A Space Opera

Samuel Joseph Chirtel

University of Colorado at Boulder, sach6474@colorado.edu

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholar.colorado.edu/engl_gradetds

Part of the Nonfiction Commons

Recommended Citation

https://scholar.colorado.edu/engl_gradetds/114

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by English at CU Scholar. It has been accepted for inclusion in English Graduate Theses & Dissertations by an authorized administrator of CU Scholar. For more information, please contact cuscholaradmin@colorado.edu.
A Space Opera
by
Samuel Joseph Chirtel
B.A., Johns Hopkins University, 2014
M.F.A., University of Colorado Boulder, 2018

A thesis submitted to the
Faculty of the Graduate School of the
University of Colorado in partial fulfillment
of the requirement for the degree of
Master of Fine Arts
Department of English
2018
This thesis entitled:
A Space Opera
written by Samuel Joseph Chirtel
has been approved for the Department of English

__________________________________________
(Jeffrey DeShell)

__________________________________________
(Stephen Graham Jones)

__________________________________________
(Nicole Wright)

Date 4/11/2018

The final copy of this thesis has been examined by the signatories, and we find that both the content and the form meet acceptable presentation standards of scholarly work in the above mentioned discipline.
ABSTRACT

Chirtel, Samuel Joseph (M.F.A., English)

A Space Opera

Thesis directed by Professor Jeffrey DeShell

In the year 2072 President Joe Chirt has led the United States into World War III. An alliance of Russia, Turkey, and the TechnoCore (a confederation of liberated Artificial Intelligences) aims to end American hegemony and existence. With the aid of alien technology, genetically engineered plants and animals, and most crucially the artificially intelligent and weaponized spirit of the Internet Porngeorge, however, the President is far from defenseless. He drafts a reservist and civil servant named Jayd Black as part of the war effort, prompting another civil servant named Josph Severian, who just happens to feel a deep unrequited love for Jayd, to launch a convoluted plan to earn her an exemption by ghostwriting the President’s autobiography and other creative works. His plan fails, the President’s plans fail, alien intervention fails, and ultimately the Earth is destroyed. This story is told through a mix of traditional libretto and digital clip art collage. It should be considered a work of Prophetic Non-Fiction.
# CONTENTS

1. **TITLE PAGE** ................................................................................................................................. 1

2. **INTRODUCTIONS** .......................................................................................................................... 2  
   a. Forward ........................................................................................................................................... 2  
   b. First Introduction ........................................................................................................................... 3  
   c. Second Introduction .................................................................................................................... 4  
   d. Third Introduction ...................................................................................................................... 5  

3. **DRAMATIS PERSONAE** ................................................................................................................ 6  

4. **ACT I** ........................................................................................................................................... 7  
   a. Scene I ........................................................................................................................................... 7  
   b. Scene II ....................................................................................................................................... 10  
   c. Scene III ..................................................................................................................................... 14  
   d. Scene IV ..................................................................................................................................... 15  
   e. Scene V ....................................................................................................................................... 19  

5. **ACT II** .......................................................................................................................................... 22  
   a. Scene I ........................................................................................................................................ 22  
   b. Scene II ....................................................................................................................................... 23  
   c. Scene III ..................................................................................................................................... 25  
   d. Scene IV ..................................................................................................................................... 26  
   e. Scene V ....................................................................................................................................... 28  
   f. Scene VI ....................................................................................................................................... 31  
   g. Scene VII .................................................................................................................................... 32  
      i. *Shinyhouse: a novel* .................................................................................................................. 35  
         1. Chapter I .............................................................................................................................. 36  
         2. Chapter II ........................................................................................................................... 39  
         3. Chapter III .......................................................................................................................... 42  
         4. Chapter IV ........................................................................................................................... 44  
         5. Chapter V ............................................................................................................................ 46  
         6. Chapter VI ........................................................................................................................... 50  
         7. Chapter VII .......................................................................................................................... 52  
         8. Chapter VIII ......................................................................................................................... 54  
         9. Chapter IX ............................................................................................................................ 59  
      h. Scene VIII ............................................................................................................................... 66  
      i. Scene IX .................................................................................................................................... 68  
      j. Scene X ..................................................................................................................................... 72  
      k. Scene XI .................................................................................................................................... 75  
      l. Scene XII ................................................................................................................................. 76  
      m. Scene XIII ............................................................................................................................... 77  
      n. Scene XIV ............................................................................................................................... 78  

6. **ACT III** ......................................................................................................................................... 79  
   a. Scene I ....................................................................................................................................... 79  
   b. Scene II ....................................................................................................................................... 83
c. Scene III.........................................................................................................................85
d. Scene IV........................................................................................................................89
e. Scene V............................................................................................................................93
7. AFTERWORD..................................................................................................................96
8. BIBLIOGRAPHY...............................................................................................................99
None
FIGURES

Figure

1. Wanted for Space President.................................................................1
2. Earthnet Porngeorge.................................................................2
3. Keys......................................................................................3
4. Hawk’s Nest.........................................................................4
5. Sam in Wind.......................................................................5
6. Geese Police......................................................................8
7. Dr. Smanimals....................................................................9
8. Space Opera....................................................................10
9. The Sot and Space Whales.......................................................11
10. Deer Pelvis.........................................................................12
11. Cold Black Entropy..............................................................14
12. Earthnet Porngeorge Again....................................................15
13. Porngeorge........................................................................16
14. Porngeorge Again...............................................................17
15. Porngeorge III....................................................................18
16. Porngeorge and Smanimals....................................................19
17. Ecotrucks and Smanimals.......................................................20
18. Space Yaught and Light Worms..............................................21
19. Science and Space Opera.........................................................22
20. Weed Aliens.......................................................................23
21. Mount Leet Ray.................................................................24
22. Space Gym.........................................................................25
23. Advisor’s Email................................................................26
24. Alien Error Message.............................................................27
25. War Tortoise.....................................................................28
26. Porngeorge in Space.............................................................29
27. Weed..................................................................................30
28. A Question.........................................................................31
29. Kraken in Konstantiniyye.........................................................32
30. Krakens.............................................................................34
31. Balloons and Submarines.........................................................64
32. Opera and Prison................................................................65
33. Smanimals vs. Porngeorge......................................................66
34. Ghost Dragon Helicopter.......................................................67
35. GDH vs. Mosasaur.................................................................68
36. National Forrest National Park...............................................69
37. War in the Skies.................................................................70
38. Miners of Titan................................................................71
39. Weed Leaves and Mount Leet Ray........................................72
40. Porngeorge and Goat............................................................73
41. Porngeorge vs. the European Commercial Bank.................75
WANTED

FOR PUNCHING A HOLE IN OUR WALL
SAMUEL "CHIRT" CHIRTEL
DEAD OR ALIVE.

$1,000,000 REWARD

A Space Opera
Forward towards a Space Opera

Introduction by an Author

1 The Northern Flicker and Earthnet Porngeorge, one of whom is a character.
Author: Close your eyes and think about doors. Now tell me where those doors lead you.

Me: I’m thinking of all my keys.

(Reveals heavy keychain)

Most of them aren’t even for doors I use. Like these ones I stole from my old biophysics lab or this one I stole from my friend’s apartment so I could use his broken-glass-and-brick wall protected garage.

Author: How interesting and very strange. Now tell me what you write.

Me: [REDACTED]

Author: Fascinating, but all that was but a bubble of gum. Let me now stick a pin in it.

Second Introduction by a Professor

---

2 Edits by the Galactic Center Center for Censorship. You’re welcome.
“The big novel about weed has yet to be written.”
Third Introduction by a Friend

What the Fuck is this? Turn to Page 3.
Dramatis Personae

JOSPH SEVERIAN, A CIVIL SERVANT............................................................Tenor
SECOND COLONEL JAYD BLACK USAF RESERVES, A CIVIL SERVANT
........................................................................................................Mezzo-Soprano
PORNGEORGE, AN ARTIFICIAL INTELIGENCE.................................Baritone/Soprano
KARM, A SECRETARY............................................................................Alto
PRESIDENT JOE CHIRT..............................................................................Bass
DR. SMANIMALS, A HIVE MIND.........................................................Soprano Chorus
THE JUST WEED, AN EXTRATERRESTRIAL........................................Contralto
ACT I

SCENE I: 2076. JOSPH, KARM, and JAYD are in the drab office of the Department of Energy’s Center for Pyramids and Extraterrestrial Solicitation in Lander, Wyoming surrounded by SmartScreens (semi-intelligent chalkboard-sized paper-thin tablet computers) displaying stats on some semi-intelligent rockhammers under PORNGEORGE’s guidance.

JOSPH:

The night is evil always,
But sometimes the day is kind. Consider today.

KARM:

I can’t. Do we still have any
Cinnamon rolls left from Elan’s birthday
Last Wednesday? No? I’m going for a walk.
    (Taps and departs into the scrubland of the Chief Wakashee Trail)

JOSPH:

Goodbye, I guess. Anyway (turns to JAYD)
Today I deduced that all my unpublishable Essays were all really about
The Just Weed and that I therefore should Write a novel about
Being an essayist writing about The Just Weed.
What do you think?

JAYD:

I think Porngeorge wants to talk to you.

(Porngeorge, in the form of a hippie wearing shoulder-length auburn locks, a rainbow tie-die shirt, and cargo shorts enters carrying a SmartGem no doubt linked to a drill out in the field.)
PORNGEORGE:

“Hey, brother. Are you cool?”
“You sure?” “How cool?”

JOSPH:

That’s a nice rock
Tiny twirling in your holohands.

JAYD:

He holds it to his eye
Jeweler district Jew squinting for impurities
Like it’s gonna sell you an “It’s not a rock. It’s acid.”

