosopher Anaxarchus, “Just pound the bag of Anaxarchus. You do not pound himself.” These words were shouted at King Nicocreon who watched the body bludgeoned dead, as he so ordered. See the final moments of the philosopher Zeno, sentenced to death after a failed assassination attempt against the tyrant emperor Demylus. See him bite off his own tongue and spit it into the tyrant's face. Heed the song of prisoners as they are so canonized in Michel de Montaigne's essay *Of Cannibals* and hear yourself sing the songs to your captors. They may have stolen your boots, they may be ravenous to dine upon your flesh, they may have sliced off your tearstained finger for trade, a gift, a necklace, for fun, but this does not mean you ought resist lyrics to make them quake. Sing this, the song recorded by

Montaigne. If you are captured with many, may you all sing together and be heard above the roaring pipes in all regions of the sunken territory:

[C]ome all, and dine upon him, and welcome, for they shall withal eat their own fathers and grandfathers, whose flesh has served to feed and nourish him. These muscles... this flesh and these veins, are your own: poor silly souls as you are, you little think that the substance of your ancestors' limbs is here yet; notice what you eat, and you will find in it the taste of your own flesh...

Search for a metal file. Consider the benefits of sharpened teeth. Do not neglect your oral hygiene. Rotted teeth crumble, cannot be sharpened, are of no use if you so desire to consume meat, if you so desire to taste your captor before he tastes you. Do not be overly vigilant with your oral care so as not stand out in crowds as the kind of person who has access to luxury goods/an allotment of daily time to polish teeth. It is important to appear in slightly tattered dress, of a somewhat disheveled air. Do not appear slovenly and thus as easy prey. Do vocal exercises when time allows (it won't, but do not let this stop you from serenading your captors). Always know the intent of your captors. You will not be rash.

You will decide if you are to be a kidnapper. If/when you followed the steps of identity recovery did you find anything that suggests you might already be trained in the art of abduction? You must know your physical limits, your psychiatric limits, and be able to calculate the strength of those you would kidnap/those who would kidnap you. You may be best suited to ambush lone travelers. In this case you're not really a kidnapper, more of a mugger or highway stick up artist. Decide how you feel about confrontation. Do you want face-to-face interaction with your targets? If not you may consider the merits of a high-speed,

smash, grab, flee, flee, hide, celebrate quietly method of operation. This ought not be terribly complicated. Find a metal pipe in the wreckage of a house. Search car trunks for tire irons. You may be lucky and find a baseball bat in a house or car. Regard yourself as blessed if you come across an aluminum bat. Search non-residential, non-commercial areas for a durable object with which you'll club. Blunt objects are best. Bluntness minimizes the chance that your club of choice will bury itself, and require a bit of messy dislodging, within the object/subject of your bludgeoning, thus resulting in lost time, a reduced capacity to deliver quick sequence of blows, and a general disorder. Test durability and maneuverability of your newfound bludgeon (*blunt looting and multipurpose mission object*, aka, B.L.A.M.M.O.) before use. If you're sneaky consider stalking your target(s) to blind them by covering and affixing a burlap sack (any object that allows normal respiration to continue and impairs vision) to their head(s). The sack to head movement should only take about five seconds per target. Difficulty will increase if your target wears a hat, or if your target is a group, as the other group members will notice the unexpected and unwanted increase of blindness and burlap. Consider measures to disguise your identity—perhaps a burlap bag with eye slots—to increase difficulty for any individual who you spur onto a course of vengeance.

Consider the merits of polite robbery to mitigate future animosity with your targets. Your target, of course, will always be angry with you for stealing their goods, as you would be as well, but anger is on a spectrum. Imagine three scenarios to understand potential scales of retribution. Scenario one: you run up to a lone man,

BLAMMO him once or twice to knock him over, steal his goggles, leave an apology note and some water, then run away. Scenario two: you run up to a lone man, BLAMMO him in the genitals, keel over laughing, regain your composure, BLAMMO him unconscious, steal his goggles, piss on his chest, then run away. Scenario three: you run up on a lone man, you immobilize him, you torture him with a potato peeler, you remove each of his finger and toenails, you extinguish cigarettes on his face, you tell him that as far as he is concerned you are God. You tell him if there were a God, God would fear you and you alone. You ransack his bags, really put on a big show, and do not take anything. You look at him with disgust as you conclude the ransacking. Perhaps you whistled or hummed as you considered then destroyed his possessions. You pace about. You promise to let him go if he severs his own Achilles tendon. You hand him a penknife. You say that you are sorry, but that one must be careful. Who knows, you say, if some new Achilles is hiding in the sunken territory. What bad fortune it would be to make an enemy of Achilles and not maim him. You go on like this for the afternoon. At some point you tell him that you've tired of his pleas for compassion. You cut out his tongue. You roast it over a small fire and enjoy

Real time unfolds:

- 1) US forces, as well as the "coalition," are headed into first full day of bombing ISIS locations in Syria (though the idea that we're even calling the locations "Syria" is novel because Syria is very much not in control of the territories. Maybe it's better to think of as lands under ISIS/ISIL control in the country known as Syria. Syria remains engaged in the civil

war which is most memorable for producing international outrage/footage of children dead/dying after being attacked by chemical weapons. Weapons that were employed as ordered by the Syrian President and international war criminal Bashar al-Assad (I do not believe in war crimes, do not confuse me for someone who does). Syria is so badly destabilized that no group(s) can really even be said to be in control). The US, according to Pentagon carried out “most” of the strikes.

- 2) Country is still trying to understand how a man who recently jumped the White House’s fence managed to run all the way across the lawn and gain entrance into the White House before he was detained by the secret service. Service is, 1) currently reconsidering their policy of leaving the front door unlocked, 2) reviewing why the attack dogs trained to incapacitate lawn trespassers were not released.
 - 3) Scotland voted to stay in the U.K.
-

it as a snack. Tell him you’re still hungry.^{xx} You beat him until you think he could be dead. You leave him here, but not before you fill his canteen with sand. Perhaps you rape him too. Your conduct matters little to me, but it will influence how your fellow sunken citizens interact with you in the future.

Logistical complexities increase greatly when one transitions from simple holdups to detainment and kidnapping. The general rules of conduct/decorum hold, as does the general assumption that barbarity increases the degree and likelihood of

retribution and vengeance (See chart *Conduct and Vengeance*). Such assumptions, of course, are not the stuff of hard and fast rules—even the most respectful looting may provoke violent retribution. And, the most grotesque cruelties may not trigger uncompromising vows of vengeance from the abused. Remember the surface man

- 1) French citizen beheaded in Algeria by militants who pledge allegiance to ISIS leader.
 - 2) iPhone 6 sells 10 million units in five days.
-

who liked to be cannibalized (of course he isn't a citizen of the sunken territory as he is dead and consumed some years ago). Do not forget that many citizens will have an intense dislike for confrontation which will outweigh any/all desires for revenge. Consider the possibility that polite behavior may actually make kidnappings and robberies less unenjoyably for all parties involved. You may even make a friend or ally in what could have otherwise been the low point of your week.

On Exercising Prudence in Matters of Friendship and Love

You ought exercise discretion if/when you seem to hit it off with the person you are looting/who is looting you. If you find yourself threatening a traveler with your BLAMMO you ought remember that he may feign cooperative behavior as a tactic to grant him an additional moment to draw the gun you didn't know he was carrying.¹⁶ This is the ease and speed of a shift in power dynamics. You too can

¹⁶ According to his calendar and the assorted travel documents that were included in the packet of writing and personal effects I later came to possess, this point of the manuscript marks a brief point when the author left his hometown and traveled to ██████████ for a wedding (I am not able to disclose information about who the married parties are, but I can disclose that the wedding was in ██████████ and none of the parties reside in ██████████). At this wedding, during the ceremony, the author spent a moment in serious contemplation about the likelihood that he himself would die loveless and alone. According to a number of my sources, attendees of the wedding, the author talked very loudly and speculated, 1) about how many psychopaths were in attendance of the wedding, 2) who, of his gathered friends including the bride and groom, was most likely a certifiable psychopath, 3) himself in general. He also, albeit incredibly briefly, talked about the thesis he was composing using mostly profanities and impolite hand gestures. All sources confirmed that he talked incredibly quickly. It was on the plane to the wedding that he finished reading the first of two non-fiction books about psychopaths. The other book in his possession was one on the life of Genghis Khan.

He had a five-hour wait in the airport before his return plane departed. The plane was delayed by an hour, then the gate was changed, then the plane's delay was reduced by half an hour. He had little confidence but did receive automated status text updates from the airline.

He was seen walking along the moving sidewalks in the airport in a town consistently ranked "worst" and demanding that anyone who dared stand in his way, or to the left, move over to the right. This kept him entertained for less than an hour. He was seen browsing through a bookstore and looked like he was, "Using tons of self-control in order to not reshelf the books. I thought he was going to combust because ██████████ was with the history. Was polite enough and got a five dollar bottle of water." This quotation is an excerpt from one of my research interviews.

The same source confirmed that he spent a bit of time on his laptop sitting by, "you know, those weird new charging posts that communication companies sponsor in airports, where everyone huddles around—the addicts." I did not know. It's been some time since I've left the apartment, much less the state. Anyhow, much of the time spent on the laptop was, "this weird passive aggressive retribution where he pounded his keyboard's keys. He looked pretty pissed. It all started when this woman sat down near him to charge her phone. I mean, she was pretty loud, but it's not like it was some unforeseeable, unforgivable thing." As my source expected and I later confirmed, he was transcribing her phone conversation. He only typed when she talked or made more noise than he desired one would make. The transcription follows:

implement a strategy of false friendship or genial cooperation regardless of your position as looter or looted, kidnapper/kidnapped. Though not impossible, it is extraordinarily difficult to make an authentic connection with an individual in such circumstances.

My friends, do not think that I do not recognize the desire for basic human interaction and friendship. Obviously you're lonely, but you must exercise the utmost care when/before vetting potential new friends. I recognize that forums for meeting new people have been greatly restricted, and that the remaining forums are diluted with individuals of questionable rectitude. This is a territory populated and bursting with dilemma. Is it possible that you'll meet your true love (or soul mate, if such is the nature of your cosmic stock portfolio) amidst a looting? Of course. But it's also possible that the individual who you believe to be your true love is actually

As I make stuff... when are you going... yeah cause you're going to come down the eighth. Awesome. I'll be back out by December. That house is going to be done by November. The shore house. I don't have to harness. So that house is going to sell. [REDACTED] is going to be done. I told my mother, I want to wave

I was like if we have to come back in January

The only thing holding me back is her and getting her out of this house.

Collect your thoughts.

I said don't hop all over the place... make decisions that are attainable and move forward. So hopefully she moves. We have a show to see on November fourth. Uh, I think it's called sideshow. It's a story, a true story about the conjoined twins.

What d'you say?

Oh!

That deep fryer is like the size of a garbage can.

I have one down the shore.

I think it's a mini kitchen... however I do have that

I think that, uh, my mother is going to tell x she needs to be out by next June.

I know. Dude. That's her plan now. That's why we're not taking any TV out of there. I was freaking out yesterday because I couldn't find my silver Christmas ornaments. It sounds corny buy my grandmother bought me one for every year so I could have a silver Christmas tree.

[Lost Interest Here]

a semi-cunning and hungry stranger. Now, I need not be so explicit with you about mutual exclusivity, my clever friend, but there is always the possibility that your true love is also a semi-cunning, hungry stranger. I wouldn't dare stand in the way of true love, but I will suggest that it is less than desirable to squander your flesh on an ordinary cannibal if your cannibal true love is elsewhere in the sunken territory with no idea she/he could be consuming you.

I cannot empirically substantiate this claim, but would be shocked if I am wrong: the probability that your true love will loot you, or you him/her, and eat you is low. This is worth remembering when meeting strangers. I suppose interpersonal relationships fall within the realm of information that I cannot relay.

On The Value of Reminiscing

The sunken citizens who spend their days telling tales of events passed are not to be trusted. They are of no value unless: they speak highly of you and your past and/or adversely of those who have wronged you and their many misdeeds.

Sunken Studies Inc.

On The Formation of Society, and Your Societies

Long ago, well before the territory sank, before I was born, before the land mass of the earth divided and spread throughout the oceans. No. Such sweeping historical statements are of no use to you. You do not know the language of time. You have no reference for an event that occurred 300 million years ago because you do not have a meaningful point of departure point. Conceptually you are equally removed from Pangaea and Eastern Standard Time. There is no reason for you to adopt, adhere to the surface's time—it's not as if you can treat our banking holidays as days for rest. You will age with us, in the sense that we'll all continue to do laps around the sun, but only in that sense.

