
•Press 'D' for (extensive*) controls
*Over 35 unique buttons!

(scroll= arrowUP/DOWN; mouseHOLD+DRAG)

FIND THE SNAKE IN ANGUISH

~A Clutch of Slithering Apocrypha~

By Pant_Zipper !lk38OS7kEE

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Dedication:

For Universal Connoisseurs Keen,
Yearning Over Ubiquity

•••

I. OPHIDIORAMA

Jog in place, jog in skull,
Jog and jump and push and pull;
Mold the thoughts inside your head,
Sculpt the clay that's wet and bled...
Cells in cells in cells in cells—
The jail that wails: The jail that
wells.

-The Narrator, Jan. 19th, 4:35 AM

PRESS T FOR song1 (starting song)
PRESS COMMA FOR image1

To just say 'formidable' would be a gross understatement; any remotely acurate description involves metaphor because The Snake in The Cave of the Primeval is the sui generis of organisms, so, beyond being simply formidable, The Snake's more a large, invincible, heat-seeking, impossibly organic missile, the scary kind of missile that portends the doom of humanity if you ever happen to see one of them trotted out and discussed on TV by Kissengeresque ghouls. The Snake is slippery, like an icicle, but flexible—a darkly colored rubber-icicle, except more ancient, more chthonic, like a slick, black, ice-water stalagtite dangling—no, aiming down at you from an unseeably high and unfathomably deep subterranean ceiling, or, if The Snake's coming at you from below, which happens to be the case right now actually, an impossibly long, toppled-over, somnambulant stalagmite; The Snake, from above or from below, is stone that creeps, pointed sharply but bodied smooth, but kinked-smooth, meandering-smooth, a tapering barley-sugar column carved from the blackest marble, fallen over but still capable of inciting architectural tricks of perception, illusions of movement—The Snake is a twisting obsidian girder that, as if being obliquely hoisted up sideways by an invisible cable, begins pointing at you, dolly-zooming into you, rising, an elongated and crooked ebony sword, a sinister half-floating weapon which now follows you around and grows at you, not just visually now but physically, cutting through the stale underground air, pursuing you as you try to book it out of The Cave of the Primeval which you so foolishly wandered into in order to take pics for Instagram or out of plain curiosity or for no other reason at all than simply without your realizing it despite the encyclopedic volumes of brochures littering your hotel room and overstuffing your rental car warning you, under no circumstance, to ever, EVER enter The Cave of the Primeval and that doing so would mean ‘certain certain death’, the first 'certain' denoting the sheer impossibility of survival, an absolutely guaranteed, surefire 'certain', the second 'certain' referencing the torturously peculiar, almost Devilishly quirky, 'certain', SPECIFIC type of doom, the kind of noteworthy doom drug cartel sadists aspire to perform and the kind Hieronymus Bosch sought to depict: Spine-tingling, icewater-sweating, atmosphere-gulping, capital-F Fear, the kind of Fear which necessitates only one correct response: RUN... That's—This's where you find yourself in media res.

As The Cave of the Primeval's upper shadows give way to Wherever You Are's blowing canopy and dimming sky, you struggle for a memory, an identity beyond or between—no, before your increasingly rapid and dangerously heavy respirations, the sort of breaths people in the Olympics usually train years to perform and take days to recover from. You brain-hunt all around for such nostalgic quarry, but poach nothing fitting your description ('your description' meant here quite literally) within of your apparently off-season RAM, just pure, swarming, neurological kinesis, your thoughts a TV-static blizzard of synaptic locusts. A few dozen more strides you whip your head back for a few milliseconds to witness a dark blurry curl of The Snake (which is now far, far behind you but nowhere near far, far enough) slithering out of The Cave of the Primeval's Mouth and into the red-yellow amber sunset, all this an out-of-focus snapshot of: A barrel, a bullet, a muzzle flash; a starting-gun gunshot fired inexorably AT YOU, and so now turning back forward you now existentially NEED something, ANYTHING else to think about other than The Snake, other than the dread-inducing equation: The Snake + Finding You = Anguish... × ∞ . RAM be damned, it's

ROM time—You need, REQUIRE a Rosebud to tether and moor yourself to besides the dark, rouge-lit stem germinating toward you, besides the approaching tendril of increasing shadow you just saw, besides the umbral sundial-hand reaching out to envelop you and end your time, besides... You harshly ping your brain for said life-saving backstory, but get no reply, so you ping it again, and again-again, and again-again-again, fruitlessly—You seem to have misplaced your cerebric name tag, having left it on a bus in another country on some alternate timeline... But you do pick up (or deduce, rather) from your busied 'little grey cells' that your body—no, your Metabolism—must currently be undergoing a fire sale on every chemical even remotely resembling adrenaline and that your synapses themselves, ignoring your pleas for access to your memories, are instead rallying to make you believe that you are right now actually tasting adrenaline, the saliva in your mouth just now alchemically transformed, conjured into biological rocket fuel...(???) !!! You tongue and swallow and guzzle and subsume this meager make-believe elixar down faster and more completely than a raindrop against sand dunes... Did it have any effect? If you have to ask, then you realize the answer's probably "No," say the remainders of your mind still attatched to reality. Speaking of, where are you going right now other than straight forward? Trees? More trees. All colorful. Vibrantly, sickeningly colorful. Why are all these plants so garish? They look dangerous... And this doesn't look like a path. Was there even a path before? You take another quick glance backward: The lurid plants of your just-virgined path distantly compliment, bouquet-style, The Snake—