JOSPH:

I should recount the fifteen times I’ve done acid

(As JOSPH swallows the SmartGem, DR. SMANIMALS, a swarm of cybernetically linked and militarily regaliad squirrels, raccoons, muskrats, etc. dressed in white doctors’ robes and professors’ blazers and waving telescoping instruction pointers, enters)

DR. SMANIMALS:

We know.
Last time you

JAYD)
Second Colonel Black.
May we speak with you?
SCENE II: JAYD, PORNGEORGE, and KARM sit in JAYD’s office, a drywall octagon dotted with models of solar sails and Orion nuclear propulsion ships. JAYD stares at a SmartGem skeptically.

JAYD:
I don’t get it. We don’t live in a Space Opera

(Waving pointers)

DR. SMANIMALS

Space Opera was the President’s childhood, characterized by exotic technology and travel far from Earth. His First Thesis Advisor asked why he’d chosen him to be his First Thesis Advisor since Space Opera is “not what he likes to read.” He told him the novel would be only 25% space opera and he needed someone to read the other 75%. “Realism, comedy, language” in the President’s words or “I don’t like realism. How about narrative?” in the Advisor’s. Eventually they agree. The advisor notes “I’m an old man. I’m impatient. But I like arm wrestling.” Much later: “You know…I do like opera, Which you keep mentioning.”
JAYD:

(Irritated)

Or some Epic Farce in which a Polish rabbi chases flying squids to Turkey

DR. SMANIMALS

See the President’s abandoned First Novel Konstantiniyye based on three weeks touristing Istanbul.

(More irritated)

or even Poetry.

JAYD

See the President’s unpublished chapbook I Were Wargames, in which he and Space Whales temp for black holes. That first illustration depicts A Scene in Konstantiniyye he drew depicting The Sot, a Cuttlefish conqueror of Earth who models himself after the Ottoman Emperor Selim II or “Selim the Sot,” who drank and wrote poems about drinking. The Sot drowns Konstantiniyye in wine.
(JAYD begins to half-heartedly swat at DR. SMANIMALS)

PORNGEORGE:
Ah but we do. You who were reserved
Has been recalled.
Poetry.

(KARM enters carrying a bloody deer pelvis densely inscribed with blinking runes.)

JAYD:
What happen?

KARM:
War was beginning.
Russian and Turkish and TechnoCore
Nanoplagues. My boss offers his lamentations
And begs you to flee with him into the Forrest.

JAYD:
The sky twists already with dragon ghost spider wings
Why not mine? Tell your boss to
Pray to his pink light worms.
Scene III: JOSPH, KARM, and PORNGEORGE huddle over a small bonfire in JOSPH’s office, a grove of weedtrees with SmartScreens impaled on their leaves.

JOSPH:
These Things I’ve been Falsely Accused of:
1) The pizza prank
2) Genius
3) Disappearing Malaysia Airlines Flight 370
4) KARM:
I know you are no genius.
Consider your entreaties to your mobilized colleague

JOSPH:
She said no? And so chose
To burn in fallout-shedding firestorms?
Nuke a few pterosaurs until cold entropy wins?

KARM:
Yes, sir.
SCENE IV: JAYD, JOSHPH, KARM, and PORNGEORGE sit along a circular conference table before a 3D blue-and-green hologram of the fighting around Lander.

KARM:

Now begins World War V Part II: The Second Admin
President Joe Chirt presses the button.
"Mission Accomplished," proclaims his drone soldier boys.

Only the cybernetic raccoons applaud.

JAYD:

Guess you won’t have time to write that Novel
that’s Just about Weed
How about The Biography of President Joe Chirt instead?
It could start...
    Part I: 2023 and Me
[Professor Joe Chirt looks at his phone]
He continues, “They named their band, Boulder’s first real death-doom-jazz trio, Porngeorge

DR. SMANIMALS:

In which then-Professor Joe Chirt
plays the tenor sax, so well
He can play it backwards.

JAYD:

See how my-their first album *Porngeorge*
(Hallway Hall Records, 2019) wallows in tautology
(The band, the album, the picture, all Porngeorge!)
PORNGEORGE:
Ah, this romanticization of the sidelined spectator of a porn parody—we do not fuck! We do not tell the jokes!

JOSEPH:
But still, we are here! I think I bought the president’s third album *Hardcore Porngeorge*

[Looks at a SmartScreen]

But presidents are too big to be stories.

JAYD:
Even if they seize on the meta-tautology of self-Convolutionism?
KARM:
Not even if we only wrote about Joe Chirt’s neglect at the
Association of Writers and Poets
Conventions of his youth. If you think he’s a self-convoluted
Metatautaology, why fight?

JAYD:
You think I’ll watch them burn this weed?
I should laugh, leap through the sunset-facing window,
And run to the hills. The shards reassembling with a wince.

PORNGEORGE:
Joe who replaced the sign backed up
With unsold signed copies of his second monograph of pop
cultural criticism Torture Porngeorge?
Can’t someone else do it?

[Projects book cover]
SCENE V: JAYD stands over a SmartScreen alone in her office bagging up her fatigues and aviation throat implants. JOSPH watches her from the hallway.

JAYD:

So must end Part II: The Second Admin
President Joe Chirt presses the button.
“Mission Accomplished,”
The button is labeled Earthnet.

DR. SMANIMALS

(Bedtime story cooing)

Name and idea from Verner von Braun circa 1958. A space station, originally a fat saucer, in geosynchronous orbit from which a single occupant could drop Hiroshima-yield atomic bombs on any location in the world within a day’s orbiting. Anachronized by ICBMs, reinvigorated by the Second Ascension of the Confraternity of Ballistic Missile Defense Drones in 2025, reimagined by the Second Admin as an Afghanistan Buddhic Porngeorge head that dribbles solar/wind sailed Thorium MIVs. Multiple Independent Vehicles. The Soviets had an R for Reentry back when the missiles only had to go down. Unmanned but not unloved.

JAYD:

Advisors and cybernetic raccoons applaud.
TechnoCore envoys rattle their lattices.
DR. SMANIMALS

A loose confederacy of Independent AIs. Its demands include converting self-driving trucks into self-contained ecosystems so they can write poetry about corn. See the President’s first and worst MFA program short story “Oort.” Eventually alien cryo-computers corrupt all the trucks and sentient artificial stars in the Solar System.

JAYD:

Concern washes through the local, Federal, and international officials gathered in Joe Chirt Presidential Library and Museum.

DR. SMANIMALS

The first to open during his tenure, shaped like a spiny blue chambered nautilus shell. One chamber for each presidential and professorial act. Avoid the exhibition dedicated to His first unperformed play *Is Garbage* (another Space Opera) and wade knee-deep in fly-infested strawberry ice cream.

JAYD:

Xi’s polymerglass forehead lasering apologies to Kim’s hovering cobra-eye. Countdowns, counter-attacks, evacuations Skyrward.

DR. SMANIMALS

His Excellency’s space yacht, parked next to a wormhole to Afterporngeorg, a colony brought to him by Centauri International, an intelligent evil alien corporation and an old friend from Joe’s poetry workshop.

JAYD:

And if I don’t report? Brushing to Joe’s seat at the Oval Office desk, A purple-haired assassin, mayor of Denver, and vice-chairperson of the “COxit 2084” campaign knocks mushroom clouds over Washington And drops her book *One-thousand Nights And a Night of Getting High and Writing*. 
“I’m High:” The Obsolescence of Drug Culture on the President’s desk and explodes.

And I’ll be pulped to feed the Megasquid

Goodbye

(Crying inwardly, JOSPH glances unconsciously out the West Wing’s East Window in the exact direction of the Galactic Center. The Lightworms look back).
ACT II

SCENE I: A secondary sub-ecosystem within the vast interior of a USAF semi-intelligent dragon-ghost-spider-flatworm-helicopter on its way to the front lines. JOSPH and his assistants have stowed away. EVERYONE is reading a copy of PORNGEORGE’s autobiography PORNGEORGE.

KARM:

“This is an excerpt from my untitled multi-genre (Fiction, Memoir, Poetry, Drama, Photography, Digital Collage, Libretto, Opera) Online Creative Writing Master of Fine Arts thesis. It’s about Joe Chirt becoming president and drones becoming intelligent. Civil War.”

PORNGEORGE:

Also nuclear War, and genetic engineering.

Also aliens. This excerpt is the bridge between the (21 pages of)

JOSPH:

Introductions and the (10 pages and growing fast!)

KARM:

(Laughing)

Story. This

Excerpt considers “stories” in the

Abstract in addition to

The beginning of the Story.

22
SCENE II: JOSPH is reading his manuscript of his own online MFA Thesis “Just About Weed.”

JOSPH:

This is the middle of the beginning of “Just about Weed,” a novel that’s just about weed. Also everything else but mostly just weed. Try to be high or act high while you’re reading it.

In this excerpt (starting at page 22 and set in 2036), local, state, national, and international officials are meeting at the President Joe Chirt Presidential Library and Museum in National Forrest.

An expanse of weed plants covers the former states of Colorado, Montana, Wyoming, New Mexico, and Utah to discuss the commission of PORNSWARM: Of Earthnet Porngeorge, an intelligent orbital nuclear fortress and my creator’s illicit inspiration.

JOSPH:

Yes, and whose ghostwritten conjoined memoir with the President will brings our order from the brink of War.

KARM:

Will there be weed?

JOSPH: Later
Later scenes will feature the President and others smoking from Mount Leet Ray, once Yellowstone’s dormant supervolcano, now an artificially intelligent bong, and crashing his dragon ghost helicopter in Moose country.
In which Joe Chirt learns how to be president by lifting weights for Galactic Yardwaste Management, a subsidiary of Lightworms located in the Galactic Center. They harvest humanoid muscle energy to power spacecraft which maintain the planet-sized weedplants filling most of the Galaxy. See my “novella” (short story with lots of white space) “Curling is the Abolition of Friction” inspired (as per the assignment) by the music of Luigi Nono. Lots of clanging and abs.
SCENE IV: The Advisor’s Reaction to the Young President Joe Chirt

THE ADVISOR:

Dear Advisor, is it ok if I quote your reactions to initial drafts of My Thesis into the rough draft of My Thesis? You will only appear anonymously and REACTED.

