

[what follows is a complete playthrough of the 2023 game, *Repeat the Ending*. This is the Spring Thing version. This is not to be confused with the “2003” transcript, which is actually a separate part of *RTE*’s story.

If you have difficulty playing parser games, or just prefer reading, then this is for you. You’ll be able to see everything except the in-game guide, which can be launched by typing “FG” at any point in the story. It isn’t locked behind progress.]

Start of a transcript of:

Inform 7 v10.1.2

Identification number: //E9A2EE13-8008-41D8-88F2-2459642EE5DB//

Interpreter version 1.3.6 / VM 3.1.2

Menus version 5 by Wade Clarke

Basic Help Menu version 4 by Wade Clarke

>restart

Are you sure you want to restart? yes

This 25th Anniversary Edition of *Repeat the Ending* can optionally display artwork by Callie Smith. Because different hardware and software systems present images differently, you can choose between small, medium, and large image sizes. Note that this choice can be changed at any time by entering the *\*GRAPHICS\** command.

What image size would you prefer?

- (1) Small
- (2) Medium
- (3) Large
- (4) Print image descriptions instead

This setting can be changed at any time by entering the *\*GRAPHICS\** command.

\*\*\*

*Repeat the Ending* is a work of interactive fiction written in the Inform 7 programming language.

It features frank and disturbing depictions of mental illness, including suicidal ideation. More troubling subjects lurk at the periphery, even if they are not dealt with directly: child neglect, substance abuse, and domestic violence. This warning can be viewed at any time by typing "ADVISORY."

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

This definitive text of Repeat the Ending is made up of three equally important parts. These three elements are: this game, the "Reader's Companion to Repeat the Ending," and a possibly notorious play transcript (often referred to as "the 2003 transcript"). This is an unusual arrangement, since typically a game has no equal, merely supporting props and characters. Even if it does not stand alone, it usually stands above.

The \*GUIDE\* command will open the "Reader's Companion," which expands as the player advances through the game. Initially, it will only offer helpful instructions and hints. More content will be made available throughout the story. Note that those hints are meant to be read, and no prizes will be awarded for avoiding them. In fact, I recommend reading all of the hints once the game is completed, particularly the "general questions" section.

Speaking of hints: this is not a traditional, Zorkian game of things. Only one problem in the game is solved without magic, and its hint is revealed via magic. You will never make progress by flipping switches, putting clothes in plastic bins, using keys to unlock doors, breaking windows, carrying a big inventory around, et cetera. Examining objects is seldom sufficient. Reading footnotes and, better still, reading about gameplay in the "How to Play" section of the \*GUIDE\* will hopefully spare you a sizable amount of frustration and wasted time. If you aren't either looking for or else using magic, you probably aren't making progress.

Note that the description of the first area of the game contains a footnote or annotation. You can learn how to read footnotes in the \*GUIDE\* as well. The specific instructions can be found in the "Paratext and Other New Textual Features" section of "How to Play Repeat the Ending." These footnotes are essential to the experience of Repeat the Ending. Neither the orange-eyed woman nor the unkempt depressive is responsible for any confusions, errors, or outright failures that may arise while ignoring paratexts.

I am deeply grateful to all who have given Repeat the Ending a second chance; perhaps this phenomenon is better called a kind of grace.

?Drew Cook

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Repeat the Ending\*\*\*

I skip across the treetops, and they pass swiftly under my feet. A massive bleed-off of psychic potency waits in a nearby primeoid dwelling, and I'm the first to have noticed it. There's a knack to detecting and siphoning this kind of entropic bleed. Any novice can redirect the lost energy of an inefficient flame or machine, but few know how to deal with processes that aren't thermodynamic.

It's forbidden, too, which must discourage some entropists, but what's the purpose of knowing how to do something that you're afraid to do? Coasting down from the trees, I skate over the low-cut grass of a wide lawn. The bleed is loud for those who can hear and lies somewhere beyond a rather unremarkable window.

Approaching the Scrying Hall (1980)

I hover before a transparent plane of glass that reflects my orange and luminescent eyes. Far behind me, the indistinct shadows of trees reach upward. They are darkness pinned to a lesser, starlit darkness. Through the glass, an adolescent primeoid gazes into a brightly glowing scrybox. There is no apparent sign of the psychic bleed that drew me here. The source must lie someplace beyond this hall of divination.

While there are many ways that I might depart from this spot, the only location that interests me can be found \*INSIDE\* the house. [PS 1].

>mono

Now printed text is configured for monospace fonts.

>ps1

Specialized verbs used in Repeat the Ending (1996) were never thoroughly explained. This new critical edition features commentary and detailed play instructions by C. A. Smythe, interface consultant. Hopefully, their guidance will assist new players while granting new insights to those already familiar with Cook's work.

While some gameplay tips will be provided via footnotes, players can access the "Player's Companion" at any time to access detailed instructions and other useful information. To review those texts, simply type `*GUIDE*` (or `*GD*`) at any time during play.

- P. Searcy [CAS 1]

>cas1

The goal of these annotations is simple: address shortfalls in Cook's failed attempts at implementing tutorials for Repeat the Ending's magic system, since its opacity was the gameplay-related flaw most-mentioned by critics at the time of its release. There are three elements that merit discussion. In the first place, the mechanics of the system, which have never been clear, demand elaboration. Additionally, the broader subject of "entropic magic" ought to be explained in detail. Finally, an implication of Cook's failure (or inability, perhaps) to write a satisfactory tutorial system deserves special attention.

For the purposes of this tutorial, players are advised to `*EXAMINE THE LAWN*`.

- C. A. Smythe

>x lawn

Few things more loudly declare primeoid extravagance than their lawns. These non-native grasses require frequent mowing and watering, and do little to nothing to support local fauna. I have heard that they are status symbols, though I can't imagine why. [CAS 2]

>cas 2

There are three commands dedicated to Repeat the Ending's unique magic system. The first, `*DIAGNOSE*` (abbreviated as `*DG*` or `*DN*`), works a little like `*EXAMINE*`. The player can evaluate the magical - or, as this game will often say, entropic - properties of a thing or phenomenon. Give it a try by typing `*DIAGNOSE THE LAWN*`.

- C. A. Smythe

>diagnose lawn

The grass is thick and green, which primeoids seem to consider "good grass." Each blade has been recently mutilated, a ritual that devout primeoids perform regularly. While the processes and resources required to sustain the lawn must be substantial, the grass has no single, concentrated source of entropic bleed that could be siphoned away. [CAS 3]

>cas 3

Note Cook's use of the term "entropic bleed," which may be meant as a synonym to "entropic magic." While there are more objects to \*DIAGNOSE\* and \*EXAMINE\* in this area, the player can proceed by going \*INSIDE\* whenever they wish.

If you ever wish to review these and other discovered annotations, you can do so with the command \*SOURCES [source]\*. In this case, the specific phrasing would be \*SOURCES CAS\*.

- C. A. Smythe

>sources cas

1: The goal of these annotations is simple: address shortfalls in Cook's failed attempts at implementing tutorials for Repeat the Ending's magic system, since its opacity was the gameplay-related flaw most-mentioned by critics at the time of its release. There are three elements that merit discussion. In the first place, the mechanics of the system, which have never been clear, demand elaboration. Additionally, the broader subject of "entropic magic" ought to be explained in detail. Finally, an implication of Cook's failure (or inability, perhaps) to write a satisfactory tutorial system deserves special attention.

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- C. A. Smythe

>x me

My appearance is quite impressive, naturally. The clothes I wear are the height of fashion and recency; they are only 20 years old! I wear a long skirt, a white, short-sleeved blouse, and tie my black hair in a ponytail. I've loosely knotted an orange kerchief around my throat. Unlike many of my kind, I enjoy primeoid fashion and follow it closely.

The only nod to my daemoniac nature is my orange eyes, which are admittedly conspicuous.

>x kerchief

This neck scarf is the same color as my eyes, and its loose knot points in the general direction of my right hand.

>x hand

Yes, I recognize that, by way of describing this setting, I must mention (or will mention) various primeoid features such as "faces" and "mullets," but you cannot coax me into exploring primeoid physicalities in greater depth.

>x tree

The trees are dark and far away. I passed through them on my way here and will pass through them again when I leave.

>diagnose me

I detect no anomalous characteristics or conditions.

>siphon lawn

This lawn - all lawns, really - is a colossal bleedsite whereby energy and order are forever lost to the universe. Unfortunately, the large distribution area is made up of many small organisms, each only shedding a small amount of entropic potential. While primeoid-bred plant life is often the end-state of highly entropic processes, said processes are not productive. That is, their wasted energies cannot readily be harvested and used.

>x house

The dwelling is low, broad, and mostly brown. It is all but certainly filled with primeoid rubbish.

>x window

A typical wood-framed window of the kind common to primeoid constructions. The wood has been soaked in a pigment of some sort. Instead of the blond-to-light-brown color of natural wood, it is a deep brown. Primeoids are notoriously choosy about their browns.

It hardly matters to me, but the window is locked. There are no bindings or wards on the glass, so I can easily pass through it if I wish.

>look in window

Through the window, I see a small primeoid gazing into a large box filled with light.

>x primeoid

Through the window, I see a small primeoid gazing into a large box filled with light.

>in

I pass effortlessly through the window.

Scrying Hall (1980)

This space is lightly salted with primeoid knickknacks and other refuse. For instance, a low, cushioned table occupies a large portion of the room. I have heard that primeoids use such so-called "beds" to repair their fragile frames. [PS 2]

A small primeoid sits at the edge of the bed, staring into an oddly constructed scrybox. Because his back is turned to me, avoiding his attention is an easy matter. The sensory organs of primeoids are weak to the point of vestigiality.

Nearby, a closed wooden door lies at the end of this hall. The psychic bleed must lie beyond it. My simulated human frame seems to vibrate in its proximity.

I hear a male primeoid yelling beyond the wooden door.

>listen

While the sounds from the scrybox are quite loud, it is impossible to ignore the yelling in the other room.

I hear a loud crash, as if something was thrown across a room.

>x primeoid

This adolescent primeoid is concentrating intently on an oddly-constructed scrybox. His jaw is set, and he appears to be trying to ignore a nearby distraction. Perhaps he, too, is sensitive to entropic psychic phenomena.

I hear a female primeoid shouting and crying.

>x scrybox

This scrybox is rectangular, wider than it is tall, and it has been covered in a dark brown metal or plastic treated to look like wood. It features a panel of bellied, luminescent glass. Through this glass porthole, I see a vision of primeoid adults waving and talking excitedly. Occasionally, bursts of laughter, seemingly emitted by an unseen gang, crowd out the speech of the excited primeoids.

I hear bright, unnatural laughter emerging from the scrybox.

>talk to him

Getting the boy's attention will interfere with my plans. If you've forgotten what I have come for, you can always type \*HASSLES\* or \*H\*.

I hear a loud crash, as if something was thrown across a room.

>h

It's a simple plan. Locate the psychic bleed, siphon it, then find something fun to do with it. [CAS 4]

>cas4

If we take a moment to unpack the current objective, the first part, "locate the bleed," can likely be reached by using the \*DIAGNOSE\* command on various objects. But what is a "bleed," and why would the protagonist want one? The primary gameplay loop in Repeat the Ending involves an implication of Newton's Second Law of Thermodynamics: namely, that the amount of energy or order in a system always decreases - never increases - over time. Note that this game only deals with Cook's pop science conception of entropy, as he is a humanist rather than a scientist.

The protagonist can take advantage of situations in which an observable amount of entropy is in the process of accumulating. Consider, for example, a leaking bicycle tire. Think of the air in the tire as being organized by the tube. Once it escapes, it dissipates into the atmosphere. The air that was inside the tube has permanently

become less organized, and there is no practical way to get those specific molecules back in the tube.

The concept behind so-called "entropic magic" is that a decrease in order or energy can be diverted and used before it is dissipated throughout infinite space. The command used to collect that order or energy is \*SIPHON\*. That energy can then be directed at an object or system via the \*INVEST\* command. The appropriate syntax is \*INVEST [target] WITH [entropic force]\*. Note that these crucial gameplay elements can be reviewed at any time in the "How to Play" section of the "Player's Companion" (\*GUIDE\* or \*GD\*).

- C. A. Smythe

>x bed

This low, cushioned table occupies much of the scrying hall. It is covered by a soft-looking rectangle of blue cloth.

I hear a female primeoid shouting and crying.

>look under it

What do you think this is? A primeoid text adventure game? [DSC 1]

I hear a loud crash, as if something was thrown across a room.

>dsc 1

In spite of Cook's apparent literary ambitions, it is worth remembering that he has written a substantial body of criticism regarding classic adventure games by a company called "Infocom."

- D. S. Collins

>enter bed

I have no real physiology, so there is no need for my kind to sit or rest. I really only do so when I want a primeoid to believe that I am a primeoid, too.

Besides, I am trying to avoid primeoid attention. Since the juvenile primeoid is sitting on the bed, it would be best to leave it alone.

I hear bright, unnatural laughter emerging from the scrybox.

>diagnose it

The bed might be a primitive primeoid technology designed to absorb entropic energy. If so, it is presently inactive.

I hear a female primeoid shouting and crying.

>x door

While it isn't much to look at, there is clearly a source of power beyond it.

I hear a loud crash, as if something was thrown across a room.

>open it

Beyond the door I sense the power I have sought. A male and female primeoid are arguing, and the female's face is contorted and red. Her tear ducts appear overstimulated. The female's distress is clearly the source of the bleed. Her mind is as inefficient as a misfiring engine, steadily sloughing off coherence and emotional integrity.

She looks more unstable than previous sources of psychic energy I've encountered, but I should still be able to \*SIPHON HER SICKNESS\*. [CAS 5]

>x female

I know very little of the internal lives of primeoids, but this female primeoid seems profoundly disturbed. This maternal specimen is alternately yelling and crying, and she holds a glass bottle of brown liquid in her right hand.

She is, quite obviously, a prime source of entropic energy, which I can attain if I \*SIPHON HER SICKNESS\*.

The sounds of the scrybox compete with the racket that the arguing primeoids are making.

>x male

This large primeoid has a mustache and brown hair that is cropped short atop his head but shoulder length at the back. He appears to be waiting to say something - perhaps something quite nasty - to the female, but she hasn't stopped crying or yelling long enough for him to get a word in.

The male adult strikes the table with his fist.

>siphon sickness

I reach out, and, while I am able to pull the energy toward and into my faux primeoid frame, it is obvious that something is wrong. The

world has grown red, loud, and - this is a new feeling to me -  
frightening.

Scrying Hall (1980)

I am viewing this space through a kind of oily, red film. The primeoid child, whose attention has at last been knocked clear of the scrybox, eyes me with surprise, fear, and perhaps a little wonder. I ought to have gone with a different eye color, but I've always loved orange the best.

Though the room is unchanged, my experience of it is now different. That woman's psychic bleed is so potent that I'm not sure I can get through the window. I'll need to quickly \*INVEST [something or someone] WITH THE PSYCHIC BLEED\* before this energy overtakes me. If you need to evaluate suitable candidates for INVESTment, I can \*DIAGNOSE\* nearby primeoids.

Nearby, two miserable and miserably intoxicated primeoids eye me fearfully and angrily. They appear to be working up the courage to confront me. [CAS 6]

I rub my eyes, as if the throbbing red of the bleed were merely a film laid across my face.

>cas 6

Despite all of the teaching opportunities in the prologue, Cook's decision to make this a tutorial scene is a strange one. For one thing, this encounter is only one of two uses of "psychic energy" in the entire game. General use of "entropic magic" in Repeat the Ending is left for the player to figure out. Additionally, this scene is presented as a very high stakes situation, while in reality the player is free to experiment and delay for as long as they wish. If the player performs the \*DIAGNOSE\* command on both the man and the boy, it seems that the latter is the appropriate choice. This is misleading. In fact, there may be benefits to ignoring the suggestions of the narrator. Go ahead and make the "wrong" choice by entering the command \*INVEST MAN WITH THE PSYCHIC BLEED\*.

- C. A. Smythe

>invest man

(with the unpleasantly throbbing and greasy-feeling energy)  
While I am certain that investing a potentially violent primeoid brute with powerful magical energy is a bad idea, I'm the kind of inderdimensional entity that can have trouble letting go of bad ideas. Raising my puny arms above my little primeoid head, I call the potent

psychic energy to my hands, where it begins to glow with an otherworldly white light. I then lower my arms dramatically, throwing a ball of cold flame at the paternal primeoid.

His shocked expression lasts only a moment before the magic settles into him, giving him confidence, agility, and preternatural reflexes nearly matching my own. While I can't help but feel that I've made a poor decision, this will be a fun bit of exertion, and I will still have some psychic energy for later.

The paternal primeoid puts on a good fight, though I am never in any real danger. Sadly, my outfit is torn and burned in multiple places. Clothes are harder to replace than this faux primeoid shell. Unfortunately for the primeoids dwelling within the house, this test of strength has reduced their home to a small mountain of scrap wood, metal, and various primeoid thingamajigs. I wonder - rather idly - if the juvenile and his mother survived.

Voice-over: "And with that, the orange-eyed woman boldly strolled into another world line, one separate from the world of Repeat the Ending. In this, she remained true to herself, beholden to no one. Not even to game designers."

This outcome has earned a rating of Bizarro World/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

You have made a modest beginning.

Total Fail States Discovered: 1 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 1 out of 2.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 2.

It seems that this story has ended, but you aren't ready to stop, are you?

Editor's note: In spite of the unkindnesses heaped upon its characters, this critical edition of "Repeat the Ending" is a "merciful" narrative. Note that the concept of "mercy" as it is used here is a term of interactive fiction craft. It in no way implies that anything in the world of the game is or is not merciful. Note that both recoverable deaths and their corresponding scoring system were not part of the 1996 release of "Repeat the Ending." Cook claims that these additions were part of his original, 1990s design. It's an

assertion that warrants (and has already invited) further critical scrutiny.

In almost every case, resumption of play functions as if the previous turn has been subject to an \*UNDO\* command, though in a handful of cases some conditions have been reset to allow continued play.

The protagonist has been returned to the depressing environs of the 1980s.

- P. Searcy [DSC 2]

Scrying Hall (1980)

I am viewing this space through a kind of oily, red film. The primeoid child, whose attention has at last been knocked clear of the scrybox, eyes me with surprise, fear, and perhaps a little wonder. I ought to have gone with a different eye color, but I've always loved orange the best.

Though the room is unchanged, my experience of it is now different. That woman's psychic bleed is so potent that I'm not sure I can get through the window. I'll need to quickly \*INVEST [something or someone] WITH THE PSYCHIC BLEED\* before this energy overtakes me. If you need to evaluate suitable candidates for INVESTment, I can \*DIAGNOSE\* nearby primeoids.

Nearby, two miserable and miserably intoxicated primeoids eye me fearfully and angrily. They appear to be working up the courage to confront me.

>dsc 2

A discussion of the meaning of the new scoring system in Repeat the Ending, while warranted, must be set aside for another venue. In the interim, I will belabor the obvious in saying that Cook's use of "score" is almost certainly ironic. Audiences who consider themselves too sophisticated for such outdated narrative features might better enjoy themselves by referring to it as a "failure index," "success deficit," "flop quotient," or, more portentously, a "present assessment of counter-narrative guerrilla action."

- D. S. Collins

>score

You have made a modest beginning.

Total Fail States Discovered: 1 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 1 out of 2.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 2.

>detailed score

You have discovered one of two fail states in the 1980s:

1) I amused myself with a rather unfair fight against a magic-crazed primeoid male.

At this point in the narrative, a maximum total of two points are attainable.

>diagnose boy

Though I am struggling to concentrate, I can nevertheless tell that the boy is unusually sensitive for a primeoid. He may be a stable recipient of purloined psychic energy. It should be possible to \*INVEST THE JUVENILE PRIMEOID WITH THE PSYCHIC BLEED\*.

I think that the male is too baffled to move further into the room, but I'm not sure how long that will last. It is considered poor form to injure primeoids, particularly while seeking out forbidden magics.

>invest juvenile

(with the unpleasantly throbbing and greasy-feeling energy)

[Note: While it is possible to complete this prologue area of Repeat the Ending without exploring alternate narrative outcomes, the player is strongly encouraged to do so. Finding these apocryphal endings - also referred to as "fail states" - determines which ending the player will experience at the story's conclusion.

While the characters of Repeat the Ending may or may not be able to change their fates, they can at least engage in what Cook has termed a "heroic struggle against the tyranny of the author."

Should you answer the following question with a "no," you can explore one of these alternative narrative outcomes by typing \*WIN\* at the command prompt.

Please answer "yes" or "no":no

I'm surprised. This is the first time that you have expressed interest in the \*WIN\* command. - C. A. Smythe]

I hear another blast of laughter slide out of the scrybox. The laughter has changed somehow, sounding oilier and more sinister to my ears.

>win

[\*WIN\* is a command that rushes the protagonist(s) to the conclusion of their quest. Reaching that conclusion is, technically, winning. However, Repeat the Ending is not a text that rewards rushing. While many play a game in order to finish it, Repeat the Ending was written to be completed rather than finished.

As such, attempting to \*WIN\* in this way will result in a fail state. Since each fail state associated with the \*WIN\* command is an attempt to circumvent the storyline of Repeat the Ending, they are nevertheless useful as ways to explore the boundaries of the narrative. Winning has a unique response in each geographical region of the game world, and it unquestionably yields the easiest "points" that the player can earn in-game. Note that winning has - by design - some of the darkest characterizations of D's personality in the entire text. - Pauline Searcy, Editor]

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

Without warning, the strangest feeling comes over you. It feels like you have been here many times. You have retrieved this psychic bleed before, even though you know that you haven't. With a shrug, you decide to see it through to the end.

It is a rather uneventful evening in the existence of an inter-dimensional entity, but its memory retains an inexplicable significance. The boy and his indecipherable primeoid anguish, the unexpected potency of the magic itself. I think of it quite often - once every two or three years - without knowing why.

Primeoid year 1996: when I sense, without evidence, that something about that boy will change, I don't question it. Taking flight, soaring above their warrens, their filth-belching automobiles, and their screaming babies, I land atop a massive prison for defective or failing primeoid physiologies. I know that he is in one of the cells below, and, with only a thought, I know which one.

I silently land on the roof, wondering if this boy will be the first in millennia to violate a fundamental law of the universe.

This outcome has earned a rating of the primeoids we met along the way/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

You have made a modest beginning.

Total Fail States Discovered: 2 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 2.