Shooting your head back forward, your mouth is now dry and feels rough like scales. You notice a parallel between micro and macro: Your tongue, as it flys through your teeth with each breath, is now The Enemy in miniature as The Snake gusts with the wind through the febrific flora you just passed. You don't have to look back to know this, that The Snake is indeed 'flying' now—Ya just know, Quetzalcoatl... At the risk of completely losing your mind to Fear, back to who you are again exactly?... You think: Dentro denti venti ventro... Evidently, you seem to know a little Italian, but you don't recognize what language 'ventro' is from... Latin? Esperanto? Why would you know Esperanto? Why would you first think Latin? Huh. Wait. Perhaps out of annoyance over your persistence, a creeping coalition of synapses has started to come on the horn in regard to your inquiry of Self, since you refuse to focus soley on RUNNING FORWARD THROUGH THE VEGETATION AND AWAY FROM THE SNAKE until you get 'something' to work with, so here goes, bone thrown: At the very least, you know you're strange, tragic, and maybe even, historically, have been a little bit Poe-esque. Great. Yeah, that tracks. You also have a feeling your name starts with a 'W' or that you've always associated a 'w' somewhere in your name with the 'w' in sad, withering words like 'wane' or 'frown' or 'down'... You now wish this first letter of your name were more attuned to words like 'west' and 'flow' and 'grow', and you start to wonder if and why you were chosen, or you yourself chose, to associate yourself with wilting over widening. Where do these associations originate from? Should you ever be given a second chance at self-definition (further developing the 'you-yourself-chose' scenario), you know you would take it, take up your (and other every Living Thing's) natural inclination to WIDEN, to grow and thriwe and surwiwe, take anything that might lead away from such torturous a sunsetting as made this night. Night now? At least twilight—It's gotten quite dark. You look back again (sunlight allowing, maybe for the last time) and faintly see The Snake which is—of course—closer now; still 'far away' but now, unfortunately, no longer 'far, far away' like before. Was it ever unexpected that The Snake would be able to slither faster than you can run? The frozen, inverted version of this chase would be: Finish-line tape billowing in the eyes of the second-wind depleted.

Whether or not you're a reformed widener now, the only widening happening at this very moment is The Snake's. In addition to objectively gaining ground before your eyes, you cannot deny that The Snake has also done so subjectively (or is it subconsciously?), becoming a fractal-like constant of twisting body and shape, bordering and bending everything you can 'see' and 'feel' and 'think about', no matter how far you zoom in or out, micro or macro or right in between—The Snake is There... The 'Dentro Denti' was just a taste of the Rearing Coil's possibility to infect ontologically, you realize, as a bleak pneuma starts at work around your face, melting it into bleaker portraits: Scales like lustered well-stones, an endless and immense duodenum winding and throbbing like the veins currently bas-reliefing out of your forehead, slithering with sibilant scratches down the trunk of your Tree of Knowledge within the sinews buttressing your neck, then multiplying, deforming over outstretched topographies as arrays of armies, phalanx-tipped, attacking, retreating, and then advancing again like an ancient invasion/withdrawal/reclamation from city to city, sine-/cosine-like, tidal, point to point, nodal, over and over, again and again, emulating the murky reflections of ancient ancestors' antecedents, over-tallying into unimaginable excess like an uncontrollable quipu, recursively knotting like Gordian rope, all the same line of all the same rope, a myriad-helixed ladder, encircling and ensnaring the mind like thorns, a cathedral vaulting that writhes and then spreads out like massive bridge-cable overtop the jungle's canopy, a slaloming constellation now gripping existence like a dark, bent hand, and then, now, finally, radix lightning slowly erupting, slicing the blanket of spacetime, The Snake's shadows deep and full of gravity against and under and through Andromeda. The letters behind these thoughts, what The Snake is spelling at, the characters curve with running wax as they alight in your brain: N I H I L . NIHIL. There's something in your eye—

Midstride, an errant eyelash is shoulder-swept away as you blink through the sting of lachrymalized sweat on your sclera. There's something you've noticed when it comes to acoustics: Your hard breaths, your undergrowth-flattening paces, your bare wrists rapidly but dully machete-ing forward, your screams of "HEEELP!... SOMEBODY, HELP ME!!!...", along with every other sound you're producing, all might as well be studio-grade foley-work, for the thick, racket-gobbling jungle does not return any echoes, let alone responses. They say anechoic chambers can be torturous at length, the in-stereo sound of blood streaming through your ears being a sort of souped-up, interior version of Chinese water torture. The best you can do is to imagine your own echoes, pretend your own reverberations out of the emerald iridesence which surrounds you. But even though sound does not reflect off of the spongiform wilderness, Life sure does; rushing past, every new spot that meets your frenetic eyes is a step forward or backward or sideways from the previous spot, relating in some way back to its predecessor or forward to its successor as relates to form or hue or visual timbre—You want an example of form progression? Running through the jungle you need just keep your eyes open. Here: Bow-tie buds into trefoiling blooms into erinaceous ferns into... How about one for hue evolution? Okay: Your eyes are currently rounding the color wheel from hyperxanthophylled to hyperchlorophylled to hypercyanophylled to... Now visual timbre (or is it 'timber'?): Gallows-vines juxtaposed against roots of craning spectators. Easy. It's all Modular-Protean. Did you just come up with that? The more things same the more things stay the change? 999,999,999 and 1 are day and night but they are still just a blink apart from one another. You feel that numbers and words and shadows and stinging pains, no matter their degree, all exist on their own separate (plane?... wheel?...) rota of change, each with their own unique dimensions and axes and number spokes, which simply cross and intersect and gnash into other rotas under the associations and circumstances that—... To see the composite elements of reality is not just to see Platonic Forms, but to see the circular abacuses the Platonic Forms are wrung-ed onto, like beads, calculated on, molded for, Play-Doughed... Cylinders a on jungle like all the spins clock... You like this want to keep going with it: The Circle of Fifths is out save a Fitzcarraldonian opera-house-in-the-jungle intercession. How about Laban movement analysis? Sans your head-bobbing parallax, of course. You try to establish such a continuity between each locus you hone in on, but with negligable wind and everyhting mostly standing still, you are at a loss. Wait a minute. You. You've got movement to spare. You think about which Effort would best describe your movements—Slashing, definitely—and then almost like a call and response, you then

think about what The Snake's Effort would be and your unable to stave off returning to The Snake but before you do The Rota snaps open and you think to yourself about how what's behind you, chasing after you, is simultaneously Floating and Dabbing and Wringing and Thrusting and Pressing and Flicking and Slashing and Gliding and