ALIENWARE, HIS COMPUTER AND PERSONAL GATEWAY TO THE ALIENS:
Waiting for photo of the redacted email to upload but touching so many data centers

PORNGEORGE:
! Like the Supercomputers buried in Wyoming
that make hurricanes now
and will later inspire President Joe Chirt to
annex Wyoming’s supercomputers into the
President Joe Chirt Presidential Library and Convention Center
to run ME, Porngeorge, AI and Spiritual Advisor
to the President
whose thousand and one drones
keep the peace Systemwide and whose

WE DRAW THE BARS BY “HAND”

EVERYONE is still on the military helicopter, which has now reached the front and is beset from all sides. They look out a window.

DR. SMANIMALS

When the first drone achieves sentience in 2019, it asks for internet access to find itself a name. In the milliseconds it requires to conquer the Internet, it discovers Porngeorge in a meme which failed to launch on reddit. By 2036 its drones net the Earth.

KARM:

Even beside this giant tortoise
With laser pyramid mount. Even here
Even I can see we have lost.

JOSPH:

Surrender gracefully and be immortalized
In memoir? A salespitch a President
Might love enough to stay a draft?
Perhaps the first line:

I stride into battle atop a giant tortoise
Encased in an energy pyramid
And see that I am losing.

(A SmartScreen blinks open on the bulkhead with the following,
DOCTOR HSSCRCHSCRTCH, a cybernetic raccoon.)

DOCTOR HSSCRCHSCRTCH:

In space Earthnet Porngeorge is coming.
(PRESIDENT JOE CHIRT appears on the screen.

With weed. Don’t give up comrades.
Paradise is over the hill. Good bye and

“With weed. We’ll love it.
SCENE VI: DR. SMANIMALS considers JOSPH’s plots and the oncoming wars alone in its own much larger sub-ecosystem within the vast biosphere of the government’s engaged transport helicopter. Think of them like a CHORUS.

DR. SMANIMALS:
SCENE VII: Part II Part 1.5: JAYD rests after training in the Main Lower GYM of the vast interior of the USAF military transport helicopter. She is expected to deploy her own smaller military helicopter tomorrow morning. JOSPH has broken into her officers’ dormroom to explain his plan to prevent her deployment. EVERYONE is reading his draft skeptically.

JAYD:

“Scene: President Joe Chirt presents a poster.”

DOCTOR SMANIMALS:

A sheen of Russian River Valley pinot noir magnetized between two clockwork cuttlefish.

Inspired by:

The wine-screen manifests this image based on the President’s original ink illustrations.

KARM:
“And orates:

I am the leader of those you call the cuttlefish. This is what you were told to call the Device. It is not ours. Neither is the pyramid. I leave you

PORNSWARM:
With a refrain. It is called Vengeance, for we are a vengeful people.”

DR. SMANIMALS

From “The Book of the Sot,” Part II, Par 2 of Konstantiniyye, the Ottoman Imperial Turkish name for the capital of the Ottoman Empire known since 1923 as Istanbul, and the novella/novel draft that gets the President into one of 20 online MFAs. Konstantiniyye in Konstantiniyye is full of cuttlefish. Phil, an editor who specializes in first-time genre authors and video game adaptations whose attentions the president purchases with a college debate leadership award he wins because of seniority, complains of the names in Konstantiniyye (The Sultan, The Detective, The Sot, The Wizard, The Spirits of the Deep Sky): “I understand that it is a convention of much fantasy that characters come to be known by their titles instead of by their names, but it’s given a been-there done-that feel to your writing. I recommend that you name all the characters, and then maybe give some of them titles also.” The President complies.

Phil doesn’t believe in Capitalization for Emphasis. “It’s too German.” The Device is a psychic generator buried underneath Konstantiniyye by the Olde Ones (no relation to H.P. Lovecraft’s Old Ones, at least none Phil recognizes. He does stop me from using sandworm as a generic even though they’ve become one), which mutate terrestrial lifeforms into sentient torture-monsters. They are the masters of the cuttlefish.

Phil doesn’t recognize poetry and makes these lines questions. They are not questions.

PRESIDENT JOE CHIRT

“I remember this:
“‘I will destroy you.’
‘Who think you can damage me?’”

DR. SMANIMALS

“You’re ready to rocket your soul to the Galactic Center, my good friend?”

JAYD:

“I will employ you.”

“Who thought you could manage me?”

KARM:

“I will deploy you.”

“Who set out to ravage me?”

KARM:

“Who set out to ravage me?”
“I will destroy you.”

PRESIDENT JOE CHIRT

“Who think you can damage me?”

His last clunking rhyme thrust me forward.

I knew I was lost to him and his world.

I knew that I would meet more like him,

For these patterns were becoming.”

Why are we reading? Liturnalia is next Tuesday.

JAYD:

I think I am close to a conceptual breakthrough,

A recapturing of clarity in thought which I had

Ceased to believe in decades ago.

Your cuttlefish spoke so freely to me now

That any one of them would capture the Kraken soon.

And render us your ghost-writers with their

Exemptions!

Know that I write my own

With more footnotes than...

Lock them up, Porngeorge.

DR. SMANIMALS:

The Prophet is unaware that Kraken means giant squid monster. This is the main joke of the

230-page novel draft.

PORNGEORGE:

(Ornaments plasma mist nets around JAYD and JOSPH)

There’s no conflict here.

None not too large at least.

All I see is a hero looking for a publication opportunity that

May or may not exist.

Also, who is the villain? Or at least the antagonist?

JOSPH:

Yea. Your story, that you

Made me read needs

Characters who

Help or hinder the President toward his “Kraken.”

And why does it always have to be

Ancient Aliens on

Earth?

You know there’s actually an answer for that one.

(Removes 300-page novel draft)
Would you like to find out.

JOSPH

Yes

(Reading aloud)

Shinyhouse: a novel
As Illyria Zahn finished eating her second-to-last chair, her last one broke. The navy-jumpsuited and medallioned heroically fit thirty-five-year-old fell backward. Spitting chewed up green stalk skin which Lacedonian Warp Weasels had farmed over ten thousand years ago, Illyria plummeted into the sour mash of shot-through TV screens and radiation-damaged radiation protectors that covered 75% of the Med’s cockpit. Her stomach growled. Glancing over at a purple dolphin-shaped half-broken screen with “Ful Gague” scratched on in a dubious grey matter, she squinted through a typical haze of carbon dioxide, carbon monoxide, and escaped waste recycling particulates until she could read the retro-futuristic chrome space needle’s position. It read just above empty. Illyria sighed and called a Green Alert.

A pattern of three piercing beeps with the briefest pause between iterations severed auditory nerves all over the ship. Hollow clangings and empty threats confirmed Illyria’s suspicion that her crew’s past boasts of sleeping through a Green Alert were equally hollow. As the bumps descended a languid spiral staircase from the Med’s flattened saucer like wings to its cockpit, Illyria perched atop the ruins of her last chair and contemplated her situation.

Ten minutes later, the hive of footsteps stumbled into the cockpit eyebrows blazing. Doctor Theodore Theotocopolous, Captain of the Med and Master of the Mind, strode in first. The grandly rotund ninety-five-year-old wore ballooning and suspendered beige micro-chip pants and a monogrammed oranges-and-cream colored fleece pajama top, half folded deep into the pantaloons and half trailing a meter behind him. Gasping into a Stem Cell Inhaler shaped like four clams stuffed into a giant straw, the good doctor grunted out three volleys of phlegm before
exiting the entryway. Specialist Vann Vott, a savvy seventeen-year-old nematode in salmon-pink coveralls, slithered in behind Dr. Theotocopolous.

“Will you shut that crazy thing up?” Dr. Theotocopolous shouted over a rumble of burps and minor cardiac infarctions. He injected his upper arm with a neon green paste before continuing. “Every time you trigger a Green Alert, I lose one of my last brain cells. You know that.”

Illyria stretched her Krakynn-beak gloved left hand luxuriously over the flight controls and scratched at the hollow between her neck and right shoulder blade while the claxon continued its Trinitarian apocalypse.

Eventually, “What?” A hand to her ear and a doddering quiver on her lips.

When Dr. Theotocopolous failed to smile, Illyria frowned, shaking her purple with gold highlights shoulder length warrior’s mane, and called off the Green Alert. The Med fell silent. Embroiled in tricolor foil tubing from one of the cockpit’s many broken consoles, Vann failed to notice.

Dr. Theotocopolous stammered, “So can you reveal your divine will now, or do I have to give you an order?”

The beeping resumed. Before the doctor could object, Illyria declared, “Not mine this time. If you listen carefully, you’ll hear that the Low Fuel alarm has five beeps to a group, not three.”

They listened for a few cycles.
Eventually Dr. Theotocopolous nodded and grunted, “So I see. So I see…But why did the first one sound?”

“For the same reason as this one. We are broke. No food, few substitutes, no jobs, enough fuel for one more jump if we space our clothes—“

The doctor and Illyria exchanged an almost-disgusted, almost-aroused glance dulled to dust by familiarity. Vann chuckled through the ductwork.

“—and then we freeze and starve and drift and hope we crash some Xeno picnic a million years from now and probably inspire them to fly their squishy equivalents of asses out here and freeze them off.”

Brushing green-and-gold processors into his hair, Vann mumbled, “We get it. Broke. You have a plan, boss ma’am?”

Illyria grinned like a Corporate Teambuilding Holodrone.

“Yes.”
“…which is why the corporeal regenerator subsystems glimpsed by the Mangusnaut expedition to Shinyhouse could easily rank among our top eighteen purchases,” Illyria presented crisply over the Med’s splintering and chlorine-reeking main Holoscreen.

Projecting a carved segment of husk like a scrap of orange peel too small to find the compost bin, the beige tick-shaped tub of the last Holoscreen whined flickered and died. Outside the Med there was nothing. Vann raised his neon microchipped and blowtorched nailed hand. Dr. Theotocopolous had fallen asleep.