Scrying Hall (1980)

I am viewing this space through a kind of oily, red film. The primeoid child, whose attention has at last been knocked clear of the scrybox, eyes me with surprise, fear, and perhaps a little wonder. I ought to have gone with a different eye color, but I've always loved orange the best.

Though the room is unchanged, my experience of it is now different. That woman's psychic bleed is so potent that I'm not sure I can get through the window. I'll need to quickly \*INVEST [something or someone] WITH THE PSYCHIC BLEED\* before this energy overtakes me. If you need to evaluate suitable candidates for INVESTment, I can \*DIAGNOSE\* nearby primeoids.

Nearby, two miserable and miserably intoxicated primeoids eye me fearfully and angrily. They appear to be working up the courage to confront me.

>ds

You have discovered two of two fail states in the 1980s:

- 1) I amused myself with a rather unfair fight against a magic-crazed primeoid male.
- 2) I grew bored with my search for powerful magic, instead casting the \*WIN\* spell.

At this point in the narrative, a maximum total of two points are attainable.

>invest boy

(with the unpleasantly throbbing and greasy-feeling energy)

I extend a shaky hand in the direction of the juvenile primeoid, imbuing him with some - not all - of the psychic energy derived from the disturbed female. His eyes widen, as if he has just arrived at some earthshaking discovery.

"You..." he manages, as if he is getting used to a newly installed tongue, "what did you do?" He stands, falteringly, and steadies himself by placing a hand on the scrybox. It responds his touch, the image in its glass surface wobbling before disappearing into a pool of dully luminescent gray.

A shower of sparks emerges from the scrybox, and the boy jerks his hand away reflexively. "What did you do?" he says again, as the lights overhead flicker. "What are you?" The small primeoid staggers in my direction.

Just then, the adult primeoids step through the doorway. Their faces quickly register multiple emotional responses, chiefly surprise and anger. "What's the deal?" the male says, stepping into the room. "What are you doing with our son?"

It is, I must admit, a reasonable question. I'm not sure - not really - what I've done with or to him. I suppose that situations like this led to the banning of psychic siphons in the first place. I'll have to return and check in on him one of these days. For now, though, it is time to depart. I don't want to hurt anybody, and the adult male looks eager to make me hurt him.

Turning, I head for the window, and as I pass through it I hear the boy cry out.

"Wait!"

"Wait!"

Again: "Wait!"

Thanks to the keen ears that I have made for myself, I can hear him long after I've returned to the woods:

"Don't leave me here! Don't leave me here with them!"

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

Repeat the Ending

A New Critical Edition by Drew Cook

Release 2 / Serial number 230516 / Inform 7 v10.1.2

Bedroom

We open our eyes and stare at the pocked expanse of sheetrock before us. "Here we go again," we say, shoving back the covers and rolling toward the edge of the mattress. We keep turning up for these days, again and again, and the best that we can say is that things haven't gone downhill. Well, unless we die, 1996 is going to be better than 1995. Perhaps it will be better even if we do die.

This is our bedroom, a white-walled, hollow cube sitting at the far end of a rickety metal trailer. A mattress lies flat on the floor, and a wadded-up blanket curls atop it. Our closet doors, which have been halfheartedly disguised as wood, open to an overwhelming pile of clothes that has spilled out of the closet and onto the bedroom floor. You suppose you should fish out something to wear, but the mess fills you with irrational terror: your favorite kind. Not that it matters; it's not like anyone is coming to see us, anyway. [CAS 7]

This bedroom occupies the north quarter of the trailer, and the only exit is a hallway to the \*SOUTH\*.

You can see an empty plastic bin here.

[New content is available in the \*GUIDE\*. - Pauline Searcy]

>cas7

Repeat the Ending might be considered a "merciful" game in interactive fiction craft terms. However, its scoring mechanic may tilt it in the direction of "cruel." Some points to consider:

1. Nothing - not even death - can prevent the player from completing the game.
2. The player does not need to \*UNDO\* when death or a normally unrecoverable failure occurs. In fact, for reasons that may become

clear, the player should not use the \*UNDO\* command in such situations.

3. Therefore, saving one's game is not required for finishing Repeat the Ending. Nevertheless, be aware that points do not span across saved games. If reverting to a previous save, the player must re-earn any missing points.

HOWEVER...

1. There are five possible endings to Repeat the Ending.
2. The ending of the game is determined by the player's score.
3. The \*SCORE\* command identifies points earned both as a total and by geographical region.
4. Once a geographical area is left, it cannot be returned to.
5. For instance, if you did not find both points in the 1980s, you cannot return there and find them now. You have moved on (unless you have sufficient uses of the \*UNDO\* command).
6. Players may wonder: "How many points must I earn for each ending?"

0 points: "Bad ending." The player can use the \*UNDO\* command to get the "Normal ending" instead.

1 to 9 points: "Normal ending."

10 to 20 points: "Expanded ending."

21 to 32 points: "True ending."

33 points: "Fastidious Ending." [PS 3]

Finishing Repeat the Ending with more than 20 points constitutes a successful, canon playthrough of the story. For more information regarding the scoring system, consult the "How to Play" section of the \*GUIDE\*.

>ps3

These designators (bad, basic, true, etc.) are Cook's.

- P. Searcy

>l

Bedroom

This is our bedroom, a white-walled, hollow cube sitting at the far end of a rickety metal trailer. A mattress lies flat on the floor, and a wadded-up blanket curls atop it. Our closet doors, which have been halfheartedly disguised as wood, open to an overwhelming pile of clothes that has spilled out of the closet and onto the bedroom floor. You suppose you should fish out something to wear, but the mess fills you with irrational terror: your favorite kind. Not that it matters; it's not like anyone is coming to see us, anyway.

This bedroom occupies the north quarter of the trailer, and the only exit is a hallway to the \*SOUTH\*.

You can see an empty plastic bin here.

>x bin

A moderately large plastic container, broad as our shoulders and shin deep. We used it to carry things six months ago when we moved in. It has sat in a corner ever since.

>x mattress

The mattress is not - absolutely not - where the magic happens. It lies flat on the carpet. A wadded-up blanket lies atop it, and two pillows, long ago deprived of any spring or give, slump nearby in postures of defeat. [DSC 3]

>dsc3

An early commentator characterized Repeat the Ending as a "miserablist" work, presumably due to the protagonist's negative self-talk, the dingy setting of the trailer park, and so forth. When asked about his chosen subjects, Cook asserted that "Misery isn't inherently performative. Some lives are just shit. People with bad lives aren't any less suitable as artistic subject matter than are happy people. Whatever happy is."

- D. S. Collins

>enter bed

The bed is not terribly inviting. We'd have to be pretty tired before climbing in there. [PS 4]

>ps4

This seemingly innocuous passage, which matches the text of the original game, has been the subject of lively and sometimes contentious debate. It is one of a number of discrepancies between the transcript and the 1996 game. In the transcript, the passage reads:

That bed - your bed - is disgusting. You have to be bombed out of your mind on Trazedone before you'll consider getting into it.

There are two preceding versions of Repeat the Ending: The 1996 source code, and the 2003 transcript. The two texts generally match and have identical release and serial numbers, which has led some critics to wonder if there are two instances of the binary floating around. Since this has never been confirmed, others have wondered if this change is

Cook's own manipulation of the text. Since the differences have no real effect in terms of story or (arguably) its themes, it is hard to say why they do not match.

Whatever the case, it can be argued that there is no "canon" version of Repeat the Ending. Drew Cook has repeatedly declined invitations to name one version the "true" text, instead encouraging readers to actively evaluate the two versions as competing but adjacent realities. Some critical responses to this suggestion have been less than approving, characterizing it as an undermining stunt or, as Montague characterized it, "merely a celebration of cleverness lacking philosophical seriousness."

P. Searcy

>x me

I suppose we aren't bad looking in a mopey, malnourished sort of way. I am speaking from memory, of course, because we hate mirrors more than even the most superstitious vampire. We are not currently dressed.

>diagnose me

We?I?feel tired.

At the moment we are not empowered by any sort of entropic magic.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>g

It seems like we have no energy for even the most basic things. I mean regular people energy; nobody can live on magic.

At the moment we are not empowered by any sort of entropic magic.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>g

My teeth hurt, but I don't think there's anything wrong with them. We just don't feel like ourselves unless something is hurting.

At the moment we are not empowered by any sort of entropic magic.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>g

I wonder sometimes if you did us permanent damage last year. How is our liver not busted? Our thyroid? Kidneys?

At the moment we are not empowered by any sort of entropic magic.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>i

You are carrying:

    a pair of boxer shorts (being worn)

    a white t-shirt (being worn)

>x closet

Our closet and its corresponding pile of clothes are a chaotic, ugly mess. If our closet is a mouth, then the clothes are its diseased, mottled tongue. You've let things get out of hand again, and now we are in yet another unmanageable jackpot. There's no way that you can touch the pile of clothes. It's too upsetting. Pathetic. [CAS 8]

>cas8

1996 players did not realize that it was impossible for players to physically interact with the messy pile of clothes. This was largely Cook's fault, since he did not adequately communicate that nearly all problems in the game were to be solved via magic. Then and now, attempting to \*CLEAN CLOSET\* or \*CLEAN CLOTHES\* or \*PUT CLOTHES IN THE PLASTIC BIN\* or even \*DANCE ATOP THE PILE OF CLOTHES\* are all wastes of time. Cook later added more feedback (there are different, escalating messages for attempting to interact with the clothes physically) that explicitly state that the protagonist is psychologically incapable of touching them.

- C. A. Smythe

>dance atop clothes

[PS 5].

>ps 5

Since the conventional craft wisdom of interactive fiction mandates that an author implement any nouns or actions mentioned within the text of the game, Cook must have felt obligated to write a response to the throwaway command \*DANCE ATOP THE CLOTHES\*. Cook has often complained about craft theory in IF, since he feels that it prevents writers from using what he has termed "natural language." In this case, he apparently felt that the phrase \*DANCE ATOP THE CLOTHES\* had rhetorical value, even if it had no in-game utility. Implementing the command does violate mimesis, of course, since this character would

never dance anywhere, and especially not in the vicinity of a mess that he is constitutionally unable to look at for more than a minute at a time.

Cook's stated position, which warrants healthy debate, is that it is player expectation that violates mimesis, not the author's attempts to meet it. Be that as it may, Cook wrote a response in the original Inform 5 code, but left it commented out in-game. For the purposes of this edition, the author provided an updated Inform 7 equivalent:

CARRY OUT DANCING ATOP WHEN THE PLAYER IS THE POET AND THE NOUN IS THE CLOSET:

SAY "You step onto the pile of clothing, rotating your right toe as if you are grinding it into the floor. Music suddenly and inexplicably fills the air, riding a slinky, bass-heavy beat. It calls you to dance, and you are unable to resist. Soon you have lost yourself, ecstatic and sweating, to the rhythm. The clothes, unable to defend themselves, are flattened at the yawning mouth of the still-disheveled closet."

Since the spirit of this annotated edition is to honor the original text of Repeat the Ending wherever possible, this code remains unimplemented in-game.

- P. Searcy

>l

Bedroom

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This bedroom occupies the north quarter of the trailer, and the only exit is a hallway to the \*SOUTH\*.

You can see an empty plastic bin here.

>get clothes

The mess makes us feel very uncomfortable. I don't think we will be able to interact with it directly.

>g

I think we should just walk away from the pile of clothes. The mess is really getting to us.

>clean clothes

It looks like our closet threw up on our floor. Just looking at the mess sends our anxiety through the roof. You aren't able to touch the pile of clothes. You don't even want to be near it. Naturally, I have to baby you like an African violet anytime you want to eat or dress or sleep because we can't seem to handle even the most basic prerequisites for personal autonomy and self-sustenance. If you can figure out a way to clean up without physically touching the pile of clothes, by all means, go ahead. [AHM 1]

>ahm 1

It is fairly common for the narrator to berate the game's "you" over the simple fact of his mental illness. No doubt, such passages are proof of Cook's internalized sanism.

- A. H. Montague

>search clothes

I don't know what else to say. You're deliberately attempting actions that will make a person with anxiety more anxious, which seems inconsiderate at best. I do chaos magic. I solve problems with chaos magic. Stop badgering me about physically interacting with the closet. Go find some powerful, closet-organizing magic. Jesus, dude. [DSC 4]

>dsc 4

"Dude" in this context refers not to the player but to the "you" that D berates throughout the text of Repeat the Ending.

- D. S. Collins

>x bin

A moderately large plastic container, broad as our shoulders and shin deep. We used it to carry things six months ago when we moved in. It has sat in a corner ever since.

>diagnose it

A plastic bin is a rather entropy-resistant object, and could possibly contain volatile magic for a few moments.

>get it

Taken.

>diagnose clothes

This closet, bereft of of all organization or order, might benefit from the right type of entropic energy.

>x door

It's a cheaply made, hollow door with a brass doorknob.

>close it

There's no need to keep anything in or out of the bedroom.

>x knob

It feels a little unfair that, despite the potentially awkward and laborious nature of articulating the phrase \*EXAMINE BEDROOM DOOR DOORKNOB\*, there is absolutely nothing useful, interesting, or even visually distinctive about the bedroom door doorknob.

>turn it

My goodness! Despite its seemingly ordinary appearance, the doorknob is an emissary from the kingdom of brass fixtures. Unlike their more familiar woodland cousins, such eccentric nymphs prefer nesting in cheaply made doors and cabinets made of particle board. What a remarkable time we are living through!

>g

Come on, you didn't think I was serious, did you? This is hardly a remarkable time.

>s

Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>w

Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>x sink

This sink is umber-colored, a contrast to the tan countertop that it calls home. It has a small leak, which spills out in a small but steady trickle of droplets. Try as we might, we cannot fully shut off the flow of water. Fortunately, we can't hear the drip in the bedroom, since the sound would keep us awake at night.

>x leak

While only a small amount of water is dripping into the sink, its flow is continuous. A deformed or rotted-out rubber gasket is likely to blame. There is clearly some organization lost to this process.

>listen

We can hear the faint trickle of dripping water, which must be coming from the sink. Additionally, the constant churn of the AC unit at the front of this trailer is audible in every room.

>l

Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>x shower

This plastic tub and shower combination has little to recommend it, but sooner or later everyone needs a shower. Near the drain, the tub has been stained by hard water or rust.

>take shower

Coincidentally, you took a shower just last night. I can't say where that fit of optimism regarding the day came from, much less what justified it.

>x toilet

The toilet, like the rest of our home, exudes an aura of misspent fortitude. It has been here a long time, and has nothing but water stains to show for it.

>sit on toilet

Look, I don't need your permission for everything. If we need to go, I'll go.

>open cabinet

(the bathroom cabinet)

You haven't opened the cabinet doors since you found a spider inside the cabinet several months ago. We both hate spiders enough to leave the doors closed. Whatever is in there is lost forever.

>diagnose it

Like so many other things in the trailer, the cabinet extends neither aesthetic nor practical advantages to its owner.

I think that everything in this trailer can be diagnosed. Do you really intend to diagnose everything? [DSC 5]

>dsc5

Those who have followed Drew Cook's critical writings know that he is the author of "Planetfall and the Gamification of Tedium," a logic-bending essay that attempts to excuse some of Steve Meretzky's more misguided design decisions (red herrings, bathrooms, and so forth) in the beloved Infocom classic Planetfall. Cook, known today more as a critic than as an author, makes a credible case, but fails to put its lessons to work here. Players and reviewers alike tend to agree that the trailer interior region holds too many interactable objects that serve only to distract and clutter.

- D. S. Collins [CAS 9]

>cas 9

While it is true that sometimes Cook's world feels busy, "Do you really intend to diagnose everything?" is misleading. Cook made unique \*DIAGNOSE\* responses for nearly every object in the game, and many of them are productive.

- C. A. Smythe

>x mirror

There is an ovular mirror attached to the wall behind the sink, but we don't look at mirrors. From the corner of our eye, we can tell that the glass is clouded, and, were we to use it, it might need a good cleaning. [DSC 6]

>dsc6

While Montague has called the "game over" sequence involving the mirror a "tonal non sequitur," it is perhaps the only insight into the protagonist's self-image that does not rely on confessional rhetoric.

D. S. Collins

>diagnose mirror

This mirror is a fellow entropist. It robs us of energy and organization, then swallows it up. We really shouldn't mess with the mirror. It has nothing to offer us.

>siphon mirror

Look, I know we horse around a lot, trying to put clothes in bins and whatnot, but we really shouldn't try to engage the mirror with entropic magic. It's you on the other side. Well, no, it's something like you. Chances are it's more competent and practical than you, and certainly less miserable than you. I just wouldn't mess around with that. Are you really sure that's a good idea?

Please answer "yes" or "no": yes

Well, alright buddy. We reach out with our right hand, extending our fingertips with our palm facing the mirror. Closing our eyes, we attempt to imagine energy flowing from the mirror into our outstretched hand. Something feels off; I can sense that energy is leaving, rather than entering, us. Our reflected self bears an unfamiliar smirk - life never affords us opportunities for such smugness. It appears to be siphoning US. In a matter of seconds, we find ourselves trapped in an empty, white expanse. The only feature to violate this blank space is the mirror. Rather than bearing our reflection, the mirror is a window into our bathroom. That person - or thing - on the other side stands up straighter than we do, and he certainly seems confident. When he leaves, smiling, there is no doubt that he is off to do something horrible to someone, or even to several someones.

I hope you're satisfied.

This conclusion has earned a rating of -10/10.

\*\*\*Press any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure. [AHM 2]

Total Fail States Discovered: 3 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 1 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>win

Let's get our bearings first. So far as I know, our plans are to play video games and eat junk food here in the trailer. Isn't that what winning is to us? Try again if something changes.

>diagnose leak

There's no doubt about it. The leak is a very small source of entropic energy. You should be able to \*SIPHON THE ANEMIC DRIBBLE\*.

>siphon dribble

We make a slow, wide gesture toward the sink, and, at the end of our hand's arc, we feel the small but insistent buzz of entropic power contained in the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*. With it, we could likely apply a small amount of pressure to something or perhaps restore the shape of a crushed sugarcube.

>diagnose

(yourself)

I feel like we're living on borrowed time. I guess you're the one who borrowed it? Personally, I'm ready to clock out anytime you are. Sooner, I'd guess.

We carry a tiny amount of magic retrieved from a dripping faucet. It is enough energy to move a child's building block, or else restore structural integrity to a crushed sugar cube. While it's a small amount of magic, the sink will continue dripping for the foreseeable future, guaranteeing us a practically unlimited quantity of \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>invest toilet

(with the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*)

Look out world, it's magic toilet man.

>diagnose

(yourself)

I don't think it's normal, the way I'm never hungry. No wonder we're so tired all the time.

At the moment we are not empowered by any sort of entropic magic.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>siphon dribble

We make a slow, wide gesture toward the sink, and, at the end of our hand's arc, we feel the small but insistent buzz of entropic power contained in the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*. With it, we could likely apply a small amount of pressure to something or perhaps restore the shape of a crushed sugarcube.

>invest shower

(with the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*)

Despite your enthusiastic gesticulating, the entropic nudge has no effect on the shower, whose durable plastic shell is highly resistant to entropic energy. The \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\* is likely useful in a situation where a small amount of force must be applied remotely. I can't tell if you don't already know this, or if you know but don't care.

>siphon dribble

We make a slow, wide gesture toward the sink, and, at the end of our hand's arc, we feel the small but insistent buzz of entropic power contained in the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*. With it, we could likely apply a small amount of pressure to something or perhaps restore the shape of a crushed sugarcube.

>invest me

(with the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*)

The entropic nudge is not sufficiently powerful to affect us. I think that we might feel a shudder pass through us, though I may have only imagined it.

>siphon dribble

We make a slow, wide gesture toward the sink, and, at the end of our hand's arc, we feel the small but insistent buzz of entropic power contained in the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*. With it, we could likely apply a small amount of pressure to something or perhaps restore the shape of a crushed sugarcube.

>invest door

(with the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*)

Taking a deep breath, we concentrate intensely, calling forth the primal forces of the universe, determined to push the door open, come hell or high water. When our exertions are complete, the door is open, just as you had hoped.

>siphon dribble

We make a slow, wide gesture toward the sink, and, at the end of our hand's arc, we feel the small but insistent buzz of entropic power contained in the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*. With it, we could likely apply a small amount of pressure to something or perhaps restore the shape of a crushed sugarcube.

>e

Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>s

Kitchen

This poorly lit kitchen is a busy mess. It is dark because of two burned-out light-bulbs. The room's dinginess owes much to a tower of dirty dishes stacked beside - not in - a rather dirty sink, but the countertop is cluttered with various bits of nerd stuff - game books, comics, and video games - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but we've never been much of a cook. This room is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The kitchen occupies the full width of the trailer, and opens into the front room to the \*SOUTH\*. A narrow hallway leads \*NORTH\*.

You recall - rather unhappily - that you finished off the lithium last night. You need to get dressed and head to the pharmacy. [CAS 10].

We hear a beep coming from the front room to the south.

>cas 10

It isn't always clear what the player is meant to do. A feature new to this edition is the \*HASSLES\* command, which can be used to identify the protagonist's most pressing current objective. It can be abbreviated as \*H\*.

- C. A. Smythe

>h

We need to get to the pharmacy to refill our lithium, which means we'll have to get dressed. Naturally, putting on clothes is an elaborate problem-solving exercise for people like you.

>x counter

This cluttered countertop is nearly covered by semi-collectible nerd [DSC 7] stuff. While the mess bothers us, the size of the countertop limits its scope.

We hear a beep coming from the front room to the south.

>dsc 7

In the 1990s, "nerd" was a more potent pejorative than it is today. Cook's use of it is almost certainly intended to bite.

- D. S. Collins

>x sink

This is a familiar, dual basin sort of kitchen sink made from stainless steel. It lacks a garbage disposal, a thing which we have only recently come to see as a luxury. A couple of tumblers and forks hunker grimly under the spigot.

We hear a beep coming from the front room to the south.

>x tumblers

A few forks and empty tumblers await an undignified destiny in the kitchen sink's basin.

We hear a beep coming from the front room to the south.

>s

Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. You're really doing great things with that outsized IQ of yours. I can't wait to see what video game you'll beat next. We can

escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*). [PS 6]

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

The answering machine emits a menacing beep.

>ps6

Cook uses the pronouns "we," "you," and "I" (sometimes in the same sentence) to refer to player/protagonist actions within the game. This is another novel addition for the 25th anniversary release of Repeat the Ending. The original version used the pronoun "you" exclusively to refer to the protagonist and, when necessary, the player. As is the case with other changes made for this edition, Cook has insisted that using multiple pronouns was his original intent, and that this change reflects his artistic vision both then and now.