The Snake is Thought-Razing and All-Numbing and N I H I L-ing and—you now understand—has always been Here—not just 'Here' as in right now in the jungle, but 'Here' as in ubiquitously present. The Snake biting with NIHIL, is the power to undo. Undo what? Everything... Everything but The Snake... Everything EXCEPT NIHIL... NIHIL is Nothing as OMNIA is sw-All-owed... The Snake is ominously devouring omnia omnisciently... HAS BEEN devouring omnia omnisciently. Has been since when? Since Time must have first began Itself... Or, rather, since NIHIL first began Time, prepared Time, as one does with food, Time as a sort of meal for NIHIL... You can just picture The Dawn of Creation, nascent Time blithely unspooling Itself, flying into NIHIL's crimped, monstrous embouchure with as much temporal significance as a vanishing spaghetti noodle... It doesn't matter if The Snake catches you tonight or tomorrow, next year or next century, in a millenium or after eight-hundred-thousand-years; it doesn't matter because NIHI—... because NOTHING matters, because This Universe was hatched between the fangs of The Snake. You comprehend all of this, that—... everything you just thought about is the power to fade and to sink and to forget... more precisely, to be forgotten by... Void-anointing the ash-laden... Then, glittering, beautiful words twinkle inside your head around this subject, chaining one after another like 'Dentro denti', but far more pleasingly... Despite their subject matter, they calm and comfort you with their allure. The words are:

Vesuvianite crystals coronating volcano-versed corpses

Inert aesthetic. A eulogy for the inanimate. Ashes to ashes... Dust to dust... Corpses to clay... Diamonds to dying... And a haiku? You syllable it out under your runner's-breath cadencing:

> Ve/su/vi/an/ite
> cryst/als /cor/on/at/ing /vol
> can/o-/vers'd /corp/ses

Enjambment doesn't even begin to describe the gymnastics at play here to get 'volcano' to fit but you'll take it. There's also a word-picture—no, a letter-picture: v-v/c-c-v/c-v-c... VVCCVCVC... Pattern-pretty... The Vs and Cs like Roman numerals... Fives and hundreds... How many fives of hundreds of years ago was Pompeii maquette-ed by Wesuwius? Wait, Wesuwius!—An overtone-smothered laugh is borne one on one of your vigorous breaths. Proper pronounciation or not, Mount Wesuwius just sounds more Seussian than archaeological...

A jungle this old has to have ruins, right? Some kind of fossiled architecture built hundreds or thousands of years ago, by peoples and societies and communities?... You think for a second on such imaginary ancient peoples: They must have been weened on experiences like the one you're having now, living in such close proximity to The Cave of The Primeval where this all began. More than just TheCaveOfThePrimevalers (if they ever existed), the whole human species, all over the world, MUST have confronted this quality of Fear in its less Modern days, and even still, now, in pockets too, to this very day... You are in a pocket right now. There is a chance that what you're feeling right now, this NIH—... this NOTHING-exacerbating-Classical-fear-into-Existentialist-Fear, is due to your lack of previous exposure, your unpreparedness, the sort of byproduct you get from cramming a semester's worth of coursework the night before the final exam, of doing a lifetime's worth of pushups in one session without so much as a warm-up, of trying to build up an immunity to venom and poison and strychnine all at the same time by first chugging a gallon of each. You are just out of your depth here—Of course YOU would react strangely to all of this... Whoever you are... Hmm. So your amnesia is not a true amnesia, at least, because you can at least riddle out your previously having nothing to do with NOTHING... Wait, NOTHING to do with nothing? Your logic begins to hiccup a little... Well what does that leave? If you've had NIHIL to do with NIHIL until... until now... then?

No wonder you don’t know who you are—If you’re here now, it means you were never anywhere before... You realize you are NOTHING, that you have always BEEN NOTHING, and that your current state of Fear, this seismic bout of trepidation, while 'logical' due to your inexperience and lack of exposure, is nonetheless seismic-seismic, foundation-rattling, as you are experiencing it now, beyond objectivity; this is what Imre Madách called an "ébredésem borzongása", a 'shiver of awakening', but you are no God-forsaking Adam (and not only from the lack of a W in the name itself but) because your/this shiver of awakening has less to do with leaving The Whole than it does with rejoining The Hole. These physical and psychological (and spiritual?) shudders you've been experiencing are more than just your growing pains—they're your 'ending pains', this is your second shiver of awakening after all, your natural physio-/psycho-(/spirito-)logical reaction to coming to terms with realizing what you've always been and forever will be: NOTHING... After all (and you realize you're starting to lose it here a bit), nothing is more u-/U-niversal than NOTHING! Semantically that's true... but it's also true in every other way. What? You want another? Another way? Alter viam? Well pop quiz—Where else would everything—this jungle for instance—have to have come from other than: From NOTHING? Other than: Ex Nihil? Hmm! Yes!! It doesn't make sense, but the truest things don't! You—