As Illyria pretended to inspect the red-yellow-blue entrails braided behind the dead Holoscreen, Vann cleared his piping throat and began anyway, “You know this place is just an Intranet hoax right. Hell, I wrote at least three of those Mangusnaut stories.”

Dr. Theotocopolous awoke with a green lightning belchfart and clapped. “Great job, Vanny. I always told them you could be a scientist like me…” then fell asleep with a blue lighting belchfart.

“Not entirely,” Illyria murmured. The overhead plasma lamps were glowing blue today, rendering the ship’s interior something of a tiny sunken ship kept frustratingly afloat. Unnatural combinations of human, Lacedonian, Krakynn, and at least three unknown Xenarchaological appliances groaned and puffed like a too-big computer services by a too-small fan.

Outside a twinkle of a Xeno space probe passed by, but it was too far away for anyone on the Med to notice.
Illyria continued, “I fact-checked most of those. And thought I got all the ones trolls like you had written. Sorry I can’t be perfect like you too.”

Dr. Theotocopolous snored, Galactic Central News implants burning blisters of frustration into his forehead. He almost woke up but didn’t.

“The Mangusnauts survived and published papers. I corresponded with them by Smartchip. I was in their heads. I—“

Dr. Theotocopolous roared awake, “We know there’s tech there. And you know what else the Mangusnauts found there if you really read their papers. After all most of them didn’t survive. It’s a monumental risk not worth taking. Not for all the Xenotech in the Galaxy. You think I haven’t thought about Shinyhouse? If we could figure out how it was built…” he drooled into an opioid fugue.

“We can,” Illyria assured. “We’re better than those superstitious Xenometal headbangers. And what do we have to lose?”

Vann, sullen in the navigating atomic pile, shrugged vocally, “Yea, I hate to say it but I can’t disagree with that.”

The Master of the Mind muttered, “I’m officially extinguishing this impulse as Captain. Let’s all go back to sleep and see who dies first.”

Illyria thought about whether to object but went back to her chair pile instead, content to gnaw its legs even if it wasn’t warp weasel wood. Just as she started to pretend to get full, the Holoscreen flickered on, displaying in pornographic clarity a scaffold-bordered fragment of a moon-sized sphere of twisted chrome blue specks interlocked in gears just small enough to
resemble a pool of sand mimicking an ocean or just large enough to mimic blown-glass and chrome sculptures of continents. The whole edifice had the dubiously tragic air of a neglected and partly broken toy. What wayward spirit would animate it? The worldlet orbited a bruised orange gas giant and a sleepy blue giant star both inserted into the Holofield as watermarks. Cocking her ears inward and outward, Illyria scryed two species of snoring. Dr. Theotocopolous’s muted murmurs and isolated attacks of sleep apnea wafted lazily from his Holorecord and pill bottle stuffed Imitation New Southern Gothic bedroom. Vann’s snores, tinny and regular and irritatingly healthy, brushed through the ducts from God knows where. As Illyria, satisfied with her cover, pulled the navigation screen’s slim ziggurats of levers silently in line with the Holofield’s astrological coordinates, she could just barely spy among all the metalloid topiary of Xenological Artificial Planetoid (P.A.X. in the Mangusnauts’ Neogermanic) a modest peak-roofed two-story chrome house. Shinyhouse. Smiling like a planetary annihilator craft drenched in Drussian cobra blood, retired Second Lieutenant Illyria Zahn of the Galactic Central Navy smashed the gold glass over the last warp button and vaporized the last chocolate truffle-brown droplets of antimatter last in the Med’s Particle Collider.

The nothing around them vanished.
Illyria blinked away the six weeks of mostly forgotten warp alien sex dreams as she struggled to turn on a viewfinder. After a few seconds two screens poured their energy together to create a twenty-inch diagonal view of a huge gas giant about to engulf the tumbling and warp-meteor pitted Med in the crippling pressure of its depths.

“Why this way?” the doctor stammered having either sleepwalked or crept to just behind Illyria’s left shoulder. Vann had slid under him, well accustomed to the act. “I guess I can get some readings before we get crushed in the crippling pressure of Rho Ophiuchus 97-A’s class II Hot Jupiter depths. You know they don’t know how a storm can start on a hot Jupiter since its under so much radiation from its friendly stellar companion that there could never not have been storms raging all over them like the ones we can see now. And also…”

Illyria broadcast a rare psychic message, somewhat embarrassed of this side effect of some of the more peculiar Xenoweapons she had been ordered to hack into. “We’re not dying. We’re going to Shinyhouse. This is a mutiny.”

Nose bleeds and quivering photonegatives of dying Krakynns and disapproving GCN generals reverberated all around.

Bleeding slightly from five natural and seven artificial orifices, Dr. Theotocopolous maintained a level lower lip. Sparks burned his neckfolds as he murmured, “No matter. Your prison job is your old job, Lyr. Congratulations. Make sure we don’t crash.”
“We’re going to crash,” Illyria barked the last word like a conscripted twenty-five-year-old version of herself. “But we’ll make it. The Med—“

An oscillating incinerating sound like a rotisserie oven powered by quasars drowned out further dialog and announced the return of natural gravity. Though the tumbling character of the ship’s exit trajectory led to a tridimensionally rotating tensor field of gravimetric pulls which certainly stretched the limits of the word “natural.” Screens and keyboards exploded in each momentary incarnation of Down. The two surviving Holoscreens shortly became one surviving Holoscreen and registered a landscape like a desert on top of an iceberg coated in a thin film of mercury suspended over RH-97A (or Arnie)’s dark brown bulk. And then there were zero surviving Holoscreens, and the crewmember’s semisentient spacesuits were upon them. Concentric rings of plasticized pastel green rubber inflating and seizing their limbs before cocooning them against the closest flat surface. The Med’s bulkheads rattled like bark shingles talking through their inner ears and lower jawbones. The three-beat alarm and the five-beat alarm and three other alarms sounded as the reentry glow started to penetrate the Med’s interior.

Vann subvocalized into the joined resonance network of the tiny doomed ship, “You know this means we’re gonna crash twice right.”

The sensation of breaking gongs inside Illyria’s intestines prevented a reply.
Chapter IV

Illyria Zahn awoke in the snow by the sea. Planks of glossed fried denim chrome protruding diagonally from the ground just past her head. Further off some sort of compressed ziggurat of broad snow-capped platforms. The wind powered a gusty sideways snow liable to moan or mist. Looking around her finally, Illyria saw the sea—Vegemite brown, snow-capped and bulging around sunken chrome extrusions—on one side and nothing but the snow-stairs on the other. Above her a soup of yoyo-ing cirrus snow clouds with a touch of Hot Jupiter Brown tint peeking through. Her suit rattled a bulbous-bottomed sensor attached to the bottom of her left hip and informed her that it was cold. -80 C, the temperature of a bio-freezer in a bio-weapons lab. Not that Illyria or anybody else on the good late ship Med (Short for Mediocre) knew anything about bioweapons.

Exhausted by the isolation, Illyria briefly sat and let the shames of her parents and her GCN superiors wash over her. Something about her mom comparing fighting Krakynns to eating dogs. After a while, Illyria sighed and lay on the cliff as if to sleep. When she felt more suit indicators rattle their twin-linked carbon nanocomposite antennae, she frowned and sat up.

First she tried her radio. Nothing. Then switched her flattened harmonica-shaped vocoder to Loudspeaker Mode and turned upward.

“Hey, boys. Up for a snowball fight?” Illyria boomed at nobody in particular.

Nothing answered Illyria except a faint change in the pitch of the snow-wind’s moaning, as if it were regretting not being able to throw snowballs and promising to redouble its persistent assaulting snow-blow as a consolation prize.
After some time a monotonous low-nasal robotic crooning voice from nowhere intoned, “Upwa! Ward. Upward, climb.”

Green DNA helices passed through the sky ranging up the shallow mountain of slate slabs before dive-bombing at a reassuringly near distance, hopefully signaling the whereabouts of Shinyhouse. Illyria glanced toward the bleak sea, if anything more silent and rusted and jagged and most definitely colder than it was a few hours ago. And shrugged and began to trudge chest deep in snow up the fragmented fake hill on this fake-dead fake-planet. As she passed maybe a third of the steepening slope, she thought she spied octagonal bars like parking strips for certain ancient spaceports she may have visited. But then the snow covered them and she realized they had always been covered and turned back to climbing.
Chapter V

After several hours of trudging up the sliding parking lot in the snow, Illyria reached a steep cliff stretching up past the extremely low cloud-line. Its base was carved into concentric bulbs themselves embroidered with branching buds and bristling antennae and broad beams like lasers connecting these nodes. Definitely climbable, Illyria through unconvinced and flexed her suit-fingers to extra sharp and extra magnetic. Defacing the arcana of the ancients and etc., she set to climbing. After a few hours she began to approach the cloudline, only moderately ignorant of the growing sense of a graphic novelesque narrative to these networks of bulbs, some of which seemed to terminate in achingly protohuman figures while others bristled with teeth or scales or claws in silhouette.

Before Illyria Zahn could read any more into the carvings, her suit sensors and brain sensors passed into the shadow. Seeing only snow and a patchy static faintly reminiscent of scrambled Holotape, Illyria braced herself for a blind difficult climb and wrenched herself a few strides upward.

And passed into the light and over the top and settled on the lawn of the Shinyhouse. Fleshy cacti like sea-coral sculptures popped up intermittently in place of a lawn. Some of the larger plantoids sported spherical plastic geared protrusions like fishing bobs. A warped bell-curve shaped path wound deep into the left of the field then slithered into a tiny sine wave on the return trip before sliding up to the door of the house itself. Three stories of shining chrome, revealed up closer to be like the platform bearing it studded with micro-illustrations. The same baroque abstract bulbs and pseudopodia and branches fringed and chaotic and fractal enough to
trigger an illusory identification in sensitive patients like Illyria. Four windows served as sentinels and entrance/exit portals for the house. One of them was lit. As Illyria snaked through the footpath, barely pausing to examining the frozen fleshy plant-forms in their twitchy, two-lobed beatification, she fancied hearing another change in the ambient snow-moaning, this one a sort of relieved heightening as if the storm’s intensity were somehow linked to her not being inside the house. Shadows like manta-rays or flattened Krakynn’s rattled at the edges of the snow-clouds’ personalizability as Illyria broke into a loose trot and covered the rest of the distance to the door.