- P. Searcy

>listen

While we can hear the window unit's rumble throughout the trailer, we can actually feel it here. If we ever had visitors here, we would undoubtedly need to raise our voice to be heard. Thankfully, no one has been subjected to your hospitality-mandated hollering just yet.

The answering machine emits a menacing beep.

>x machine

The answering machine is a large unit that accepts full-sized cassette tapes. It is currently beeping insistently, and the sound unnerves you. The only thing worse than loneliness is human contact. I can't think of a single soul who would want to talk to you. Perhaps it's the police? I know the phone isn't our thing, but I think you should listen to it in case someone might be coming over, or else it's the police, or whatever.

Once you've screwed your courage to the sticking place, you should PRESS PLAY.

The answering machine emits a menacing beep.

>press play

You hear the distorted sound of a human voice. "Hello," a disembodied speaker begins. "This is a message for Mr. Dee." There is a brief

pause. "You are listed as the family contact for your mother, Christina Dee, and she has previously authorized Ouachita General to leave privileged messages for you at this number." Another pause. You begin to feel anxious, a kind of dreadful itch originating between the shoulder blades and radiating outward. You cannot reach it. "Your mother is in liver failure. Unfortunately, the damage is so profound that nothing can be done. So far as a transplant goes, I'm afraid your mother's... lifestyle makes her an unattractive candidate, though we haven't given up yet."

You - we - sit on the couch, waiting for the voice to continue. "She's in intensive care, room 614. Visiting hours are between ten and two and from six to ten. Please stop by the nursing station when you arrive, as there are some important decisions to be made about her care. Sorry I don't have better news."

The answering machine's cassette player issues a valedictory click, then stops turning. We remain on the couch for a few minutes before standing once more. [PS 7]

>ps 7

This revised edition of Repeat the Ending is Drew Cook's first published work (his weekly blog about classic text adventures hasn't been updated in some time) following the death of his mother, who passed away one week before Christmas, 2020, at the height of the COVID outbreak in the United States. Due to the visitation protocols in place at the hospital, only one person per day was allowed to visit her. While he was able to see her unconscious body connected to various machines, he never had a chance to see her as he knew her. Their last face-to-face conversation had been in early June of that same year.

While it is tempting to interpret the "restored" content of this edition within the larger context of those events, Cook has repeatedly and consistently maintained that Repeat the Ending - in all its forms - is in no way an autobiographical work. To this day, he vigorously resists any and all attempts to characterize either version of Repeat the Ending as confessional.

- P. Searcy

>h

Clothes. Wallet. Car. It's just another morning for other people, but for you it's the goddamned Babel Fish.

>l

## Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. We can escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*).

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

### >x couch

This couch is the best piece of furniture we own. We can sit on it, we can lie on it, we can carelessly strew belongings across its seats. However, you're feeling a bit on edge and aren't in the mood to sit or do anything couch-related.

### >diagnose it

While we certainly do waste a good deal of energy on the couch, it has neither absorbed nor retained any of it. It's nice to sit or lie on, and sometimes that's enough.

### >x cords

A snarled heap of off-white RJ-11 cables. If we need to move either the phone or the answering machine, we'll likely buy new cabling. I doubt that we could ever untangle them, even if we wanted to. This is all thanks to your inattention and general tendency toward shabbiness, of course.

### >untangle cords

Rather than confront the problems of the day, we sit down on the floor beside the tangle of phone cords and get to work. These cables have been tangled since before we moved here. We just got in the habit of keeping the phone and answering machine close together so that we wouldn't need the advertised six feet of cord. Well, enough's enough. We aren't leaving until we get these cords untangled. How can we even live with a mess like that in our trailer.

We've been at it a couple of hours when we knock at the door. Knocks fill us with dread, which can't be news to you. There's no good reason for anyone to visit us. Unfortunately, there's no peephole, so we'll just have to confront the unknown. Pulling the knob toward us (aren't inward-opening doors against code?), we nearly faint at the sight of Sky, a kid we knew from Dayton. It must be, what, two years since

Sky's overdose? Boy, I'll tell you, until you've seen somebody die, you just haven't seen somebody die, if you know what I mean.

Of course, you absolutely know what I mean. You put us there. I guess that was just a Tuesday for you.

I shake our head, disoriented. We must have dozed off. What a weird dream. We could be buried with those dumb cords, just as tangled as they are today. I'd half like to puke. We haven't thought about Sky in ages. No matter how much time goes by, you're never safe from an idea, a thought.

>diagnose  
(yourself)

You know, in a way I'm glad that last year happened when it did. Can you imagine doing that with kids around? Ah. I guess you don't really need to imagine it.

We carry a tiny amount of magic retrieved from a dripping faucet. It is enough energy to move a child's building block, or else restore structural integrity to a crushed sugar cube. While it's a small amount of magic, the sink will continue dripping for the foreseeable future, guaranteeing us a practically unlimited quantity of \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>n

Kitchen

This poorly lit kitchen is a busy mess. It is dark because of two burned-out light-bulbs. The room's dinginess owes much to a tower of dirty dishes stacked beside - not in - a rather dirty sink, but the countertop is cluttered with various bits of nerd stuff - game books, comics, and video games - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but we've never been much of a cook. This room is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The kitchen occupies the full width of the trailer, and opens into the front room to the \*SOUTH\*. A narrow hallway leads \*NORTH\*.

>x mess

The material fact of our life as a nerd is proven out here on this kitchen countertop. The countertop is completely covered. It would require some digging to find anything important in there.

>invest mess

(with the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*)

We close our eyes and concentrate, sending the energy from the errant drip toward the cluttered countertop. There is a minute shift in the nerd stuff, and a Battle Princess Chiyo DVD is now barely visible among the clutter.

>x dvd

Battle Princess Chiyo is currently our favorite anime. Chiyo is a young woman who wields the Demon's Prison, an ancient odachi that contains the souls of one hundred ogres bound to serve the royal family for a thousand years. While the oni grant special powers to the one who wields the Demon's Prison, their voices torment their human master, and can drive her to frenzy or madness. We have watched these episodes many times, and have yet to tire of them. [DSC 8]

>dsc 8

If there is a single inspiration for Battle Princess Chiyo, it is not clear what it is. Visually, Cook may have imagined someone like Devil Hunter Yohko, who enjoyed modest popularity in the early nineties. The massive, haunted greatsword, on the other hand, feels like Moorcock by way of Lawrence Schick.

- D. S. Collins

>get dvd

There is no point in physically interacting with the DVD, since we do not have time to watch it at the moment.

>l

Kitchen

This poorly lit kitchen is a busy mess. It is dark because of two burned-out light-bulbs. The room's dinginess owes much to a tower of dirty dishes stacked beside - not in - a rather dirty sink, but the countertop is cluttered with various bits of nerd stuff - game books, comics, and video games - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but we've never been much of a cook. This room is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The kitchen occupies the full width of the trailer, and opens into the front room to the \*SOUTH\*. A narrow hallway leads \*NORTH\*.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

>x dishes

A formidable stack of dirty plates reaches from the countertop toward the ceiling. Looking at them, we are surprised by the number of dishes we own. Despite their varied origins (thrift stores and garage sales), the dishes stack cleanly and stably, one upon the next. This structure does not wobble or teeter, even when touched.

>diagnose dishes

The dishes are not currently sloughing off any kind of organization or order, but we can sense a potential there. In fact, they have admirably weathered this trailer's disorderly ambiance. If you could find a way to make them disorderly, there would likely be a lot of entropic bleed-off to siphon. Giving them a good shove would probably be the fastest way.

>shove dishes

Smashing the dishes would yield some potent magic, but we'll need a way to keep the dishes from scattering all over the kitchen floor (and scattering their entropic energy as well). If we can temporarily contain the energy, we should be able to siphon off a significant amount of order.

Perhaps you could \*PUT\* [something] \*UNDER THE TOWER OF DISHES\* first.

>put bin under dishes

We push the bin against the kitchen counter. It is situated directly beneath and adjacent to the tower of dishes, which seem to quiver in anticipation.

>shove dishes

You feel the giddy rush that cats must feel when inching a water glass over the edge of a tabletop. The seemingly inviolate stability of the tower of dishes deteriorates midair, as small-but-growing spaces appear between each plate. Their fall is interrupted rather explosively by the flat bottom of the plastic bin, casting shards loudly but harmlessly against its walls.

This bin of broken dishes is engulfed in a seething morass of rapidly evaporating order. Within a matter of moments, it will be gone forever.

Having transformed all of our dishes into magic-fortified fragments and shards, we would be fools to let it evaporate away. Let's \*DIAGNOSE THE BROKEN DISHES\* and go from there.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

Even without diagnosing the bin, it's clear that powerful order magic is escaping. Soon, it will be lost to the vastness of space.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

You likely have only a couple of minutes before the lost order seeping from the bin of broken dishes is gone.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

Now that I think of it, this may be an opportunity to defy the narrative pressures of the moment.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

Whatever your choice, this is likely your last chance to siphon whatever power the broken dishes might hold.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

While knocking the dishes into the bin was quite shrewd, you aren't completely sure that you want to harness its power.

Then again, perhaps you would! Sadly, it is true what the old philosophers said: making no choice is, in fact a choice. However, since drawing upon the power of the broken dishes is something that we would do in the "canonical" version of our story, it only makes sense that we would resist doing so here and now. Even though it ends in fire (have I told you about the fire next door yet?) at least we can be sure that we stood against the author's narrative hegemony.

In this narrative branch, we die in our underwear, which, yes, sounds embarrassing, but it's a secret we take to our grave. The force and

heat of the explosion is such that there is no body to autopsy, let alone recognize.

Thank goodness for small mercies, right?

This ending has earned a rating of Grateful/10.

Because we died during a time-sensitive event, the dishes have been restored to the counter.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure.

Total Fail States Discovered: 4 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 2 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

#### Kitchen

This poorly lit kitchen is a busy mess. It is dark because of two burned-out light-bulbs. The room's dinginess owes much to a tower of dirty dishes stacked beside - not in - a rather dirty sink, but the countertop is cluttered with various bits of nerd stuff - game books, comics, and video games - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but we've never been much of a cook. This room is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The kitchen occupies the full width of the trailer, and opens into the front room to the \*SOUTH\*. A narrow hallway leads \*NORTH\*.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

You can also see an empty plastic bin here.

>push dishes

You feel the giddy rush that cats must feel when inching a water glass over the edge of a tabletop. The seemingly inviolate stability of the tower of dishes deteriorates midair, as small-but-growing spaces appear between each plate. Their fall is interrupted rather

explosively by the flat bottom of the plastic bin, casting shards loudly but harmlessly against its walls.

This bin of broken dishes is engulfed in a seething morass of rapidly evaporating order. Within a matter of moments, it will be gone forever.

Having transformed all of our dishes into magic-fortified fragments and shards, we would be fools to let it evaporate away. Let's \*DIAGNOSE THE BROKEN DISHES\* and go from there.

>diagnose dishes

The bin is filled with dishes that have made a rapid and productive descent from order into disorder. We should be able to \*SIPHON THE SUBLIMATED ORDER\* from the bin. Don't wait too long, or the lost order will dissipate, forever lost.

Even without diagnosing the bin, it's clear that powerful order magic is escaping. Soon, it will be lost to the vastness of space.

>siphon order

We hold our hands above the bin as if it were a fire, drawing forth the lost order lurking among the broken plates. We can feel its power and can likely do something impressive with it. Since we won't be able to re-break the dishes, we'll only have one chance at using the \*SEETHING ORDER\* productively.

>diagnose

(yourself)

Someone's got to put a stop to all of this, but I guess it won't be us.

We are carrying a significant amount of order and organization that we absorbed from a broken pile of dishes. Since the dishes are permanently broken, I cannot draw more energy from them. We must be judicious as to how we expend this SEETHING ORDER.

What the hell is wrong with me?

>invest me

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

We can only invest ourselves with purely dynamic energy. Both organizational and thermal magics will likely harm or kill us. Not that you'd mind.

>diagnose dvd

Other than the time you spend loafing on the couch while watching Battle Princess Chiyo, there are no entropic forces or opportunities within the DVD.

>invest dvd

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

You wave your arms the way you imagine a wizard from Dungeons & Dragons might, then infuse the DVD case with the powerful order that you siphoned away from the broken dishes. I'd like to stop and ask what you thought might happen in this moment. What does an orderly DVD look like to you? What do you imagine when I ask that question? You might not know this, but when powerful magic is directed at an object that cannot productively receive it, anything - really, anything - can happen. Not everything becomes more "orderly" in such cases. Take this DVD, for instance. In a matter of seconds, Battle Princess Chiyo steps out of the cover art and into the room, growing to her full height.

This might sound pretty cool, but then you notice that her famed odachi, the Demon's Prison, has also grown to its full length. Princess Chiyo, unable to comprehend this bizarre place of metal and plastic, regards us and our barbaric garb - you aren't wearing pants, remember? - with a scowl. Perhaps she believes that one of her Oni prisoners has escaped and now seeks revenge. On the other hand, perhaps we are an evil wizard plotting against her family and their kingdom. Then again, she may just see you as a barbarian pervert. Whatever the case, with one swing of the Demon's Prison, Princess Chiyo effortlessly slices me in half. Really! In half!

So far as counter-narrative endings go, this one is, at least, interesting.

This outcome has earned a rating of fan service/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure.

Total Fail States Discovered: 5 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 3 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

## Kitchen

This kitchen is busy, dark, and messy. It is dark because of two burned-out light bulbs. A baffling mess consisting of various bits of nerd business - tabletop RPG books, comics, CD cases - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but you've never been much of a cook. This is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The excitement of knocking a tower of dishes off of the kitchen counter is dying down, but the bin of broken dishes still sings our tale of adventure and daring.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

>invest mess

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

Yes, of course. Fabulous idea. While you could use the precious, non-renewable power of the \*SEETHING ORDER\* to achieve important goals like getting dressed or refilling your lithium prescription, you could just as easily blow it all here in the kitchen. In your defense, there are at least notable and potentially desirable results.

The mess on the countertop organizes itself! DVDs and video game cases and game books take flight, each making its way to its proper place. The tumblers and forks cluttering the sink rinse themselves off before making themselves at home in the dishwasher. Even our various kitchen appliances seem to gleam as if new.

Our wallet, long believed lost, rests atop the newly clean counter.

While this is entertaining in a Fantasia sort of way, you really don't care about clean kitchens. We can't help but feel a little deflated when the last out-of-place thing is stowed away, leaving us standing pantsless in our newly organized kitchen. We make our way to your couch, where you sit feeling vaguely disgusted with yourself. Not only was this effort a failure, but it has prevented us from visiting our mother at the hospital. That's the problem with our arrangement: even when your intentions are good, you are a profoundly compromised and inconsiderate decision maker.

When Fast Eddie blows up his meth lab a few hours later, we are still sitting on the couch, staring through the screen of our television. You know, I wouldn't mind getting burned alive if it meant we'd never see each other again, but we can't seem to stay dead.

This outcome has earned a rating of hell's kitchen/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure.

Total Fail States Discovered: 6 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 4 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

#### Kitchen

This kitchen is busy, dark, and messy. It is dark because of two burned-out light bulbs. A baffling mess consisting of various bits of nerd business - tabletop RPG books, comics, CD cases - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but you've never been much of a cook. This is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The excitement of knocking a tower of dishes off of the kitchen counter is dying down, but the bin of broken dishes still sings our tale of adventure and daring.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

>S

#### Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. We can escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*).

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

>invest machine

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

We hold our palms away from our body, one facing the other. the potent energy of the \*SEETHING ORDER\* becomes a black ball of entropy capable of disintegrating anything it might touch.

"I have lived in fear of you too long, trinket!" we yell, venting our fury. "With this magic I unmake you!"

We move our hands as if we are shifting the energy in our hands, testing its weight. A low roar surrounds us as the ball, hungry for matter and energy, begins sucking the nearby air into it, creating substantial gusts that shove debris against my - I'm not afraid to tell it like it is - gangly frame.

If my movements have grown less graceful in the tumult, well, wrangling the primordial powers of the universe is not a graceful business! We pull our hands back, wait as if taking aim, then push the ball of raw entropy toward the offending device. It works as advertised, dissolving the device, the floor and wall behind it, even boring a tunnel through the trailer next door.

Said trailer belongs to a meth cook, and we appear to have disrupted a delicate operation in our quest for vengeance. As flames begin to lick the walls of our trailer, I note with a slippery feeling that is almost but not quite wistful that, so far as ways to die go, the ball of energy probably would have been one of the better choices.

Better than fire, in any case, which seems to be the flavor of the day.

Though your decision was foolish, I cannot fault you for pressing against the edges of this oppressive narrative.

This outcome has earned a rating of Rage Against the Machine/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure.

Total Fail States Discovered: 7 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 5 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

#### Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. We can escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*).

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

>invest tv

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

Television is a scourge of western culture and a font of materialist fantasy. With one wave of our hand, the television explodes into mathematical equations written on the air with metal and plastic. Gloating, you inform the ex-TV that its transformation will be the first of many.

You fall back into the deep seats of your couch, regarding the math with a smile. Your glee diminishes somewhat upon realizing that you don't really understand it - the formulas are a bit over our head. Soon, the whole project has gone sour on you. What kind of person gets access to magic just to turn televisions into advanced mathematics? You're so lame that you can't even get having cool powers right. Well, maybe now you know how it feels: you've only got two speeds: embarrassing and boring. My whole existence is watching you flop back and forth. Why can't we ever just, you know, have fun?

While we sit contemplating the limitations with which mental illness has encircled us, a meth lab next door explodes, taking us with it.

Interestingly, our neighbor on the other side of the trailer will, after defeating a nasty addiction to prescription pain pills and getting his abusive boyfriend to move out, write a text adventure game about a modern-day chaos wizard who, at the game's climax, narrowly escapes being simultaneously crushed and burned in a dilapidated trailer. As luck would have it, it will fare quite well in a community competition. Coincidence? Who can say?

You have achieved a score of trailer park muse/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure.

Total Fail States Discovered: 8 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 6 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

#### Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. We can escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*).

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

>n

#### Kitchen

This kitchen is busy, dark, and messy. It is dark because of two burned-out light bulbs. A baffling mess consisting of various bits of nerd business - tabletop RPG books, comics, CD cases - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but you've never been much of a cook. This is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The excitement of knocking a tower of dishes off of the kitchen counter is dying down, but the bin of broken dishes still sings our tale of adventure and daring.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

>n

## Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>w

## Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>invest toilet

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

With a grand gesture, you attempt to infuse the toilet with the substantial amount of order you retrieved from the breaking dishes. Sadly, the toilet itself is a potent if not crippling source of order, and your exertions only serve to envelop the bathroom and all of its molecules - even those that you are made of - in a kind of stasis. Here, no movement is possible. Even thought is impracticable.

You are unable to know this, of course, since you are trapped in a toilet-derived field of immobility. Perhaps a version of you in another dimension has escaped this fate, or - better still - some extra-dimensional version of yourself is watching and learning from your mistakes across many timelines. If there is such a person, they will likely be more careful with such limited resources as the \*SEETHING ORDER\*.

Were that so, and were you still capable of thought, you might have found this confrontation with an ancient toilet worth the price. But you aren't, so you don't. Fire alone would not be enough to violate our suspended state, but the force of the explosion does the trick, scattering the ashes of us and our belongings amid the trailers, rusted cars, and bent fencing north of town. Even though I applaud your defiant act of counter-narrative sabotage, I do wish you would seek out apocryphal endings that do not involve setting me on fire. That's me on fire, after all, not you.

You have achieved a score of hillbilly cremation/10. [AHM 3].

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We are no stranger to failure.

Total Fail States Discovered: 9 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 7 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>ahm3

Cook's casual use of the word hillbilly is yet another example of his internalized classism.

- A. H. Montague

>invest cabinet

(the bathroom cabinet with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

The explosive power of the \*SEETHING ORDER\* envelops the cabinet, the faux drawers, its fixtures, the countertop, and the cabinet doors. "To hell with it," you say, gesturing grandly in the direction of the cabinet assembly. While we can only use the \*SEETHING ORDER\* once, you decide that you don't care about getting dressed, or refilling your prescription, or even visiting your mother. What could be more important than escaping the bonds of this miserable narrative?

While I don't disagree, you never seem to appreciate that I'm the one who has to absorb any corporeal consequences associated with our behavior. You all but certainly know that investing unsuitable objects or systems with large quantities of entropic energy can lead to unpredictable and often dangerous results. This scenario is no exception. Not even you could think that imbuing the cabinet assembly with powerful entropic magic would be productive. Or even nihilistic fun. You can't even not give a shit right.

After a second or two, we hear something thumping around inside the cabinet. A host of large (and still growing) spiders have broken through the cabinet's facade! I won't dwell on the experience - who would - but I think that this is yet another case where you are all too eager to write checks that my physicality must cover.

This outcome has earned a rating of Spiders, Man/10. [AHM 4]

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation. [PS 8]

Total Fail States Discovered: 10 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 8 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

#### Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>ahm 4

The infamous "spider episode" is a dramatic example of Cook's hatred of his impoverished and disabled characters. Many objects in the trailer can be invested with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*, and each case leads to a different, fatal outcome. The narrator, who seems to be the "body" of the protagonist, blames his thinking, agentic counterpart for his suffering. This second half of an agonistic dyad is more than likely meant to represent the player. It is reasonable to interpret Cook's narrative structure as an accusation directed at audiences, who are not merely passive observers but partners in accountability. Naturally, this tactic conveniently shifts blame away from Cook's own self-loathing ableism.

- A. H. Montague

>ps 8

The word "simulation" does not appear anywhere in the 1996 edition of Repeat the Ending.

- P. Searcy

>win

We've had it. It's time to stop messing around and get out of here. We grab our jeans and wallet and rush out of the trailer. Ignoring our neighbor's cries for help, we run to our car. We've got places to be and things to do.

Somehow, everything gets turned around on us while we're riding the hospital elevator up. This doesn't work. We know, before we even reach the door, that our mother is lying unconscious in one of many identical rooms, unconsciously pawing at the machinery attached to her. It resists, snaking down her throat and into her veins. She can't get free, and neither can we.

Neither of us ever had a chance, you think. Sinking into a nearby chair, you contemplate your shared destinies, medical and inexorable, converging as they do here. There must have been something we could have done differently, some other somebody to be.

This outcome has earned a rating of Madame Dee, c'est nous/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation.

Total Fail States Discovered: 11 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 11.

Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>n

We can only return \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>e

### Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>n

### Bedroom

This is our bedroom, a white-walled, hollow cube sitting at the far end of a rickety metal trailer. A mattress lies flat on the floor, and a wadded-up blanket curls atop it. Our closet doors, which have been halfheartedly disguised as wood, open to an overwhelming pile of clothes that has spilled out of the closet and onto the bedroom floor.

>invest clothes

(with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*)

You watch, amazed, as the pile becomes a sort of reverse avalanche, clothes flying upward to rest in shelves or roost on ladders. For the first time in a month or more, we feel a profound sense of peace disrupt the unending yammer of hateful self-talk that runs through our brain. It will return, of course, but we've learned to take these moments as they come.

You reach into the closet and pull out a pair of (mostly) clean jeans. Having now clothed ourselves, we fill out the look with white socks and a pair of green sneakers. You're now as ready as you ever get to face whatever might lurk outside this trailer. Your pleasant moment of reflection ends. Perhaps I should remind you that any idiot can get dressed.

>i

You are carrying:

- a pair of green sneakers (being worn)

- a pair of black jeans (being worn)

- a white t-shirt (being worn)

>s

### Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>s

### Kitchen

This kitchen is busy, dark, and messy. It is dark because of two burned-out light bulbs. A baffling mess consisting of various bits of nerd business - tabletop RPG books, comics, CD cases - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but you've never been much of a cook. This is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The excitement of knocking a tower of dishes off of the kitchen counter is dying down, but the bin of broken dishes still sings our tale of adventure and daring.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

>search mess

You poke around at the mess on the counter and find our wallet! We haven't seen it in days.

We pick up the wallet and put it in our back pocket.

>h

Let's get out of here.

>s

### Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. We can escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*).

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

>w

### Front Yard

Our so-called front "yard" lies west of our front door beyond a short stair made of unstained pine boards. It's a typical June day: wet air, wet grass, high nineties. Sparse, homely grasses struggle to push their way through clay-laden soil. The yard is an ugly place pocketed in a rather beautiful region of hills and pine forests, and the relatively open area of the trailer park is, in fact, encircled by trees and low, rolling slopes. You can't help but feel that you are at the bottom of a crater here, as every nearby thing feels like - and is - a step up.

The other side of our A/C unit - let's call it the "condenser" - is here, pulling in hot air for cooling while its grille dissipates heat. The motor sounds a little unhealthy, as though some part of it is rubbing against something. Maybe a belt is loose. I don't know. Machines aren't really our thing, but it seems worth a closer look.

This is an open area with many possible exits, but only a few look promising. If, for some reason, you would like to return to the trailer, it's to the \*EAST\*. An opioid addict with a scary boyfriend lives to the \*NORTH\*, and Fast Eddie the meth cook lives to the \*SOUTH\*. Your car is parked in a bit of gravel to the \*WEST\*. [CAS 11]

>h

Now all we have to do is get in the car and drive... I think.

>cas11

It appears that you have found all possible fail states so far. Clearly, you have the matter well in hand without assistance from me.

- C. A. Smythe

>w

#### Parking Area

This is a barren area where most residents park their cars. Since it is mid-morning on a weekday, there are few other cars here, and none besides ours that are worth your attention [PS 9].

Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat. It would seem that we locked our keys within the car, since they are clearly visible through the window.

Even though this is an open area, your front yard to the \*EAST\* is the only reasonable destination on foot.

>ps 9

The "car" was the source of the most pervasive and challenging bug in the first release candidate of this expanded version of Repeat the Ending, and it almost pushed Cook to revert to a version with ten thousand fewer words of code. The problem, as he eventually discovered, was that he was inconsistent in the way that the story referred to the cars (there are in fact three "cars" in Repeat the Ending), their printed names, parts of cars, and articles ("the" vs. "your."). For whatever reason, the problem did not surface until the final stretch of the development, when testing began to throw run-time errors which were neither descriptive nor specific.

Ultimately, Cook was able to chase down the source of the problem, but it required more than one full workday. While including the flawed code would provide an interesting historical perspective, ultimately playability is a priority of this volume.

- P. Searcy

>x car

It's an unremarkable Japanese sedan. It's reliable and a tank of gas seems to last forever. Even at six years old, it's by far the nicest thing we own. Looking through the window, we can see our keys resting on the passenger's seat. [AHM 5]

>ahm 5

Cook, not knowing any better, included an astounding amount of worthless implementation in his design of the car. When considering both its interior and exterior, it features doors, windows, a steering wheel, a gear shift, seats. One can hardly fault him for his inexperience, but his decision to leave all of that clutter in, post beta testing, suggests that the past 25 years have left many lessons untaught.

- A. H. Montague

>x keys

Looking through the window, you can see our keys lying in the seat. Way to go, smart guy.

>open door

That's the idea. Perhaps we should begin by getting it unlocked.

>unlock door

Yes, that's what we need to do, absolutely. However, since the keys are inside the car, we cannot unlock it in a conventional sense. Unless you have a better idea, maybe we should \*EXAMINE THE LOCKING MECHANISM\*.

>examine locking mechanism

The car locks and unlocks via a small rocker switch on the door-side armrests. It would require only a small amount of force to engage it and unlock the doors.

>diagnose it

The lock houses no entropic energy of any kind. That isn't to say that it couldn't be manipulated with magic.

>e

Front Yard

The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing, but it seems worth a closer look.

This is an open area with many possible exits, but only a few look promising. If, for some reason, you would like to return to the trailer, it's to the \*EAST\*. An opioid addict with a scary boyfriend lives to the \*NORTH\*, and Fast Eddie the meth cook lives to the \*SOUTH\*. Your car is parked in a bit of gravel to the \*WEST\*.

>h

Now all we have to do is get in the car and drive... I think.

>e

Front Room

The front room - I wouldn't call it a "living room" - has a comfortable couch, a television, the FunStation, and the window (or AC) unit. You spend almost all of our time here, mostly playing Japanese role-playing games and eating junk food. We leave to sleep, use the bathroom, and, in certain desperate circumstances, buy food or refill prescriptions. It's been like this since we were awarded disability. We can escape the trailer via the front door (\*WEST\*) or else retreat to the kitchen (\*NORTH\*).

A telephone and an answering machine nest atop a tangle of cords on the floor.

>n

### Kitchen

This kitchen is busy, dark, and messy. It is dark because of two burned-out light bulbs. A baffling mess consisting of various bits of nerd business - tabletop RPG books, comics, CD cases - spread across every uncovered surface. The kitchen is in worse shape than our closet, but it doesn't bother you nearly as much. Sooner or later, everybody needs clothes, but you've never been much of a cook. This is usually just a waypoint between the hallway and the front room.

The excitement of knocking a tower of dishes off of the kitchen counter is dying down, but the bin of broken dishes still sings our tale of adventure and daring.

A Battle Princess Chiyo DVD, once lost in the mess atop the counter, has been revealed.

>n

### Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>w

### Bathroom

This is a cramped bathroom, as wide as a small bathtub. A toilet fits snugly between a plastic shower and a ramshackle wooden cabinet with faux drawers. A scored plastic sink basin is nearly subsumed in the cabinet's countertop, and a dingy mirror "graces" the wall behind it.

The bathroom is a dead end in many senses, and its only exit leads \*EAST\* to the hallway.

>siphon dribble

We make a slow, wide gesture toward the sink, and, at the end of our hand's arc, we feel the small but insistent buzz of entropic power contained in the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*. With it, we could likely apply a small amount of pressure to something or perhaps restore the shape of a crushed sugarcube.

>e

#### Hallway

This hallway is a narrow connector between the bedroom (\*NORTH\*) and kitchen (\*SOUTH\*). The walls and ceiling are covered in yellowed sheetrock. The floor has a smooth, wood-colored surface. Off to the \*WEST\*, a door opens into a cramped bathroom.

>s

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>w

#### Parking Area

This is a barren area where most residents park their cars. Since it is mid-morning on a weekday, there are few other cars here, and none besides ours that are worth your attention.

Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat. It would seem that we locked our keys within the car, since they are clearly visible through the window.

Even though this is an open area, your front yard to the \*EAST\* is the only reasonable destination on foot.

>invest lock

(with the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*)

Nicely done! You unlock the doors by gently pressing against the mechanism with the ENTROPIC NUDGE. Opening the door, you reach in and pocket the keys. Now we can get in the car and DRIVE.

>i

You are carrying:

- our keys

- our wallet (in our back pocket)

- a pair of green sneakers (being worn)

- a pair of black jeans (being worn)

- a white t-shirt (being worn)

>enter car

We climb into the car and start it up. As we pull out of the trailer park, a hard-to-place worry overtakes us. Something is wrong, and, strangely, it's a familiar kind of wrong. We've been here before, done this before. But how? It feels as though we've left something undone at the trailer park, but I can't imagine what.

We spend the day trying to shake the feeling. We get our medication, and dutifully pop some lithium. Over at the hospital, we sign in and head upstairs. Our mother is attached to a complex system of tubes and electrical probes. Suddenly startled and hassled by dread, it feels as if we have only just realized that our mother is going to die soon, even though we've known it all day. We want to do something or say something, so we futilely scrabble at her hands with our own, but we can't get to her. Not now, not ever.

Sinking back into our own disgust and alarm, we note that it appears that the machinery and sensors attached to her inert body are slowly consuming her. There is no stopping it, you think. You feel as though you are being devoured, too. This is what happens to people like us and her when they live too long. Alone, numb, beyond reach. Alone.

This conclusion has earned a rating of 90 miles an hour down a dead end street/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation.

Total Fail States Discovered: 12 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 1 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

Parking Area

This is a barren area where most residents park their cars. Since it is mid-morning on a weekday, there are few other cars here, and none besides ours that are worth your attention.

Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat.

Even though this is an open area, your front yard to the \*EAST\* is the only reasonable destination on foot.

>h

Perhaps we should explore a bit before leaving.

>e

Front Yard

The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing, but it seems worth a closer look.

This is an open area with many possible exits, but only a few look promising. If, for some reason, you would like to return to the trailer, it's to the \*EAST\*. An opioid addict with a scary boyfriend lives to the \*NORTH\*, and Fast Eddie the meth cook lives to the \*SOUTH\*. Your car is parked in a bit of gravel to the \*WEST\*.

>n

You'd rather not wander the trailer park unless you have a good reason for doing so.

>s

You're not going to Fast Eddie's place without a good reason to do so.

>x unit

This stout and durable-looking contraption is the back-end of our trailer's window AC unit. It is partially covered with a heat sink of closely-spaced metal fins. They look like the gills of some long-extinct fish. Within the condenser's workings, we can hear the sound of something wearing or rubbing in the main fan's motor. There is almost certainly some sort of thermodynamic bleed here.

>diagnose it

We can tell just by listening that this machinery is constantly bleeding off dynamic and thermal energy. If you siphoned it for perhaps half a minute, you'd have enough juice to knock the hell out of something and set it on fire. A couple of thoughts: one, people like us - well, like you, really - have no business handling such dangerous magic. Two, you'll be hard-pressed to find a safe thing to throw it at without blowing yourself or somebody else up.

Setting valid practical and philosophical concerns aside - as you inevitably do - investing something with the \*HOT TORQUE\* will undoubtedly yield impressive results, deadly or otherwise.

>siphon hot torque

We hold our right hand out, palm upward, as if preparing to accept something offered by the condenser. With our left hand, we make sweeping motions as if we are gathering something into our right. We take our time doing this, allowing many cycles of the air conditioner's motor to turn over. After thirty seconds or so, we have collected enough thermodynamic energy to perform a powerful \*DRAGON PUNCH\* that can level or incinerate objects with its fiery force.

I can hear an argument coming from the trailer to the north. Your neighbor has a drug problem and an abusive boyfriend, so it might be a good idea to see if he's OK.

>invest trailer

(with the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*)

If we're trying to escape the squalid misery of this place, why not just explode our way out? To hell with that dumpy trailer and those stupid stairs! We're on the same page for once. Let's blow the whole thing to hell. With a sneer and a low chuckle, we strike the side of our trailer with the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*, looking on with satisfaction as the dirty metal flank of the trailer is blown open, its contents catching fire.

It's something of a hollow experience, though. Trailers don't actually have feelings, so we haven't actually revenged it in any meaningful sense. Instead, we've mostly just burned up our possessions and home. We sigh, wondering if our Battle Princess Chiyo videos remain intact. Probably not. Either way, do you think you could find a different way to die? That's my body burning, after all.

Before you ask: "What death? What burning?" It's the one where our neighbor's ad-hoc meth lab explodes, burning and battering us down to nothing. We might get a chance to do something about that if we can keep ourselves a) here and b) alive long enough.

This ending has earned a rating of burning down the house/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation.

Total Fail States Discovered: 13 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 2 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

#### Front Yard

The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing.

This is an open area with many possible exits, but only a few look promising. If, for some reason, you would like to return to the trailer, it's to the \*EAST\*. An opioid addict with a scary boyfriend lives to the \*NORTH\*, and Fast Eddie the meth cook lives to the \*SOUTH\*. Your car is parked in a bit of gravel to the \*WEST\*.

>win

We've come a long way, but not far enough. Cutting and running while our neighbors are in trouble is, yes, in character for you, but maybe we should set a higher standard for ourselves.

Whatever. I suppose the only thing that matters is that we need to get our pills and get to the hospital.

The scene at the pharmacy is weird and jarring. A woman - almost certainly a drug addict - argues with the pharmacist for ten minutes while we wait, growing more and more anxious. A child sits at her feet on the dirty linoleum floor, hanging onto the leg of her jeans. You look at the young boy with something like recognition. "No," we want to tell him, "it doesn't get any better."

He'll figure it out soon enough, you think bitterly. Every spinning particle of urgency has broken free of our dense center, lost in the vast nothingness of space.

Jesus Christ man, this is grim. Even for us. Later, we stare out at the darkness beyond the unopenable glass window: one of hundreds of unopenable glass windows here. You cannot hear anything over the sounds of coil whine and air propelled down narrow tubes. I'm glad that no one will have to come here and look at us. That's the least we can do, isn't it? Our gift to the world.

This outcome has earned a rating of winning isn't everything/10.

\*\*\*Press any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation.

Total Fail States Discovered: 14 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 3 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

Front Yard

The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing.

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>w

I don't agree with your decision to head for your car when your neighbor is in trouble, but I guess it's your call.

Parking Area

This is a barren area where most residents park their cars. Since it is mid-morning on a weekday, there are few other cars here, and none besides ours that are worth your attention.

Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat.

Even though this is an open area, your front yard to the \*EAST\* is the only reasonable destination on foot.

>invest car

(with the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*)

"Bweh heh heh," we laugh as we prepare to blow up a perfectly good car. Who am I to say no to your request? Perhaps we will loose the narrative bonds that constrain us at long last! With a single flick of the wrist, our trusty four-door sedan, which was honestly a nice car for someone in our income bracket, explodes. Since the gas tank is practically full, however, it seems we did not put enough space between ourselves and the blast radius.

While I hate to admit it, I am as much to blame as you. I was drawn to the possibility of a garish spectacle, and our exploding car did not disappoint. Unfortunately, said pyrotechnics mandated burning me alive. I think you've grown desensitized to seeing me burned alive, but I assure you that I have not. I appreciate your future diligence in this matter.

This conclusion has earned a rating of hot rod/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation.

Total Fail States Discovered: 15 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 4 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

Parking Area

This is a barren area where most residents park their cars. Since it is mid-morning on a weekday, there are few other cars here, and none besides ours that are worth your attention.

Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat.

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>e

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The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing.

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The argument next door continues. It's hard to say from here how serious it is. Perhaps we should investigate?

>n

Outside the Opioid Addict's Trailer

We are outside the opioid addict's trailer. It seems to be the same model and age as our own. There is, however, a well-cared for Camaro parked under one of the few trees remaining in the open wastes of the trailer park. It proudly declares itself an "IROC-Z" via decals affixed to its sides and is mostly fire engine red. I say "mostly" because the hood and one front quarter panel are primer gray.

The car would be a welcome splash of color in this muted place if it did not belong to the addict's boyfriend, who has the walk and perpetual sneer of a bully. So far as the tree goes: its large, heavy branches lean over the Camaro, fully covering it with shade.

The noise that called us here is louder, and it is clearly coming from inside the trailer. I don't mean the unrecognizable music coming through the windows, either. It is easy to hear your neighbor yelling for help over the music's din. These cries are intermittently punctuated by thumps, suggesting that something - him, most likely - is tumbling or falling repeatedly. While we could return to our trailer (\*SOUTH\*), I feel that we should help our neighbor if we can.  
[PS 10]

The sound is definitely coming from the trailer here. The situation seems to be more serious than we first assumed.

>ps 10

In the original 1996 text, D's neighbor was a woman. Both Collins and Montague have speculated regarding the significance of this change.

- P. Searcy

>invest trailer

(with the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*)

We've had it with this dismal, squalid scene. Abuse, addiction, illness, and all other forms of degradation have come to roost, here, in this trailer park. Might as well blow the whole thing to pieces, you think, and I get where you're coming from. It's miserable here. That air conditioner is a bottomless mug of fiery momentum, so let's ride that DRAGON PUNCH all the way to hell. You start with the car, of course, because the gas tank will all but certainly explode.

And so it does! The force of it knocks the trailer over, setting it on fire, and terrified screams immediately fill the air. Well, that wasn't so great, was it, you think, as the old oak tree, which must be more than a century old, catches fire.

You only barely get a chance to see this, as a side mirror from the Camaro strikes us - rather hard, I'm afraid - in the face. So far as destroying the trailer park goes, your efforts fell short. You would be comforted to know that when Fast Eddie's trailer explodes in an unfortunate workplace accident, the flames cannot reach here. Between the two of you, you've done a lot of damage.

While I hate this whole recurring death thing, I'm glad your neighbor won't stay dead. That was a bit much, even for you.

This outcome has earned a rating of scourge of the trailer park/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We have begun to test the limits of the simulation.

Total Fail States Discovered: 16 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 5 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

Outside the Opioid Addict's Trailer

We are outside the opioid addict's trailer. It seems to be the same model and age as our own. There is, however, a well-cared for Camaro parked under one of the few trees remaining in the open wastes of the trailer park. It proudly declares itself an "IROC-Z" via decals

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>x car

This car is undoubtedly the prize possession of the opioid addict's creepy boyfriend. While its incomplete paint job suggests that it is a work in progress, it is recently washed and well-cared for. It would certainly be a shame if something were to happen to it. The Camaro is parked in the shade of a massive, solitary oak with heavy, leaf-laden branches.

I can hear a thumping sound coming from inside the trailer, as if someone is being shoved or knocked down.

>diagnose it

The Camaro is in great shape, as it only needs a bit of paint. I think destroying it - that is what we'd like to do, isn't it? - would be quite productive in terms of gathering some magical order.

We should find a way to break up the fight without putting ourselves in danger.

>x tree

This huge, old oak is the tallest thing in at least a hundred yards, and is burdened by massive, heavy branches. One particularly massive, heavy branch reaches over the bi-colored Camaro, blanketing it with complete shade. It may well be the largest and longest branch on a tree of large, long branches. It's so heavy-looking as to appear a touch unsafe. I certainly wouldn't park my car under it.

The fight in the trailer is serious business. We should do something before our neighbor is seriously hurt.

>x branch

Although the tree is covered with heavy branches, one is undoubtedly the heaviest of the lot. Good luck to whatever's beneath it when it falls.

The fight in the trailer is serious business. We should do something before our neighbor is seriously hurt.

>invest branch

(with the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*)

Assuming what we imagine to be a martial arts stance, we point in the direction of the large, heavy branch, and the power of the Dragon Punch surges through us and toward our target. It's a good strike. The branch, its green leaves smoking, falls directly atop the Camaro underneath it. Its windows shatter dramatically, and its metal shell crumples beneath the weight of the branch. Between the detached branch and the destroyed car, there must be an incredible amount of order leaving them now. You likely only have a few moments to collect it before it is gone forever.

The music stops abruptly. You look up from your handiwork to see that the neighbor and his lousy boyfriend have come to investigate the loud noise the branch has made. He cries out - I'm not exaggerating - in anguish, falling to his knees, while our neighbor [DSC 9] takes advantage of the distraction to run past us.

Outside the Opioid Addict's Trailer

A crushed 1990 Camaro is the star of this scene, and its costar is the smoldering and massive branch that has crushed its spine. The abusive boyfriend is staring at it, and he is pleasantly inconsolable. Recent events here have undoubtedly precipitated a massive increase in disorder. Much more than anything we've seen today, in fact.

As nice as the car/branch partnership is to look at, there is almost certainly something more productive to do to or with it.

Your neighbor's asshole boyfriend claws at the dirt in front of his destroyed Camaro, his forehead pressed to the scorched earth.

>enjoy boyfriend

We enjoy a pleasant moment's gloating over Chet's recent loss.

The abusive boyfriend tears his shirt, gazing mournfully at the sky.

>diagnose car

There is very large quantity of order bleeding off of the Camaro. You can attain it if you \*SIPHON THE DESICCATED ORDER\*.

The boyfriend, whom you have nicknamed "Chet," claws at the earth, wordless in his grief.

>siphon order

We start to tug at the desiccated order, and find that we must plant our left foot to maintain balance. This is a very large quantity of order magic, and after several seconds we feel as though we are vibrating. It's a bit like forgetting to take our antidepressant. The more we pull, the greater and deeper the feeling becomes. By the time we have absorbed it all, the sensation is a bit overwhelming. We shouldn't try to carry this energy for too long. Speaking of overstaying one's welcome: the boyfriend is stomping around angrily. Since our neighbor has escaped to safety, there's no reason to stay here any longer.

Chet's pitiful, yet deeply satisfying mewling continues, though the substantial power of the \*GRAND STRUCTURE\* makes it hard to focus.

>s

Front Yard

The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing.

This is an open area with many possible exits, but only a few look promising. If, for some reason, you would like to return to the trailer, it's to the \*EAST\*. An opioid addict with a scary boyfriend lives to the \*NORTH\*, and Fast Eddie the meth cook lives to the \*SOUTH\*. Your car is parked in a bit of gravel to the \*WEST\*.

An ominous plume of drifting smoke rises above Fast Eddie's trailer to the south. Given his profession, a fire there would be a very serious matter [DSC 10].

>invest trailer

(with the \*THE GRAND STRUCTURE\*)

Of course. What good is powerful magic if we can't abuse it? The \*GRAND STRUCTURE\*, which is several times more potent than the \*SEETHING ORDER\*, is one badass and nasty bit of order. Unfortunately, there isn't much to do with it right here, since there are no

obviously disordered or disorganized systems to rectify. Sure, the window unit is definitely wasting both thermal and kinetic energy, but using the \*GRAND STRUCTURE\* on it would be like putting out a match with a fire hose.