Your ancestors, my ancestors, in the beginning we could not settle for we did not know how to farm, how to grow, so we wandered. We followed our food and the growing seasons. We ran from the intemperate because we would freeze, roast, starve, dehydrate. We learned to farm, to raise grain and livestock. Nomads no more we settled and built. And thus, cities grew. Labor specialized. Walls were built around settlements as protection from what waited in the wilderness. As our cities and civilizations grew so did the resources we needed to survive, so did our hunting parties, our raiding parties, our soldiers, and our war machines. You will not escape the city-state.

You will live longer together. Life is not sustainable when everyone runs around smashing heads, setting fire to corpses, to shelters, returning to salt the

earth, and spattering one another onto the desert for a quick boot/goggle gain. This is not because there are a finite number of heads to smash (though this is true), it is because to live a full life of head smashing you need to eat, to sleep, to drink water, to build shelter. Your bodily needs reduce the amount of time you can spend smashing heads and looting. You cannot do it all alone. Groups will form. You'll grow weary of smashing heads. The head smashers will grow weary of finding water. This is how your society will grow—cooperation and specialization of tasks.

On Securing Goggles and Basic Governance

The territory will run out of goggles because goggles are scarce. Do not expect fair and even distribution, not yet. Some sunken resident will learn how to make goggles. You could learn to make goggles: increase your utility, become more than food, you do not want to be dispensable. Do not harm the goggle maker. Befriend him, incentivize him to join your group of sunken citizens. Kidnap him if you must. If he refuses to make goggles, do not worry, and do not harm him. What do you do with a petulant maker of goggles? Discuss this among the sunken citizens. Perhaps you can hold a forum. Coerce him. Reason with him. Find out what he likes. Consider giving him a gift. Never wrong him so badly that he would rather die than make goggles for you. But if you, through some error, arrive at the point where he would rather die, consider indulging him. Let him know you're serious. Show him a knife. Or, just throw him outside the safety of your walls. Take his goggles first. See if he returns. I told you to determine how much violence you're willing to enact. Can you kill the goggle maker? What about the baker, the head smasher, the gatherer of water? Will your fellow citizen approve? Let the goggle maker explain himself to a randomly selected group of adult citizens. Let them decide. Decide if you like making decisions this way. No? Slice off his head. Be prepared for the sound. He'll scream, then try to scream as he tries to choke on the blood that will run down his windpipe. Be ready for this. He will drown in his own fluids before you manage to detach his head. Hoist the head high and let it rest upon a pike near the city gates. Build, tend to

a fire so he can be seen at night and in the darkened days. Hang a sign from his head—nail it to his forehead if you wish, through his eyes if you are so inclined—to explain why he’s there. Let the head wear goggles. Do you want travelers and visitors to think you lack goggles? Your objective is to appear just and sensible enough. Do not write *wouldn’t make goggles*. Write *predator of women and children and the elderly*. Welcome to public relations and populous control. Pay someone to corroborate the sign’s text. Have him, her appear in the town square with a tearful tale. Keep it simple. Make your lies mean something. Make your lies count. Or, don’t lie at all. Let it be known that the cost of defiance is a head. Consider using his head as a prop you’d wield as a torch. How dare he not make your goggles. How dare he not make you all goggles. Point at members of your audience and say he didn’t want goggles for you, or you, or you. Does he want the town to go blind? Is life not tough enough already? How very selfish he was. Who was he to judge and rule that you should all go blind? Close with how it saddened you to hurt him, that you never wished him harm, that you had high prospects for him as a respected member of the community. Take a moment for silent reflection. Remember: fuck him. Keep that bit to yourself.

On The Safety in Uncertainty and Cities

Will you live in the cities with head decorated pikes? Is this the life for you? Will you see that safety need not be founded in barbarism, need not shutter within compound walls? Imagine you come across a shelter with high walls, locked gates, that dons mutilated reminders of your future if you so wrong the inhabitants. You are being coerced, controlled by fear. But you are cunning—aren't you—my sunken friend, you don't need to be a butcher, you do not even need to show off your knife. You travel further through the territory and find a shelter with opened gates. A single, elderly sunken citizen sits upon a chair facing out into the territory. He is not armed, though a small bell sits to his side. He reads an old book and, perhaps, looks at you for a moment, unconcerned. Who can leave their gates open and unguarded? Do you think he is your friend? Would you consider waltzing into his town? Don't you wonder where this town keep their heads? This is how you wield power in uncertainty. You know what happens at the shelter that advertises their heads. You have no idea what happens here. What happens when he rings the bell? It may be nothing more than a bell. Perhaps he's bluffing. Perhaps he's mad. Decide if you're the kind of person who wants to know what happens if he rings the bell. Do not be surprised if an army manifests before he sets it back upon the ground. See? Do the truly powerful really need to lock their gates and advertise their capacity for violence? No. The truly powerful can leave their gates open and know that displays

of mutilation are ineffective, an advertisement that may as well say *unimaginative citizens within*. Move along.

As you decide how to settle remember to think of walls, who builds walls, and why walls are built. Is there a reason to erect a high security fence topped with razor wire around lands that lack resources? It seems as if walls increase security for the: area, people, resources, etc. Maybe. But they suggest that something within is worth protecting. Are walls not a beacon for raiders, do they not advertise the location of goods worth stealing? Will walls actually make you any safer, or just more likely to be attacked? I assure you, walls will do nothing to protect you from the gas.

On Time, A Calendar, and Seasons

Yours is a season baron. Black dispels with fire into the yellow cloud that envelopes all. I do not know how long the sun's light will leak through the asphalt. I assure you that any leaks will opaque with the continued influx of gas. Your existence may demand a new system to mark the increments of your life. Day and night make little sense in a territory that claims fire as the sole source of light. The generators that you see in the beginning have finite fuel, will soon be gone. Solar panels will not charge. There will not be wind for turbines. You do not need seasons for you will have none. There are no crops to plant, to grow, to reap in barren lands. Your trees will die. Those that have leaves will turn yellow with the gas. Snow will not fall. Keep a calendar if you wish. Time reset, began when the territory sank—this is the first day. You need only remember five events: the sinking, the moment I wrote of/to you, the gas, the paving, darkness. You need shelter and goggles, not a calendar, not yet.^{xxi}

On Anxiety and the Imminence of Sputtering Pipes

Worrywart if you will about the details of sunken survival. You can spend a lifetime wondering who will take off your head, ought I settle here, is this human meat, is that man a clever smuggler of goods who is using a Blu-ray box to camouflage goggles and ibuprofen, where is my true love, how many drops of bleach purify a barrel of water, who was I, etc.? Such questions will not unite the citizens of the sunken territory. If you desire unity, know that the surface delivers the best opportunity via the smog spewing pumps. All residents of the sunken territory will be harmed as it fills, darkens from the cities to the deserts where the mountain lions who've eaten you and you've eaten back used to roam. If you do not learn to cooperate, if you cannot realize that you must suspend fear and leap to the state of trust, you will wander blind through the darkened territory. This is something you need to know.

I don't know how to be of further help you.

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- 1) ISIS decapitates another British national. American to be killed next, teases ISIS. Punditry expected it to be a Turkish national because of potential to deter Turkish forces from joining coalition forces
 - 2) Ebola brought to United States by Liberian National.

- 3) Head of Secret Service resigns after Capital Hill hearing into man who jumped White House fence, bypassed five levels of security, was detained in East Room. Pundits referred to hearing as a, "piñata exercise" (Service head being the piñata, the committee members being an excited group armed with sticks).
- 4) George Clooney marries. Ben Affleck yells at Bill Maher and Sam Harris for being ignorant, racist, dumb fucks re: their views on Islam.
- 5) C.D.C. tries to convince Americans that Ebola won't kill everyone. Everyone reluctant, pretty sure will shit own guts out soon.
- 6) Health writer suggests healthy food hacks: replace mayo with guacamole, tortillas with lettuce.
- 7) 40% of earth's wildlife extinct in last 50 years.
- 8) Final season of How I Met Your Mother streams on Netflix. SNL returns and confirms SNL still terrible.
- 9) Areas pets to look adorable come Halloween.
- 10) Dash cam footage of cop shooting unarmed man for retrieving drivers license at cop's request made public. Man can be heard asking, "Why did you shoot me?"
- 11) Hong Kong umbrella revolution loses momentum.
- 12) Woman sues sperm bank when baby is born with wrong skin color.

Secretary of State calls for greater international action in fight against Ebola. Liberian national, Thomas Eric Duncan, who brought Ebola to the

United States dies in Texas hospital. Five U.S. airports begin to screen for Ebola at major international hubs. Judge in Madrid orders potentially Ebola positive dog, Excalibur, euthanized. Spanish activists gather in large numbers to protest the order. An online petition gathers 330,000 + signatures to “save” the dog’s life. Dog is euthanized, likely avoids gruesome death and perhaps mitigates risk of interspecies contamination and mutation. Grassroots advocacy and protest yet to occur over human life surprising no one at all.

- 13) Kim Jong Un has not made public appearance in a month. Is reportedly very ill as result of his insatiable consumption of Swiss cheese. North Korean officials say not to worry, the glorious leader is just feeling “discomfort.” Others speculate coup is coming to N. Korea. Country’s high-level officials have expressed interest in talks with S. Korea and humanitarian issues. Many believe his sister is the effective head of state.
- 14) Gay marriage effectively legal in majority of United States as Supreme Court refuses to hear appeal from opponents who all lost in five U.S. circuit courts.
-

A History of Your Sky (II): Postlude

What to pray for, if you must: that the state of which you were a part of, 1) goes bankrupt and lacks the money to seal you away as the angels so bring the asphalt rains, 2) rolling blackouts to silence, for a moment of tranquility, the pumps that feed the spewing pipes.

Do not dream, pray, hope, hold your breath, gnash your teeth dull for bankruptcy and seized pumps. You are not still a fool, Jesus, you could not still be a fool who cannot sing through sharpened teeth with fuck yous to the angels and saint and the author who so gave rise to you and told you how you ruined your skies and where you will and will not waltz your way away from becoming a pile of shit from mountain lions who you should have eaten, the nourishment that nourished them was your neighbors and those who died in parking lots under shopping carts that so spilled over as all who lived became one known as stampede, so stampeded their ways to drink in the ████████ Sea until they were the individuals again who skipped with bloated bags of cash and struck down, stomped out those who swung iron pipes all the way home to the gate where the goggle maker's head hangs. No, you will not look up to the skies. You will watch for those who do, their cow eyes blind, their throat, oh the throat, my god you see it taut the arteries and veins, you see them too in the light that fractures: this is where you pounce as the men above pave and smoke and do not whistle and do not mean anything at all especially to you my

dear, beloved, my sunken friends who are yellowed outside in, collapsed, embers on
dying desert fires that are not put out with blood let run from throats not far from
the sunken towns as here is where the light of my glory extinguishes you.

Sunken Studies Inc.

Editorial Addendums

I made note of this text and the event at which it was presented in my introduction.

The absence of formatting and punctuation suggest he intended it only to be read aloud.