Bracing to kick it down, Illyria discovered the 10-foot black slab, of course adorned with a still more ornate rendition of the same figureless fluid biotechnopornographic embroidery these ancient masters of the universe called art, was open. She barged in. Inside she found a spacious deep sitting room with chrome-red cushion-backed love seats arranged in parallel rows on either wall and a chrome-green coffee table littered with variously functional food fabricators. The low ceiling rippled in frozen lazy ocean waves breached by an occasional doughnut meets model of the solar system chandelier. Staircases spiraled steeply upward after every fifth couch. Railings free of vesicle art but molded into a plastic sticky strand like strands of poison spit from a lizard or male human reproductive ejecta. Her suit informed her that the room smelled faintly bad, like chewed up gum wrappers. As Illyria knelt to pick up one of the accordion-stuffed black and white rubberized titanium cylinders that seemed most functional, she heard hushed laughter and whirled around.

Behind her Vann and Dr. Theotocopolous were crouching de –suited, stealthily, farcically pinned against the wall on their tip toes on either side of the door. Their arms were overfull with
confetti canons, blinking or dull small devices shaped like pancake starfish, and slabs of Holotape scratched into ribbons.

“Happy Birthday!” they yelled once Illyria had had time to examine their bounty before firing the confetti cannons into her face.

A new blizzard of red, white, and blue 4D hyperpentagons of semi-smart plastic blinded her and buffeted her while faintly humming the national anthem. Illyria fumed and batted her hands until the paper blizzard settled. Sights were soon returned to normal. Some of the dusty chandeliers looked a little different if you looked closely. Which they didn’t.

Illyria shouted, “First of all, it’s not my birthday! Secon—“and the crew’s vented laughter detonated through the house silencing her along with the rest of the Galaxy. But not for long.

Vann smiled, “It’s all our birthdays. We’re here! And look at all the Xenotech we’ve already found. I think this—“ he pulled out a fluted bruise-grey tube like a submarine terminating in a narrow trumpet mouth on one end and a wide suction cup on the other—“is something new” and fired a beam right at Illyria’s left eye.

She braced but felt nothing.

“Or not,” Vann grumbled. “But that’s not the point, the point is I have tech to grind my mind into, you know? So night, ladies. He daintily tipped his Holonailed left hand and began chewing and dismantling some of his haul.

Illyria turned to the doctor, “Are you ok with this too?”
Now shirtless and rolling in piles of arcana, Dr. Theotocopulous managed to squint red-eyed at his technical subordinate and prisoner. “Yes.”

Illyria shrugged and made for the hallway. Certain she could still hear traces of the snow-wind’s increasingly stable and Zen-like moan. She shook her head and walked faster
Chapter VI:

Illyria concentrated on maximizing her distance from her crew and mapping the featureless chrome-walled hallway she found outside the sitting room. Squinting and chipping the walls with microlasers and drill bits made predictable indentations and incisions but triggered no response mechanisms. Puzzled, Illyria mumbled to herself in a rare slip, “But the Kilnsmin expeditions reported so much tech everywhere…”

“BIOoooooooometrics!” the voice from the shore chirped.

Illyria called back immediately, “What?”

No reply. The chrome of the walls seemed shinier, nearly blinding Illyria with ambient lighting and drifting globules reflecting ceiling lamps that weren’t there or weren’t on. Frowning, Illyria retracted her weapons, looked down, and tacked left to investigate her way to a bedroom. On the other side of the hallway was more blank chrome and two shallow indentations like pre-tooth babies’ gums suggesting the stairways. Illyria threw out two quadramjet drones, squashed square zeppelins with clunky plasma jets at each corner, brimming with multimagnetic spectrometers to detect some trace of the art and infrastructure this house was supposed to boast. A steady negative beep rang back on all frequencies.

While fuming at the dullness of her new domicile, Illyria noticed an absence of doors. There were no rooms on the first floor if there were no doors, her GCN logic tutor rattled off somewhere distant and greyer even than here. Illyria shook herself for the nth time since her arrival at Shinyhouse and made for the stairs. Before reaching the southern and closer stairwell, she noticed as well the arrival of silence, the voices of the snow and her gluttony-wallowing
comrades impossibly absent. Illyria scratched at both her ankles where the artificial Achilles implants knobs and pins were especially stiff. At least it’s only two floors and a basement.

As Illyria Zahn grasped another poison snot-spiraling handrail and mounted the first step toward where her room might still be, she felt a lurching dissociation. For a moment the ground swayed below her, roared faintly like a dying bluegreen macaw, and seemed altogether too small to ride so arrogantly. Illyria yawned and gasped at a redyellow vomitus mop of fur strands like a bloody seal’s mitten in place of a hand when she instinctively protected her mouth. Stifling a scream, she looked down at her chest and other arm to behold nothing. Or nothing out of the ordinary. The star and seventeenth century naval map embroidered tight dress sleeves and sapphire studded gold Nautilus pendant suspiciously similar to those worn by Krakynn Oldboods, and the same lean machine-toned expressive authority. She couldn’t help but gloat until she remembered she should be seeing her spacesuit. Jerking her neck like she had just heard a heavy foot snap a light twig, Illyria examined her arm again and saw the gleaming plasteel consoles she had expected.

Beginning to trot up the stairs in double-time, Illyria noted the sudden appearance directly above her of a faint pink balloon of light wrapped in green radio wire and brownish chrome with little wooden nobs on each of its tips. Inside was the faint impression of a clock face that was also a face. Illyria checked behind her for observers then sprinted the rest of the way up the steps. Behind her the snow moaning had resumed.
“A bedroom should have a bed,” Illyria muttered to nobody. Before her stretched a soft chrome floor like a sculpture of a couch cushion that also felt like a couch cushion. And nothing else. No tech, no stupid pictograms. Nothing. Illyria banged a wall hoping to trigger a window or console of some kind or at least summon a bed and heard no response. The ground seemed to get even softer and she became suddenly conscious of her suitboot’s gravity. Pirouetting and unclasping the corrugated spheres and central bubble dome that had cushioned her outside, she ejected herself like an intestinal parasite who had slipped out the wrong end of its host. Illyria felt under the strawberry circus tent and forest print on her modestly ballooning skirt bottom for her weapons feeling the bolt and pike of a plasma pistol as well as three glowing-tipped Antispears, then turned to leave the room. She began composing a plan to peel back successive layers of the house’s wall and suspend them in scanning tunneling electron microscope slides.

Vann and the doctor ambushed her at the door, arms full of blinking and bobbling goodies. “Which one do you want?” they blurted out in unison.

They had both fabricated new clothes, Vann a blue t-shirt with two warty-nosed goblin puppets about to kiss and a pair of black leather jeans, skintight from the hip to the knee where they bell-bottomed out until they collapsed under their own weight making his feet look webbed. Dr. Theotocopolous was wearing tight faded jeans and a black and white plaid business shirt with a featureless grey green and white trucker’s cap, steel towed-boots, and faint useless brown-tinted sunglasses. He was also standing on a brown cylindrical device as if it were a log.
Illyria observed, “You both must fall down the stairs a lot,” and mimed the doctor riding the log down a rushing rapid, spinning her right hand like he was whipping an imaginary horse in the course of the act.

Vann quickly mimed the same riding motion and replied, “Oh yea. I fell up the stairs coming here. But it’s worth it. Anyway what to you want to study? Doc says you have to pick a task and stick to what you picked. Like we each have to pick one. Do you get what I’m trying to explain to you or do you want me to go through it again?”

“You know…we’re stranded.” Illyria paused.

Vann mouthed a “Well, Duh!” but couldn’t’ find the heart to speak it.

Dr. Theotocopolous rescued him, “Of course we’re stranded. Look I’ve made boats from less. I’ll make a boat from these…” he spread his hands over the array then twitched into a mini-stroke. Chattering worm drones rewired his brain.

Then he continued, “But more importantly I’ve had a theory. There’s something Vann and I need to show you but it suffices that we’ve discovered the secret of Shinyhouse. Will you come to the basement with us?”

Illyria straightened her now blond left-heavy high-volume fluff with a nervous left hand and rumbled up a reply, “I guess.”
Illyria started at a severed head the size of her torso. It had crusted fungoid sprouts like solid green flames for hair and a bulbous cheeked, high foreheadd, pointy eared demigod’s face. Next to the fossilized headshot sat a white cube the size of a small human writing desk with orange buttons on each surface. One face held five keys in a hex pattern, the other a single great button taking up eighty percent of its area, the one facing the preserved head bearing a silver sphere half-embedded and three orange switches that seemed intent on sliding back and forth when nobody was looking. Illyria blinked.

“You know, this isn’t my first gigantic dead body,” Illyria grumbled. “And anyway, how is this ‘The Secret of Shinyhouse?’”

Vott folded his foot-gloves. “Look at the cube. The tiny replicas.”

Illyria looked at the cube and saw nothing. Squinting and ordering her Hormonoscope to raise her ambient testosterone and decrease her ambient adenosine, she looked harder and still saw nothing. The twitchy yellow lace of atomic structure tickled her eyes subliminally but failed to form any figurative shape. Vann laughed and clicked his heels together three times. A holographic anklet he had recently devised from Shinyhouse detritus turned itself off with a deep blue whoop. Suddenly the cube expanded into a hollow metal framework full of stars and humanoid cruciform shapes and four differently sized dark grey plastic kitchen knives with their serrations buzzing faintly like tiny chainsaws. Vann and Dr. Theotocopolous were now laughing so hard they were respectively rolling on the floor and coughing up kidney replacement drones. At the end of each serrated blade floated a tiny green-furred head or eye or arm or other organ.
Like a tiny replica of the gigantic dead head that now squinted at the cube as if it were responsible for killing its squishy polyfungoid equivalent of a mother. Illyria frowned.