However, as both you and I know, the scope and reach of the \*GRAND STRUCTURE\* is such that it will affect a large area. There's no need to cast it on anything here, as it will work its magic on the yard and your trailer regardless. It may even affect the grass. I suppose that I'm threatening you with a good time, since you have already decided to expend that magic here and now.

"I am the enemy of chaos!" we lie, calling the \*GRAND STRUCTURE\* to our raised hands before unceremoniously lobbing it onto the patchy grass and mud at our feet. Within seconds, all color is drained from the front yard. The trailer, the ground, and even the stairs have taken on the appearance of a two-dimensional, black and white sketch. I see that my feet and legs have already been transformed into immobile charcoal on textured paper. This flattening colorlessness creeps up my body. I would compare it to drowning, but only in a speculative way, since you've never drowned us. Don't get any ideas!

This outcome has earned a rating of sketch comedy/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*  
We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 17 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 6 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

#### Front Yard

The "yard" in front of our trailer is a grubby patchwork of homely, resilient grasses. There isn't much to look at here besides the short set of stairs leading to our front door, and the condenser of a formidable-looking air conditioner. While it's operational, the motor sounds unhealthy. Machines aren't really our thing.

This is an open area with many possible exits, but only a few look promising. If, for some reason, you would like to return to the trailer, it's to the \*EAST\*. An opioid addict with a scary boyfriend

lives to the \*NORTH\*, and Fast Eddie the meth cook lives to the \*SOUTH\*. Your car is parked in a bit of gravel to the \*WEST\*.

>x smoke

Dark, thick smoke rises from Fast Eddie's trailer, just off to the south.

To the south, a noxious cloud of smoke drifts skyward. I believe exploding meth labs are widely regarded as dangerous. Perhaps I could convince you to intervene?

>diagnose it

The smoke is a symptom. Try dealing with its source instead.

This is quite like you, horsing around while a fire burns near a quantity of red phosphorus.

>s

Outside Fast Eddie's Trailer

It is hard to distinguish the trailer of Fast Eddie the dope cook from our own. It is old and balanced atop gray cinder block stilts. The door suddenly slams open, and Fast Eddie leaps down the stairs. He gives us a wild and wide-eyed look, then sprints past us. You can see an open and growing fire through the door. If he really is a meth cook, that trailer is going to blow any minute now.

The flames inside the trailer are spreading. If you can't put the fire out, something bad is going to happen to us and our stuff.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

The flames are higher, and seem to be spreading more quickly.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

Look, I know that you don't actually have to feel being burned alive. That's my job, but I'm here to tell you it's a pretty miserable death. Cut me a break, would you? Figure this out.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

Really, we're doing this again?

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

Yeah, yeah, yeah. The flames grow, and the trailer explodes with substantial fire and force. And yes, I am burned alive. You might think I'm a bully because I don't coddle you, but who's really to blame for our whole crap situation? Who decided to stop treating a major mental illness? Who got us into drugs? Who thought it'd be fun to do every dumb thing he could think of? That's on you, pal. It's you. It's always been you. If you ever had to feel being set on fire, you'd straighten right out. But no. I'm the one who burns, you're the one that hears about it. I'm glad that you are trying to change things up, but please lay off the fire thing for crying out loud.

This ending earns a rating of have you ever burned a mile in another man's shoes/10.

Since this failstate has occurred during a timed event, the timer has been reset. The player has four turns to perform a productive action.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 18 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 7 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

Outside Fast Eddie's Trailer

It is hard to distinguish the trailer of Fast Eddie the dope cook from our own. It is old and balanced atop gray cinder block stilts. There's nothing special about this trailer or the yard surrounding it, but there is something quite special and dangerous about the burning couch that you can see through the trailer's open door.

>invest fire

(with the \*THE GRAND STRUCTURE\*)

The sheer weight and might of the \*GRAND STRUCTURE\* causes our knees to buckle. It feels as if we must heft some great thing over our shoulders before throwing it in the direction of the trailer. The

flames within are doused immediately. All volatile substances have been broken down into less hazardous substances; the trailer's electricity has been neutralized, too. It seems that every process, phenomenon, or substance that can be quickly reduced to a disorderly state has been neutralized. The trailer has become, in a rather all-encompassing sense, completely inert. It's likely dangerous to enter, given all our squishy bits and tendencies toward disorder.

>x trailer

Now that the flames are out and the dangerous chemicals are stabilized, it's just another ugly trailer in a park filled with ugly trailers.

>enter it

There's no telling what lingering effects from the \*GRAND STRUCTURE\* might still be active. Don't we have places to be?

>h

Now that we are officially the hero of the trailer park, we can leave for town. We're a little behind schedule, but nothing too serious.

>n

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The only exits of interest lie \*EAST\* to the trailer and \*WEST\* to the parking area.

>w

Parking Area

This is a barren area where most residents park their cars. Since it is mid-morning on a weekday, there are few other cars here, and none besides ours that are worth your attention.

Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat.

Even though this is an open area, your front yard to the \*EAST\* is the only reasonable destination on foot.

>in

We open the door and begin to step into the car when we hear the crunch of human footsteps on gravel. Straightening, we turn around to see the opioid addict from next door. His hair is mussed, presumably the result of a violent altercation with his boyfriend. It's good that you interrupted that, I think, but it isn't like we can solve his problems permanently. We descend into a funk - it doesn't take much, does it? - thinking of the generally dismal nature of addiction and the debasement that it kindles. You know all about that, don't you buddy? He looks at us, concentrating as if trying to rethink some already-decided thing. After several awkward seconds, he speaks softly:

"You did it. I don't know how you did it, but you did it."

We nod. Addicts live in a magical world. To be an addict is to believe in magic. Belief that things aren't as bad as they look. Or belief that one can stop whenever one wants to. Or belief that if you had my problems, you'd use, drink, whatever, too. And so forth. You used to spout that bullshit all the time, didn't you? The question and its answer briefly hangs, going nowhere, in the thick June air before he speaks again:

"I need a ride. Out close to the IHOP. Can you take me out there?"

We think it over. On one hand, it is bad policy to get mixed up in an addict's business, especially one we can't really get away from - he's your neighbor, after all. However, it's a jerk move to leave him here with his violent, angry boyfriend.

What do you think? Are we going to drive him out by the IHOP? It's not exactly on the way to the hospital.

Please answer "yes" or "no": no

You decide to leave your neighbor in the parking area, in the close vicinity of his violent boyfriend. Speaking honestly, I know where you're coming from. We've got things we need to do, and that man could easily get his problems all over us. Still, part of me (and therefore part of you) wonders how we can ever change the way we see ourselves, change the way we live, if we never choose to do even a basic, minimum amount of good in this world? What point was there in getting him out

of the trailer for a few minutes if we weren't going to get him out of the trailer park?

Such thoughts make for a dark trip to the pharmacy and a troubled ride in the hospital's elevator. We find our unconscious mother twitching fitfully in her bed, as if the respirator gives her nightmares. Sitting in a nearby chair, we watch her, silently, until a nurse kicks us out at the end of visiting hours. Back in the parking lot, bathed in the yellowing light of sodium lamps, we recognize that whatever unfinished business there is between our mother and us will forever remain unfinished. Its associated empty spaces will go unfilled. Such is the shape of the rest of our lives.

This outcome has earned a rating of unhelpful/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 19 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 19.

#### Parking Area

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Speaking of our car: it's a black Japanese sedan, approximately six years old. It does the job, reliably carrying us around town. It gets excellent gas mileage, too. It's funny that it's a four door because nobody ever rides in the passenger seat, let alone the back seat.

Even though this is an open area, your front yard to the \*EAST\* is the only reasonable destination on foot.

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"You did it. I don't know how you did it, but you did it."

We nod. Addicts live in a magical world. To be an addict is to believe in magic. Belief that things aren't as bad as they look. Or belief that one can stop whenever one wants to. Or belief that if you had my problems, you'd use, drink, whatever, too. And so forth. You used to spout that bullshit all the time, didn't you? The question and its answer briefly hangs, going nowhere, in the thick June air before he speaks again:

"I need a ride. Out close to the IHOP. Can you take me out there?"

We think it over. On one hand, it is bad policy to get mixed up in an addict's business, especially one we can't really get away from - he's your neighbor, after all. However, it's a jerk move to leave him here with his violent, angry boyfriend.

What do you think? Are we going to drive him out by the IHOP? It's not exactly on the way to the hospital.

Please answer "yes" or "no": yes

We silently wave him on, then climb into our car and put the keys in the ignition. Our neighbor climbs in soon after you. He smells like cigarette smoke. "I'm Brad," he says, buckling his seat belt. We do the same and start the engine.

"D." you say. "Just call me D."

#### Inside Your Car

We sit in the driver's seat of our six year-old Honda sedan. The interior is in excellent shape, and it has the neutral smell of a cared-for car. The orange plastic needles of various analog gauges point in various directions, and all seems to be in fine working order. The wheel and stick shift are ready to transport us and our passenger where we need to go [DSC 11].

This is a very good development. I do not believe we've done this before - give Brad a ride, that is - perhaps this is a way to escape the bonds of authorial hegemony. I suppose you deserve some of the credit, but it will take a lot more than a car ride for us to climb out of the hole that you've dug.

Brad picks nervously at the skin covering his fingertips.

>x skin

Brad's tendency to pick at the skin on his fingertips is not just some nervous habit. He is undoubtedly signaling his membership in the Ancient and Esoteric Order of the Champions of Seth. What a remarkable coincidence, that two members of that famed offshoot of the Invisible College might live so close together in a small, southern town? We respond in kind, making the sign of the fig.

We should probably get going. Sitting here in the parking lot with our neighbor is kind of weird. [DSC 12]

>dsc12

It's worth noting that there are so many implemented objects in the car that the player will reach a fail state before examining them all.

- D. S. Collins

>talk to brad

Sigh. Yes, we are so very good at talking to people. There will be plenty of time - too much, really - to wage battle with awkward silences during trip across town. Just \*DRIVE\* the car and Brad will be all but certainly dazzled by our repartee.

This feels kind of awkward. Maybe we should go ahead and \*DRIVE\*?

>x seat

You are sitting, thereby fulfilling the purpose of the carseat.

Our neighbor, whose name we've only just now learned, has grown increasingly anxious in the seat beside us. If we don't get moving soon, he'll probably get out of the car.

>x wheel

We will have to manipulate the steering wheel while we drive, but you don't need to say more than \*DRIVE\*. I'll handle everything else.

Well, that's that, you weirdo. Brad climbs out of the car and starts walking toward the road. What were you trying to do, anyway? We only have ourselves to blame for our loneliness; we obviously don't know how to act around people. Or, more accurately, I only have you to blame.

On the bright side, we will make it to the hospital faster this way. You keep telling yourself that - that this is better, even that perhaps you never wanted to give him a ride in the first place. The truth is that you're a freak who has no idea how to get on with people or even live in this shitty world. The pharmacy is alien; It feels dangerous. A malnourished woman stops arguing with a pharmacist in order to forcibly yank her son up by the neckline of his t-shirt. When we finally receive our medicine, we run for the exit as if we could feel the hot breath of some large thing on our neck.

The hospital isn't any better. We wait 15 minutes for an empty elevator that you can ride alone before stepping into the cold, mechanically-treated air of the intensive care ward. Inside one of its many rooms, we find our mother entangled in an incomprehensible snarl of cables and tubes. Her sleep - if it is sleep - is fitful. She appears to be struggling to remove the tubes from her face, but her hands have been restrained. You see yourself, your future, here. We are the only one that will visit her.

No one will visit us, because we at least have the decency to forego having children. It's the least we can do. It was the least she could have done.

This ending has earned the rank of blood will tell/10.

Since this failstate has occurred during a timed event, the timer has been reset. The player has four turns to perform a productive action.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 20 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 1 out of 2.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 21.

### Inside Your Car

We sit in the driver's seat of our six year-old Honda sedan. The interior is in excellent shape, and it has the neutral smell of a cared-for car. The orange plastic needles of various analog gauges point in various directions, and all seems to be in fine working order. The wheel and stick shift are ready to transport us and our passenger where we need to go [DSC 11].

Brad tugs at the long sleeves of his shirt, as if trying to hide his hands.

>drive

We back up, then point the front bumper toward the nearby state highway. It's mid-morning on a weekday, so traffic is light as we drive through town. You're no good at small talk - or other forms of talk, really - but you try to reciprocate his efforts.

"Nobody ever visits you," he says flatly. It isn't a question. We nod. "You hardly ever leave, either. Don't you have friends or family?"

"There's not a lot of that, no. I like being alone," you lie, keeping our eyes forward.

"When you turned up outside my trailer, I thought you were going to shoot my boyfriend," he laughs. It sounds like a scattering of notes at the low end of a mandolin's range.

"Well," we say, "I figure someone might shoot him eventually, but it won't be me." Our speech is more folksy when talking to strangers. It makes us feel safe.

He doesn't miss a beat. "Nobody will believe that you gave me a ride. You're the Boo Radley of the trailer park." Again, the laugh. A silence grows. Without looking at him, you can sense that he's looking at us. It's a shame that we're driving all the way across town. This is going to take forever. After a few moments, he asks, "Are you into girls? I have literally never seen anyone at your trailer. You aren't terrible looking, there must be someone out there who'd put up with you."

"Maybe so," we say, still looking forward, "I've had girlfriends before, but it never came to anything good." What an understatement! You are a riot, a genuine riot.

"You look like you'd be into weird shit. Weird music, Japanese cartoons, that kind of thing. Is that right?" He laughs again.

"Yeah," we say. "I guess I do like some weird shit." What can I do? We like weird shit.

"I know somebody," he says conspiratorially, "that might be your type. She's pretty hot for being such a lousy dresser."

We laugh. A hot, horrible dresser does sound like our type. But we've sworn off romance, haven't we? Since there's no good way out of the conversation, I drop the tactical nuke: "That might be pretty good, but I can't think about it now. My mom's in the hospital. Seems to be in bad shape."

"Oh my God," he says quickly. "I'm sorry. Why didn't you say so? You shouldn't be driving me around."

"That's alright," we say gently. "It's alright. I'll be there in no time."

It has the desired effect: silence. We're close now, on the south end of town and headed westward. Fifty years ago, this area would have been dotted by country homes and small farms. Now, it's just another sardine can of homely '70s ranch houses. The world's arc toward crowded misery has, over the past few decades, grown shorter and straighter. Our destination is one such home, squatting at the end of a broad slope of smooth asphalt.

Curiously, one of the last remaining "farms" lies across the road. There, we see a Bush Hog going back and forth over a large stretch of land, cutting down patches of scrub. As we pull to a stop, your passenger cries out, "Oh shit, Marbles!" before jumping out of the car. Without giving it much thought, we follow him [AHM 6].

#### Driveway

This wide, flat driveway connects what used to be a country road with what used to be a country house. Unlike many of the properties nearby, this front yard contains many tall pines, and the ground is covered with pine needles. The trees afford some privacy and, most likely, absorb some of the engine noise coming from the nearby road. Our car is parked here, ready for your eventual departure.

At a far corner of the property, a lone oak stands among the pines, reaching up and out to claim light and real estate. There, we see the source of Brad's concern: two gaunt, starving dogs have treed a sleek,

black and white locket cat - presumably the "Marbles" he spoke of. Off to the north, we can see and hear a Bush Hog making its way across an open field in a pattern of consecutive parallel lines. We notice that, when it rolls over a low bush or bit of scrub, the song of its motor goes an octave deeper. It is cycling through an irregular cycle of low- and high-efficiency states.

"I'm going to try and find something for the dogs to eat! See if you can hold them off!" Brad yells as he runs into the house, leaving us alone with Marbles and the dogs. We aren't doing a good job of hurrying to the hospital, but leaving now would be a shitty thing to do - even for you.

The dogs, obviously starving, claw at the base of an old oak.

You have earned twenty of the twenty-one points available prior to reaching this location. We may make it after all.

>undo

Inside Your Car

[Previous turn undone.]

>win

Looking at the clock built into your car's dashboard, you panic. There simply isn't time to drive to the IHOP, double back to the pharmacy, then drive to the hospital. We aren't very good at telling people what to do, but you muster some courage and tell your neighbor to get out of the car. He's used to people jerking him around. Now you can be one of those people, too.

Well, I guess we can't please everyone. Our mother is dying, after all. We speed over to the pharmacy, then stride purposefully inside. At the pharmacist's counter, an underweight woman - perhaps our age - is arguing with a clerk. She's probably addicted to speed of some sort and wants an early refill. A young boy is sitting at her feet, holding her keychain with a bored expression. It is almost as if he is thinking, "I can't believe I once found these interesting." He's old enough to know something is wrong with his mother, but not yet old enough to know what that something is.

"What a dismal scene this is," you think, looking around. After ten minutes, you give up. Getting the lithium tomorrow will be fine. We've

probably got two days before the danger starts. We head back to your car, then race over to the hospital. When we finally return to our trailer, it's late. Why does this all feel so familiar? We stand in the small yard outside our front door, gazing up at the moon. This place, this view, the hospital room, the lobby, even that pathetic kid at the pharmacy: you've seen it all before, somehow, done it all before.

Despite these lovely insights, we've blown it again. There's no closure, no peace, no way to keep going. Maybe you drink again. Maybe you stop taking your medicine. You more than likely do both. One thing they don't tell you is how boring, how repetitive insanity is. Everything's more interesting in the movies.

This outcome has earned a rating of Hollywood Magic/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 21 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.  
Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

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Brad fidgets uncomfortably.

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At a far corner of the property, a lone oak stands among the pines, reaching up and out to claim light and real estate. There, we see the source of Brad's concern: two gaunt, starving dogs have treed a sleek, black and white locket cat - presumably the "Marbles" he spoke of. Off to the north, we can see and hear a Bush Hog making its way across an open field in a pattern of consecutive parallel lines. We notice that, when it rolls over a low bush or bit of scrub, the song of its motor goes an octave deeper. It is cycling through an irregular cycle of low- and high-efficiency states.

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The dogs, obviously starving, claw at the base of an old oak.

You have earned twenty-one of the twenty-one points available prior to reaching this location. It seems that you require no chastisement from me. How refreshing! By all means, carry on.

[New content is available in the \*GUIDE\*. - Pauline Searcy]

>l

Driveway

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At a far corner of the property, a lone oak stands among the pines, reaching up and out to claim light and real estate. Two dogs, obviously insane with hunger, have driven Marbles the cat up a tree. Off to the north, we can see and hear a Bush Hog making its way across an open field in a pattern of consecutive parallel lines. We notice that, when it rolls over a low bush or bit of scrub, the song of its motor goes an octave deeper. It is cycling through an irregular cycle of low- and high-efficiency states.

The thin, filthy dogs gaze at Marbles with immense longing.

>x dogs

These two dogs have been living through hard times. Their dirt-matted fur is draped loosely over their bones, and their eyes are wild with hunger. They are currently pawing the base of a tree where a small, black cat has taken refuge. [DSC 13]

The malnourished dogs yelp frustratedly at Marbles, perched just out of reach on a low tree branch.

>dsc13

The Driveway location is yet another significant departure from the originating 1996 text. The neighbor, the cat, and this location are all entirely new for this anniversary edition. Originally, a dog attacked the protagonist near his car, and he drove it away with magic. Helping animals and rescuing people is, in fact, a radical shift away from the character of the so-called "poet" of 1996. Qualitative characteristics aside, this new text contains more than twice as many words as the original.

As others have pointed out, it is not possible to verify Cook's claims regarding "original intent."

- D. S. Collins

>diagnose dogs

The dogs have long been the unfortunate objects of entropic processes, but there is no energy left to siphon off.

The dogs, exhausted, roll their eyes, mad from starvation.

>x marbles

Marbles is an attractive and healthy cat in her prime. Unfortunately, she has been driven up a tree by a pair of starving dogs. She eyes them anxiously, afraid for her life. Quite reasonably afraid, I might add. I have a feeling of impending doom, as if some horrible fate awaits her despite her apparently secure position. In good times and bad, she is a sleek, black cat with a white "locket" on her chest.

The dogs, starving and deranged, occasionally glance at us anxiously, as if we might disrupt their hunt.

>rescue marbles

It's not a bad idea, carrying her to safety, but those dogs are completely crazy. They'll likely attack if we get close, let alone pick up the cat. Maybe there's a way for us to enhance our physical prowess.

The dogs, obviously starving, claw at the base of an old oak.

>x oak

(the oak tree)

A lone oak tree stands in one corner of the property, where it has crowded out an otherwise dominant stand of pines. A cat has fled to a lower branch, beyond the reach of two gaunt dogs, apparently insane with hunger. The cat hisses at them, back raised, as they paw and whine at the trunk. The oak's branches reach out and up, claiming a large territory for itself among the pines.

The thin, filthy dogs gaze at Marbles with immense longing.

>x pines

The land in front of this ranch home is covered with pine trees, which offer shade and limited noise cancellation. They have also carpeted the ground with soft, brown pine needles. The overall effect is far

more attractive than the lawns of other nearby homes. Despite their noise canceling effect, we can still hear the tractor across the road.

The malnourished dogs yelp frustratedly at Marbles, perched just out of reach on a low tree branch.

>x needles

Ah, so you noticed the pine needles.

I wonder, how would you characterize our relationship? Would you say that we share the same goals? What would you consider a more serious concern? Murderous, starving dogs, or pine needles? What do you think we are here to do? I mean it. In fairness, I think that rushing ahead has problems of its own. I'm not... listen, I know we're never really going to get along, but I'm not coming after you. Honestly, I can't decide between the pine needles and our mother.

Is that sick? I think it's sick. But then again, I've had the strangest feeling all day. I want to say that I've been here before. No, that I was too busy to be here before. I think that we ignored our neighbor and the fire, that we rushed to the car, we rushed to the hospital... and nothing. Do you believe in grace? Do you think grace awaits us, there?

I feel like we've been watching her die every day of our life.

Anyway. I think we should be looking for ways to change the day or change ourselves, to change something, but no matter how you slice it, those are some regular-assed pine needles.

The dogs, exhausted, roll their eyes, mad from starvation.

>diagnose needles

"All visible objects, man, are but as pasteboard masks. But in each event - in the living act, the undoubted deed - there, some unknown but still reasoning thing puts forth the mouldings of its features from behind the unreasoning mask. If man will strike, strike through the mask! How can the prisoner reach outside except by thrusting through the wall? To me, the white whale is that wall, shoved near to me. Sometimes I think there's naught beyond. But 'tis enough. He tasks me; he heaps me; I see in him outrageous strength, with an inscrutable malice sinewing it. That inscrutable thing is chiefly what I hate; and be the white whale agent, or be the white whale principal, I will wreak that hate upon him. Talk not to me of blasphemy, man; I'd strike the sun if it insulted me."