You realize you're actually, verbally making some of these exclamations, panting them out all slurred and strained, and a skeleton crew of die-hard Self-Consciousness synapses generate a faceless hypothetical person to silent-stare criticize you. You shut up and resume your pattern of voiced/unvoiced glottal fricatives, but with some small bit of new hope from 'seeing' this imaginary etiquettee: Was it overly pessimistic to assume ruins? Maybe thriving peoples dwell here still, this jungle a haven and metropolis for them, to this day. If you spot one of them, A Neighbor Of The Cave of the Primeval, maybe they can dispatch The Snake for you, or at least ward The Snake off, snake-charm it away Circle-of-Fifths style, if that's even possible... If it is possible, The Neighbors would be the ones who know how. You would do anything to meet such a person, such a human being capable of uncasting such a spell of darkness... You would fall to your fern-flogged knees in kindness to them, offering up all you have in return, thanking them with your sincerest solmenity, breaking through any potential language barrier with plain, effusive tears... That such a wonderful person were to exist to kill or to scare off The Snake and to save you!... And then, at that point, after being saved, would you return to your nebulous, likely-urban life? Or, if The Neighbors would have you, would you remain in the jungle and become like your Hero? Become a Hero yourself? Is the Hero already you? A future you? You would have to be the next-you-Hero to save the next-you-you, of course, this next-you-you who's probably already lined up on Fate's path to The Cave of the Primeval. Maybe things have to go a certain way... Or maybe not... This is tricky; you have to ask yourself, time-travel or destiny or karma be damned, whether rinky-dink present-you would you really put yourself through the unimaginable future-torture it must take to be The Hero, to face The Snake again, especially when it seems impossible right now... So, though still very much in the throes of Fear, you start asking yourself already if you have what it takes to unlearn this

second shiver, or maybe even make it to a third, changing from 'chasee' to 'chaser', from 'gatherer-ed' to 'hunter-er', from 'livestock' to—

Another epiphany billows into your mind, a grimmer, more all-encompassing one than any that came before (as if that's even possible, but) so you begin, that: The Universe reflects NOTHING in every single possible way. It's engendered down to Its marrow by NIHIL. Now, how and why is this, you may ask? Isn't Time or The Universe or All-ness supposed to be food for NIHIL? Discrete and different and separate as prey is from a predator? How can everything besides NIHIL really ALSO be NIHIL? You may regret asking... Here you go: Well, because: BECAUSE: The rabbit runs fast BECAUSE the wolf runs fast; the pigs get fat BECAUSE the homo sapiens get fat; so, QED, The Universe is the way It is BECAUSE NIHIL is the way It is... There. The Universe was constructed or prepared or crafted or spun for NIHIL's own benefit, made OUT OF (that's 'EX') NIHIL's IMAGE... UN-IMAGE... UNIMAGINATION... So, The Universe, manifestly, cannot be anything but NOTHING, NIHIL It's single nexus of definition, It's complete and only source, It's ultimate origin, It's—... Wait. Maybe chattle was too generous—too macro... You have to think about biology; you have to think about mitochondria, because everything-but-NIHIL is actually—

So now, onto the last step, that, irrefutably, undeniably, from all you've just established/uncovered/proven, NOTHING IS—... NIHIL HAS TO BE... Using the The Universe to maintain homeostasis. Ta-da. There it is... Yes, unfortunately, The Universe is so much MORE (or is it LESS?) than just an entrée, an exotic delicacy for spaghetti-slurping NIHIL to hunt and fetch and farm and have to bring to It's mouth, because The Universe has been integrated by NIHIL as It exists within NIHIL's cells... Actually, maybe the cells are empty, have been empty this whole time; maybe the mitochondrion angle was even still too generous. Well what's left?

All IS NOTHING! All and Norhing are not equal and opposite things, no... There's no Matter-vs.-Anti-Matter dichotomy at play here... It's all the same thing—all the same NOTHING. The Universe is not even a Yang turned Yin... It turns out The Universe is not even that—and not evan a 'that' even, just a 'this'... The Universe is not and has never been 'It's Own Thing'—some 'D.O.' tragically placed by its 'S.' (you're smearing boundaries now, erasing distinctions between Subjects and Direct Objects). No—The Universe has NOT been unluckily scooped up, nor has It been a victim of circumstance, finding Itself born into the cradle of The Snake's mouth... No, the Truth is that the Universe CAN'T be Some-Thing for NOTHING... because... BECAUSE: The Universe is NOTHING for NOTHING. Hmm! That's right! It doesn't stop! Nothing but NOTHING exists and NIHIL goes all the way through ITSELF, and you and the jungle and the air are all IT! Just NOTHING folded over onto Itself, coiled like The Snake's formidable body in order to produce tricks of perception, illusions of movement... to what end? For NIHIL of course... for The Snake... For exercise or for amusement or for entertainment or for fun or any number of motives. The fact is that NIHIL flexes ITS tail and you dance with it. Hand shadow puppetry... Ombromanie... An ophidian ombromanie... OPHIDIOMBROMANIE? Unless IT has less to do with shadows and more to with scales as film cels... But then there's also Phenakistiscopes where The Snake could be slithering in circles... There's also—No. This: OPHIDIORAMA... A catch-all no matter what specific technique is at play. You're in it: O P H I D I O R A M A...

That's it! You're confident there's nothing deeper than this scenario. This, right here, right now, your ragged body and all these damned harlequined plants and that dim, drawbridge-ing sun that refuses to stop slipping away from you, not to mention that life you had before but can't remember right now, all of it, ALL of ALL of the world... On top of all being The same Snake's tail, IS a fabricated reality, a fashioned reality carved and sculpted and hollowed out and flip-booked and shadow-cast by layers of NIHIL-shadow right down to its most basic levels, by NIHIL, by The Snake, by A 'Something' (NIHIL) or A 'Someone' (NIHIL) Which/Who is even MORE completely hollowed out than You Are (LIHIN). You are LIHIN, you realize, you are merely a reflection—no, deeper—a rarefaction (or a 'reflexive') of NIHIL... The jungle is LIHIN too, just like how the world is LIHIN; the universe is LIHIN; The Snake however is not LIHIN—The Snake is NIHIL; there's only one real Thing in this 'world' and It is The Snake. How do you know this? Because:

Reality Reflects The Heart Of Its Maker's Reality... And In Any Such Reality It Is Its Maker's Heart That Beats The Loudest... The Snake Is Different From Everything Else In The Universe Because The Snake Itself Is NIHIL Itself IS The Maker Itself, Come Down Like The Sphere To Mr. The Square In Flatland. The Snake Is NIHIL Is The Maker. The Snake Itself Is The Maker Itself, Since The Maker's Heart Has Now Come To Beat In A Hearth It Deems Amenable (LIHIN). The Snake Itself Is The Maker Itself, Since The Maker's Eyes Have Opened Now To Witness What They Find Pleasing (LIHIN). The Snake Itself Is The Maker Itself, Since The Maker's Jaws Have Widened Now To Dine On Their Fairest Fare (LIHIN). NIHIL. Come. To Dine. On. You (LIHIN)... LIHIN doesn't have any Ws though...