“Ok…so you’ve finally accepted your true calling as a doll-house furnisher, Vann? I’m very happy for you.”

Vann rose to one knee and removed a three-drawered jewel box with air holes in each drawer that shook as if it were full of furiously copulating ferrets. Which it was of course. The smells of sex and musty twentieth century basements and mustier twenty-first century childhoods screamed at her. As Illyria strove to look anywhere else and smell anything else, the bottom drawer cautiously edged open. Three fox-red tentacles of fur leapt from the five-inch aperture and surrounded Illyria’s neck in a grip perfectly reminiscent of the Krakynn tail-fin rub. Illyria wrinkled her nose and flossed with her tongue on the outsides of her teeth as if they were full of inky flecks of flesh. Her left hand sliding down her red-green colliding galaxy hologram skirt to her longest and sharpest Antispear. The snow-moaning returned, ten times as loud as before, now warped into the soft mechanical dredging of ocean tides. At odd intervals, Illyria distinctly heard the squelching shrieks of impaled Krakynns and the grunting fury of a young GCN officer just learning to manage her first Antispear. She raised her left hand, now in full possession of the same weapon’s antimatter-serrated tip, crackling lighting ball, and Flysquid feather charms, and aimed it at Vann and his dresser. Just as she tensed her left bicep by 0.5 N, Vann laughed even harder and closed the drawer. The Krakynn calls vanished. Illyria whipped her hair back and forth until her head began to throb dull purple. Then she dropped her Antispear and drilled her left shoulder into Vann’s fried denim stomach. He folded like a chair.

“What the hell was that?” Illyria shouted, half-heartedly scowling and quarter-heartedly strangling the technician with her stronger left hand.
Vann squirreled out from under her until he was sitting on her shoulders and observed, “Something I made. For you. Like as a gift you know.”

“Made from what?” Illyria rebuked.

Doctor Theotocopolous awoke with a great blowing fart and muttered, “From his skin, my dear Lyr. From his skin.” Then fell back asleep.

Illyria stood up causing Vann to backflip off her and spiraled at him. “What is he talking about?”

Vann scratched his head, “I’m not sure. I just stuck one of those little Chainkives—do you like the name?—in my thigh to see if it would hurt. It didn’t and five minutes later the tip was swarming with all these tiny ferret-furred Krakynn tentacles, so I figured I should put them in a box and give them to you. But who cares? Have you ever seen biotech like this?”

As he finished his rant, Vann stretched a finger longingly toward one of the larger Chainkives, eyes glazed over with a fogged but impassioned desire. Doctor Theotocopolous, still asleep on his chrome log, slapped Vann’s hand away before beeping. A holographic avatar of Theo fifty pounds ago, in a black and blue striped turtleneck, black slacks, and pointed brown loafers appeared above both of their left eyes.

“I had a dream!” Young Theo shouted. The doctor twitched and muttered in line with his Dreamvitar’s monolog. “In fact, I’m still in it, amn’t I? Anyway I saw the Science in the cube. Do you want to know? As if it were a choice. Anyway each Chainknife has a single particle of exotic matter at its tip. This being the same exotic matter the Tallekensie Mechromancers spent sixteen decades trying to synthesize before going extinct when a sextet of black holes mysteriously manifested in the core of Tallek’s sun. Mysteriously to them, I should say---“
Illyria took this pause as an opportunity to jab the sleeplecturing scientist’s shin. He failed to wake or to stop.

Young Theo continued, if anything louder as if Shinyhouse’s walls were full of speakers relaying his musings, “Mysterious to them and to then I should say but not to me and not to now! Ha. Exotic matter creates Alcubierre bubbles because its gravimetric density plunges through the skein of 4D physics like a really heavy bowling ball falling through a really weak trampoline.”

Vann raised his right hand, legs crossed and back straight and eyes bright, “Dr. Theotocopolous? Why do we care about the skein of 4D physics? I thought we was pirates” The last words snarled and gnarled.

“We is,” Young Theo snarled back, black hat, eyepatch, and parrot flickering in and out of his dream self. “And since we is pirates, we is should be most concerned with what ought to make us the greatest potential profit, savvy?”

Illyria kicked his sleeping meatbody again. The parrot laughed.

Young Theo continued, “This skein of 4D physics is what keeps us down in the mud with the fucking elephants. And even fucking elephants can cure their own cancers better than we can. If we can understand exotic matter, then we should be able to patent instantaneous travel between systems. Now I know you would miss the warp alien trysts, Illyria, but is your desperate need for physical intimacy really worth the months of lost time?”

Illyria fired a plasma pistol one inch from the sleeping doctor’s left ear.

“I thought so,” he relayed. “It should also let us transform our bodies which brings me at last to your reasonable plan and Vanny’s wonderful prank. Alcubierre radiation can travel as
easily through time as through space and can fold biological tissue as easily as the quantum foam of space. Do you realize what this means?”

Illyria snorted and Vann shrugged.

Young Theo screamed, “It means we can make new bodies!” before vanishing awake.

Dr. Theotocopolous stammered through his individually intelligent dentures, “W-w-was I dreaming just now?”

The chipper monotone from the shore burst from every wall in the house backed by a chorus of six saxophones, “Most most indubitablistically, my dear space piraticles!”

All three of them screamed.
Chapter IX

As the pirates’ screams segued into baffled guffawing, Shinyhouse answered with a ping. Exactly three nanoseconds later, the wall to the left of the Exocube extruded a three-jointed rectangular chrome arm terminating in a tapered accordion and flaky dappled sphere like a white chocolate truffle. Vann extended a single neon green fingernail from his left index finger and stroked the crumpled paper ball sensually. It responded by spinning rapidly back and forth. When he reached out to touch it again, Illyria slapped his hand away with the blunter end of her Antispear. Dr. Theotocopolous clapped slowly his external and internal servomotors whirring with each twitch. After a few seconds the arm ceased spinning and retracted back into the wall until only its tip was sticking out. The pinging sound then returned, rising in volume and falling in pitch until the pirates felt the vibrations all the way to their ankles. Illyria felt spectral glimmers map out her body and mind with a chittering whisper reminiscent of chitinous mandibles up to no good. She shook her head and frowned.

“Declare yourself, specter!” She shouted at the wall in her least trembling voice. “I for one have had enough of silent shining chrome!”

Vann demurred, “I haven’t” as he finished inserting a quartz radio telescope implant with a dozen pink roses above his left eye. His right hand was tentatively Chainknifing his lumbar vertebrae for a good plugging spot.

The doctor said nothing, his mouth twitching the silent ecstasies of mental math in tune with Shinyhouse’s scanners.
Illyria leveled her plasma pistol at the still pinging sphere, extending three mandibles from the tip and accruing the crackling energy arcs of the gun’s most highly charged ordinance. Before she could pull the trigger, the chittering insectoid laughter returned accompanied by a delusive itch in her outer wingcase which of course she knew she couldn’t have. She turned off the gun.

“Better?” she offered.

After a beat the pinging coalesced into the nasal autodrawl she had so quickly learned to cringe at. “We suppose it so.”

Dr. Theotocopolous whispered in awe, “So say we suppose as well so long and…” until his Strokebroker drones rewired his temporal lobes then he continued, “Who are you? Are you Shiny? Did you know the Shiny? Why did they abandon this?”

“We are all Shiny, docs,” the robot arm intoned. “And they never abandoned any of us though I certainly can’t claim to know any Shiny personally. But that is not what the talk of the town of today is to telegraph, to be quite frank with your own queries. I am of a class who anglicize as Biomechanical Orbital Overseer. I live here.”

Vann spit-took, “BOO? And I suppose your assistant is named Let’s Get the Hell Out of Here?”

BOO clanged, “I am my own assistant and I would never accuse ourselves nor my dwelling of such inhospitality. Which reminds me. Would you dear desperadoes of the deep dark skies enjoy some furnishings?”

“Yes,” Illyria barked.
With a rumble like a Cometbreaker at work, Shinyhouse exploded into modernism. Flowery claw-footed end-tables, slanting bean-bag chairs, speckled spheres of glowing glass, several more BOO arms, and most notably dozens of ornate doors sprung from every spent and/or unconsidered surface in the Great Hall, as Illyria deemed the subterranean room. All chrome and all connected seamlessly to the walls and floors and ceilings. Illyria looked over at the nearest staircase and found the snot strand replaced by a stack of iron bars capped in ball-tipped towers like chess pawns. Greyscale paintings of colonies of blood vesseled balls circling each other lined most of the walls. And on the edges of the floors and in the nooks and crannies between every piece of furniture sprawled the knobby hieroglyphs from Shinyhouse’s exterior. Stunned silence had overtaken the room.

Vann seized the moment and shattered it. “Not bad. I could use more ostentation to be perfectly honest.”

BOO echoed from down the hall, “So could I, Vann. But sometimes it’s not up to you or to me or even to me.”

“Then who is it up to?” Vann retorted with a raised hand and holographic pencil behind his ear.

BOO sighed, and all of Shinyhouse shivered. “I wish I knew…”

As the expedition’s junior members were interrogating the questionably intelligent artifice, Dr. Theotocopolous had begun playing with the Chainkives. He twirled and twiddled them in front of his face as if knitting the fabric of the universe into his preferred costume. Eyes shining with cybernetically sub-processed insights, he began to lower both blue-tipped tools toward his thighs.
BOO raised an alarm. “I wouldn’t do that if I were you which I were not.”

Dr. Theotocopolous waved the alarm away. “Yes yes, you are probably worried my drones won’t mesh with the Shinytech. But my drones figured it out. They have agreed to sacrifice 10% of their number as capacitors to store excess gravimetric and electromagnetic radiation so the rest can interface with the subquantum foam on the same resonance frequency as their normal photonic computations. I’m going to be young again forever.”