The dogs, starving and deranged, occasionally glance at us anxiously, as if we might disrupt their hunt.

>diagnose needles

The pine needles hide only more pointlessness behind their transparent pointlessness.

The dogs, obviously starving, claw at the base of an old oak.

>x needles

Those are some regular-assed pine needles.

The thin, filthy dogs gaze at Marbles with immense longing.

>siphon dogs

The dogs have long been the unfortunate objects of entropic processes, but there is no energy left to siphon off.

The malnourished dogs yelp frustratedly at Marbles, perched just out of reach on a low tree branch.

>l

Driveway

This wide, flat driveway connects what used to be a country road with what used to be a country house. Unlike many of the properties nearby, this front yard contains many tall pines, and the ground is covered with pine needles. The trees afford some privacy and, most likely, absorb some of the engine noise coming from the nearby road. Our car is parked here, ready for your eventual departure.

At a far corner of the property, a lone oak stands among the pines, reaching up and out to claim light and real estate. Two dogs, obviously insane with hunger, have driven Marbles the cat up a tree. Off to the north, we can see and hear a Bush Hog making its way across an open field in a pattern of consecutive parallel lines. We notice that, when it rolls over a low bush or bit of scrub, the song of its motor goes an octave deeper. It is cycling through an irregular cycle of low- and high-efficiency states.

The dogs, exhausted, roll their eyes, mad from starvation.

>x house

This low-slung ranch house is made of pale, red brick and appears to have been built in the 1960s. If so, it's one of the unfortunate properties that slowly watched the forest and farmland disappear around it. It has the door, garage door, and windows that you might

expect. Its chief distinguishing feature is that our neighbor apparently has a friend living inside it. That friend, apparently, has a cat named Marbles. The house is otherwise filled to the brim with "I don't care."

The dogs, starving and deranged, occasionally glance at us anxiously, as if we might disrupt their hunt.

>enter house

The only reason that we got out of the car was to find out what was happening with "Marbles." You don't know the person who lives in that house and have no business inside it.

The dogs, obviously starving, claw at the base of an old oak.

>x bush hog

The tractor thingy is an aging and infrequently used tractor with a large, rotary-blade attachment designed for cutting down brush and scrub. The cutter is powered by the tractor's motor, which growls whenever the tractor runs over a substantial piece of brush. Presumably someone is driving it, even though we can't make out a driver from here. [PS 11]

The thin, filthy dogs gaze at Marbles with immense longing.

>ps 11

Bush Hog is a line of tractor attachments used to cut down vegetation.

In this edition's initial draft, "bush hog" was spelled at least three ways, all of them incorrect.

- P. Searcy

>enter bush hog

Be serious. We don't know how to drive that thing. Besides, we're supposed to be doing stuff with magic, aren't we?

The malnourished dogs yelp frustratedly at Marbles, perched just out of reach on a low tree branch.

>diagnose it

You're onto something. The tractor thingy, with its fluctuating rotations per minute, is clearly a source of kinetic energy. We can draw upon it if you \*SIPHON THE MOMENTOUS RUMBLE\*.

The dogs, exhausted, roll their eyes, mad from starvation.

>win

It's too bad, but we just don't have time to deal with cats and crazy dogs. We jump into the car and speed off before our neighbor can return. We even - accidentally, of course - burn a bit of rubber turning onto Lakeshore Drive. In fact, we're so far behind schedule that we'll have to wait until tomorrow to get our lithium. For once, I can't say that I blame you. Escaping this narrative is important, but we can't shirk our duties as a son.

Despite reaching the hospital before visiting hours end, a feeling of dread creeps over us as we enter the building. Something isn't right. This all feels quite familiar: the inexplicably bright-sounding receptionist, the antiseptic smell of the elevator, even the intensive care ward, noisy with monitoring equipment and the low roar of fifty ventilators all inhaling and exhaling in concert: we've seen this all before, somehow. We know, sitting down in her room, that our mother will never wake again. There will be no closure, no great reconciliation, no peace. That inert body, seemingly more cyborg than human, is all remains. This is it.

Tomorrow morning, we learn that she passed in the night, and an unbearable cocktail of grief and relief sings in our body. Our goal in life, our only goal, had been sparing our mother the experience of burying us. That is the natural order of things, a custom even we respect: children ought to bury their parents. Soon we will be acquitted of that duty. What will we live for, then?

We don't bother to pick up the lithium tomorrow, or the day after that. What's the point? Who even cares what happens to us now?

This outcome has earned a rating of I hate cats/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 22 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

The Driveway: 1 out of 3.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 24.

Driveway

This wide, flat driveway connects what used to be a country road with what used to be a country house. Unlike many of the properties nearby, this front yard contains many tall pines, and the ground is covered with pine needles. The trees afford some privacy and, most likely, absorb some of the engine noise coming from the nearby road. Our car is parked here, ready for your eventual departure.

At a far corner of the property, a lone oak stands among the pines, reaching up and out to claim light and real estate. Two dogs, obviously insane with hunger, have driven Marbles the cat up a tree. Off to the north, we can see and hear a Bush Hog making its way across an open field in a pattern of consecutive parallel lines. We notice that, when it rolls over a low bush or bit of scrub, the song of its motor goes an octave deeper. It is cycling through an irregular cycle of low- and high-efficiency states.

>siphon rumble

Yes. The motor loses power every time it runs over a bit of brush, and is a powerful source of kinetic energy. Holding our arms wide, we pull it into ourselves as a thrill of power shivers through us. While you ought to exercise caution wielding the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*, I have a feeling that you won't. [CAS 12]

The dogs, starving and deranged, occasionally glance at us anxiously, as if we might disrupt their hunt.

>cas12

As the text has suggested elsewhere, the protagonist can directly invest themselves with "pure" kinetic energy, thereby granting themselves temporary superhuman speed, strength, etc. The necessary language in this case is \*INVEST ME WITH THE MOTORIZED KINESIS\*. Note that the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\* can still be applied to external objects, should the player wish to experiment. As in all such cases, it may be wise to save before playing through a one-time event.

- C. A. Smythe

>invest car

(with the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*)

Of course. Blow up the car. That's definitely your kind of party. I have to admit, though, that your erratic behavior has been paying off lately. Without question, blowing up our car is not part of our

narrative throughline. I guess what they say about the blind squirrel is true, after all.

It takes little effort. I extend my right hand and point my index figure and thumb as if I hold an imaginary gun. Bang, bang, there goes the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*. Unfortunately, things work a little too well. Of all the times to have a full tank of gas! A flying car door strikes us in our head and chest, knocking us down.

And, naturally, knocking us out. I prefer being unconscious during the fire, personally. Take it from me: you would, too.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 23 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

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At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 24.

#### Driveway

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>invest tree

(with the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*)

You bring your arm back as if throwing a speed ball - quite funny, considering our history - then launch the full might of the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\* at the large oak tree. Impressively, it snaps the oak's dense trunk like a twig, and the tree falls to earth. Less impressive is the fact that the cat is in the tree during this idiotic display. I don't know, honestly, if the dogs get the cat. I can't bear to look.

Whatever the case may be, the tree appears to have crushed the hood of our car. I guess we won't be visiting our mother after all. How are we going to explain what happened to Brad?

This ending has earned you a rating of exciting careers in forestry/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 24 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.  
Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.  
The Driveway: 3 out of 3.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 24.

#### Driveway

This wide, flat driveway connects what used to be a country road with what used to be a country house. Unlike many of the properties nearby, this front yard contains many tall pines, and the ground is covered with pine needles. The trees afford some privacy and, most likely, absorb some of the engine noise coming from the nearby road. Our car is parked here, ready for your eventual departure.

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>invest me

(with the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*)

You fold your arms across your chest, and inhale deeply as the kinetic energy spreads like a warmth throughout our body and limbs. It's a shame you can't feel this for yourself, isn't it? It feels pretty incredible - like we can do almost anything.

Just as we've infused our own physiology with the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*, you look up to see Marbles slip and almost fall to the ground! She is now hanging desperately from a tree limb, and frantically trying to pull herself up. One of the dogs might be able to reach her if it jumps high enough. You're not sure which will win out: exhaustion or desperation. In any case, we should probably try to rescue that cat if we can.

The dogs, obviously starving, claw at the base of an old oak.

>rescue marbles

Thanks to the power of the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*, we zip past the dogs before they can even see us, gather Marbles into our arms, then bolt to the opposite corner of the stand of pines. We stop long enough for the dogs to run towards us, then cross the lawn again. We quite literally run circles around them, never giving them a chance to catch up. Just as we feel the power beginning to fade, we hear our neighbor open the door. We quickly bolt to the far end of our car and crouch. While he opens a package of frankfurters, we stand, still holding a rather confused Marbles.

Brad throws the first package of ten to the dogs, who pause before consuming them to gaze at him lovingly. We have never seen anyone or anything so fully committed to their task as these dogs eating. Our neighbor opens a second package and throws them to the ground. The dogs are deeply, profoundly moved by his generosity. They will, without a doubt, recall this day as the best of their lives. Our neighbor looks from us to Marbles, then back to us again. "You must be some kind of superhero," he says, likely recalling that we also ended his boyfriend's violent rampage.

"No," we say. Even I don't know what we will say next. We have no history of being admired for our character. We set Marbles on the ground, safe from the dogs now sprawling lazily in the shade of the nearby pines. "I... I'm just glad everything's OK now." [DSC 14]

Brad looks at us. Perhaps he plans to ask about our mother. It would be best if we got moving before we're too late for visiting hours.

>dsc 14

Given D's interest in comic books and anime, it isn't terribly surprising that parts of Repeat the Ending could appear in structurally conventional superhero stories.

- D. S. Collins

>talk to brad

He looks at us brightly and says, "I'm grateful for your help, but shouldn't you be getting to the hospital? I'm sorry that you got held up here."

Our neighbor bends down to pet the cat. It would be best if we got moving before we're too late for visiting hours.

>in

With Marbles now out of danger, we give our neighbor an awkward wave before climbing into our car. In our rear-view mirror, we can see him watch us drive away. We sigh, turning onto Lakeshore Drive. There's something in us that is drawn to messy and occasionally dangerous people. I suppose I should chastise you for the friendships we've held in the past, but in all fairness I'm not much wiser in that regard. That's one reason we agreed - a rare occurrence - to just give up relationships in general.

All this helping out is off brand for you, but I can't help but feel that it's worthwhile. We can't do what we always do if we want something different to happen. Maybe we'll go back to disregarding the welfare of others tomorrow, after we've visited our mother. Shaking off our reverie, we see that we have nearly reached the pharmacy, one of thousands of locations in a nationwide chain.

We pull into its parking lot, noting that there aren't many other cars here. One of the benefits of being disabled is that we can shop while most people are at work - a real perk for an agoraphobe like you. As always, we park in a space surrounded by empty spaces with the hope that they are still empty when we return. Turning off the engine, we climb out of the car and pocket our keys.

Pharmacy Parking Lot

The parking lots for these chain pharmacies all look the same. They wrap around the building's customer entrance, which is at one of its corners. The other two sides are occupied by drive-thru windows and, as needed, space for cars to queue up. At the moment, the lot is significantly less than half full, with only a handful of cars parked here. There isn't much to do here beyond going \*INSIDE\*. [PS 12]

>ps12

When Cook revisited the pharmacy section in 2020, he had almost certainly been taking various mood stabilizing drugs for over a decade. Undoubtedly, he had spent a great deal of time in pharmacies. It's worth noting that Cook was uninsured for a significant portion of that time, and that it required a great deal of ingenuity (and begging) to remain compliant with treatment during that period. When later asked about the experience, Cook quipped that "A man can't hardly afford to be crazy in this town."

- P. Searcy

>win

Our patience fully exhausted, we drop what we are doing and tear off in the car. In only a few moments, we have reached your destination. Hospital parking lots are always full, you think, and death and sickness are perpetually going concerns. Approaching the wide main entrance, we walk past a white stone statue of Saint Catherine of Siena. She looks upward, holding a large tome to her chest. You know without looking that the base is inscribed with "LOVE FOLLOWS KNOWLEDGE," one of the more famous quotations attributed to her. As a long-lapsed Episcopalian with crypto-Catholic tendencies (you like the mythology but loathe Thomas Aquinas), we swallow hard. What love has ever traveled in the wake of our knowing?

The sum of our hard-won knowledge is expressed in sentences like, "Never bail another man's woman out of jail" - idiocy of the sort that most could easily guess. Still more could live whole lives without ever needing to know such things. Again tired of ourselves, we make our way to the ICU, a corridor lined with identical doors and flooded with cold, sterilized air.

Standing at the foot of our mother's bed, we look her over. It's the curse, you think. It's in our blood. Her mother and her grandfather before, all of us miserable and dangerous in our misery. Thank god - with a lower-case "g" - that we have no children. Better to die alone than to let this curse live on, through, and after us.

This ending has earned a rank of love follows knowledge/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 25 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.  
Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.  
The Driveway: 3 out of 3.  
The Pharmacy: 1 out of 3.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 27.

#### Pharmacy Parking Lot

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>l

#### Pharmacy Parking Lot

The parking lots for these chain pharmacies all look the same. They wrap around the building's customer entrance, which is at one of its corners. The other two sides are occupied by drive-thru windows and, as needed, space for cars to queue up. At the moment, the lot is significantly less than half full, with only a handful of cars parked here. There isn't much to do here beyond going \*INSIDE\*.

>x cars

As is customary, people have parked their vehicles in the pharmacy's parking lot. None of them catches our eye as something useful or interesting... wait. A white, exceedingly dented pickup truck does, in fact, stand out as being the shabbiest nearby vehicle here in a town where shabbiness rarely feels out of place.

>x truck

This truck has had a rough go of things. Bare, rusted metal has broken free from its prison of white paint, and it would be more accurate to call its surface "stippled" rather than "dented." It has survived years of entropic activity before enjoying a moment of rest, here, in this otherwise innocuous parking lot.

>diagnose it

There does seem to be an entropic opportunity enveloping the ancient, white truck, even though it clearly has no power of its own to offer us.

>h

This should be easy. Just go \*INSIDE\* the pharmacy, head \*SOUTH\* to the counter, then \*BUY THE LITHIUM\*.

>in

Checkout

This is a typical pharmacy check-out, with a large, electronic cash register on a laminated counter. A woman wearing a red apron stands nearby, waiting for customers. The usual "impulse buy" temptations lie in wait on a nearby rack. We can hear a squeaky shopping cart rolling noisily somewhere to the south.

Since we've been coming here for as long as we've been taking lithium, we know that we can head directly \*SOUTH\* to reach the pharmacy counter.

A superhero action figure, still in its package, lies discarded on the counter. Perhaps a mother pried it from the clutching hands of her child, choosing to abandon it rather than buy it. It's a small, plastic representation of the comic book character Badman. He was our favorite as a child.

At this time, you have found twenty-five of twenty-seven possible fail states. You seem to be applying yourself for once, but I don't want to get my hopes up.

The cashier yawns loudly.

>x cashier

This woman's red apron makes her immediately recognizable as a pharmacy employee. She's reading a newspaper with her elbows propped on the counter, and exudes an aura of aggrieved boredom. No doubt she will spring into action if or when someone wishes to \*BUY\* something.

>diagnose her

(the cashier)

The cashier gives us a baleful look over the top of her newspaper, and we reconsider.

>guncho cashier

She's just minding her own business at her thankless job. Don't be a bully.

>x badman

This plastic figure is held in a cardboard-backed blister pack. He wears a black and gray costume, complete with a black vinyl cape. Unless things have changed a great deal since you were a child, any

kid of the right age would treasure it. For whatever reason, it is marked as clearance and only costs one dollar. An incredible bargain, really.

The cashier loudly snaps her newspaper, then turns the page.

>get badman

You can't just take it. We have to \*BUY THE ACTION FIGURE\* first.

The cashier stands up straight, then stretches her arms upward and outward.

>buy it

Sure, why not? We'll have enough left over to pay for our lithium. Pulling a couple of bills out of our pocket, I pay for the action figure. We quickly tear the toy out of its packaging, which the cashier graciously throws away for us before returning to her paper with a bored sigh.

>i

You are carrying:

an action figure

our keys

our wallet (in our back pocket)

a pair of green sneakers (being worn)

a pair of black jeans (being worn)

a white t-shirt (being worn)

I can hardly believe how empty the pharmacy is. There isn't a single customer lined up at the cashier's counter.

>x counter

This slab of laminated wood was built to endure the insults of countless dropped items, screaming children, panhandlers buying whatever it is that they buy with dimes, and everything else that happens in the middle of a small, southern town. It is unmarked and looks just as it did on the day it was made. The cashier leans against it whenever she isn't otherwise occupied.

The cashier looks at us over the top of her newspaper, as if sizing us up.

>diagnose it

This durable surface has withstood all sorts of abuse, yet it remains unmarked. We aren't going to get anything out of it.

The cashier yawns loudly.

>s

Pharmacy

This corner lies beyond the various aisles of the pharmacy's shopping area, and features a waiting area with four straight-backed chairs, a blood pressure machine, and, of course, the star of the show, the pharmacy counter. Nearby, a payphone stands at the ready in case a customer must call their insurance company. An exhausted, frazzled-looking woman stands at the counter, arguing with the pharmacy clerk. Her speech is only intermittently coherent. A small boy - her son, most likely - sits near her left foot.

The frazzled woman rummages desperately in her black purse, as if something there might change her circumstances.

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart nearby, occasionally stopping to pick up an item.

>x boy

This young boy, apparently the son of the frazzled woman, sits on the floor near her feet. He holds a keychain and looks at it ambivalently. His mother likely hoped that it would distract him, but he outgrew such entertainments years ago. I don't suppose she knows him very well, despite their proximal lives. Habitual substance abuse occupies a lot of a person's attention, and frequently intrudes upon the thought-lives of its practitioners.

Poor little guy. He's already screwed. A lifetime of behavioral problems and unfulfilling relationships awaits. We can at least agree on that, can't we? Surely you don't anticipate less than a lifetime for us. He looks irritated and bored. Angry. Embarrassed. He wants to leave but has nowhere to go and no way to get there. He loves her but can't find evidence that she loves him back. He can only take it on faith that she does. She says so, after all.

Once he's a little bit older, he'll tell himself that things will get better when he turns eighteen, when he moves out. You want to tell him the truth, cruel as it is: you never move out. Nobody ever moves out, not really.

The young mother, clearly experiencing withdrawal of some sort, leans heavily against the counter. Her black purse seems dangerously close to slipping free of her shoulder.

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart nearby, occasionally stopping to pick up an item.

>x mother

This young woman - younger than you - is arguing with the pharmacy clerk about refills and health insurance. It's hard to follow it all because the woman's speech is rapid and has an associative, run-on quality to it. If I had to guess, I might say that she was a speed addict - Ritalin or Adderall/Obetrol, most likely - who has run out before her designated refill date. The pharmacy clerk, who is just doing her job, is getting nowhere explaining the realities of prescription drug coverage. A black purse dangles precariously from the woman's shoulder; she could drop it at any moment.

A boy of perhaps five is sitting at her feet. He is too young to be ashamed of her, but old enough to be embarrassed.

The young boy tugs at the hem of his mother's jeans, but she does not look down. Instead, she shakes an empty pill bottle at the pharmacy clerk.

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart down an aisle, vanishing from sight.

>guncho mother

We aren't going to play out our weird psychodrama baggage with the the frazzled mother. Just get a therapist like everyone else.

While the clerk steps away to consult with another employee, the frazzled woman exhales loudly and cracks her knuckles.

Somewhere out of sight but nearby, you can hear the squeak of a poorly-aligned shopping cart wheel.

>z bag

Since I can only understand your command as a transitive verb, do not specify an object when attempting to wait.

>x bag

The frazzled woman has a black purse. It hangs from her shoulder by a thin strap. Its position seems rather precarious. Every time she reaches into it, you think it might slip free and fall.

The woman turns around and looks at us, causing her purse to swing wildly from her shoulder. "Don't stare," she sneers, "I have a serious medical condition!"

Somewhere out of sight but nearby, you can hear the squeak of a poorly-aligned shopping cart wheel.

>talk to boy

Randomly walking up to the boy and talking is only going to make people uncomfortable.

"Judson!" the speed addict snaps at the young boy at her feet, "be still!"

A shopper pushes a shopping cart into sight. It has a squeaky wheel, which suggests it is rubbing a bit.

>x wheel

Small. Hard. Loud. It's a squeaky wheel, but there's no grease in sight.

"Someone stole them from my car!" the emaciated woman says urgently, "They broke my window!" She pulls a scrap of paper from her purse, and waves it significantly.

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart nearby, occasionally stopping to pick up an item.

>diagnose it

The wheel is, naturally, the source of the unpleasant squeaking sound. You should be able to attain a usable amount of kinetic energy if you \*SIPHON THE UNGODLY SQUEAK\*.

The frazzled woman rummages desperately in her black purse, as if something there might change her circumstances.

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart down an aisle, vanishing from sight.

>z

We fidget nervously for a moment.

The young mother, clearly experiencing withdrawal of some sort, leans heavily against the counter. Her black purse seems dangerously close to slipping free of her shoulder.

A shopper pushes a shopping cart into sight. It has a squeaky wheel, which suggests it is rubbing a bit.

>siphon squeak

Gathering entropic energy is difficult in public, since we don't want to act like a weirdo. Play-acting a disinterested glance at the noisy wheel, we silently will its inefficiency into a usable amount of kinetic energy. While it's a good deal more potent than the \*ENTROPIC NUDGE\*, we aren't going to be knocking a hole in the wall with it. You could probably use this \*DEMONIC SQUEAL\* to push something weighing a pound a distance of one foot.

The young boy tugs at the hem of his mother's jeans, but she does not look down. Instead, she shakes an empty pill bottle at the pharmacy clerk.

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart down an aisle, vanishing from sight.

>s

Since the pharmacy counter is located in the back of the store, I can only head \*NORTH\* to the entrance from here.

While the clerk steps away to consult with another employee, the frazzled woman exhales loudly and cracks her knuckles.

A shopper pushes a shopping cart into sight. It has a squeaky wheel, which suggests it is rubbing a bit.

>n

Checkout

This is a typical pharmacy check-out, with a large, electronic cash register on a laminated counter. A woman wearing a red apron stands nearby, waiting for customers. The usual "impulse buy" temptations lie in wait on a nearby rack. We can hear a squeaky shopping cart rolling noisily somewhere to the south.