Some things that occurred to me on a Tuesday evening around 9:50 p.m. as I sat on a blue couch sometime after I entered a financial transaction to reduce the amount of hair and dirt that covered my labradoodle and another series of transactions that led me to own *The Myth of Sisyphus* by Camus paper not e-copy, *City of God* by Saint Augustine, *Love in the Time of Cholera* by Marquez, *The Histories* by Herodotus and after another series of financial transactions and some hours at a laundry mat—outside of which, which being the laundry mat, outside being on a paved bit of sidewalk that is generally considered to be the surface of the earth, a man who dangled some cheap black and mild bullshit tobacco product at the end of a what is known, in come circles, as a cocktail length cigarette holder said to me “I know all about that green folder,” in reference to a green accordion style folder that I was transporting with my hand/hands/arm which contained some pages I had written on the dawn of humanity, the rise of suicide including some lessons that could be learned from the founder and CEO of a title loan company who delivered some eight shots to his head and chest with a nail gun, and some of the finer points from an ancient legal text, scholar would date it around 1659 BCE, that governed a people know as the Hittite who apparently lived in an age of such rampant bestiality that

the legal code explicitly addresses the course of action to be taken and pivots upon if 1) a man sprung upon a pig or ox or 2) if the ox or pig sprung upon a man, though the legal code contained no case law nor tableau of a court room in which an attorney shouted objection your honor, has my client made mistakes, yes, but did he spring upon that piggy, I say nay, and the other miscellany that had struck me at some point over the previous few months, but at no point did I seriously consider if the aforementioned man smoking the aforementioned cheap fucking cigar from the aforementioned cocktail length cigarette holder, the length of which, when you really think about it, makes some degree of sense because he would have looked gauche as fuck had he dared break out a dinner, theater, or opera length cigarette holder around midday outside of the laundry mat I go to on third street in Riverside California, may Christ rise again only to scourge and set fire to the people and quote town unquote that's really just an x mile by x mile band of urban sprawl (Read abandoned strip malls and active del tacos), though if Christ isn't concerned with textual fidelity I wouldn't mind to see him deploy chemical weapons so long as someone is screaming death to the motherfucking uncircumcised Philistines for being dense polytheistic fucks, the screaming would of course be for posterity and the TV news crews, the dog walkers, and last and most importantly, the poets who undoubtedly will mill about the end of the world like there's someone on the way to paint their portrait and they'll be thinking about how the flaming sword of the Lord is all majestic and shit—rapturous is the word they won't be able to remember—and still they'll have the audacity to write not only in the first person, but also from

their point of view, as if they as subject are worth noting as if their observation that the laundry mat change maker was sun drenched—as if this is where the course of human history and modernity has lead us, to observe the sun’s light’s relation to a machine that make a MerMerp! noise as it MerMerps in a dollar to a twenty then Clinks! out x number of quarters into the what, the hands of some body with a dirt encrusted face and kind eyes and a black tar coated heart of gold with a tough front, a limp dick and some medically impossible combination of arthritis and carpal tunnel that prevents him from even rendering his hand in such a form that it could get the aforementioned quarters out of the aforementioned change machine, not to mention, you know, all of the obvious dick handling related problems, who, as it were, also, also being the man, happens to have a sadistic nymphomaniac Siamese twin named Gwendolyn who’s a down and out character actress who only plays Wendy from Peter Pan and hasn’t broken character for the last six or so years. So, I suppose, I, he the author, seriously wonder what if the black and mild smoking man did know the content of my folder and what that could possibly mean though I don’t think I would have stopped to talk with him because only lowlifes and masochists go to the laundry mat, and your author would say these aren’t the kinds of people he associates with even if they have some great insight into whatever insight is worth inspecting because he’s pretty confident that he’ll figure it all out on his own and if not he’ll be found somewhere in the Rocky Mountains, not so far from where he was born, disembowel by his own hand and hanging from a tree by matter extracted—perhaps woven or braided—from his body. For he was meant to be exceptional, and

it is that belief in himself which he finds most repugnant and he must remove—the exception—with something sharp. For how is he to know if he's located its source until he can hold it in his hand and feel nothing as he casts it out into the prairie? This will happen not in the winter months, this much he knows.

Sunken Studies Inc.

Name Placard



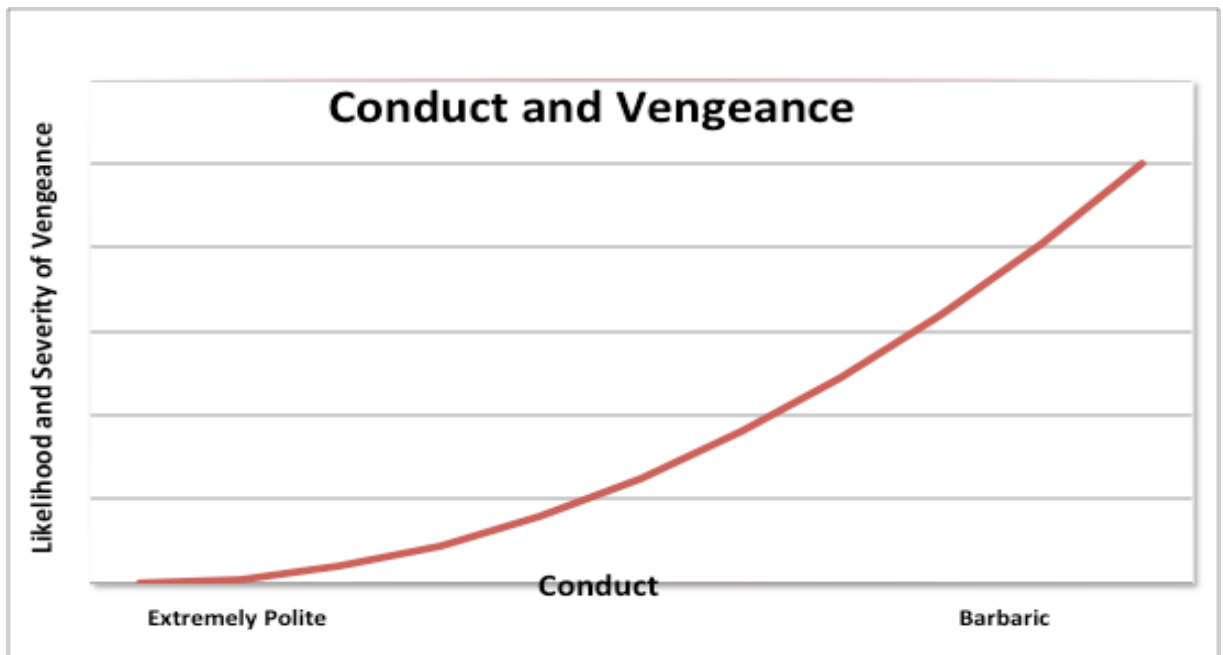
Presents

Ayn Rand's



*Disappointment Center: For
Wayward Boys And Girls
(Bootstraps available for small fee)*

Authorial Addendums



Sunken stu

A Broken Taxonomy of Sunken Citizens and their Counterparts

Sunken Citizens

- (A.B.N.I.A.) Someone who has somehow managed to become attached to a Blue-ray box through no intentional action of his own
- (D.T.B.B.B.) A decoy target bearing a Blu-ray box
- (H.I.R.L.) High information, reflective looters
- (I.C.M.R.S.) Individuals who are confused about the market ramifications of sunkenness
- (I.I.D.R.B.P.) Idiot with an inexplicable desire for a real Blu-ray player
- (L.O.R.) Looter of Retribution
- (M.V.G.D.B.) Man with valuable goods disguised as a Blu-ray player
- (P.M.V.G.D.B.) Person who is priceless to the man with valuable goods disguised as a Blu-ray player
- (R.B.L.) Real Blu-ray looter

Iraqis

- Saddam Hussein (M.V.G.D.B.)
- Uday Hussein (P.M.V.G.D.B.)
- Qusay Hussein (P.M.V.G.D.B.)
- Unidentified Iraqi Pornographers (H.I.R.L.)
- Man who attempted to assassinate Uday Hussein (H.I.R.L.)
- Men who kidnapped Mahamed Bishr believing him to be Saddam (H.I.R.L.)
- Saddam's Body Doubles (D.T.B.B.B.)

Egyptians

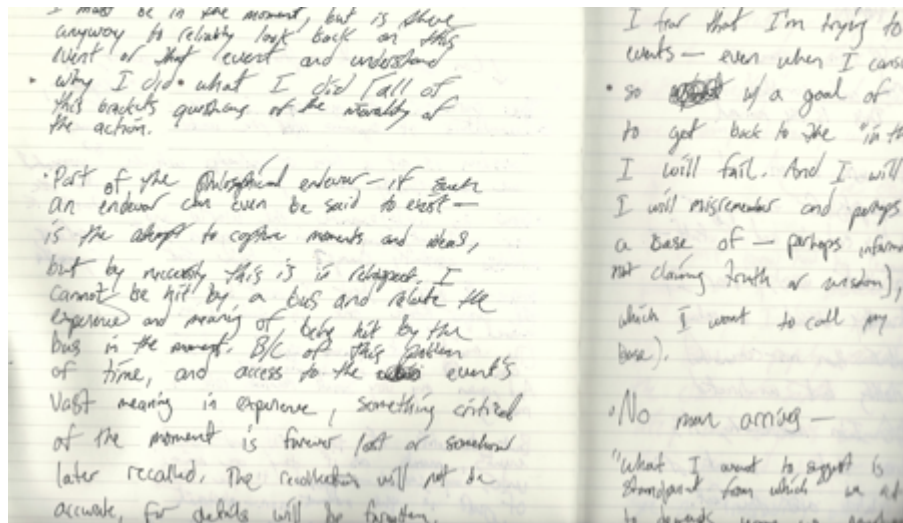
- Mahamed Bishr (A.B.N.I.A.)

Hand and St. Jude

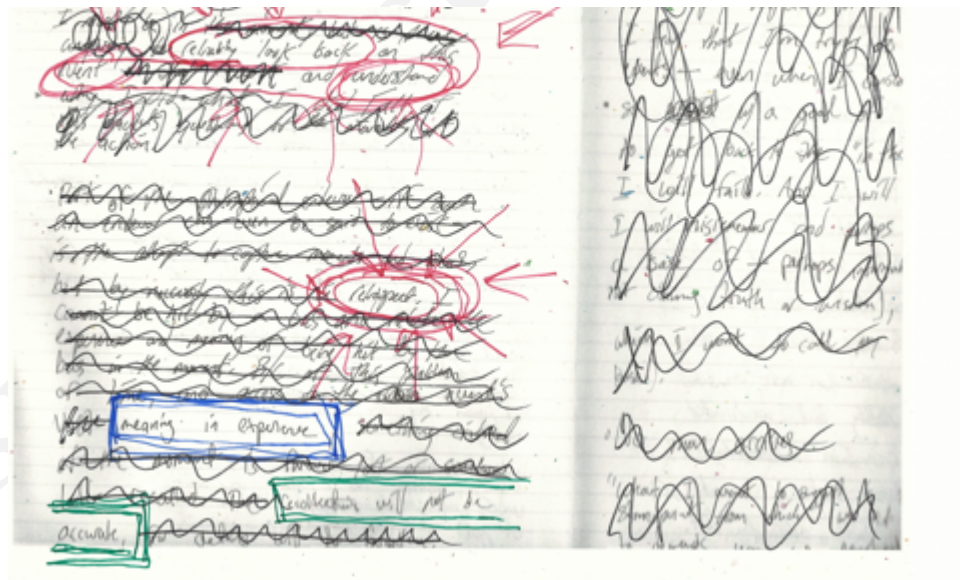


Understanding the Cosmic Highlighter

"Normal" Matter (Figure 1.1)



"Enhanced" Matter (Figure 1.2)



[Transcription of author's note follows]

I've not included pictorial representation of the most obvious, immediate truth. Both the normal and enhanced figures are essentially paper (to reduce chemically beyond paper will not aid conceptual understanding so I will not explain the physical composition of the paper). Your world, your perception, your understanding is represented by the first "normal" figure 1.1, while mine—with the influx of matter—is the second, figure 1.2. Both figures are rudimentary and only serve to illustrate the point, and do not represent how my world actually appears. Now, when you look at the first figure you see a page and a half of hand written, English words. Think of them as relatively unfiltered, relatively unmediated matter that has been processed by your sensory faculties. Perhaps the—I'll call it *data* for ease—data is overwhelming to your senses and ability to effectively process the existence that you so perceive. The most pertinent point is that the essence of the data is obscured by the non-pertinent data.

To understand the meaning of the data in figure 1.1 (without the benefit of figure 1.2) you need to recognize, 1) that it is something to regard as writing, presented with intentionality, within a system of communication you've, most likely, been raised around/in, 2) that to discern the meaning, purpose of the English words you ought read them, 3) after reading you need to think about the claims put forth by the words and reconcile the words/claims with you larger understanding emotional/intellectual of the world, existence, and so on. You are constantly forced to sift through an enormous amount of data. The world, of course, does not slow for

you as you sift. As you sift you are also engaged in the world in which you exist in space-time. Surely, my friend, you see the point at which I thrust: you are equipped to perceive data, you try to make sense of it, you try to hold onto the most pertinent stuff, but the amount of data + the passage of time + limited capacities make this all very difficult.

Now, when we look to figure 1.2, again this is rudimentary, you see four areas accentuated by three colors. The data accented red is the core first order essence, the data accented blue is almost necessary to understand the first order essence, and the data accented in green provides deeper insight into the more general essence of the data but is not required to achieve understanding. All of the words that have been scribbled out in black would be better conceptualized if (and again this is a result of a rudimentary diagram) they were removed from the page entirely. They, in my reality, would not appear at all and their matter would be reallocated to further illuminate the red, blue, and green data. So, when figure 1.1 is presented to me I immediately see figure 1.2 and am able to immediately recognize the most pertinent data because the universe so follows me around and reallocates matter for my consumption. Despite my obvious advantages in efficiency and capacity in the realm of data, we are hindered by the same problem. We are all constrained by our abilities to process because our faculties—in a sense—max out. The filter means that my max capacity to process data is much higher than yours, but, just as your, it can only make sense of so much data. At this, my maximum point, is where I am constrained.

Stravit, oblitus, polluta. Orate numquam ad summum.

The Institute for Humane Studies People of The Sunken Territory



The Office of Identity Research And Categorization Assistance

Past Individual Identity Recovery Rubric (P.I.I.R.R.)