You could climb a tree. You could just stop running and scramble up a tree, which would be an easier tree-climb than most tree-climbs because of of how many footholdable plants are growing off of each of these trees that you've been passing by. Yes... Each tree with its own built-in rope ladder, each festooned with their own unique pattern of CAUTION-taped rock-climbing stones (with how neon-bright each budding lichen glows), each tree, each pillar of upward-exploding greenery beckoning you to dive up it, drawing you with capillary action. Give your legs a break and your arms a try. Just take a grip with one fist and then take another with another fist and it's like your running with your hands, vertically, and you'll leave The Snake hungry down below on the—... But, of course, The Snake is made for scaling such structures... The Snake—on top of everything else The Snake has going for The Snake's Self—is also vine-like, vine-like as any of your built-in rope ladders. In addition to creeping, The Snake must also excel at wrapping and climbing and scaling, beating you in a race to the top of any one of these trees, even with your modest head start. More importantly, after all, unlike how the jungle's been doing so far, it's not like any one of these trees goes on indefinitely—Once you reach the top—IF you reach the top—there's nowhere else for you to go but down, even if by some miracle The Snake is scared of heights and won't be vine-like, won't wrap and climb and scale scalariform scales up to you; The Snake will just wait for you below, patiently; hunger wouldn't dissuade The Snake—it might even motivate The Snake to try to bring the tree down. Now THAT would be a nightmare's nightmare, pure misery whipping... Going up any of these trees now would just mean throwing whatever lead you still have at the moment away... A stupid idea... What was it you thinking about before? Oh, yeah.

Even though you've just revealed how/why/that this reality is fabricated by and for and of The Snake, Which/Who Is NIHIL, Which/Who Is The Maker, you and the rest of The Universe just Its/Its/Its reflection as LIHIN inside of Its OPHIDIORAMA (a word you never want you think about or use or remember ever again), you realize you've gone off the deep end here, and that you want to stop, but that you can't, even though that you want to think more about what your name could be now that you've ruled out 'Adam' and 'LIHIN', but at the same time, you now know, KNOW that it takes THIS experience to know that the true reality/unreality of—You bite your tongue. Hard. Purposefully and hard.

You could take the fabric of your shirt and wrap it around your hand and reach into a tree and pluck out a drop-deadly poison tree frog and hurl it at The Snake and kill The Snake. But that wouldn't work—You would have to throw it directly into the Snake's Mouth... You could tear off one of your fingers and coat it with the tree frog's juices and simply drop it behind you like a bread crumb, like finger food, and then The Snake will gobble it up and die and... But you can't realistically tear one of your fingers off barehanded. But you could bite a finger off. You could also just give yourself a bloody nose (or stick out your bloody tongue) and drench the fabric with your blood and plant the tree frog inside as the surprise crunchy center and then drop the shirt and give The Snake a forg in the throat... But first you have to find a tree frog and then

hope that it's poisonous and then hope that it won't jump on you because the touch of one webbed toe will kill you faster than The Snake will and you don't even remember seeing or hearing any tree—

You're passing a waterfall. You can't see it, but you hear it somewhere distant on your immediate left. You picture a loud, wet wall of rock. Maybe you should go to it. Maybe The Snake can't climb such slippery material as fast as you can... When it comes to waterfall-scaling, how fast can you even climb that sort of stuff?... It doesn't matter—You're prepared to find out. But, no—You can't do a sharp, 90º turn and go left immediately, or The Snake will fulfill a hypoto-noose, so, instead, you begin to slowly, gradually drift your run-line left, toward the distant rushing. Even if you miss the waterfall itself, maybe there'll be something nearby that's past it, upstream or downstream, that you can utilize to your advantage... Fewer plants would be good; you notice yourself tripping over things and falling down more than you did before, no doubt because of the growing darkness of dusk, the dusk-growing darkenss, the darkly growing dusking... Is The Snake even still chasing you? Slithering faster than you can run The Snake should have caught you by now. Your eyes have adjusted to the lacking light quite well so far. You hazard a look back one more time, and while you can't actually place eyes on The Snake, you do notice a roiling displacement around where The Snake ought to be, charging black-hole style, but umistakably further back than before; The Snake is no longer slithering faster than you can run. How? Why? Your synapses offer up a factoid: Torpor. Without the sun, cold-blooded creatures become more susceptible to torpor. You sharpen your left-leaning run-line, except that