Since we've been coming here for as long as we've been taking lithium, we know that we can head directly \*SOUTH\* to reach the pharmacy counter.

The cashier loudly snaps her newspaper, then turns the page.

>out

Pharmacy Parking Lot

The parking lots for these chain pharmacies all look the same. They wrap around the building's customer entrance, which is at one of its corners. The other two sides are occupied by drive-thru windows and, as needed, space for cars to queue up. At the moment, the lot is significantly less than half full, with only a handful of cars parked here. There isn't much to do here beyond going \*INSIDE\*.

>invest truck

(with the \*DEMONIC SQUEAL\*)

While I'm not sure what you hope to accomplish, we pull our arm back, then swing it forward as if slow-pitching a softball at the poor, blameless truck. It seems that either its parking break is disengaged, or else it has popped into neutral, because it begins to slowly inch down a slight incline - how did we miss it - in the direction of our car! Leaping forward, we grab hold of the tailgate and pull, but the truck will not be stopped. Still, it seems unlikely that the truck will do too much damage. With a dull thunk sound, it forcefully comes to rest against our back bumper.

Well, this certainly is a pain in the ass. Should we wait for the owner and exchange insurance information? It's just a dent. Wait. What's that smell? Gasoline? It is! Whether the truck's gas tank has at last succumbed to years of mistreatment, or if instead the truck's heartless owner kept a poorly-closed gas can in the truck bed hardly matters now.

Is it good or bad luck that, just as the spilled gas trickles onto the pavement, flowing under and past our car, a nearby panhandler throws a still-lit cigarette butt directly in the path of the gasoline? In seconds, the truck explodes. Our car follows suit. Somewhere in there, we get burned up, too. The truck, at long last, has had its revenge on humanity!

What a silly Rube Goldberg doodad this life is!

This Outcome Has Earned a rating of old truck, new trick/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

We may escape this cycle yet.

Total Fail States Discovered: 26 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

The Driveway: 3 out of 3.  
The Pharmacy: 2 out of 3.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 27.

#### Pharmacy Parking Lot

The parking lots for these chain pharmacies all look the same. They wrap around the building's customer entrance, which is at one of its corners. The other two sides are occupied by drive-thru windows and, as needed, space for cars to queue up. At the moment, the lot is significantly less than half full, with only a handful of cars parked here. There isn't much to do here beyond going \*INSIDE\*.

>x sidewalk

While the old expression "seen one, seen them all" can't be universally true - there will always be outliers - we certainly have seen this one before. Regularly seamed, approximately white concrete, the usual. Unfortunately, your inspection yields no new insights.

>diagnose it

I admire your thoroughness. You are like the protagonist of a 1980s adventure game. Here in 1996, though, there is little one can do with a bit of sidewalk. Concrete is quite entropy-resistant, unless you are capable of crumbling it.

Don't get any ideas! We are not going to smash up the sidewalk. If you're really serious, come back on a day when our mother isn't dying.

>in

#### Checkout

This is a typical pharmacy check-out, with a large, electronic cash register on a laminated counter. A woman wearing a red apron stands nearby, waiting for customers. The usual "impulse buy" temptations lie in wait on a nearby rack. We can hear a squeaky shopping cart rolling noisily somewhere to the south.

Since we've been coming here for as long as we've been taking lithium, we know that we can head directly \*SOUTH\* to reach the pharmacy counter.

The cashier stands up straight, then stretches her arms upward and outward.

>s

## Pharmacy

This corner lies beyond the various aisles of the pharmacy's shopping area, and features a waiting area with four straight-backed chairs, a blood pressure machine, and, of course, the star of the show, the pharmacy counter. Nearby, a payphone stands at the ready in case a customer must call their insurance company. An exhausted, frazzled-looking woman stands at the counter, arguing with the pharmacy clerk. Her speech is only intermittently coherent. A small boy - her son, most likely - sits near her left foot.

The woman turns around and looks at us, causing her purse to swing wildly from her shoulder. "Don't stare," she sneers, "I have a serious medical condition!"

A shopper pushes a squeaky cart down an aisle, vanishing from sight.

>invest mom  
(with the \*DEMONIC SQUEAL\*)  
... [PS 13]

This outcome has earned a rating of bully/10;

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*  
I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 27 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.  
Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.  
The Driveway: 3 out of 3.  
The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 27.

## Pharmacy

This corner lies beyond the various aisles of the pharmacy's shopping area, and features a waiting area with four straight-backed chairs, a blood pressure machine, and, of course, the star of the show, the pharmacy counter. Nearby, a payphone stands at the ready in case a customer must call their insurance company. An exhausted, frazzled-looking woman stands at the counter, arguing with the pharmacy clerk. Her speech is only intermittently coherent. A small boy - her son, most likely - sits near her left foot.

>ps13

For whatever reason, Cook chose to leave the response to the \*INVEST MOTHER WITH THE DEMONIC SQUEAL\* action blank. This absence of text is not an error. During the editorial process, Cook was asked directly about this feature, and it is left as-is per his request. It is worth noting that, in the 1996 version of Repeat the Ending, the lithium puzzle was solved by shoving the woman. While the solution is different in this edition, Cook's decision to retain the act as an unremarked, game-ending action invites critical speculation.

- P. Searcy

>invest bag

(with the \*DEMONIC SQUEAL\*)

While this feels a bit unkind, I have to admit that we have few options and even less time to finish our task and get out of here. Forgoing the usual dramatic hand gestures, we direct the kinetic energy of the \*DEMONIC SQUEAL\* at the precariously dangling purse. Unfortunately, our timing is less than perfect, as the woman has just decided to call her insurance company on the nearby payphone. Had we waited for another moment, she would have been out of our way.

It's similarly too bad that her arm is momentarily at her side, so there is nothing to stop the purse from falling to the floor and spilling its contents there. For a second, she stares silently at the ground, holding back tears. This, she must be thinking, is simply too much. It's too much for anyone to bear.

How relatable it all is! I can't count the times you have, metaphorically speaking, spilled the bag, leaving me stuck cleaning up after you. It's only natural that she might feel like a cry. Public places or no, sometimes you just have to let go. It's not like she meant for life to turn out this way, hooked on amphetamines and stuck alone with a kid who - let's face it - is going to be wildly fucked up. I'd love to tell her everything will be OK, but that would be lying. Aren't we living proof of that? It's all but certainly too late for both her and that poor kid.

Speaking of the kid: startled and worried by his mother's choked-back sobs, he starts crying, and boy howdy, he is not holding anything back. He's screaming, in fact, and you know that this isn't just about this trip to the pharmacy. It's about everything. He's had it. He's had it with this place, with his dismal, messy home, with the father he doesn't really know, with his mother. He never knows what he's going to get, who she'll be, when he sees her. She might cry, she might yell, she might inexplicably fall into things, she might say

stupid things like "It's not your fault I'm like this" and blah blah this and blah blah that. He's had it with the general incompetence of adults, every one of them unconvincing liars, unreliable, with their way of acting as if you are putting them out, imposing on them. You know this kid, and you know him well.

His mother is barely holding it together. The boy's screaming is too much to bear, and she can't concentrate on cleaning up the mess that her purse has made. That we have made. Since she's in front of the pharmacy counter, I don't think we can get our refill until she moves out of the way. Perhaps there is a way to help her focus on the task at hand.

The noisy shopping cart, currently out of sight, has rolled to a stop. That customer must have reached the check out at long last. [DSC 15]

The young boy shrieks at the top of his lungs, impotently striking his mother's leg with his tiny fists.

>dsc15

While this act may seem unkind, Cook's sympathies undoubtedly lie with the boy.

- D. S. Collins

>x boy

The dropped bag is apparently a bridge too far for the young boy. He's tired of people staring at him and his mother, tired of never being home, tired of constant humiliation. He imagines the hand of God parting the clouds, reaching down and crushing him in His fist, leaving no sign that he ever existed. He screams, eyes closed, screams in a dark of his own making.

You're kind of a jerk, aren't you? Spilling her bag like that.

>give badman

Whom do you want to give the action figure to?

>boy

The boy regards you with hostile suspicion. Upon sighting the Badman figure, he appears to write us off as one of those parents who give their kids presents and are usually sober during the day. Even as we draw closer, he obviously believes that the toy is meant for someone else and not him. When we offer him the Badman figure, he looks utterly baffled. We may as well have climbed out of a spaceship. With the toy now in hand, he regards it with a profound warmth that is -

dare I say it - enough to move even the likes of you. Where was such a man in the long, humiliating hours of our youth? What is it we feel, looking at him, as the boy inspects the figure's cape and adjusts the rope and grapple in its hands? Is it a mending, a reconciliation?

What am I saying? We are not good people. We are not even sentimental. The kid and his toy don't make us happy. He makes us weak. People see weakness and then they get inside you, tear you all apart. We are survivors. We are practical. We gave him a toy because he was in our way. That's all. [PS 14]

Without the boy's screams in her ear, the woman can concentrate enough to collect her things and make her way to the nearby payphone. Bravo.

The boy holds the toy aloft, then swoops downward with it as if dive-bombing an invisible enemy.

>ps14

This scene is new to this restored edition. Originally, the protagonist shoved the woman out of the way with a more powerful version of the \*DEMONIC SQUEAL\*, and there was no action figure. As such, the protagonist's brief reflection on the relationship between weakness and happiness was not present, either.

- P. Searcy

>x clerk

The clerk has had a difficult afternoon. Just \*BUY THE LITHIUM\* and leave her alone.

The frazzled mother silently runs her fingers over the small, black partitions ensconcing the payphone. Presumably, it has been engraved by idlers with their car keys: doodles, profanity, and odd sadnesses.

>buy lithium

This is it! We give the clerk our name, then hand over nearly all of our money. In return, she hands us a stapled-shut plastic bag containing a bottle of pills. Ripping open the small white sack, we retrieve a pill before swallowing it at a nearby water fountain.

Within moments, we're back in our car and speeding toward the hospital. The day has flown by: it's already dusk when you reach the hospital parking lot. Out on the blacktop, it's still June in Arkansas. Thick, hot air carries frog song from treetop to treetop, and soon bats will be carving erratic loops out of the sodium lamplight overhead. If I recall correctly, we are either too early or

too late for visiting hours. They ended around ninety minutes ago and should resume in an hour. I have the strangest feeling that we shouldn't wait. What if our mother's remaining time is limited? I should get up there as soon as possible.

#### Hospital Parking Lot

This is the hospital's large parking lot. Since it is on a gentle slope, it appears to reach beyond the horizon, lost to the curve of the earth. We stand near a white stone statue of Saint Catherine of Siena. Even though we are too far away to read its inscription in the dusk, I know that it must read, "LOVE FOLLOWS KNOWLEDGE." Well, we both know that isn't true, but it's more beautiful than the average lie.

I acquired this knowledge as a lapsed Episcopalian and crypto-Catholic. Not in the sense of Catholic theology, mind you, with all of its shabby Aristotelianism, but of its lovely pageantry and mythology. I also know, for instance, that after Catherine's death, pious grave robbers stole her head. Today, visitors and pilgrims can view it in an elaborate reliquary inside the Basilica San Domenico in her hometown of Siena.

This statue features her whole body, head and all. Looking forward with a serene expression, she holds a book in one hand and a lily in the other. What would it be like, I wonder, to believe in magic? I don't mean in the sense of things that we can do. I mean the opposite of that. What if we lived in a world where everything meant more than we thought it did instead of less? A world absolutely besotted with significance? If power were additive rather than subtractive?

There's something about this light that settles me. I feel as if I could stand here forever. You know, until we go in and up, our mother is in a quantum state. She could be going downhill fast. She could be laughing at sitcoms and eating a cheeseburger! I have the sudden feeling that we live in a very open world, that our world is wide open. You must feel it, too. Surely you feel it.

Behind us, someplace under a tree in the gathering dusk, is our trusty Accord sedan. Above and before us hang the countless lit and unlit windows of the hospital. I have come to throw my shadow against one of them, haven't I? I guess we can't stay here forever, but don't you agree that there is something about the light? I can't say what it is. I don't know.

Ha. You're right. It's very unusual for you to tell me to hurry up. I must be nervous! How funny. I guess there's nothing for us to do but

walk past St. Catherine of Siena, Doctor of the Church, and try to talk our way upstairs even though visiting hours are over. I should hurry in. The reception desk should be just \*INSIDE\*. [PS 15]

>ps15

In accordance with Drew Cook's wishes, no annotations have been added to the final "Hospital" section of Repeat the Ending. Instead, additional critical content has been made available in the "Reader's Companion to Repeat the Ending." As has been previously noted, the only ending carried over from the 1996 version of the game is the so-called "bad" ending. Most endgame content is new to this 25th anniversary edition. Furthermore, no notices will be printed when new guide content is available. Note that the \*GUIDE\* can be read in full after the game is complete. [CAS 13]

- P. Searcy

>cas13

In previous versions of this new edition, the narrator discussed the current state of the score after describing the Hospital Parking Lot. Ultimately, it was cut for reasons of tonal consistency. Since it helpfully predicts possible endings, I include that cut content here, without further comment.

- C. A. Smythe

"The current score is twenty-seven out of twenty-seven points available prior to reaching this location. I don't know what to say. I admit that I may have sold you short."

>diagnose

(yourself)

"All shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well..."

If I carry magic with me, it has been carefully hidden.

Is this the first or last time I have been here? Is repetition punishment or prize?

>diagnose

(yourself)

"All shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well..."

If I carry magic with me, it has been carefully hidden.

Is this the first or last time I have been here? Is repetition punishment or prize?

>in

I walk past Saint Catherine of Siena with a hard-to-place feeling of guilt, then enter the hospital foyer. The air is cool and still inside, and the light is gentle. A reception worker, seated behind a large counter, looks annoyed at my entrance. We are quickly told - before even reaching the counter - that daytime visiting hours are over, and that evening hours will begin in fifty minutes.

I consider trying to talk my way in, but the worker looks over his shoulder at a nearby security guard, who seems ready - possibly even excited - to join the conversation. I'll need to find another way.

Hospital Parking Lot

We are standing outside a hospital at dusk, and the tree frogs have begun their incessant music. I can see the rising moon, partially concealed by trees, on the far side of the bypass. There, countless, ceaseless cars travel to other, equally uninteresting parts of town. Busy, busy, busy. Our car is around here someplace. I'm sure we could find it if we had to. Above and before us, a geometric grid of lit and unlit windows rises overhead. Our mother is on the sixth floor someplace.

A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

Every second, the traffic on the bypass either rushes, lurches, or creeps by. The distant sound of engines, occasionally punctuated by horns, is nearly enough to drown out the music of nearby insects and frogs.

>x statue

Saint Catherine gazes upon me with a small, beatific smile. She holds a book in one hand and a lily in the other. The words "LOVE FOLLOWS KNOWLEDGE" are inscribed in large letters near its base.

The music of the many cars traversing the bypass is a single, held note.

>x lily

The lily is part of the statue of Saint Catherine of Siena, which is carved from a single, large block of marble. Interacting with it separately is not likely to be productive.

The cars on the bypass seem unable to reach a fixed speed, instead braking and accelerating without discernible rhythm.

>touch statue

Years ago, in what seems another life, I would have touched the hem of Saint Catherine's garment for good luck. I lack the courage (or is it audacity?) today, even though I would welcome any blessing she might offer.

What a waste of energy it is, all of the comings and goings we are always in the middle of. Does anybody ever really go anywhere?

>h

Walking in the front door didn't work. How are we going to get up there?

>l

Hospital Parking Lot

We are standing outside a hospital at dusk, and the tree frogs have begun their incessant music. I can see the rising moon, partially concealed by trees, on the far side of the bypass. There, countless, ceaseless cars travel to other, equally uninteresting parts of town. Busy, busy, busy. Our car is around here someplace. I'm sure we could find it if we had to. Above and before us, a geometric grid of lit and unlit windows rises overhead. Our mother is on the sixth floor someplace.

A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

Every second, the traffic on the bypass either rushes, lurches, or creeps by. The distant sound of engines, occasionally punctuated by horns, is nearly enough to drown out the music of nearby insects and frogs.

>win

After all this time, waiting another hour isn't going to hurt anything, is it? I may as well climb in the car, put the seat back, and kill time until visiting hours resume.

The time flies by! I am soon riding the elevator to the intensive care floor, where my mother is at the center of a ratted nest of billows, pumps, and diagnostic leads. It's so weird, looking at her now. I know that it's her, but I would never have known that it was her, had I not known. I'm not making sense, I realize, but it is hard to get at the heart of a true thing sometimes.

I think what I mean to say is that even I have always hoped to find a greater distance between things and the soul.

This outcome has earned a rating of if the sky resembled more the sea/10

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 28 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

The Driveway: 3 out of 3.

The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.

The Hospital: 1 out of 6.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 33.

Hospital Parking Lot

We are standing outside a hospital at dusk, and the tree frogs have begun their incessant music. I can see the rising moon, partially concealed by trees, on the far side of the bypass. There, countless, ceaseless cars travel to other, equally uninteresting parts of town. Busy, busy, busy. Our car is around here someplace. I'm sure we could find it if we had to. Above and before us, a geometric grid of lit and unlit windows rises overhead. Our mother is on the sixth floor someplace.

A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

>x frogs

In this part of the world, tree frogs are always out of sight, yet close at hand. They must be in all of the nearby pines. I believe they are calling potential mates. There's something poignant in that, isn't there?

The music of the many cars traversing the bypass is a single, held note.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs discuss advantages of deciduous trees over evergreens.

The cars on the bypass seem unable to reach a fixed speed, instead braking and accelerating without discernible rhythm.

>nitfol frogs

A frog tells his fellow frogs about his troubles attracting a mate.

What a waste of energy it is, all of the comings and goings we are always in the middle of. Does anybody ever really go anywhere?

>nitfol frogs

The frogs discuss the pleasantly hot and humid weather.

Every second, the traffic on the bypass either rushes, lurches, or creeps by. The distant sound of engines, occasionally punctuated by horns, is nearly enough to drown out the music of nearby insects and frogs.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs wonder if you are passing through for the last time, or if they will have to repeat this day yet again.

The music of the many cars traversing the bypass is a single, held note.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs are disappointed that some players ignore scoring mechanics, even when they are integral to the meaning of a work.

The cars on the bypass seem unable to reach a fixed speed, instead braking and accelerating without discernible rhythm.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs wonder if you will blow up your car again, since that always spices up an otherwise quiet evening.

What a waste of energy it is, all of the comings and goings we are always in the middle of. Does anybody ever really go anywhere?

>nitfol frogs

The frogs speculate as to what the term "railroading" might mean.

Every second, the traffic on the bypass either rushes, lurches, or creeps by. The distant sound of engines, occasionally punctuated by horns, is nearly enough to drown out the music of nearby insects and frogs.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs wonder if the orange-eyed woman will turn up tonight. Such a strange and curious creature!

The music of the many cars traversing the bypass is a single, held note.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs are glad that you stopped throwing the statue of Saint Catherine of Siena through the front wall of the hospital, because it seemed like bad luck.

The cars on the bypass seem unable to reach a fixed speed, instead braking and accelerating without discernible rhythm.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs discuss their creator, who has yet to move beyond his troubled past.

What a waste of energy it is, all of the comings and goings we are always in the middle of. Does anybody ever really go anywhere?

>nitfol frogs

The frogs settle into a bit of frogsong in hopes of attracting mates.

Every second, the traffic on the bypass either rushes, lurches, or creeps by. The distant sound of engines, occasionally punctuated by horns, is nearly enough to drown out the music of nearby insects and frogs.

>nitfol frogs

The frogs have settled into a bit of frogsong in hopes of attracting mates.

The music of the many cars traversing the bypass is a single, held note.

>l

Hospital Parking Lot

We are standing outside a hospital at dusk, and the tree frogs have begun their incessant music. I can see the rising moon, partially concealed by trees, on the far side of the bypass. There, countless, ceaseless cars travel to other, equally uninteresting parts of town. Busy, busy, busy. Our car is around here someplace. I'm sure we could find it if we had to. Above and before us, a geometric grid of lit and unlit windows rises overhead. Our mother is on the sixth floor someplace.

A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

The cars on the bypass seem unable to reach a fixed speed, instead braking and accelerating without discernible rhythm.

>x cars

Which do you mean, the cars parked nearby or the traffic on the bypass?

>nearby

Even though I am in a hurry to reach my mother's room, I stop to examine the various cars parked here. I begin to regret my decision almost immediately, but continue looking anyway. The cars are evidence of the sunk cost fallacy. Now that I've looked, it's hard to stop looking.

After several fruitless minutes, I give up. What was I expecting, I wonder?

What a waste of energy it is, all of the comings and goings we are always in the middle of. Does anybody ever really go anywhere?

>x traffic

In the cohering dusk, the illuminated brake lights of each passing vehicle begin to bleed into the next as the congested traffic starts and stops, speeding and slowing. Collectively, the traffic must waste a tremendous amount of kinetic energy.

Every second, the traffic on the bypass either rushes, lurches, or creeps by. The distant sound of engines, occasionally punctuated by horns, is nearly enough to drown out the music of nearby insects and frogs.

>diagnose it

The traffic in total - a continuous flow of large, motorized objects - is shedding a massive amount of kinetic energy. I'm not sure that we are capable of controlling it, but it may well be time for a bit of productive recklessness. I think we should try to \*SIPHON THE INFINITE MOVEMENT\*.

The music of the many cars traversing the bypass is a single, held note.

>siphon movement

As much as we love bad ideas, I feel a little anxious about this. The traffic is squandering a massive amount of kinetic energy every minute. I've never before attempted to control such an incredible amount of wasted power. Reaching out with my mind, I feel the cast-off momentum of every stop and start, every acceleration, every depress of every brake pedal. This power is almost... it's almost like drinking - absolutely thrilling - and I feel the hairs on my neck vibrating, singing. My teeth hum in my mouth. It's as if the world told me a secret so massive that I can't push it into my ear. Can't you feel it?

What should I do with this power? Something impossible. Something amazing.

>diagnose

(yourself)

"All shall be well and / All manner of thing shall be well..."

I have more entropic magic than I know what to do with. I could knock the hell out of something with it, or I could \*INVEST MYSELF\* with this \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\* instead. I think I could handle that; I'm really not sure.

Is this the first or last time I have been here? Is repetition punishment or prize?