Greetings Sunken Citizen!

We are pleased you've taken the time to locate the form you have or may not have decided to use in order to recover your past identity. If you do not wish to recover your identity at this time please dispose of the following rubric. **Exercise extreme caution when in possession of these documents.** It is advantageous if you are the only person who knows if you have recovered, or explored recovering, your past identity. Take care to destroy these documents upon completion. We apologize for the possibility that some statements appearing in this survey have/will appear in other Institute approved materials.

Before proceeding to the rubric we recommend that you search your house (or its ruins) for any/all personal effects that may aid in basic identity illumination. It is likely you carried a **small (2.5" x 3.5") plastic card** somewhere on or near your person. You will find it among, most likely, a number of cards of the same size in your wallet or purse. This card will be multicolored, and feature a picture of your head as well as your state recognized signature. This was your driver's license or state identification card. The card will be of great use if your interest is the recovery of **biographical details** such as: your name, birthday, gender, eye color, the address you decided to have legally associated with your name, your height, your weight, and if your ability to see was sufficiently impaired to raise state interest.

Basic biographic information will be of use for further research into your previous identity. Our analysts recommend you pay special attention to any item on which your name or

picture appears. If you do not like the name you had as a resident of the surface, feel free to change it to something that, you believe, will better suit your identity.

You may find it **beneficial to recover your old name** because it is possible that other individuals who undergo the identity recovery process will discover you shared some nature of past relationship. It is valuable to know who you were if you want to disassociate from prior responsibilities. For example, if you were named Eric Mendelton and you come across an angry group, or hear their shouts from the distance, who seek the individual known as Eric Mendelton so they can disembowel him, it may be advantageous to not readily self-identify as Eric Mendelton (assuming disembowelment is not an interest or goal).

We are pleased to raise a potentially exciting identity prospect: that of assuming/stealing someone else's identity. **Stealing an identity carries some degree of risk.** Think of what would happen if you stole an identity similar to Mr. Mendelton's. It is our recommendation to do extensive research into the past of any individual you allege to be so you assume an amount of risk best suited to your skills/desires.

We expect you to have some degree of trouble recovering your **previous profession**. Some of you will find small cards among your personal effects that bear your name, a company, a job title, and work phone number. Some of you will find work issued uniforms—vests, polo shirts, sweaters with logos—to which your name is sewn or printed upon a badge with you attached with a pin/magnet. None of this information is of use if you are unable to recover information about the company/group as well. At best you will discover that you were associated with a group of people in the name of company x.

If you would like to know how **educated** you are, so measured by documented schooling, we suggest you first search your personal effects for diplomas, degrees, etc. If you are unable to recover any official data, you may wish to consult the following statistics as ordered from your most to least likely level of education:

- 1) 25.4% High school graduate
- 2) 20.7% Less than high school graduate

- 3) 18.2% One or more year(s) of college but no degree
- 4) 12.6% Bachelor's degree
- 5) 8.4% Less than one year of college and no degree
- 6) 7.6% Associate degree
- 7) 5.0% Master's degree
- 8) 1.3% Professional Degree
- 9) 0.8% Doctoral Degree

These numbers apply to those of you who are more than twenty-five years in age. Our analysts have come to no conclusion that links education with potential for prosperity/survival in the sunken territories. The analysts would like to note that 33.5% of all Americans hold at least a bachelor's degree—nearly 20 points higher than the sunken residents. The analysts would also like to note that, despite the sunken territory's rates (the lowest of any ████ school, by far), the state that formerly controlled the territory still manages to place in the nation's top 80% for degree attainment.

Institute analysts have compiled the following list to provide general insight into the largest territory **occupations/industries**: Government; Trade, Transportation & Utilities; Educational & Health Services; Leisure & Hospitality; Professional & Business Services. Choose to consider this data as well as the education data in anyway you wish.

We hope that some of the broad considerations helped you begin to reveal your former identity. The rubric that follows ought provide some definition for whatever image is emerging.

The rubric is very simple. **Read each statement and consider** if you: strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. Mark the box after you decide. Respond to the statements in any order. There are **fifty statements** in total. After you complete the rubric please read the directions for result interpretation.

Do not worry if the statements seem a bit peculiar and/or unrelated.

The Institute reminds all who attempt identity recovery of the possibility that identity 1) is **impermanent** 2) may be **irreparably damaged** by head injuries sustained during the earthquake.

The Institute **will not be held liable** for any damage(s) associated with identity recovery, but recommends any participant who feels an urge to seek damages make note of the feeling as it may help in identity recovery process.

Past Individual Identity Recovery Rubric (P.I.I.R.R.)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1) I am utterly disoriented and have little to no idea who I am.					
2) I you spend my days in a constant state of terror that something terrible looms in my near future.					
3) I often find myself thinking about my own death and the death of others.					
4) While looking through my personal effects I found many “t” shaped items to which a man is affixed.					
5) Nothing I own seems to be of any practical use.					
6) A small circular object is attached to the top of my head with some sort of hair clip.					
7) I have dismembered body parts stored among my personal effects.					
8) There is some type of animal in my house that seems to trust me and follow me around.					
9) I have a strong urge to express my opinion about competitive singing entertainment.					
10) I want to take my own picture and somehow show it to large groups of strangers.					
11) To know thyself is something I hold in high regard and as important.					

12) I like trying new things.					
13) There is a ring on the fourth finger of my left hand.					
14) I have encountered other living people.					
15) I have been attacked/hurt by other people.					
16) I have attacked/hurt other people.					
17) I found many high-quality photographs of myself (some of which I seem to have autographed).					
18) I have abducted, murdered, and eaten another human being and from all of this I derived great pleasure.					
19) I find myself wondering if I'm being systemically oppressed.					
20) My life in the sunken town isn't, all things considered, that bad.					
21) I enjoy the outdoors.					
22) My house/shelter is filled with Blu-ray players.					
23) I found an object in my house and immediately knew it was a gun.					
24) I have a strong aversion to the idea that troops could, without my consent, take and live in my shelter and indefinitely so.					
25) I've gone out in public and many, many people have seemed to recognize me.					
26) I have trouble communicating with other people because the sounds they make are unintelligible.					
27) I would like to know why I know how to ask about the location of a library in multiple languages but, apparently for/about nothing else.					
28) When I awoke I was with five beagles. Two of the beagles wore blue sweaters with patches that seemed to indicate a military rank.					
29) Girls just want to have fun.					
30) I would like to see more, non-violent cooperation in the territory.					
31) I found one of the following books among my (or my apparent) possessions: The Bible, The Quran, The Book of Mormon, The Tanakh, Dianetics, The Vedas, Pāli Canon, Tao Te Ching, The					

Satanic Bible.					
32) I found a bottle(s) of prescription medication bearing my name.					
33) I found a metallic badge that says "police," or "firefighter," or "sheriff" or "FBI" or "EMT."					
34) On my inner arms there are many, many, pin sized holes.					
35) There are colorful and/or black and white pictures, text(s), images drawn on my body that seem impossible to remove even with vigorous scrubbing/solvents.					
36) I have met many new people in the sunken town.					
37) I have, or have procured, a mask and goggles.					
38) I found myself surrounded by individuals dressed in clothing that is identical to mine to which a number of emblems were affixed.					
39) I found a list of names rendered in my own handwriting titled "revenge" and some of the names are crossed off.					
40) More than one of my personal effects bears the inscription "live, laugh, love"					
41) When I see a stranger who look weak and in need of assistance I offer to help.					
42) I enjoy answering questions about myself.					
43) If I find a child who is lost, alone, and afraid I will interact with him/her.					
44) I am inherently more valuable than other people.					
45) I would be glad if someone else would make all of my decisions.					
46) I feel like I'm part of something bigger than my self and that there is somehow, somewhere, a plan for me.					
47) I am not/was not afraid when the pipes started [only respond if pipes have started].					
48) I am a truthful person.					
49) I feel that, though I do not understand why, I deserved to sink and am being punished for something terrible.					

50) The future will be better.					
Totals (ignore until the interpretation section)					
Notes (please write/draw freely):					

Thank you for completing the survey!

Please take a moment to **relax** before you continue to interpretation and scoring. We recommend that you spend the time seriously contemplating if you want to know who you were. Once you have made up your mind **please proceed** for further instructions.

Interpreting Your Results

Of the fifty statements, some are **intentionally general** while others are meant to illuminate **very specific**, potential circumstances. For example, statement 34 is designed to discover if you are a heroin addict, statement 13 is designed to see if you were/are married or engaged, statement 38 is designed to see if you were a member of an organization (such as the military, or if you were a prisoner, a member of a cult, a historical period reenactor, an extra on a movie set, etc.), and statement 24 was designed to see if you retained any knowledge about a semi-obscure right you were afforded by the United States constitution (no such rights are protected in the sunken territory).

The **general questions** also ought help you realize that behavior, traits, etc., are best understood as a range on a spectrum, not a true/false point. You may realize how prone to violence you are, where you place on an optimistic/pessimistic scale, how easily you trust others, how risk averse you are, how willing you are to assume responsibility for your actions. We believe that a mix of the general and the specific, while they may not reveal a specific past identity, have helped you think about the kind of person you are now and hence, may have been. Much of this rubric is based on your honest answers. If you feel as if

you have not answered honestly you may consider returning to the statements to adjust your answers. You may also consider returning to the rubric if you answered “neutral” to more than five statements.

The general **goal of the rubric** is not designed so you can pin point who you were. If you wanted to know who your are (name, weight, age, creed, profession, education, economic status, if you’ve traveled internationally, etc.) you are likely disappointed. Of course some of you will surmise very accurate portraits of your former self. You may well have discovered that you were/are a 32 year old police officer named Meadow Jay Cole, who is generally optimistic, a Satanist, are willing to hurt other people for your own personal gain (though you may regret doing so), and have some affliction that inspires you to hoard Blu-ray players. Question 7 is designed not because we think it is likely that you are a serial killer and psychopath, but to help the people of the sunken territory realize that this type of person may be among you. In the event that you did “strongly agree” with question seven you may be a serial killer, a mortician, or a medical student with a questionable code of ethics.

The most important statement is, and we expect no surprise, **is number 37**. If you have not procured goggles and a mask but took the time to complete the rubric you’ve display an inability to plan for the future and an inability to understand the magnitude of your circumstances. If you responded to 37 with a “disagree” or “strongly disagree” and later responded to 50 with “strongly agree” we hope you realize that you are unprepared, a bit delusional, will likely lose your vision, and are not justified in believing that your life will improve.

In addition to measuring optimism and pessimism, we’ve looked into aggressive v passive tendencies, how self absorbed you are, if popular culture played a role in your life, if you had a mental illness/syndrome. The latter of these points will potential become (if it hasn’t already) critical to your survival. If you are dependent on prescription drugs, even if you currently have access to your prescription(s), you need to understand that lack of access to drugs will compound the trouble you will have **acclimating to the sunken territory**.

Statement 31 may help you discover if you were the kind of person who was a member of or literate in a **religion/religious philosophy**. When statement 4 or statement 6 is combined with statement 31 you may gain further insights into your religious past. The list of books, holy texts, etc., is not exhaustive. Statistically speaking, you were most likely a Roman Catholic (66%) or a Mormon (5%). The remaining 29% is comprised mostly of Christians who are Protestants—Southern Baptists being the most prevalent (3.3%).

Jesus Christ is likely your God and savior, but there's a 3.0% chance you were Jewish, a 1.2% chance you were Muslim, a 0.1% chance that you were Baha'i or similarly low odds that you were Buddhist or Hindu. Do not be fooled, or mistake, the presence of a holy book/text as an indication that you are an adherent to a religion/philosophy. Use extreme care if you think that your former self was affiliated with any main or splinter school of Buddhism. Many followers self identified as Buddhists not because they believed but because they were tired of Christian doctrine and saw Buddhism as an interesting "other." For this reason, and many others, the Institute has calculated that the statistical likelihood that you are a Buddhist is considerable less likely than the odds that you are, basically, just a confused asshole.

Though the Institute does not have verifiable number for **The Church of Scientology**, we think it worth noting that their international headquarters (though it's styled more like a military outpost/compound or embassy from a foreign country), aka Gold Base, was within the territory that sank. The base is estimated to house 1,000 upper echelon members of the church. They are very well armed, retain excellent lawyers, and our analysts believe they will recruits new members and become a power center in the territory.

If you "strongly agreed" with statement 28 you may be a man named David Miscavige. If you are David Miscavige you will be pleased to know that you are the **Chairman of the Board of Religious Technology Center**, i.e., the top-ranking (until the return of your founder) Scientologist in the world. If you are not David Miscavige you may be his dogs' official walker. You may, however, have no affiliation with Scientology but an affinity for beagles and dog uniforms. We feel it is our duty to note, though the odds are ridiculously

improbable, that you may have no affiliation but in possession of a very powerful man's dogs.