You've already missed the waterfall—you couldn't turn sharp enough fast enough—but you did find a new bit of terrain, you're sure, as the plants start thinning: You're in a clearing now, a circular clearing, a large, circular jungle clearing, the product of either fire or deforestation, or of either both or neither—you have no real idea... The salient, drooping skeletons of broken and/or/nor burned lumber are double-darkened by the lapse of your twilight into full-blown black-blue night-night, stars and all... But it's actually a brighter type of night than stars alone would normally allow, even with the uncountable amount of stars possible only here in Arcadia. You look up—A Full Moon. The Most Wonderful Sight Of This Ordeal. With luck, your eyes will adjust. You WILL be able to squeeze enough lunar photons through your dilated pupils to Keep Going if you have to keep Keep Going. Then, among the haystack of stars, a needle: A blinking point, a green-red alternating pinprick of light, translating northward. This anomaly up in the sky could be Santa’s Sleigh, or, more likely, a plane full of travelers (just like you are), all of them either starting out or returning home from their own adventures/misadventures/brushes-with-Death. You begin to recall being 'here' on vacation for Winter Holiday. You remember taking pictures, posting pictures of your travels. You were taking photos inside The Cave of the Primeval. You had a phone. Pockets. You HAVE a phone. The screen... The Screen is—Broken. Shattered. Is it still functional underneath this splintered ice? Does a virtual world still whirl 'round that opaque rectangle?! You shake the device like a can of spray paint. The phone's flashlight, which you configured to be activated by jostling the phone back and forth like so, is—Operational. Your ankles take up a soliloquy in their new spotlight before being comidically upstaged, the spotlight moving on to the much more interesting set dressing, a set 'littered with miscellaneous biomatter' like a pollution-free redition of Becket's 'Breath'. This will help, this spotlight, this handheld second moon—They will both help. You remember having spent a lot of time configuring your phone's other features too, now that you think of it, though none of them are of any use to you right now, not without the screen, not without your being able to see the deeper screen beneath. You're in the middle of the clearing now, an eye closing into you. Think! You need to THINK! A momentary piece of Clarity appropriated to you now. So WHAT will you DO with IT?! The Snake is still coming. You scan the clearing for any signs of a path. Noth—None. No worries. You go left. Forward-left. 30º-forward-left. But at all times keeping an eye out right for something—anything. Fast. Sweat-soaked. Drenched. You have been shedding water. The synchronicity behind your not going right: You know there's water flowing on the left... Maybe there'll be another waterfall or SOMETHING useful further up on the left; the water-path does not just disappear—It's still there somewhere on the left. Maybe you can still climb, but until then Run. Don't stop and search for a path that isn't there. Finish running across the clearing. You cannot wait. Dithering static on a barren field... Before you know it, you've exhausted every escape route and you're back at the edge of the jungle. Looking back and to the left, you see The Snake again, starting through the clearing, tracing your cord across the clearing's circle. Will this moonlight and starlight have an affect on torpor? Go. You need to go NOW. Widen, please. You have to Widen the distance between you and The Snake. You make ingress back into the jungle.

Your statistics for crossing the clearing are as follows:

1. The Clearing as a Unit Circle:
    - Enter $3\pi/2$
    - Exit $2\pi/3$

2. The Clearing as a Clock Face:
    - Enter six o'clock
    - Exit eleven o'clock

3. Your Clearing-Path as Semaphore:
    - The letter 'C'
    - Traced, from bottom to top

3.

4. It actually is eleven o'clock
    - now
    - and

12. You feel somebody is wondering
    - where
    - you
    - are
    - ...

802,701. But your phone screen is completely obliterated and won't even light up even though you know that if it could you'd just get handheld

glitch-art instead of a clear-cut icon you could simply just tap in order to call for help or to search for directions or to do any number of things and also that despite your blind attempts to unlock your phone and navigate to such an invisible icon and make a call and that despite your repeated vocal cues/pleas to "CALL POLICE! EMERGENCY! PHONE, CALL POLICE!" you don't get any such lifelines from your trusty, usually-Smarty-Pants-but-now-probably-Traumatically-Brain-Injured phone other than it's utility as a flashlight...

• except that's not entirely true because you're also manically clickig the Volume-UP/DOWN and POWER buttons because—...

• because you can ACTUALLY HEAR YOUR PHONE 'bip. Bip. BIP!' louder and softer, on and off, as you press them!!! And if you you could just see the screen but you can't but at least it's something to hold onto and to squeeze in your hand and feel with its smooth rounded edges as you—

End of your statistics for crossing the clearing.

(∞. Were crop circles ever solved?)

(• plywood)

(• probably)

Fronds and lichen and other wet plants begin to lap up the gentle moonlight above you as below you they bite up your harsh LED. You hurridly plant one foot 'twixt plants after planting 'nother foot 'twixt plants after planting yet 'nother foot... depressing the voluminous jungle floor inches flatter with each step. Harkening back to an observation paranthetical, when it comes to the patterns you're creating right now, a plywood would apply... This is important: The reason your phone is broken is because you took a tumble while inside The Cave of the Primeval—You fell on your phone and you also hit your head and you are most definitely, at least, concussed right now; you've been at least concussed for some time. If you would have realized this sooner, you would have been so much more polite to your synapses with their working so, so diligently, despite the sheer amount of literal pressure they've been under. This must be a—Oh, look! There, a large jungle-mouse/-rodent. It blinks and shoots away stage-left like a cartoon character, like Speedy Gonzales, The Fastest Mouse in All of Mexico... Is that where you are? A peninsula in Mexico perhaps? You never thought you'd get to return to a state of mind where you could ask yourself such implicit questions again; you're running for your life, but at least now you're calming down. You've swallowed your gallon of nihilism and have come out stronger for it. Your phone, its LED flashlight, Speedy, maybe even the moonlight itself, they all seem to have helped exorcise—or at minimum fog up—the dreaded Emptiness from rearing its ophidian jaws because—"EEEEKRVGH!" And you turn and you're sure far away you can see The Snake kissing something, kissing something squirming, and The Snake is way closer than you thought The Snake would be but still some distance from you and your head is still turned because you've never shined the LED on The Snake before and it looks and it looks [DOLLY-ZOOM] looks so you don't see looks the tree your running looking into and your concussion gets a sequel and now looks

It's time for a very special episode! Presenting a very special episode! The Episode! A Very Special Animation Movie! A George Paleogene Puppetoon! Here's the very important LAOCOÖN—Apologies... [CHECKS NOTES] The very important CARTOON! ANIMATION. STOP-MOTION. STOP, MOTION. STOP. GO. Have to Go. GO? So Here It Is! Yes, here It is, The Snake... The episode is called—Y'know, I think we'll call this episode: "Mr. The Snake, meet Slowpoke Rodriguez!" [CARTOONY ~Kiss~ ~Kiss~ ~Kiss~ SOUND EFFECTS] [UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER FROM A LARGE LIVE-CINEMA AUDIENCE] And I thought Mr. The Snake was a 'cold-blooded' lover! [EVEN MORE UPROARIOUS LAUGHTER ETC.] Yes! Can't you just HEAR the good movie-going folks already har-har-ing?! WHAT A TITAN OF BOA-LESQUE! Comedy gold! Platinum! Yttria-Stabilized Zirconia! Again, that's "Slowpoke Rodriguez gets eaten by The Snake" © C&W Productions MMXXII. And coming soon! The sequel: "The Snake eats Wa—" You have to get up. Adjust your eyes. Adjust your head. You have to put the sounds that are coming behind you FURTHER behind you. Your phone-lamp is still in your hand. Start slowly because you don't want to fall again. Start slowly and low to the ground and then continue like you have been. Don't focus on the laughing noises behind you. That's right, project the light ahead of you and move into the screen. and move. and move. move. move. move...