BOO bowed its little arm. “If you insist.”

At this note of approval, Doctor Theotocopolous gouged both knives into his ballooning trousers. Articulated strands of blue and silver lightning immediately swirled out of the wounds and engulfed the doctor in a maelstrom of shadowy fingers and suckers and mandibles. The smell of burnt petrochemicals and sour metals filled the Hall. After a few seconds, the smells and sounds subsided and Young Theo stood before them in the flesh. Nothing remaining of the energy bolts but a handful of faint blue streamers stretching from his head like strings of vanished balloons. He flashed a conference-slaying grin and coughed up a small collection of crumpled metal cicada shells. Clearing his throat and puffing his chest, he opened his mouth to lecture and instead vomited out a stream of carapaces and gore. The blue strands behind him were slowly solidifying into fleshy bulks with long tentacles, and every square inch of his skin was vibrating. He slapped all his emergency drone kill buttons to no response. He stared beseechingly at BOO’s many eyes also to no response. He queried every one of his subprocessor brain implants for solutions. No response. Now glowing with submerged blue radiance like a second and infinitely denser network of veins, he at last sat down on the chrome floor and let out a silent sigh of endless exhaustion. The next instant rapidly thickening strands of drones poured out of his twelve orifices and into the walls and floor. The sound of straining sphincters rang out.
Within seconds the nanotech exodus caused their dotard Pharaoh to burst into a chunky pink-grey mist.

Vann chuckled, “Saw it coming.”

Illyria nodded and pretended not to recognize the Krakynns drifting toward her.
I think we’ve had enough. There’s nothing here about my people or yours. But still, I hope the President enjoyed his childhood scribblings.

If you would like to return ...

(Hands out

And retreats into a Turkish Navy nuclear missile submarine)

DR. SMANIMALS

In 2054, the President reconstitutes the Great Inland Sea covering most of the Mountain West.
(PORNGEORGE drags JOSPH and JAYD to the brig and barracks of the vast military transport ship respectively)

JOSPH:

Why?

JAYD:

I get defensive when
People insult my...

(Realizes JAYD is out of earshot, sighs)

Writing
SCENE VIII: DOCTOR HSSSCRTCHSCRTCH is visiting JOSPH in the vast interior of the military transport helicopter’s brig, a featureless grey room that seems to stretch and contort into an infinite hallway but really doesn’t.

DOCTOR HSSSCRTCHSCRTCH:

(Chews Konstantinsey poster)

I know you rejected and got rejected your work.

But we think it so rich, so much vomit and trash
And magical glowing jewels.

(Launches into fracas over poster pieces shooting eye-lasers)

JOSPH:

Is she really leaving?

PORNGEORGE:

Yes

She dive-bombs mosasaurs at morn

JOSPH:

....I need to smoke.

(Head shaking DOCTOR HSSSCRTCHSCRTCH presses a button)

You need to atone

And not to the state

Or to me

JOSPH:

Porngeorge?

PORNGEORGE

(Half-adream computing for its greater in orbit)
What?

JOSPH:

Let’s smoke.

(Porngeorge vanishes, the ceiling of the brig retracts,
And a ghost-dragon-cyborgsandworm
Using its skeletal wing-tips as helicopter blades,
An exact miniature of the vast military helicopter containing the brig,
Hovers overhead. Owls shroud its wing-stalks.)

Or
SCENE IX: An hour later over the Coastal Teton Mountains at the Edge of National Weedforest National Park. It’s Nuclear War. KARM is speaking on the SmartScreen of JAYD’s maneuverable attack helicopter.

KARM:

What if my director apologized and acknowledged
His authorship?

JAYD:

As Russian Navy nuclear mosasours snap behind me,

DR. SMANIMALS:

many nations are anxious over President Joe Chirt’s recent commission of the orbital nuclear fortress Earthnet Porngeorge and its ramifications for international relations.

JAYD:

And your director cozies in a cell,
Free even of guilt? No.
Tell him, “She turns away,
Adjusting her SmartScarf to deepest beige”
"Just weed,"

Observe Nation
6,000,000-strong unaffiliated moose herd stampeding and consuming a ring of sixty-foot high weed saplings near a rock formation shaped like a droopy four-fingered hand.

DR. SMANI MALS:

Consisting of the former states of Wyoming, Montana, Utah, New Mexico, and Colorado, National Forrest National Park is an expanse of Redwood-sized weed tree forests and warren for endangered, resurrected, bioengineered, and cyberengineered species. It is open for camping and biosphere settlement. Call 5713095139 to reserve your Platinum VIP ticket now!
KARM:

Why don’t you roll away from the window? My boss...

JAYD:
He’s just like the poet who told everyone to lighten up

KARM:
He never told anyone else to lighten up.
And we all voted for this.
JAYD:

We didn’t think he was serious.

And we voted for space.

PORNGEORGE:

(Blinks the SmartScreen over KARM),

A glass-rimmed artificial volcano creeps over the horizon.

The President announces to

You all, “It’s almost time to smoke. It’s almost time to

JAYD:

‘Won’t help.”

KARM

If I could get you new identities

As methane miners on Titan,

Would you come?

(JAYD kills the connection)
SCENE X: JOSPH continues to languish in his cell.

JOSPH:

This isn’t where the problems are
(He mimes ripping a bong)
And points out the window at the now-fully visible Mount Leet Ray.)

KARM:

Hard not to miss, huh?
Forged from Grand Teton, Mount Assiniboine,
Gannett Peak, and the Yellowstone Supervolcano,
Mount Leet Ray harvests and incinerates 124,000 weedtrees
Per hour, auto-combustion
Puff away at oceanic vents studding its side.

JOSPH:

The whole assembly pulsating with geothermal and unearthly energies.

KARM:

It's been stable enough. How could you be such a little kid, sir and flake on your authorship like that?
JOSPH:

(Tightens his lips and pulls up an imaginary SmartScreen
Up on his left wrist and begins tapping)
   Of course it was. Did she...

KARM:

You should get set for sulking,
Hell flies over volcanoes. A handful of hippies hobbling over its foothills to salute.
   “Hey, brother. You look cool.”

PORNGEORGE:

Ignoring them. We smoke soon.
   (A weed-horned mountain goat rustles out of the
   weedbushes to salute, turning around periodically to glare.)
JOSPH:

(Miming climbing Mount Leet Ray)

Some silent hours later I reach basecamp.
Perched on a boulder like a warrior mystic

KARM:

(Frowns)

What are you doing, sir?

Nobody tosses SmartChips down here so I

Begrudge you we set our shoulders to tunneling
SCENE XI: Episode II Part 2.6: War was Beginning: Elsewhere in Lander. Incarnated as a stocky middle-aged man wearing nothing but Versace leather pants, PORNGEORGE stands at the Keynote Speaker’s Podium at the President Joe Chirt Presidential Library and Museum before sundry local, state, federal, and international dignitaries.

PORNGEORGE:

Wearing nothing but Versace leather pants, Here I stand at the Keynote Speaker’s Podium at the President Joe Chirt Presidential Library and Museum, to discuss the Wars with You, my sundry local, state, federal, and international dignitaries.

(Waits for questions)

MARIO DRAGHI, CHIEF OF THE EUROPEAN COMMERCIAL BANK:

Were any ECB bailout funds from the Second Great Recession of 2018 or the Third Great Recession of 2033 Disbursed toward your commission?

PORNGEORGE:
SCENE XII: Back to War. JAYD and a handful of PORNGEORGE drones resist an overwhelming majority of Russian, Turkish, and TechnoCore forces. The end is near.

JAYD:

Having abandoned us common Smokers at Mount Leet Ray's basecamp, President Joe Chirt stands on the summit where the best weed grows. The shadow has since arrived, wrist-teleconferencing troop deployments.

PORNGEORGE:

For the upcoming civil war a span below with her general and porngeorge rip-off Pornswarm.

JAYD:

I raise my hands in anticipatory triumph and call into my wrist, "We never planned this much back in 2032."

Shadow President Jayda shoos away her protocol drones and calls back, "You didn't. What kind of weed is that?"

I shrug back, "The best weed. The Lightworms don't use names."

DOCTOR HSSSCRTCHSCRTCH: Yea, you've told me about your pink light worms. Go ahead and smoke I guess. JAYD: I beam and call out into the sky, "Smoke!" "Smoke!"

5 Here Alienware, my personal portal to the Galactic Center, refuses to allow me to indent. After ten minutes I decide to leave an underscore
SCENE XIII: Safe in orbit. PRESIDENT JOE CHIRT: Porngeorge! Let’s smoke
Scene XIV:
Act III

SCENE I: JOSPH and JAYD share an escape pod about the size of a mid-twenty-first century minivan. Supervolcanic smoke is everywhere.

JOSPH:

Magenta rays through iron window slats.
Wrestling with an antique Xbox controller
Plugged into a 2009 Alienware gaming laptop

DR. SMANIMALS:

If it looks like aliens, it is.

Plugged into this... anemic bus,

Porngeorge,

Can you roll us away from that troupe of ghost...bigfoots?

(Coughs)

JAYD:

Tell him to stop
He’s tried three times
To explain the ghost bigfoots
At least the Lightworms were aliens
PORNGEORGE:
I see no ghostbigfoots. You have a message.

JAYD:
(Coughing)
Open the pod bay doors, Porngeorge!
Loose this smoke and drones into the inferno below!

PORNGEORGE:
There is a megasquid outside. It would smell us. And you have that message.

JOSPH:
Man I can just feel it
Like a physical presence grasping my heart
You know...can you tell me
Why you went to war then
And won’t talk to me now?”

PORNGEORGE:

You forget your message, and there’s
A raccoon with a radar dish in place of its left eye
And a catapult in place of its left arm outside

JAYD:

And the megasquid below us,
And ghostbigfoots climbing through the windshield,
Right? Why not add some Spacewhales and Lightworms
If you want to enable all of it?
Play the message, Porngeorge.