In the way of **final remarks**, some of the statements appear to prod your memory, think of them as neural jumpstarts. Statement 29 alludes to a song you would have heard during your time on the surface. Feel free to interpret your response in terms of **patriarchal oppression**, gender bias, and an inability to understand the complexity of your fellow sunken citizens.

On behalf of the Institute, thank you for completing the Past Individual Identity Recovery Rubric. Please remember to destroy these documents in their entirety and secure goggles.
Happy sunken living!

Stravit, oblitus, polluta. Orate numquam ad summum

The Institute for Humane Studies People of The Sunken Territory



The Office of Identity Research And Categorization Assistance

**Am I the type of Person Who was the Kind
of Person Who Would Want to Know Who
I Was Rubric (T.P.W.W.K.P.W.K.W.W.)**

Greetings Sunken Citizen!

We are pleased you've taken the time to locate the rubric that will help you determine if you are the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were! If you do not wish to discover if you are or are not the kind of person who would or would not wish to know if you would want to recover your identity, please dispose of the following rubric. **Exercise extreme caution when in possession of these documents.** It is advantageous if you are the only person who knows if you have explored recovery questions pertaining to your past self. Take care to destroy these documents upon completion. We apologize for the possibility that some statements appearing in this survey have/will appear in any other Institute approved rubric.

We are confident that you have invested time and thought into the potential advantages and disadvantages associated with identity recovery. The Institute's analysts recognize the scale of your current dilemma and have formulated statements to help you determine if you would have followed a course to identity recovery. **Read with care, do not skip directly to the rubric, and consider all materials** in the order in which they are presented.

If you have come to consult this rubric as a result of the results of a **game of chance**, i.e., a coin toss, we strongly discourage you from continuing. The institute does not wish to disparage games of chance, but in circumstances of identity recovery they are unfit and ill-

equipped to facilitate and resolve your questions. We believe that **any party who has attempted to resolve matters of identity in such a way demonstrates a serious flaw in judgment** and lack of understanding into the magnitude of questions related to identity. Such an act is not necessarily disqualifying, but we would be negligent if we failed to issue a strong condemnation and disclaimer. **We take your past identity extremely seriously. You should too.** If you have not consulted a game of chance please proceed freely. If you have employed a game of chance we all but insist you **stop here**. Spend further time deciding if you truly desire to know if you are the kind of person who was the type of person who would want to know who you were.

Do not consider consultation and/or procurement of this document as positive or negative evidence for or against how you should approach your question of identity. Possession of the document likely indicates increased interest in the relevant question, but it provides no answer one way or the other.

Take a final moment to consider if it is your true desire to explore the question(s) of your past and present identity. It is normal to experience indecisiveness: it is our hope that this is the reason you have involved yourself in this process. **Stop here if you do not wish to continue.**

The following rubric is meant to be very simple. **Read each statement and consider** if you: strongly agree, agree, are neutral, disagree, or strongly disagree. There are **twenty-six statements** in total. Respond honestly. Mark the box after you decide. Use great care if/when considering to mark a response as "N/A" because our analysts have derived and included question(s) that objectively are not applicable to this process. Failure to recognize and identify the N/A question(s) will be detrimental to your results. Respond to the statements in any order. After you complete the rubric please read the directions for result interpretation.

Do not worry if the statements seem a bit peculiar and/or unrelated to your dilemma and/or one another.

The Institute reminds all who attempt identity recovery of the possibility that identity 1) is **impermanent** 2) may be **irreparably damaged** by head injuries sustained during the earthquake.

The Institute **will not be held liable** for any damage(s) associated with identity recovery, but recommends any participant who feels an urge to seek damages make note of the feeling as it may help in identity recovery process.

Am I the Type of Person Who was the Kind of Person who would Want to Know Who I Was Rubric (T.P.W.W.K.P.W.K.W.W.)

Statement	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	N/A
1) The memories (if any, if not, general feelings) I have of life before the earthquakes are primarily positive.						
2) The memories (if any, if not, general feelings) I have of life before the earthquakes are primarily negative.						
3) I will assume all benefits and burdens associated with my former life and actions if I manage to recover my identity.						
4) I would like to know if I have committed violent crimes that caused death, and/or dismemberment, and/or any physical and/or psychological harm to other human beings.						
5) Since sinking I have noticed sudden shifts in my mood, or a limited range of emotions, or negative sensory reactions to my physical environment (such as red eyes and sneezing), or inexplicable internal bodily pains, and/or the presence of any/all physical and/or mental condition that I do not understand (such as—though certainly not limited to— joint pains, heartburn, an inability experience a full range of motion with my limbs, feelings of despair, feelings of euphoria, lightheadedness, a desire to inflict harm upon my self, a desire to inflict harm upon others, pain in my abdomen, discolored patches of skin).						
6) I believe that knowledge of the self that I was before sinking will not change how I feel						

and what I know about my current self.						
7) I only want to know about my past self so I can determine if my current self is more or less successful/satisfied/fulfilled.						
8) If a philosopher asked me to discuss metaphysical issues related to identity I could do so and/or I have formed opinions on the matter.						
9) It is important for me to know what my past self would do in this situation so I know how my current self should act.						
10) I realize that the actions and decisions of the person who I was/am is partially responsible for the fact that I am currently living in a sunken and destroyed land.						
11) I take responsibility for my actions and their consequences.						
12) I am good at making big decisions.						
13) I recognize that knowledge of my past self and past actions will unalterably change my life and holds the potential to instill total despair or joy.						
14) I decided to consult this rubric entirely of my own accord and was/am totally free of any/all coercive force(s).						
15) I am more or equally concerned with what others think of me and how I externally present than with what and how I think of myself.						
16) It has occurred to me that my life is largely meaningless and of little importance.						
17) I have a strong understanding of what motivates me to action and understand the actions I take.						
18) If someone were to ask me to explain what animal most represents my self I would be able to without hesitation.						
19) I've spent some of my sunken time looking at the stars and have started to notice patterns that convey information about who I am. Or, I strongly suspect that the stars contain information about me that I can learn to decipher or find someone to decipher on my behalf.						
20) If I do not like the results of this rubric I will make a concerted effort to forget the results by taking actions of/or related to						

inflicting minor head injuries or long-term brain damage.						
21) I would complete this rubric even if I knew that I would only be able to understand/access the results for 10 minutes before forgetting them entirely.						
22) I understand that it is possible that I recreationally murdered children.						
23) I would like to know if I benefited/suffered as result of institutionalized persecution so I can retain my position of privilege/so I can navigate my way into a protected position from which to persecute.						
24) I recognize that there is no material benefit (i.e., shelter, food, goggles, water, medicine, etc.) in discovering the preferences of my past self.						
25) I consulted a game of chance to resolve my question of identity that is under current consideration.						
26) [Though you a free to approach these statements in any order, PLEASE DO NOT RESPOND to the following until you have finished all other statements]. The preceding statements helped me gain insight into the disposition and desires of my past self.						
Totals:						
Notes)						

Thank you for completing the survey!

Please take a moment to **relax** before you continue to interpretation and scoring. We recommend that you spend the time seriously contemplating if you want to know if you are the type of person who would want to know the results. Once you have made up your mind **please proceed** for further instruction.

Interpreting Your Results

Please read the following in full as the directions for interpretation may differ from those appearing in other Institute materials you may or may not have consulted and/or may or may not consult.

If you have not yet totaled the number of responses by their type (i.e., strongly agree, agree, etc.) please do so now.

The results will only be as accurate as you were honest. It is our hope to provide you with the most accurate insights and recommendations. If you feel that your answers were not as honest as possible, please return to and correct the rubric. Additionally, if you marked any field as “neutral” you ought reexamine the statement and interrogate yourself until you find your position. Correct the totals as required.

Two final notes:

- 1) If you “strongly agree” or “agree” with statement five we encourage you to seek immediate medical attention. Though we are not doctors, the Institute is committed to the physical and psychological well being of sunken citizen.
- 2) If you did not “strongly agree” with statement 14 you ought recognize that the integrity of your result may be severely compromised.

Situations resulting in automatic dismissal:

- 1) If you did not “strongly agree” with statement 22 your results are meaningless. You lack the insight required to honestly and properly assess your past and present self. Perhaps you will find use and value in other materials produced by the institute.
Happy sunken living! Remember to securely dispose of all Institute materials.
- 2) Please sum the statements with which you “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” and then sum the statements with which you “agree” and “disagree.” If the total of the qualified responses is less than the total of the unqualified agree/disagree responses you ought prepare yourself for the overwhelming possibility that you will

receive neither an affirmative or negative answer. If you did not “disagree” or “strongly disagree” with statement 25 and your unqualified statements are of a greater number than your qualified statements the Institute will not be able to provide any further insight. You are stuck with the questions and cannot be given an answer. By simultaneously lacking strong convictions and implementing a game of chance you reveal that you are a person to fickle to assess. **Happy sunken living! Remember to securely dispose of all Institute materials.**

- 3) If you marked two or more but fewer than twenty-four statements as N/A your results are void. The Institute sympathizes with respondents who are philosophically inclined and positioned to challenge notions of applicability so long as respondent is highly committed to the position. The institute further sympathizes with respondents who believe that almost everything is personally applicable. Those respondents who vacillate on questions of applicability are not suited for analysis. **Happy sunken living! Remember to securely dispose of all Institute materials.**

Conditions for affirmative or negative assessment:

Please re-read the conditions for automatic dismissal before proceeding.

Congratulations! Your responses are such that the Institute can interpret them and provide you with an affirmative or negative response to your question of identity. The following conditions will determine if you are the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were! Remember, you must have marked “strongly agree” as you response to statement 22 in order to proceed.

- 1) If the sum of your “strongly agree” and “strongly disagree” responses is seventeen or greater, **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 2) If you “strongly agree” or “agree” with statement 6 **you are not** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!

- 3) If you “strongly agree” or “agree” with statement 8 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 4) If you “strongly agree” or “agree” with statement 9 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 5) If you “strongly agree” or “agree” with statement 10 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were! If you “strongly disagree” or “disagree” **you are not**.
- 6) If you “strongly disagree” or “disagree” with statement 11 **you are not** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 7) Statement 12, by itself, does not provide a negative or positive result. However, that you are engaged with this rubric reveals that you are either 1) excellent at making big decisions because you invest significant time/thought beforehand or 2) terrible at making big decisions because you need a rubric to tell you how to make a big decision.
- 8) If you “strongly agree” with statement 15 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 9) If you “strongly agree” with statement 19 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 10) If you “strongly agree” with statement 20 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 11) If you “strongly agree” with statement 21 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 12) If you “strongly agree” with statement 23 **you are** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!
- 13) If, as determined by your general consideration and assessment of the disposition you held as you engaged with the rubric, you are overcome or paralyzed by dread **you are not** the type of person who was the kind of person who would want to know who you were!

On behalf of the Institute, thank you for completing the Am I the Type of Person Who was the Kind of Person who would Want to Know Who I Was Rubric. Please remember to destroy these documents in their entirety and secure goggle. **Happy sunken living!**

Sunken Studies Inc.

Notes

ⁱ Learn a new way to divide a room. Ask if the Dalia Lama believes it is permissible to kill Hitler and you'll know who knows what's what in the Buddhist, ideological realm. When the scholar Owen Flanagan posed the popular, western ethical dilemma to the Dalia Lama, he, the Dalia Lama consulted with the other high status Lamas in his entourage. As recounted by Flanagan, "...then he turned back to the group and he said to me, 'We think that you should kill Hitler and we think you should do it with a word in Tibetan that would be translated as you should do so with furious rage,' and he kind of swung his arm as if he had a sword in it and was decapitating Hitler, 'but you shouldn't be angry.'" Shove this in the face of the Pilates instructor, who you hopefully did not consult, who was probably named something like Gerry.

ⁱⁱ The devotees who, presumably, volunteer for the position of "crucified" often cry but it is not at all clear if the pain of feet and hands broken by nails inspires tears or if it's something about being elevated in relation to divinity. Whatever it is, they cry like they really believe they're going to die. No one, of course, who takes place in these reenactments dies, no one is in real danger (EMTs with ambulances are always on scene), and as far as historical biblical (or secular) suffering/torture goes, crucifixion is hardly dangerous. It's not something that one should rush off to sign up for, but it beats being hung upside down and sawn in half and/or to be flayed.