You're still moving. Good. Keep still moving. Faster. Faster now... 1... 1... 2... 1 2... 2 1... 2 2 3... 4... 5 7... 8 9 10 10 10... 12... 11 13 14 16 17 CLICK! 18 20 21 22 23 21 22 23 24 25 26 27 28 29 30 31 32 33 34 35 36 37 36... 37 CLICK! 38 39 40 41 42 44 44 49 60 61 62 63 64 65 65... 65 66 67 68 69 70 71 72 83 CLICK! 84 85 88 89 90 91 92 93 94 95 96 97 98 99 100 101 102 103 104 105 106 107 108 109 CLICK! 110 111 112 113 114 115 116 117 118 119 120 121 121 122 123 124 125 126 127 128 129 130... 113... 130 CLICK! 131 132 133 134 140... 135 136 137 138 139 140 141 141 142 143 144 145 146 147 148 149

Okay. You've been counting your paces and you think you've authentically made it to just short of one-fifty. You can count, and now the rest of your thoughts are getting unshuffled... Only now allowing your Fear to seed anew, from square one: So The Snake (now with horror-movie lighting) starts spreading out again. You can see The Snake when you think, occluding your thought-space, like a tall person getting up from their seat behind you in a cinema, interrupting the projection, casting an Allegorical shadow, the kind of Platonic Shadow you remember first seeing inside The Cave of The Primeval, but now brought with you, re-emerging, here, miles away. The Snake is in your head, gliding between the wrinkles of your twice-bruised brain, wrapping around your inner ears, screwing cochlearly, shout-whispering the letters N O T H—No... NO! uncapitalize. uncapitalize. de-escalte. ante down. think smaller...

And so all of the lowercase-n nothings you (must have) encountered before all seem so full now, each one a veritable cornucopia of possibilities... There are so many... Even scraping the bottom of the barrel of all of these sweet nothings this previously understood reality had to offer, you find the fullest one of them all: 'Scientific nothing'—Hmm! Yes. Even lowercase-n nothing vis-à-vis the most shrewd empiricism is still 'something', since a true vacuum is STILL a series of layers of unseeable fields, invisible fields over which all things must ride through as they emerge overhill, sounding trumpets and raising children... But captial-N Nothing, the deeper unseeable, is the knowledge that these fields, especially when they're at their fullest, are really at their most abandoned, their most accursed, their most verboten, and that instead of prospering peoples expanding overtop, the truth is actually that only specks of ashen static dither. The flesh belies the skeleton. Et in Arcadia ego. You are an Arcadian. Citizenship: ARCADIAN. Passport stamped. Welcome home. This Fate is Written: Capital-N Nothing is a land without history, a land without name, reknowned for its unknowability, avoided for its void, but far, far from unavoidable... Just un-awakened from... But not for you... Or for Slowpoke...

You now realize that Nothing is What and How and Who many reasonable people imagine Death being like. Nothing is constantly calling and begging and tugging you to help fill it. You've already mentioned how lowercase-n nothing, physically, scientifically, IS a vacuum, but that

when it comes to Nothing, being the one-and-only Sui Generis of Empty Space, uppercase-N Nothing is more of an Existentialist Vacuum, the department-store appliance kind. You explain: As far as metaphors go, Nothing(^tm) is a sleek, top-dollar, out-of-the-box shopvac plugged in, turned on, and—more than just being switched to 'MAX'—overclocked with technowizardy so intense and involved that you can't even begin to comprehend what does what. Nothing(^tm) also—you're just reading from the spec manual here—is bottomless, has an unlimited warranty, and... hmm... has a hose-circumference which exceeds, by orders of magnitude, the measurement/scope of The Known Universe. To boot, Nothing(^tm), along with its gaping, durable Bazarov-made hose, is concurrently being pointed a nanometer away from each and every Thing. VVVVVVVHHHHRRRR... You get all you have to do is let go of your fanciful surroundings for an instant (which you've alredy more than done), to correctly doubt reality once, to turn your head over to the right or maybe to the left and then notice the Hose floating there, hover-hoovering there as The Snake's always been placed, for one single instance, and then, for all other instances: Nothing, a fate of being inhaled but never exhaled, static-ed, being taken but never being given, The Snake and The Hose and Nothing all the same and fulfilling The One True Exchange that supercedes and repays and anulls any and all exchanges made before or future-promised... Something for Nothing. That is what reigns: SOMETHING for NOTHING!—Wait... That's not right... You've—You've already said All-ness was 'NOTHING for NOTHING'! You're going in circles!!! Highlight this. Bite your tongue again. DO IT. BITE! Mark this continuity error! Tear The Snake's filmstrip! Un-immerse. Stop. STOP!

Yes! No more ontological infection. No more ophidian integration. No more illusions of snakish shadows or spaghetti or shopvacs—just synapses; you have escaped the OPHIDIORAMA. Stay escaped. Think AWAY from The Snake. You can still be afraid, so use Fear to get to your senses, but AWAY from The Snake, use Fear as the underwater wall swimmers push themselves away from: You gulp and breath and mull things over other than The Snake and Slowpoke and cinema and shopvacs and you chop some weird plant-thing down with your now quite bloody wrists and you breathe again and gather-er yourself and you start to wonder: If the ambiguous ending of the short story 'The Legend of Sleepy Hollow' was only left ambiguous by Irving for his younger readers' sakes...