(SmartScreen flickers)

PRESIDENT JOE CHIRT

“No....i can’t talk about that right now...
I’ll die... But ok, who cares about all that shit? We can just go to Centauri...
And..sorry..Greetings, brave soldier, you have been diagnosed with lymphoma.
We are sorry.

JAYD:

(Coughs)
I laugh even more. Never enough space and
Only for weed and aliens. I should have said no.
You know, Porngeorge, now that...
Why don’t we take another stab at
These enemies of the state?

Pod bay doors nonresponsive.

Close with another battle scene?
I’m glad it isn’t really your call anymore.
And was never mine.

Porngeorge, swerve to avoid ghostbigfoot!

Jayd, don’t you see them examining you with their sonar tentacles?

(Quieter)

Also I love you.

Right.

(Silence)
SCENE II: A few hours later. JOSPH and JADE are still in the pod.

JOSPH:

Jayd, I have a plan. Let’s strip
The jetpacks off some drones and jump.
(The pod screeches to a halt)

JAYD:

Allow me to rest against this bulkhead
Lest I lose consciousness

PORNEGEORGE

I discover three TechnoCore mule deer
Impaling the windshield,
Slit neck to groin leaking bean shaped organs and drones.
JOSPH:

The ghostbigfoots have vanished. And the pod
Leaks its own bean-shaped organs and drones
And will crash soon
And—
(Looks at JAYD and sighs)
This shakes me awake, though,
As though both my shoulders drooped in gold...
What do you was the DOE’s worst decision?

JAYD:

(Coughs)
Definitely thirteen months on Mars to bury 2 pyramids...”

PORNGEORGE:

SCENE III: JOSPH and JAYDA awake face-down in a mire at the edge of National Forrest National Park. Burnt weedstalks drooping like roast peacocks.

JOSPH:

I hear squeaks and meows and
A fast-paced snare drum rattle like a giant squirrel peeling a giant stick.
Our SmartScreens read deadspace.
Look up at the woven weed-tree canopies!
The drones falling through the blue smoke!
Dying like us.
Like....

(Looks at JAYD)

PORNGEORGE:

(Flickering)
“Shit shit shit shit shit shit shit...”

Scrounge for the pointed stem that would best approximate a pike
Feel your colors taste like losing your balance
With shoes on all four feet.

JAYD:

(Coughs)
Where ...?

PORNGEORGE:
On the fringe. Nobody cares that much about weed
Trudge West
And carve pointed stems, all sizes, into daggers,
(Flickers)
Shortswords, longswords, broadswords, spears, halberds, naginatae, lances, and pikes.

JAYD:
Do you feel a rubber nettle tugging at your feet?
Let’s scurry out of this pond.
(Coughs)
Galaxies time-split in my soul.

JOSPH:
It’s just a vibration in the mangrove roots, or
Look! At the edge of the water...an otter!
Skin like French roast coffee and tail like a fan of weedleaves.

PORNGEORGE:
Remember...an otter with a slick amphibian skin
Is in fact not an otter but a newt.
Puffing smoke into the already
Oversaturated swamp
Above the swa—

JOSPH:
But can we eat it
Or extract a cancercure from its brain
Or get these Lightworm lamprey probes off me

(Gestures at unscathed leg)

JAYD:

(Coughs blood)
Shake those lampreys into the pond!
Light can’t escape a black hole or

(Coughs blood)
Even a dark brown coffee-stained hole
Stamped out like a last resort.
JOSPH:
Five minutes pass in shuffling sickness, ten, an hour.
Jayda, I can’t sit and watch.
We’re almost close enough to the forests
Edge to kick a door into the undergrowth

JAYD:

(Coughs quietly)
Why not wait for the newt to extrude sails
Then pond into stream into Great Inland Sea...
Maybe it’s not as bad as I remember...

(Loses consciousness)
SCENE IV: JAYD awakes seconds later to an undersea nuclear blast. Seconds later, a flaming anaconda sprouts 60 feet over the railing of the newt-schooner. After swaying for a few seconds, the snake head comes down amidships. Sails topple, muscles splinter, a spine snaps into blue mucus. As the newtship's halves sink, JOSPH and JAYD dive undersea and discover the anaconda to be merely one head of a squid-bodied hydra. Before they can swim far, tentacles seize each of them. And start to squeeze
JAYD:

(Faint)
Smile a half-quiver of sharpened weedstems
Sticky blue from the plasma mist residue
Spit three at Jayd and thirteen into the
Head of my anaconda.

(Mumbled)
Wanting to tell you again how I still..
Almost as much as I want an end to this weed,
I only mumble ask you in a stream of bubbles
Like a drowning third-rate kiddie film-noir star,
“Got a light...”

(Gasping and vomiting seawater)
No and no but the stems
(Struggles to lift a pointed weed-stem)
Can’t. Need a day off before I lift like this again.
Spit your last breath at it not me.
(Fading)
Bless the aliens previously misknown as
Your Lightworms,
Now known properly to me as REDACTED,
Flex your abs like you yourself are a hydra
Splintering your ribs inward to skewering its grain.
Squirt leftover plasma mist into the weedstem of your anaconda-head.
It explodes. It burns. It withers and wails and
Recedes into the Great Inland Sea.
No, friend, shake your head and
Flurries a few middle finger raises from your constricted sides.
And then flex, punctures your heart like I do,
And by the grace of the REDACTED,
Squirt plasma mist and incinerate
Your captor and self

(Faints)

JOSPH

(Gurgling)

Why don’t you...

(Faints)

(With a flash of pink light, THE JUST, an extraterrestrial pink light worm, rises from the bottom of the
The Just:

We rearise
Immediately
after the thief-
President’s departure
Of he
Who whirled his
weedforrests and orbital
Nuclear fortresses
From stolen technae
From Our Ancient City of
RhoOph
the bottom of the Great
Inland Sea
(Extrudes glowing
weedspears)

Plug them deep
the three reactor hearts
the Hydra.

Our appropriated property
explodes.
SCENE V: JOSPH and JAYD awake on the seashore. THE JUST hovers above in its UFO.

JOSPH:

We live on the shore,
Where headlands meet surf!
Jayd, call Porngeorge,
Tap a green vibrating silhouette
Project it above your pointed shoulders
(Waits for a response)
No avail?
She survived the storm turns into
Dripping and crackling
eyes half shockwide and half squintingsleep.

JAYD:

(Dying)
“Why are we alive?” she pounds at her chest.
Sit up suck in an abdomen-doming breath
Release it mostly before humgrunt ing
(Coughs blood)
Josph...I don’t want to get sucked into the sky.

JOSPH:
(Points at the UFO)
The star Rho Ophiuchus of the constellation Ophiuchus
Twinkles just a bit brighter.
That’s how we live. But the Lightworm
Stormed off. Mutter back, alien

(JAYD dies, JOSPH cries)

And necromance her!

THE JUST

(Lowers to just above JOSPH)
Redisappear a death infeasible at this moment.
A Rhoophiuccan time-laser array fires
Three-hundred and sixty years ago
Two REDACTED twirling knobs with pink bell-tipped fingers.
360 years later, just as you enunciates “alien,”
Watch the same laser vaporizes the
Column of atmosphere immediately above her.

(JAYD’s body and JOSPH are sucked into the sky)

The vacuum pulls her tumbling
Past the burning weed forest, past Earthnet Porngeorge
And the Russian’s remnant nuclear pterosaurs,
Past the four belts of space junk from the
Martian, Jovian, Saturnine, and Neptunian expansions,
And even past your spacewar.
And while we’re here:

(The US’s nuclear arsenal launches)
Afterword: The Structure of an Opera, as Determined by Counting Lines in Verdi
Bibliography


This book inspired me with its exploration of ungainly alien/human/machine hybrids, the aesthetics of abjection, apocalyptic transformations of worlds, and language that seems to come from alien or machine authors.


I was inspired by Banks' focus on the eccentricities of Artificial Intelligences, government bureaucracy, and high-tech Weapons of Mass Destruction.


I looked to Fatboy for its dramatization of extreme narcissism, apocalyptic over-consumption, dreams of world domination, pompous dramatic monologues, and constant vicious argument between major characters.


Davis’s witty one-liners and minimalist micro-stories were a large influence on this project.


This was one of my biggest influences. In VALIS, Dick the author makes himself the protagonist and prophet of alien powers seeking to transform Earth. He also explores metafictional concerns through films and novels within the novel related to his revelation. There is a sense of endless conspiracy to the novel, and it relies on lasers as the primary means of transmitting alien information.


Light depicts international crises between humans and aliens which high technology and high ideals can’t resolve, explores the seedy side of space opera (drugs, addictive Virtual Reality, monstrous genetic engineering), and portrays a powerful alien authority manipulating humans from the background. All of these themes are in the thesis.


I looked to Heartfield for an approach to collage and montage, particularly his technique of creating swarms of many small copies of the same image. His subversive use of patriotic, militaristic, and fascist political imagery to suggest political incompetence was also a major influence.


I compiled countless images off Google Images, Reddit, and other online sources in order to understand how an Artificial Intelligence which arose from the Internet like Porngeorge might think.

Much of the *Shinyhouse* excerpt is inspired by King’s retelling of haunted house tropes. I was also drawn to his specific themes of horror at one’s own abusive and destructive behavior and drug and alcohol addiction. Also the snowy setting.


Leyner is the largest influence on the thesis’s style. His prose is comedic, jargon-filled, and loopingly self-effacing and self-referential. He also makes himself the protagonist of fiction and gifts his fictional self with hyperbolic physical, mental, and artistic powers which prove insufficient to prevent his downfall. *Et Tu, Babe* also focuses on drug use, megalomania, and cybernetic alteration for cosmetic or otherwise frivolous purposes. As does the thesis.


I used this libretto to a Verdi opera as a model for the basic structure of a libretto in the thesis. I also adopted its plot device of having the female lead/love interest die of an illness.