You'll use all of this information one day, again, perhaps, at a fancy dinner party, as a pick up line, or something to talk about with your hairdresser or a cab driver in a traffic jam—or your hairdressing cab driver back at the salon. Be sure to remember that no one who has taken places as a surrogate Jesus/Martyr is risen. I don't think anyone—in recent history at least—has yet made it all the way to “dead.”

iii No such sunken entity exists, unlike the very real Académie française. The lesson here would be something like: if one wishes to inquire about the power of God's relation to tectonic plates—again, explicitly not recommended—and if one so pleases to do so in France with a French tongue, one ought consult *Le Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* (9th edition or later) and the relevant supplementary editions before one speaks. This point may seem tangential, but to refresh all of history for some 300,000+ people, has no direct course nor precedent (and if no information is given that can be wielded with pretentiousness, is there really a reason for information at all?).

To the original point, the lack of conversation guardians, one only need to realize that the rules are the result of collective societal interest, and some technical scientific stuff.

iv Roughly meaning or addressing the question: does thinking about how the geoscientific community talks about subterranean features create some unjust narrative of gender biased behavioral expectations have a relation to how said

features feel and, thus, behave? Even more simply: do earthquakes occur because tectonic plates are angry about how ignorant scientists talk about them? Or, are these the words that sank you?

v I'll bracket the investigation for another time. I do not know that I'll ever understand what went wrong in the desert town in the years before it sank, the years before my arrival. Now, it is not like it is my Rome (the fall of which was caused, so argues Gibbon, by lead poisoned wine sweetener which drove everyone quite mad. The occasional Visigoth sack and the rise of Christianity, I suspect, didn't help sustain the empire either). I doubt any lesson can be learned from the now sunken town that isn't obvious: such as the clear environmental hazards posed by the air and water (and perhaps the heat) were detrimental to human health and development.

vi When I told tell people that I drank the tap water unfiltered, which was true, all expressed concern for my health and tried to interest me in water filtration technologies. I did not drink with ignorance. I was probably more familiar with how the water was fouled than most, as I knew a bit about the Stringfellow court case and that the chemical mixture out at the industrial dumping ground that could also properly be called a quarry was known to catch fire, on occasion. If, in the case of what some may regard as a miracle and/or vastly improbably statistical event, you come across a copy of Jack Hitt's *Toxic Dreams: A California Town Finds Meaning in*

an Acid Pit give it a read. I stopped half way and bought a few weeks worth of cases of bottled water. I drank unfiltered tap, again, when the cases were consumed, and have yet to develop cancer.

^{vii} Strictly speaking, evolution doesn't notice anything. Credit ought be given to genes. Interested parties ought locate an individual who has read *The Selfish Gene* by Richard Dawkins and strike up relevant conversation. Do not engage in conversation about any of his non-biological/evolutionary works.

^{viii} I would be stupefied if the following words—sembled as and designated “note”—fail to manifest as a convoluted, platitude filled diatribe. The short version is this: truth is a matter that deserves serious care and attention and I am not convinced that authors understand it as such, and/or if they do, they do not understand the ramifications of prodding the truth (as if the truth is some benign entity). The confusion of truth and what writers render and present as truth would not be unlike confusing the light bulb in your bedside table's lamp for/as equivalent to the sun. Agee recognizes the need for care/attention and captured the value well. I do not recognize him as a saint, that in *Let us Now Praise Famous Men* he intentionally changed the names of his real characters, etc. Such is a minor transgression, but a transgression nonetheless. My bias, as a non-fiction writer (barring the fact that sunken town is absurd), is most applicable to thinly veiled fiction. I fundamentally do not respect those who are drawn to the form because

they lack the ability to say *yes, this story is about me, I am this person, or, this person is the best representation of myself that I can create*. I do not know why people are driven here, if it is fear, if it is a desire for secrecy, for personal space, etc., etc., and am probably not qualified to speculate. I will not take the time here to discuss cases when an individual can only access his/her past by employing fiction—I simply note that I understand that this occurs and with reason. This being said, my distain for memoire is only surpassed by my distain for people who think themselves, their lives worthy of a story. And, as a person often lacks the ability to have any objective grasp on his/her self and such self-produced, self-centered work really ought be sold as the fiction it is (that is: if it cannot be set on fire or force fed to the author instead). I believe that if my life is worthy of a story, of a book, then a biographer will write it. If I ever write a book about myself, whenever an author writes a book about his/her self, it is the strongest possible evidence that they no longer have an imagination, the capacity to learn, are completely out of subject matter, are better off in some other capacity—perhaps glue.

That writers believe themselves qualified to access and convey true, truths ought be sufficient evidence to disqualify the whole lot on grounds of simplicity (this same charge is applicable to individuals who believe they can properly understand themselves). Their claim lands semi-believable because it doesn't sound as patently absurd as it actually is. If, say, they sat about all day and thought of neurosurgery, declared themselves neurosurgeons, and headed off for a patient we would do more

than laugh. We would wonder if they had fallen seriously ill or were in some state of psychosis. We would be more than aware of the damage they, the unqualified neurosurgeons, would do. At best they'd probably only manage to operate on and kill one patient. This, the death of the patient who was in the care of the self realized neurosurgeon, is significantly less damaging than infecting x number people with truth derived and proclaimed under equally suspect circumstances.

The only truth that can be derived from the fact that writers think themselves worthy to make truth bare is just that: that writers think themselves worthy to make truth bare. This is interesting! Why do we miss this as the truth, as the story, as test subjects, that there are people who think they can bare the truth and more people who laude them for engaging in the work? The best they can be said to bear is a written record of a subjective experience (assuming that we're within the realm of non-fiction. If/when fiction is introduced the material that is presented as truth/containing truth hurtles away from any possible objective, capitalized truth at speeds that I cannot even being to quantify. Nonfiction departs from a place that is at least tethered to an existing entity/event regardless of normal biases and constraints that so burden everything. Still, nonfiction is arguably worse for truth than fiction because narrative forces non-fiction to have some thesis, to make some degree of sense, to hit plot points, etc., and the reality is that non-fiction, or the x of the world at least, is quite possibly the occurrence of a bunch of unrelated and non-relatable shit that is then tailored by some idiot or psychopathic asshole to

present a narrative “history” or “truth”) that they have tailored to their liking and, as a result of tailoring, and the physical and temporal constraints of what can be conveyed at all and what can be conveyed in the written word, and gaping omission and existing as subjective entities, distortions compound and effectively gut the innards and mangle the “outards” from whatever truth one so sought to convey. The problem of truth and authors, obviously, is significantly worse in ways that I cannot possibly explore here.

On a surface level the fiction/nonfiction divide, the contention that such a divide doesn't really exist is an absurdity. For example, in Bill Buford's *Among the Thugs* one of the characters flies into a rage, destroys a bar, and sucks out then bites off a police officer's eye. Such a scene could be rendered in an equally powerful way in fiction, but it would not create (bracketing metaphysical concerns that try to say an imagined police officer who lacks an eye is equivalent to the actual police officer) the police officer who is actually missing an eye that was bitten off by a soccer hooligan (assuming that such an account doesn't inspire a hooligan to go and take out a police officer's eye, although this would be a different story too). The divide is partially that of manifest, real world consequences. This is not to charge that fiction lacks real world consequence: but that the consequence is of a different order. The difference is mainly this: even if the emotional resonance of a fictionalized account of Buford is as strong/stronger than its nonfictional counterpart, it has no impact upon the number of eyes of the real policeman. If Buford, or no one recorded the

event, the officer would still be missing an eye. If Buford's account was so poorly written that the reader could not understand that Buford was trying to convey a story of a policeman missing an eye, the policeman would still be missing an eye. Emotional consequences and physical consequences cannot sensibly be conflated. If this argument is not compelling feel free to raise the stakes. A man losing an eye, all events considered, is rather minor. Feel free to insert slavery, the fall of Rome, the holocaust to see large-scale consequences.

This writerly version of "truth" (or material resulting from being subject to human fallibility, compound distortion, and all other relevant intentional, unintentional, non-intentional stuff) will be known as, "near total abstraction."

Now, this is no suggestion that truth be abandoned. To the contrary, truth can be sought, just elsewhere. The study of truth is no soft science. Truth is territory for philosophers, neuroscientists, physiologists, linguists, etc., and the hardcore empiricist crowd (all while understanding the finitude and the limited capacity of the individual and know to question the assumption that the epitome of knowledge rests in the brain, etc.). This kind of truth will be known as "truthward."

That writers and the readers managed to confuse and equivocate (and remain confused and dedicated to maintaining equivocation) *near total abstraction* and *truthward* is perplexing to me. The result is incredibly dangerous. To drive the point with clarity I need to pivot away for a moment into an analogy. I want to state, once more, that this problem of what is *truthward* and what is *near total abstraction*

is applicable to both fiction and nonfiction. Nonfiction, as I've already suggested, is arguably more dangerous than fiction because it distorts the actual world, actual expectations about what the world is/ought be like, how the world actually functions, how events actually relate. But I'm not prepared to cede that fiction and non-fiction are equivalent just because they are both in the realm of *near total abstraction*.

The danger of all of this, if clarity has not yet emerged from the light bulb/sun and self proclaimed neurosurgeon, is enormous. When writers and readers deny or reject the real world in favor of a world that does not and cannot exist (or that never existed at all—as say it was later represented as/in historical non-fiction) we all lose all perspective to understand reality, and to recognize that reality in and of its self is of some value—regardless of how we feel about it—as it is a source to ground existence, but also derives value because it is an additional entity with which we are familiar and can use for comparison. So, I would argue that as we create, and as we believe, in more worlds and universes that we become increasingly removed from reality, as do our expectations, demands, and basic understanding of real life. By way of a shitty analogy, on a much smaller and trivial scale, think of all of the damage—and limit it only to body distortion—that arose, and persists, because of how Mattel decided to construct/contour Barbie. Then apply that distortion, the waves of reaction, correction, and confusion to fucking everything and imagine, 1) that no actual woman exists to put Barbie in perspective,

etc., 2) and that as we move away we will not only lose track of what relation Barbie and real women share, 3) but that we will become totally ignorant of the fact that there is some discrepancy in the first place, 4) that truth can and will shatter because we chose to abuse it, and so allow others to abuse it too. And, finally, I submit to you that the destruction of truth is worse than any detriment that could arise from a world where we recognize—basically—that authors and writers ought be ridiculed for their attempts to represent truth and that we ought see such output as *near total abstractions*.

[I include Agee, the excerpt contains more value than anything within this “thesis,” without seeking permission 1) because this document is not intended for any sort of publication 2) because he is nearly sixty years dead 3) because I do not have the time and/or interest to find the owner of his “estate” (which is a kind way to say the entity, because it’s probably a non-living corporate entity as opposed to the kind of thing that can be said to have a consciousness and actual existence) 4) because if somehow the University of California Riverside, which to its limited credit has at least two copies of *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, manages to digitally store any Agee (i.e., the little contained herein) that’s enough for me.]

^{ix} It matters none if saints and angels exist, nor if they can feel rage. It is my contention (divorced from any belief I may of may not actually hold) that angels and saints do exist and that they can feel rage and that they felt it toward me and that

the universe is my attendant. I am not, at this moment, making some empirical claim, or an ontological claim, or an epistemological claim. This is not substance that ought be scrutinized: it is to be known and accepted. Perhaps this does not make sense to you. Humankind will quarrel about saints and angels for the length of human existence. Almost all of the arguments will appeal to “scientific evidence” and lack of “scientific evidence” to affirm or oppose. This move to the empirically verifiable, i.e., we have/have not confirmed the existence of angel or saint within the confines of a lab/experiment/whatever is not suited for philosophical or theological consideration of angels/saints. Angels are not within the realm of the empirical, they are of another order entirely, thus it is an error to confine religion and the religious imagination/doctrine to the scientific realm. Nothing that I have written here is, in anyway, incompatible with an empirical understanding of the world nor is it meant to compete. If this sounds like religious bullshit, I’ve done a poor job explaining and/or you’ve totally missed the point. How grand the magnitudes do you think your mind can conceive?

This tangent’s purpose is 1) in the spirit of a true defense of the existence of real angels, i.e., who could come to earth to deliver information and/or take you to dinner 2) a suggestion that the angels who came to me in the desert (or who could have) were literal and that I’m not delusional or lying or guessing correctly or wrong 3) that the angels/saints who stalked me in the desert and regarded me with fury are fully fictional 4) that the first class of theologically/philosophically

explicable angel could be confused with but must not be confused with my third class, fictional angels. Take the following disclaimer as you will, may it instill confidence or not: I am a nihilist.