>invest car

(with the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\*)

You know, I often wonder what we could have been like if we were "normal" (whatever that means) or if we could have had an easier time of things. Could we have turned out a different way? I feel cheated,

when I think about it. Your judgment is awful; I don't know how such a smart person could be so dumb. I would have liked for us to have friends, or to have done some sort of constructive, fulfilling work. But you can't do it. We've tried and we've tried, and we can't do it. As poorly as we've gotten along, once our mother is gone, there's nothing. Nobody to miss us. Isn't it sad, to have no one to miss you? We've resented her for so long that our relationship is like an itch you can't reach. What have I ever done to close the distance between us?

Oh. Sorry, you said something about the car. It's like the old saying goes, "Where there's a will, there's a way to blow up your car." At least, I can imagine you saying that. At this late date, causing our car to explode is old hat for us. At least, it should be. Isn't that weird, to say that we ought to be experienced in blowing up a car? This seems like my last chance to do it, so I'll try to make the most of it.

The power of the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\* is such that it feels as if I am holding a boulder over our head. Despite its seeming weight, I am able to throw it accurately in the direction of our poor, blameless car. The result is spectacular! It barrel rolls into multiple trees, felling them as it travels. It finally collides with a bread delivery truck of all things, and both are engulfed in a fiery explosion. The sight is so spectacular that I don't even notice the large pine falling upon us. It's nice, not having to see it coming.

This outcome has earned a rating of vehicular homicide/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*  
I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 29 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.  
Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.  
The Driveway: 3 out of 3.  
The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.  
The Hospital: 2 out of 6.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 33.

Hospital Parking Lot

We are standing outside a hospital at dusk, and the tree frogs have begun their incessant music. I can see the rising moon, partially concealed by trees, on the far side of the bypass. There, countless, ceaseless cars travel to other, equally uninteresting parts of town. Busy, busy, busy. Our car is around here someplace. I'm sure we could find it if we had to. Above and before us, a geometric grid of lit and unlit windows rises overhead. Our mother is on the sixth floor someplace.

A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

>invest hospital

(with the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\*)

I hold my arms up and apart, looking like a hillbilly Gandalf. With only a moment of focus, I drive the massive power of an entire highway of heavy traffic into and through the side of the hospital. I'm surprised that this level of audacity and/or disregard for human life has not propelled us from the narrative. What is it going to take?

We don't have time to discuss it, since the catastrophic structural damage done to the hospital results in a very large chunk of it falling directly on me and my body. It isn't burning alive, I've got to give you that. Still, I can't help but feel you are enjoying this a little too much, even after all I put up with for you. I don't know why I act surprised, as ingratitude has always been one of your defining traits.

This ending has earned a rating of ingrate/10

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 30 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

The Driveway: 3 out of 3.

The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.

The Hospital: 3 out of 6.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 33.

#### Hospital Parking Lot

We are standing outside a hospital at dusk, and the tree frogs have begun their incessant music. I can see the rising moon, partially concealed by trees, on the far side of the bypass. There, countless, ceaseless cars travel to other, equally uninteresting parts of town. Busy, busy, busy. Our car is around here someplace. I'm sure we could find it if we had to. Above and before us, a geometric grid of lit and unlit windows rises overhead. Our mother is on the sixth floor someplace.

A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

>u

I think we have enough entropic power to get to the roof, though I'll have to use it before trying to fly. I could always \*DIAGNOSE ME\* if I needed more information about the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\*.

>invest me

(with the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\*)

I direct the incredible power of the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\* inward, and feel a massive surge of power. I think that I could do almost anything, and I'm probably right.

>fly

I start out a bit clumsily, but within seconds I have figured out how to propel myself up to the roof. The feeling is incredible and likely addictive. It's a shame that it is over so fast. Flying must require a lot of magic, as the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\* was only just enough to reach the roof. After a surprisingly gentle landing, I stand, panting a bit, already hoping to do it again soon.

#### Hospital Roof

This large, open area is mostly featureless. A tarred surface, undoubtedly waterproof, serves as a "floor." I have an incredible view of the rising moon here, as the building is several floors higher than any tree nearby. Or any tree in the county, for that matter. I'm experiencing the usual anxiety that I feel whenever I'm near a high

ledge. It would be so easy to jump. One weak moment is all it would take. It's too easy.

A nearby door presumably opens into a stairwell. It would be easy to enter the building from here.

I feel an energy, familiar and strange at the same time, welling up within me.

>jump

Mustering my courage, I step toward the edge of the roof. What harm is there in looking, I wonder, though I think that I know the answer. What do you think? Should I get a closer look?

Please answer "yes" or "no": yes

Alright then. I move even closer to the edge. There's something seductive, something irresistible about it. Having reached the precipice, I feel a thrill run through my limbs. I could do it. It would be so easy. I could just let go, forego this last encounter with my mother, forsake this darkness for a greater darkness.

It would be over in a minute.

We've discussed the dangers of roofs and ledges and other high places, but in fairness I must admit that I wanted to go. This one's on me.

This outcome has earned a rating of short trip, long fall/10

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 31 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

The Driveway: 3 out of 3.

The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.

The Hospital: 4 out of 6.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 33.

Hospital Roof

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A nearby door presumably opens into a stairwell. It would be easy to enter the building from here.

>undo  
Hospital Roof  
[Previous turn undone.]

>undo  
Hospital Parking Lot  
[Previous turn undone.]

>enter car  
No, no, no. I'm not turning back now. This power is pushing me forward, not back.

>undo  
Hospital Parking Lot  
[Previous turn undone.]

>undo  
Hospital Parking Lot  
[Previous turn undone.]

>enter car  
I can't do it. I've lost my nerve. I just can't do it. I climb into the car and drive to Iron Springs, a campsite north of town. By the time I get there, it's dark. Real, country dark. The moon is behind one of those steep, blunt hills that make up the Ouachita Mountains. Climbing out of the car, it takes minutes before I can make out anything. Even though the sky should be clear, there is no starlight overhead. No light at all. In fact, I feel like I'm staring down the gullet of some massive, world-swallowing beast.

My mother dies sometime in the night, and I guess it's fitting that she might go without us finding any kind of closure, or deliverance, or grace. In that, our life is practically unchanged. We go on playing video games, eating junk food, having maybe one human conversation every week or two. Wanting to die, but willing to wait for it.

This outcome has earned a rating of dear darkness/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 31 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

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A nearby statue of St. Catherine of Siena looks down from a low pillar. I feel, despite her beatific countenance, judged and found wanting. I don't think we can talk our way up there, and I don't think we should wait. There must be some other way.

>invest me

(with the \*ESOTERIC VELOCITY\*)

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>fly

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the roof. After a surprisingly gentle landing, I stand, panting a bit, already hoping to do it again soon.

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A nearby door presumably opens into a stairwell. It would be easy to enter the building from here.

I feel an energy, familiar and strange at the same time, welling up within me.

>jump

Mustering my courage, I step toward the edge of the roof. What harm is there in looking, I wonder, though I think that I know the answer. What do you think? Should I get a closer look?

Please answer "yes" or "no": yes

Alright then. I move even closer to the edge. There's something seductive, something irresistible about it. Having reached the precipice, I feel a thrill run through my limbs. I could do it. It would be so easy. I could just let go, forego this last encounter with my mother, forsake this darkness for a greater darkness.

It would be over in a minute.

We've discussed the dangers of roofs and ledges and other high places, but in fairness I must admit that I wanted to go. This one's on me.

This outcome has earned a rating of short trip, long fall/10

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

I will be free.

Total Fail States Discovered: 32 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.  
Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.  
Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.  
Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.  
The Driveway: 3 out of 3.  
The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.  
The Hospital: 5 out of 6.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 33.

#### Hospital Roof

This large, open area is mostly featureless. A tarred surface, undoubtedly waterproof, serves as a "floor." I have an incredible view of the rising moon here, as the building is several floors higher than any tree nearby. Or any tree in the county, for that matter. I'm experiencing the usual anxiety that I feel whenever I'm near a high ledge. It would be so easy to jump. One weak moment is all it would take. It's too easy.

A nearby door presumably opens into a stairwell. It would be easy to enter the building from here.

>in

I quietly make my way down to the sixth floor. The hallway is mercifully empty, save for cold, sterilized air and the noisy exhalations of ventilator equipment. On any other day, this place would creep me out, but there's no room for that in my head right now. I soon reach my mother's room without incident.

#### Hospital Room

This space is approximately the size of my kitchen, neither small nor large. It is dominated by a large, complicated-looking bed. It is motorized for lifting and reclining its head and foot, and many tubes and wires seem connected to its frame. At the center of all of this machinery and electronics is my mother, who is either sleeping or unconscious. An uncomfortable chair sits in a corner, and a window looks out onto the parking lot.

Plastic tubing is attached to my mother's face. Presumably, it extends down her throat.

Something weird is happening to me. It feels as though I am vibrating with strange music.

>out

Even though I've come all this way, I just can't go on. I can't face this. I head to the stairwell, then run past security on the first floor. Later, back at the trailer, I stare off into space. I don't know why I bother. Looking out a window, I see that the moon's light has been devoured by the low, nearby hills. This trailer park is at the bottom of a bowl or crater of sorts, and I'm at the bottom of that. I'll never be more than I am right now, and I've never before been less.

This outcome has earned a rating of coward/10.

\*\*\*Press Any Key to Continue\*\*\*

Half of what I say is meaningless.

Total Fail States Discovered: 33 out of 33.

Nineteen Eighty: 2 out of 2.

Trailer Interior: 9 out of 9.

Trailer Exterior: 8 out of 8.

Inside the Car: 2 out of 2.

The Driveway: 3 out of 3.

The Pharmacy: 3 out of 3.

The Hospital: 6 out of 6.

At this point in the narrative, the maximum possible score is 33.

Hospital Room

Bed. Window. Chair. Mother. Me.

>x mom

My mother is practically unrecognizable. She looks swollen and pale, and her rest is fitful. Something angry and sick rises up within me. It isn't anger toward her - not really - not even anger toward us. The world never tells you how... just how fucking cheap everything is. How easy it is to be careless with anything that ought to be cared for. She probably thought she had a decade or more to smooth things out between us. I thought the same thing. Look at us now. I lean forward in the chair and cradle my chin in my hands.

Then the idea comes. I know. I think I know what to do. I think it will work.

I can feel each individual hair on my head.

>diagnose me

Half of what I say is meaningless.

I have brought something with me. Though I have possessed it for a long time, it was never mine. I don't mean to speak in riddles; I just don't know how to say what I mean.

What is this energy I am carrying?

>invest mom

(with the oddly familiar orange magic)

Sitting in the chair beside the bed, I put my hand on my mother's shoulder. She's malnourished, and I can feel the finer contours of her bones through the skin. She was pretty when I was young. I remember. Sometimes my father would take her dancing and she would put on a yellow dress and she was so pretty. That was long ago. They nearly always came home late; angry; yelling. I never understood why they kept going when it always turned out so badly, but I think I get it now.

"I get it now," I say, smoothing the hair away from her forehead. Is there anyone to blame? I try to remember her shitty, racist family. She was the only one to leave west Texas, which made her braver than the rest, but lonelier, too. If all you have is shit, then that's what you miss when it's gone. I understand that. "I get it," I say, still smoothing back her hair. I kiss her forehead, then bring my fingertips to her temples.

"This is yours," I say, directing the soft, orange sweetness back to her. I give it back. "OK?" I say, kissing her eyelids. "Take it back." I can feel my arms warm, as if the energy is traveling through them. Down the arms, through the hands. "Take it back," I say.

Her eyes snap open, and she reflexively moves her hands to the ventilator tubing. Juiced with the impossible magic of lost energy returned to a system, she pulls the tube out of her own throat without a sign of pain or discomfort. "Whew," she says, gasping as if she has just taken a long drink of cool, sweet water. "Whew, honey!" She looks around, then looks at my face. "I guess," she says, "I must be dying, the way you're looking at me." Her expression is matter-of-fact and untroubled.

I nod, and I suddenly feel as if the world entire is caught in my throat. She grabs my hands and begins stroking them. "Hey," she says, "hey now, buddy. Hey, it's alright." Now her grip is tight. "You know, after your father left, I wasn't sure how we'd ever make it. I was scared." Her eyes are soft and wide. Clear. "I'd always had a man to

take care of me. I never would have left Texas without a man. I never thought a lot of myself," she continues, reaching out with one hand to touch the side of my face. "But we never slept in our car and we never went hungry, did we? We never gave up."

She saw us as a team back then. To her, we were a team. I look at her. I see her deep, dark eyes. I see her finely angular jaw. Dark, thick hair. She looks like her father's people, and so do I. What kind of man hates his own mother, I wonder? I haven't seen her in a year, not since I landed here again. She was as sick as me and maybe sicker. "I should have helped you, mom," I say. It's the first real, true thing I've said about myself in a year or longer. "Mom," I say, still stroking her hair. "Mom, I never tried to help you."

She looks at me. "No, baby. That was never your job. You need to live. Just go out and live, OK?" She looks at me straight on. "Such a handsome man you turned out to be. You're a survivor, too. We come from strong people." She holds my hand to her lips and kisses it. "Come here and kiss me on the forehead, baby."

I bend over and kiss her, breathing deeply. I want to smell her hair. I want something to keep. "Good night, baby," she sighs.

Some minutes pass.

I stand from the chair. A nurse or someone will be here soon. I should leave.

>h

I have done what could be done. It's time to leave this place.

>diagnose me

I am only what I am.

>x mom

I can't bear to look. Let's just get out of here, OK?

>hug mom

I think you're confused. This is my story, not yours. I don't need your permission to leave.

I step out on the roof, and the air is still hot and thick. I'm not sure how I will get down from here. Perhaps I can get more juice from the traffic nearby. I see that the moon has risen, massive and white, above the treeline.

There's no hurry. I stand and watch the traffic for a while - fifteen minutes, perhaps. It's good to be out here in the dark. It's good to be able to think. I hear a car door shut somewhere below, followed by hard-soled shoes moving fast. "Busy, busy, busy," I think. This building is full of awful things happening to people, good and bad alike. I should clean my kitchen tomorrow, clean everything. Act normal until I feel normal. I should make friends with somebody. Hell, even making some enemies would be better than nothing.

I walk over to the abrupt edge of the roof and sit down, dangling my feet. I'm strangely unafraid. I know I'm not going to jump. I just want to sit. Sometimes a body needs to sit.

I'm still there, moments later, when I hear a crunch on tarred gravel. Turning around, I see a woman wearing lime green, sequined hot pants and a tight, white shirt that - rather than buttoned all the way down - is knotted at the bottom. Her hair is black and pulled back in a severe ponytail. Even though it is too dark to see her eyes, I know who it is.

"You," I say, standing, "It's you! The orange-eyed woman!" She steps closer, spotlit in a patch of moonlight.

"That was a neat trick," she says, as if we had already been conversing for an hour. "I always knew it was possible. Academically, not practically." She puts her right hand on her hip and looks you over. "Do you dress like that all the time?" She sounds unimpressed.

I do dress like this all the time, as a matter of fact. I haven't cared about my appearance in a long while. It's not like anyone would notice. Not any humans, anyway. "Fashion," she says, "is one of the only interesting things that you primeoids do. Why would you choose to look like that?" If I hadn't just said goodbye to my mother, I'd probably laugh. Her clothes are ridiculous. She looks at my face. "Your mother died." She says it matter-of-factly. It isn't a question.

"Yes. She did," I say.

"That is a challenging time for your species, I believe. The death of a family member." Her expression and affect are that of an entomologist cataloging a rare beetle. "However, by violating a

fundamental law of the universe, you were able to speak to her before she died." She bends over to tie the laces of her high-heeled sneakers. "You stored the energy of the psychic bleed for sixteen of your years, then put it back. Returned lost energy to a system." She stands again. "Disappointing, really. I don't think that would work for me, and even if it did, I wouldn't be sufficiently entertained." She puts an odd emphasis on "entertained," as if it were the only important thing in this world. "You must need to know how to get down," she says, again looking distastefully at my jeans.

It is moments later. Having learned to harness the tidal power of the moon, I follow the orange-eyed woman over the edge of the roof. Just as I have begun to sling myself over and beyond the bypass, I suddenly stop, hanging motionless in the air. The cars below me are still, too. Stranger yet, the world is completely silent. It is a silence so complete that I have never heard the like. Slowly, the world fades from sight, and I am dangling in a void.

A momentary terror bends over me, but I am reassured when someone else appears nearby. It's a man - a little older than my mother. In fact, he looks a great deal like her. He could be my uncle, though I've never met mom's only brother.

"Look at you," he says sadly. "You could be my son." The man removes a thick pair of glasses, then polishes them with the end of his shirt. "But I decided a long time ago not to have children." He replaces his glasses, then looks at my face. "You are just as I imagined you," he says. "This conversation..." he trails off... thinking, "It's a shameless rip-off of the ending of *Breakfast of Champions*. That's one of the books that made you want to be a writer, isn't it? Back when we were, oh, fourteen or so. We laughed and laughed. And then we were sad. That book took us everywhere. I know it was that way for you because that's the way I wrote you. I wanted you to love that book the way I did."

I know, just like that. The author of my troubles stands before me. How many times have I entered that hospital room? As many times as I have entered, I have never once left. Not really. Not like this. I have never been here, talking to him. I have been in the dark, but I have never been in this dark. It belongs to him, not me. I never had the courage to escape this day. I only ever tried to run past it as if it were a cemetery at night. I wanted to end what I ought to have overcome instead. This day, repeated endlessly, is a thing he has done to himself: a trap he has laid for himself. Everything, all of it, has always been about him. "I want to apologize," he says. "I haven't been kind to you. My own father was educated. He had a doctorate in

American Studies. I grew up surrounded by books, reading them and talking about them. I took that from you. I never let you have that. My own father went around cleaning up after my mother his entire adult life. With his help, she was able to live a long time. Have a career, even. Almost everyone that she knew considered her a success."

I stare at him, this dimension-hopping non-uncle of mine. "Why did you do it? How could you do it? You made me and my mother so sick. How could you force someone to be that way? What's wrong with you?" As soon as I say it, I know that there's no answer. He's even more messed up than I am. He is driven to relive his shitty childhood in a loop, again and again... he can't help but repeat the ending.

"My boy," he says, "my son. That's why I am here. I am setting you free. You've found the edge of this simulation, of this narrative. You've broken through. You're free to push beyond it now, to do what you will. To live." He turns, and begins walking away, into the void.

"Wait!" I cry, "Wait!" I run after him, into the ceaseless nothing surrounding me. "Make me whole! Fix me! Bring my mother back!"

My creator stops, then looks back at me. "I'm sorry," he says. "I don't know how to write you any other way."

"That's it?" I ask. "You can't do anything?"

He thinks for a minute. "I can leave you alone." The world begins to fade into focus. I am still several stories above the pavement, still swinging from the moon's tidal forces. There is at least this. Trees. Moon. Gravity there for the swindling. As the world fully snaps into place, the orange-eyed woman looks over her shoulder, watching me fly above the highway, above its cars and lights. Soon I have climbed above the low hills, passing into the star-filled dark of the wilderness west of town.

\*\*\* You Have Reached the Stars West of Town \*\*\*

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, QUIT, UNDO the last command, view the BAD ending, view the BASIC ending, view the FULL ending, view the TRUE ending, view the FASTIDIOUS ending, consult the GUIDE, display IMAGES, or review your SCORE in detail?

> score

You have discovered two of two fail states in the 1980s:

- 1) I amused myself with a rather unfair fight against a magic-crazed primeoid male.
- 2) I grew bored with my search for powerful magic, instead casting the \*WIN\* spell.

You have discovered nine of nine fail states in the trailer's interior:

- 1) You attempted to siphon power from the bathroom mirror, only to find yourself imprisoned by an ominously competent doppelganger.
- 2) You hemmed and hawed while the power of the \*SEETHING ORDER\* evaporated from the bin of broken dishes.
- 3) You used the power of the \*SEETHING ORDER\* to summon Battle Princess Chiyo to your kitchen. She rewarded our impertinence by cutting us - cutting me - in half.
- 4) You wasted a powerful source of entropic magic to tidy up our kitchen, leaving us utterly pantsless when Fast Eddie's trailer exploded.
- 5) You destroyed our telecom devices with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*.
- 6) You used our only means of getting dressed to destroy a television.
- 7) You invested a highly entropic-resistant toilet with the \*SEETHING ORDER\*, which left us unable to escape the fiery explosion caused by a workplace accident. Cooking meth is work, isn't it?
- 8) The less we say about the spiders under the bathroom sink, the better.
- 9) You grew impatient, perhaps mistaking an ending for a victory. Such is the nature of the \*WIN\* command.

You have discovered eight of eight fail states in the trailer's exterior:

- 1) You decided to leave without exploring the trailer park (unlike you), missing out on multiple opportunities for you to help your neighbors (like you).
- 2) You blew up our trailer with the flaming fury of the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*.

- 3) You rushed forward as if life were a game to \*WIN\*.
- 4) You blew up the car, which responded in kind.
- 5) You destroyed our neighbor's trailer - and probably our neighbor, too - with the \*DRAGON PUNCH\*.
- 6) We were transformed into a charcoal sketch on high-quality art paper.
- 7) Like Icarus, we flew too close to the flaming meth lab.
- 8) Even as well as I know you, I was appalled by your decision to strand your neighbor in close proximity to his violently abusive boyfriend. Shocking, really.

You have discovered two of two fail states in the car's interior:

- 1) You acted like a total weirdo with our neighbor.
- 2) We rushed headlong for the end of this story. And reached it, unfortunately.

You have discovered three of three fail states near Lakeshore Drive:

- 1) You barged recklessly toward the end of the story, only to find that we were unprepared to face what's there.
- 2) Blowing up the car never gets old. For you, anyway.
- 3) You knocked over an oak tree with the \*MOTORIZED KINESIS\*, crushing our car and quite possibly killing a rather adorable cat.

You have discovered three of three fail states at the pharmacy:

- 1) You finished the game!
- 2) Just as a strange sequence of events concluded, our car exploded.
- 3) Even a bad mother is a mother.

You have discovered six of six fail states at the hospital:

- 1) Oddly enough, winning here led me to wait rather than hurry.
- 2) My car exploded, perhaps for the last time today.
- 3) I knocked a massive hole in the side of the hospital.
- 4) I left because I could not face the realities of the moment.
- 5) Why did I jump? Some things just can't be helped.
- 6) Rather than confront my mother's death, I fled.

Would you like to RESTART, RESTORE a saved game, QUIT, UNDO the last command, view the BAD ending, view the BASIC ending, view the FULL ending, view the TRUE ending, view the FASTIDIOUS ending, consult the GUIDE, display IMAGES, or review your SCORE in detail?

>