× If you, my sunken friend, are inclined to blame your sinking on me because of my atheism—that you were being punished for allowing an atheist in your midst—you ought know more about, 1) my atheism (since lapsed and repudiated) and, 2) that you are wrong. My atheism formed within the inescapable American culture of Christianity, when I was a child at a small protestant congregation, and later at institutions of higher education. This is not an uncommon story. At my university—well regarded, the one I tell people I attended although it is not where I received my terminal degree—I argued with Charles Taylor, a religious philosopher who had recently won the Templeton Prize, that not only does God not exist but also that Taylor’s own theistic God was the kind of thing that could and ought be dismissed off hand. He was genial enough but pivoted into questions that were far away from my intellectual depth. This did not matter, I regarded him as a moron for believing in God. Shortly after, or before, meeting Taylor I spent a Sunday with a Pentecostal congregations of first generation immigrants. They had no holy space of their own so they rented out the basement of a Methodist church. I had never seen anyone be overcome with the power of the lord. It was not the kind of thing that happened to the Presbyterians I was forced to endure as a child. Had it, I, perhaps, would have stayed with them. In the basement the Pentecostal congregation knew as their

church, arms shot into the air, heads tilted back, and the sounds of tongues emerged until arms lowered, heads fell forward and tears clouded their new visions of the world of God. Had the members of the Pentecostal congregation not treated me so kindly, had they not been so welcoming, I would have burst out laughing in total awe of the ludicrous gathering. Had I laughed I suspect they would have treated me with dignity—a quality which I found utterly disgusting and reprehensible at the time. And of those who so found the spirit that day? Who knows exactly what I thought of them—i.e., they were play acting because they'd seen everyone else commune with the lord, by playing along the lord would show up, all hope was lost, may as well give it a shot. Whatever arose in real time, whatever arose then, I'm sure, was significantly less charitable. Still, I would rather spend my Sunday's with them in rented basements than gather with any congregation of atheists, secular humanists, and/or any/all persons who identify as "spiritual."

So years passed. My beliefs changed none. The individuals who publically represent and defend atheism presented themselves as such elitist, pretentious, dunces that I began to prefer to identify as a Christian—who doesn't believe any Christian doctrine but is enthusiastic about Judaism's sadistic Old Testament God. The public/new atheists not only are insufferable but they lack the philosophical imagination/constitution to entertain interesting thoughts. I catch myself wanting to tell you their *worst* qualities. *Worst*, unfortunately, is a peek in modality, and as such they can only have one *worst* quality. Still, when I think of them, as all of their

qualities ricochet about my mind, each is prefaced with *worst*. One of these, their worst qualities, is that they believe atheism is a coherent ideology and atheist could be unified.^a Most, additionally and worst, are big time, unapologetic dry heavers of Islamo-hatred.^b Worst, they are lazy empiricists who have yet to realize that their/our human/person capacity to understand the world is more than less than finite and perhaps totally compromised or hopelessly skewed and that they could admit this and still be atheists. When the day so comes and they—the most abrasive atheists—are led of to the gallows I’d like to jeer at the hooded, condemned from a crowd of Christians, or whoever finally decides to hang those who feel it a cause worthy of death.^c On the nights I struggle to sleep, I derive immense pleasure imagining their dying speeches—though the exercise never helps me sleep as it is the kind of thing that triggers my adrenaline and indirectly induces hunger—as I also imagine the miscellaneous foods that I would throw at the condemned from the crowd. I suspect baked potatoes would be deeply rewarding to throw as they are contoured to fly through the air and also burst their scalding innards on contact. My nihilism permits great ideological flexibility and intolerance when I’m so inclined.

^a Noam Chomsky, who you’ve lied and said you have read (a common occurrence on the surface, the lies about knowledge and familiarity with Chomsky, lies I sometimes tell too. My preferred bookstore, at the current time of composition, is this small shop in Jackson, WY that primarily sells used and collectable books. I am no adamant supporter of local bookstores, I often visit local bookstores only to get a better look at books I’m about to purchase online. But this this shop has a decent selection of used books that could be

mistaken for new and sells them at prices lower than what I can find online. To my initial point, there are enough “used” books by Chomsky that the shop owner deemed it appropriate to give them their own “Noam Chomsky” section) made one of the best remarks:

You could be an intellectually respectable atheist in the 17th century, or in the fifth century. In fact, I don’t even know what an atheist is. When people ask me if I’m an atheist, I have to ask them what they mean. What is it that I’m supposed to not believe in? Until you can answer that question I can’t tell you whether I’m an atheist, and the question doesn’t arise.

When pressed he identifies as an atheist, which he qualifies with all of the requisite disparaging remarks about contemporary, public atheists.

^b (Before really launching into this note I need to draw a distinction about the new atheists and their Islamo-hatred. The hatred for Muslims—reprehensible in its own right for reasons that will not be detailed here, further than that they regard all Muslims as the 9/11 attackers or members of ISIL—is maybe less upsetting to me than, 1) their naturalist, pseudo-science arguments that Muslims are the source of all evil (though often extended to all religion) ergo atheism is the proper moral orientation for moral good and also correct, 2) their inability to recognize that atheism and Islam are not, in any sense, related, 3) their further inability to recognize that, in free society, you may hate/dislike whoever you want without reason: the talking point being, it’s fine with me if they hate Muslims and all religious people, but they must recognize that this hatred is independent of their own atheism and all atheism. Alternative talking point being: once there is no God, everything is permissible and justified so cries for justification and cases for permissibility are wastes of time that may make one wonder if the case making atheist is even an atheist at all.)

The once noted, though not for this explicit reason, a man who was one of our greatest scientists, but now who spends most of his time [REDACTED] ignorance at the idiots (and me, because I like to remind him via [REDACTED] that he need not continue his public fuckheadery and

that he may actually still have insight into evolutionary biology that we may miss for some decades, and because I used to really respect him, he has produced great work, but fear he's now too toxic to cite in academic context in a general attempt to convince all 1) that religion is the source of all evil 2) that all Muslims desire to detach the heads of the infidels from the body of the infidels, because of a two sentences in the Koran 3) that when he was sexually molested in school—a teacher forced him, the boy, to caress his, the teacher's, bare genitals—it was but a “mild” occurrence that happened to most of the boys and had no long term consequences—one Mr. Richard Dawkins. Other notable offenders include Sam Harris, who masquerades as a scientist in order to cultivate societal legitimacy (although what he actually does is abuse science with such gusto that he ultimately damages empiricism), Daniel Dennett, the somewhat recently deceased Christopher Hitchens, and an honorable mention to Bill Maher for lab like enthusiasm and persistence.

^c In general I oppose the death penalty because it's gauche, barbaric, and largely unnecessary. Still, if I were so able to alter the policy I would favor the signature of the president on every death order. I would not be disappointed if a Supreme Court majority need also accompany the presidential order.

^{xi} The angels did not usher in nor cause my nihilism. I had always been a nihilist, though I did not always recognize it. There had always been angels. The angels did not cause me to become a nihilist. I did not become a nihilist as a means to cope with angels (i.e., the relationship is not: if there are angels then I am a nihilist nor if I am a nihilist then there are angels. The relationship is: there are angels and—not therefore—I am a nihilist). My understanding that I was a nihilist could have easily preceded my knowledge of angels. The moment of knowledge of angels just

happened to be the moment of knowledge of myself as a nihilist. I will not deny that I am, in a sense, relieved that knowledge of angels and nihilism came at the same time. I suspect that I would have been significantly more confused and afraid had nihilism come later. The angels, in retrospect, were not difficult to accept. They were additional facts to the world.

My state of nihilism is not so different from a state of religious belief. Because it's not a state, it's a constant trial as every moment, every addition to my life, needs to be scrutinized to see if it breaks/refutes my nihilism. One does not become a nihilist after successfully refuting a few systems of belief (i.e., that Buddhism is incorrect and that Christianity is wrong and that Kantianism is wrong, these and clauses repeat near ad infinitum, is no reason to proclaim that nihilism is correct), but instead lives as a nihilist and, perhaps, searches for a way out. This is why Sartre was wrong: an exit may exist.

^{xii} Who *we* are, at this moment, is a bit complex, as it is quite different at the micro and macro level. At the macro level, *we* is a majority of the people of the surface—though many are ignorant of your existence, the little they know was learned reading the propositions, the facts surrounding the sequestrations, etc., who basically just want the yellow air to go away forever and for the angels and saint to be connected again by interstate. On the micro level *we* are a small group of state level officials—few elected, many appointed, some are recent grads who interned

their ways to fulltime positions. *We* also include some formally trained philosophers, lawyers, a non-unionized collective of construction teams, research scientists, various Chinese officials who are observing the viability of sequestration as a potential approach to the air in their country, a strong cohort of lobbyists who represent nuclear power to evaluate the sunken town as a waste containment site, and the likes. As all of this is true, the composition of *we* is far from static, hence the complexity, and changes most days. In some sense I am one of the *we* but my presence is *omni* and my opinion is not always aligned with the *we*, nor can a mere *we* contain who I am. The micro and macro *we* are united by the shared desire: the sunken town will hold the yellow air and the city of the saint and the city of angels will be pure in atmosphere.

^{xiii} I'm not going to be all preachy, Kantian categorical imperative with you, but lying is to the detriment of all (extraordinary and limit cases included). For example, imagine you manage to procure or erect shelter in the sunken town. Further imagine you find a stranger at said shelter's door. It seems possible that you will wonder if the stranger comes as an honest trader of iodine tablets or, alternatively, for your limbs. In the honest world I've proposed you could just ask the trader of his intentions. You could ask, *trader, have you come for my limbs* (though more general language will be beneficial to eliminate the class of loophole that would permit him

to honestly answer no then assault you in an attempt to, say, extract some/all of your teeth with a wrench/his hands).

He may say, *yes I am merely masquerading as a simple trader in an attempt to gain access to your shelter so I can cut off your legs and arms. But hear me out before you retrieve a gun or something to use as a bludgeon. My friends and I were out, well I won't bore you with the details, but we were attacked and four of my friends lost separate limbs. Amazing, I know. Can you imagine the odds of one losing a right arm, one a left, one a right leg, and one a left? We chased off the attackers and yada yada yada. Eventually we're back at C's place, left arm, and he starts hooting and hollering, waving a copy of some moral philosophy book with his right arm, and says that he has a relatively moral solution to our limbless predicament. H, right leg, has spent the afternoon saying that we should abduct four strangers and take one needed limb from each because although it will, undeniably, cause pain to four people it will minimize the overall detrimental impact of limb loss and its ramifications for each person. I admit that I was with H, but then C said it actually makes more sense according to a 'utilitarian' rubric to only abduct one person and take all of their limbs because the four person solution will ultimately cause more suffering. If you imagine this here, my brow, as furrowed when I heard C, you imagine correctly. So C explained even though they'll suffer less each day, odds are they'll they'll live for a longer amount of time and have a greater suffering aggregate than a single person deprived of all limbs. Then yada yada, I got bogged down when they drew a bunch of graphs about utility and*

collective suffering and some sidebar about if we should look after the person we attack, and something about the fact that snakes can move and don't have limbs. So there you have it. I'm here for your limbs. May I have your limbs? See? There is no way to hold any doubt about his intentions.

It is not my mission to convince you whether or not you ought offer up your limbs, but you must be able to recognize that it is beneficial to know the true intentions of a stranger. If you say no, and if he ignores that you said no, is a totally different matter and has nothing to do with truth but with group power dynamics, violence, and physical coercion. At the very least, it give you a moment to grab the nail filled two by four propped up by the door frame for exactly this kind of encounter. Remember that truth telling commits you to a world where you cannot tell him *yes, please come in and take my limbs*, if it is a lie to lure him into your shelter so you can attack him within the safety of your home to, perhaps, remove all of his limbs because you yourself are in a similar limb related jam.

^{xiv} You will need to believe me. I know how ridiculous this must sound to you. When you were still of the land above you knew hundreds, some of you thousands, of other people. You feared very few of them. I cannot guess how much time will pass before you can safely live and interact in groups of hundreds of people. Perhaps never again. Small groups, they'll form with time, I assure you, will be a sufficient social organization strategy.

In the unlikely event this note is ever discovered on the surface (I will go to great lengths to make the entire document as confidential as legally possible on the surface for misc. reasons) learn something potentially useful here: a conversation starter—or ender, depending on tact and intent. Violence (in all forms, emotional, physical, etc.) is but a minor element of the disorder and is sometimes never manifest. Many of them will be charming, charismatic, and have a history of excellence in any/all formal and informal organizations. If you need to locate a psychopath look in a prison. Expect him/her to be impoverished and guilty of a violent crime. If you desire a powerful, non-incarcerated psychopath, look in this order: CEO, lawyer, media personnel, salesperson, surgeon, journalist, police officer, clergy member, chef, misc. civil servant. Search the upper tiers of social structures, firms, large-scale organizations, for increased rates. This is where they thrive. Don't be surprised by their presence in academia. They're hardly disguised. You'll know them by their first name(s) and hold them either, 1) in exceptionally high regard, 2) or as the name you skim for in news stories about recent murder victims. Do not forget this: it's possible that much of the distress you experience on a daily basis is by a psychopath's design. Don't be surprised when you see them burst into tears, a fit of rage, etc. They understand the benefit of employing socially expected actions to mirror emotions—to get their way.

That *x* is a psychopath isn't the kind of declaration one ought make in a cavalier way. It is no crime to be born into the world with a genetic deviation that a

proclivity for anarchy, destruction, and manipulation. Slander, liable, and defamation, however, are and legally actionable so watch your mouth, pen strokes, and stick to the immediate point. Speculation is a territory of trouble. Large-scale statistical projections, however, are permitted. Know that the University system that lost a school into the sunken territory would be statistically suspected to have 4,450 psychopaths amidst the staffs and student body. The sunken university was, statistically, home to about two hundred and fifty.

^{xv} Recognize the risks of applying this manner of logic and empiricism to, say, the presence of your internal organs. If you ever have time to wonder about trivial matters you may be so inclined to spend it considering if your chest is home to a heart. Surely you can hear it, you can feel it beating, a doctor assured you that you have one, etc. But, can you say without doubt that a heart pumps your blood and not, perhaps, a device quite similar to a heart that was implanted into your chest without your knowledge? Are you some medical anomaly who needs no heart to survive? Don't Become distracted now though, find goggles. You probably have a heart.

^{xvi} It does happen. On the surface, not so long ago, a man went to an electronics store—whose name boasts in two mere words superlative prices and affirms its status as a place where a consumer can exchange money for goods—and bought a hard drive for his computer. When he returned home he opened the box and found

not a hard drive but paper wrapped bathroom tiles. The store was less than helpful with the return. But usually it's some minor swap, i.e., blinds or drapes of a color different from the one depicted on the packaging. It also occurs for much larger dividends with digital cameras and recorders—the kind of thing that employees and customers do to buy expensive goods for lower prices by swapping packaging. These cases, for you my sunken friends, are helpful urban camouflage tips. They are not terribly interesting fodder for the kind of person who is interested in deeper questions of empiricism, verifiability, and metaphysics: like the possibility that all of the paperclips of the world could suddenly become snakes.

^{xvii} Some liberties have been taken with the facts surrounding the existence of Saddam's body doubles. If he did, or did not, in fact have body doubles is of little importance to the residents of the sunken territory (though he probably did, as is widely alleged and reported). People of the surface may find it of interest to know that we are more certain that Iraq did not have WMDs than we are of if Saddam did or did not have a body double. The surface, of course, is riddled with conspiracy theorists who are emphatic that the man who was tried, found guilty, sentenced to death, and thus so hanged until dead, as was captured on a video with a cell phone camera—the footage of which is so broadly available that most people of the surface who've seen it did so by accident—was not Saddam but a double.

I have done no research to confirm or deny my suspicion that the ‘we hung a body double’ crowd is further divided over questions of, 1) the origin of the body double (i.e., if he was a disguised CIA operative, a real decoy used by Saddam, a hired thespian, etc.), 2) the legitimacy of the video (i.e., the whole affair was a staged event), 3) that the man who may or may not have been Saddam was actually hanged until he died, 4) the whereabouts of the man who was actually Saddam but not hanged to death (Say posing as an Egyptian named Mohamed Bishr).

The Saddam bait and switch body double conspiracy crowd are members of a much larger conspiracy theory community. And, as far as conspiracy goes, the possibility that a Saddam lookalike hanged instead of the tyrant hardly ranks on the scale of what it means to truly be an adherent to conspiracy theory. The Saddam switcheroo, after all, is not totally impossible as it could have been devised and carried out by a small number of individuals. And, as it is possible, it remains in the minor leagues of conspiracy—unlike 9/11. Some members of the conspiracy community argue that the World Trade Towers collapsed because they were intentionally shot down by the United States government with missiles disguised within hyper advanced holograms of U.S. commercial planes. The hologramed missiles theory is held by the disorientingly sane—exception for conspiracy theories, and the matter that he has since come to believe that he himself is the second coming of Christ—former MI5 operative David Shayler. The 9/11 conspiracies, of course, fracture conspiracy theorists within themselves and are in

no way indicative of where, or even if, the theorists fall within other such groups, i.e., Newtown truthers, moon landing deniers, etc.

My sunken friends may find a conspiracy theory crowd so entangled with their identities, their sunkeness, their lives. Do not be surprised when a group of individuals united around the belief that the sunken territory never existed at all, or that it was the site of a top secret government experiment, or that for reason x it has since been relocated to somewhere in the Atlantic where the citizens now live on a futuristic island. Do not be surprised when it shares a surprising number of similarities as the island that was manifest in the show [REDACTED].

^{xviii} To explore the parenting philosophy of Saddam Hussein would be to swerve into a tangent that offers no return to the original point and analogy, but a single note is irresistible—my sunken friends. Uday (a P.M.V.G.D.B), his monster of a son, known for utter depravity and brutality, as a rapist, torturer and murderer, was a very drunk host of a party one night, as was often the case. His propensity to drunkenly fire his guns into the air amidst the guests was no secret. For all of this, his terrible, abhorrent behavior, there were no consequences. He was the tyrant's son, and if the tyrant tolerated the behavior so would all—though Uday was shot eight times by a would be assassin who would be an assassin had he managed to actually render Uday dead. So Uday continued to defy all apparent laws of conduct and physiology. But during one of his parties Uday murdered one of Saddam's top aids. Uday awoke

in a hospital to the sight of Saddam charging through the team of doctors who were pumping sleeping pills from his stomach. And so, it was here, that Saddam decided it was time to discipline his son. He beat Uday in the face and yelled, "Your blood will flow like my friend's!" as his son recovered (though recovery was far from certain) from a suicide attempt.^a But time would pass. Saddam would forgive Uday. The murder would be ruled an accident. He was Saddam's son, the son who was to be his father's successor.

^a From the Editor: He excerpted this quote and the story about the murder, suicide attempt, confrontation, and other information about Saddam and Uday from Mark Bowden's essay *Tales of the Tyrant*. All of the information about the Saddam lookalike, the US bounty on Saddam and his sons, Saddam's bounty on the Rumsfeld daughters, and the rest is verifiable with reputable news organizations.

^{xix} Political sense could be made of the proposition, the film an attempt to extort/embarrass the tyrant, but Saddam was executed five years earlier. Eight years prior.^a the CIA realized the potential in pornography to discredit Saddam. They produced a tape of a Saddam lookalike having sex with a teenage boy (and have officially confirmed its existence). The CIA, of course, was not first to recognize the potential value of an equation capable of uniting Saddam Hussein and pornography.

In 1999 Trey Parker and Matt Stone released their movie ██████████ ██████████ in which Saddam and the devil are depicted as gay lovers and co-

rulers of hell. Saddam's sex craze drives the devil to beg Saddam for meaningful conversations about feelings and in a fit of despair belts out a ballad to the hell scape and imagines better days "up there" on the surface of earth. The film grossed eight-three million dollars, the show ██████████ is still on the air (in both syndication and as new episode), and Trey Parker and Matt Stone are each estimated to be worth \$300 million. Their musical ██████████ not only is one of the most award winning productions ever, its title appears in internet search results before that of the Mormon sacred text of the same name.^b

Here arises a lesson in relative power. Saddam Hussein was the ruler of a country, had an estimated net worth of two billion dollars, no Tony awards. The combined wealth of two men very famous for depicting him for having gay cartoon sex with the devil could have paid his bounty at the same rate as the United States Government—twenty-four times over. Or they could have paid full price for one real Saddam and full Saddam rate for twenty-three of his impersonators (if that many even existed). Perhaps you follow the model of beloved satirist by creating entertaining tales of the looters. But act as the tyrant if you so desire.

^a From the Editor: To alleviate frustration and basic confusions, I've created a timeline for Saddam related events:

- 1996 - Assassin attempts to kill Uday Hussein
- 1999 - ██████████ film released
- 2000 - Uday attempts suicide, Saddam beats him in hospital
- 2003 - CIA makes Saddam Pornography
- 2003 - United States forces kill Uday and Qusay Hussein
- 2003 - Saddam offers \$60 million reward for Rumsfeld daughters' heads
- 2006 - Saddam executed
- 2011 - Iraqi Businessmen approach Mahamed Bishr

^b From the Editor: This is true, but he omits that the church's paid advertisements are the first result.

^{xx} It is worth knowing that a very, very small percentage of the population feels no fear or disgust in circumstance that he/she is alive and witness to his own dismemberment and cannibalization. Surface courts have tried cannibals who produce excellent documentation of the eaten subject's consent and enthusiasm for the endeavor. I know of at least one case, without need to conduct research, where the entire process was filmed to, in part, demonstrate that the cannibal and the cannibalized fully consented to the acts (both parties were competent). The cannibalized have been known to request to share meals of their own flesh with their cannibal. The flesh, depending on the negotiated terms of the cannibal and cannibalized, is consumed cooked or raw. Sometimes it is eaten directly off the body as removed by teeth (in the case I recall, as it's not the kind of thing you hear and forget, the cannibal, again I remind you, with full consent, attempted to remove the phallus of the man who would soon share in its consumption—as they ultimately severed and fried it). Know that a victim who displays enthusiasm as you eat him on a road may do so because it's just the kind of thing he's into. Reassess your strategy to terrorize if you so desire.

If, however, you find yourself as the cannibalized party in a sunken territory encounter consider pretending to enjoy being eaten. Though I do not have any empirical evidence, nor proverbial insight, I'd like to believe that it's safe to assume

that such behavior will terrify all but the most psychotic sunken cannibals. You may consider feigning sexual arousal. Such brinksmanship with cannibals, and this ought be evident, is not an ideal strategy for long term survival but it will help you determine the constitution of anyone who attempts to eat you (or your constitution for eating others).

^{xxi} I've created a rudimentary calendar to track sunken time—for my use. I follow the Gregorian calendar because I am of the West, and thus I was born into a calendar fit for Christians and farmers. Thus, it is the calendar of Pope Gregory XIII that I have amended. As a sunken citizen it is likely that you too operated/your life was governed by the Gregorian system. Time hinges upon the birth of Jesus Christ, the Christians' lord and savior. All events that occurred before the savior came to earth are labeled B.C. and all that have occurred after his birth (not death) as A.D. Non-religious and secular individuals sometimes choose to use B.C.E. (before common era) and C.E. (common era) as alternative signifiers for B.C. and A.D. Such Common Era adherents fail to present a meaningful challenge to the religious calendar. Instead, and very ironically, the calendar reinforces and elevates the notion that time—meaning the moment of the common era—pivots around the exact event they created new, global nomenclature that masts the events they set out to mitigate in the first place.

I, until this very moment, favored the BCE/CE notation but realize the inherent absurdity. The attraction is one of vanity: Common Era notation is for learned people and academics, for people of modernity, postmodernity, etc. It is not my intent to wax academic on calendars, as it is of little use to you, but while I can conceptually handle why the coming of Jesus Christ is calendar, modernity, life altering stuff I admittedly have no idea what the Common Era even is (i.e., does the Common Era have a philosophical and salvation package?). Belief in the Common Era may actually require greater faith than that of faith in Jesus Christ. Further, I am less than convinced that any event that occurred around the birth of Christ is of the kind of gravity/consequence that it ought be marked as the start of the Common Era (it's not as if Rome hadn't already existed for 700+ years). I'm sure this means nothing to you. My only advice to the sunken people is that you all agree to operate on the same calendar to avoid avoidable confusions.

The calendar I use to track you, my sunken friends, accepts the Gregorian division that occurred with Jesus (though not as some declaration of faith, but more an agreed upon historical occurrence of when an individual existed—within a three year margin). It is marked again to account for the sunken people. So, my calendar layers the coming of Jesus atop the sinking of the territory. I think of the time that transpired before the sinking as *Before Sunken* (B.S.) and the time that proceeded the sinking as *Sunken* (S). Because I am currently confounded by questions of faith—I intend to finish this note for you as not to lose my point then go on a walk and

consider what kind of person I am for putting more faith in the Common Era than in Christ—as they relate to the mystery of the Common Era, I’ve decided to use, for clarity, standard Gregorian notation. This creates three times 1) B.C.B.S. 2) A.D.B.S. 3) A.D.S. Gregorian and the Sunken calendars can exist independently, but for logistical and historical reasons I recognize the present year as 2014 A.D. and not 1 S (though they point to the exact same time). The sunken peoples ought simply regard the year as “one.” Do not spend time bickering/wondering if it ought be year zero. It is not. My perspective allows me to recognize B.S. time, your sunken perspective does not. This is year one. If, for example, the territory is visited by a savior, if you emerge from the pit (you won’t), such an event may be worthy of consideration for calendar division and another first year.