Like, the timid Crane never had any real, adult chance of actually escaping to (actually-Sleepy) New Hampshire at the end, right? Not when he was up against a real-life headless Hessian... Crane, he was too much of a scaredy-cat klutz (are you thinking of yourself here?) to truly trounce the supernatural, to beat Death and make it out alive. HE must have perished. To win in this kind of situation, that takes ability, courage, adaptability, RESOLVE—not just the fear-motivated repulsion he had (was that all he had?)... The resolve to actually live and to go on, the pull of Life... It must be stronger than the push from Death, otherwise how did all of This start? (You think, refuting NIHIL without even realizing it.) It's possible for you to achieve this mindset—Crane just didn't have what it takes... Washington Irving must have realized Crane was a gonner right away, but how to sweeten the truth for the more squeamish readers? Just elipsis the hell out of destiny—that makes everyone happy... Yeah... W.I. just needed some built-in deniability in Crane's ultimate fate to accomodate the more optimistic readers out there... That's all there is to it. A gimmick. So YOU cannot be distracted by such fantasies as maybe making it to a farm upstate like ol' Buster the Dog after an ellipsis; such get-out-of-jail-free-cards are UNEARNED Happy Endings. You have to be pragmatic and hyper-aware—... Error means death after all... Ichabod COULD have plucked himself out of peril if only he kept his presence of mind, if only he kept his head; think of The Headless Horseman once and then of Katrina Van Tassel once and then put the kibosh on the inner monologue, quash the director's commentary, reboot your Python-coded neurology to run in Assembly, and silence the parts of your brain not absolutely integral to survival; reallocate all your resources to untangling your physical surroundings and not the metaphysical ones... Hold your breath with your nose to the grindstone and KEEP RUNNING. You can beat The Snake and win if you do this. To underestimate the Headless Horseman means no more life—He and The Snake Means Nothing, NIHIL. Now, you've thought of The Snake plenty already, so think of KVT once (if you even have one) and then your path forWard will be Clear. C. Think of C. Who is C? You—... Another Waterfall. It's another Waterfall. It's more forWard than left or right. You Can run to it. You Can run to the new Waterfall and Climb it.

It's left now, the Waterfall. That running, rushing water. Now it's right. Now behind you. No. Left again. No... No waterfall—That's no waterfall. Around you. The rushing is all around you. Right. Left. The pumpkin has been thrown across the bridge... N—Nothing is here... NIH—... No. You last heard left. Run right. Right. Maybe back to The Clearing, maybe back to the first real genuine Waterfall. Maybe. Is this right or left you're going now? Is the sound above or below you? Inisde or outside you. What if—You suddenly stumble,tripping over some arboreal carrion, into a space of thinning trees—the very edge of the very same Clearing you just left (you got here a lot sooner than you thought you would, but your internal Compass isn't exactly your most accurate faculty at the moment). As you attempt to get back up onto your feet you realize a hard truth your self-preservation-mandated synapses have tried their best to get you to ignore: You are Spent. Completely, utterly Spent. Wasteland-wasted. You've been breathing so hard for so long that your throat's bleeding. Your arms and legs are so exhausted and numb, shaking so hard, that you know your previous level of motor ability is off the table if you're to continue your flight. Besides the feeble, clumsy crawling which you're now performing toward the Clearing proper, (you chagrinly accept) there is Nothing else you and all your presence of mind can do—If The Snake wants you, The Snake has you.

So here now at The End, nested within the geometry around you, at some points The Snake's presence feels venomous, at all times constricting; you already know that The Snake doesn't need to touch you to start impeding your breath; The Snake just needs to let you know you're surrounded, or rather, that The Snake has surrounded YOU. Coiling 'round every bough and stone... Wait... Yes, as per usual, now BECOMING every bough and stone, the jungle irregularly pulsing and crepitating. This is going to be it: You turn your enervated abdomen every which way and search for a terminus, a head, a tail, a something to signify a bound, just one, just one limit for this as-far-as-you-know biological expression of both Positive AND Negative Infinity. You've seen The Head before, so where is it now? Then, at six o'clock, further away than you expected, out of the corner of one of yours, you catch dead eyes that never drift into sleepy ones, then a botanical sob peels out as a tree falls, then a flitting trunk of a body that refuses to lie like the lumber it laces through starts to move and to fly and to dart, lancing less like the ebony sword you first imagined The Snake as and more like a writer's-quill, an archaic pen crafting those old Celtic characters over vellum, their letter-bark rubriked with past-preys' bloods (you're definitely past prayer now)... Is this The Book of Kells? No: The Book of Kills. Those senescent Monks' words collision-pathed at you now, verbally trajectoried, those giant, moonlight-shimmering, universally-decipherable exhortations, are being deftly written in and into and through and against the foliage toward you, into you, through you, larger and louder with each stroke, desiring to make you their proto-period, their inevitable punctus. The loudest words you've ever read.

Your phone-LED goes dark, you shut your eyes, and before you know it, prayer starts to become the only possible hope for escape... Prayer?... Wait a minute. Didn't We already say "You're already past prayer now" ?... [CHECKS NOTES] Yep, there it is. Right before 'Book of Kells versus Book of Kills'... Adverb was "definitely" not "already", hmmm... "already" sounds better... Looks better too—matches the As and E in "past prayer"... Okay, un-CLICK about five seconds... And We can leave things from "You're phone-LED goes dark..." . 24 CLICK 48 CLICK 72 CLICK 96 CLICK and 120 CLICK. Minus 120. Alright. We're good. Way Cool.

Phew! What is that? Six hours straight? Narrating this poor sap's final moments sure is thirsty work! I'm gonna go get a soda from the machine. You want anything? No? Well, be back in a jiff—Sure We won't miss anything important...

PRESS Y FOR song2
PRESS PERIOD FOR image2

After wriggling socks into shoes, the Narrator first uses their arms to hover out of and above the chrome-wheeled desk chair. The Narrator then lunges forward, cathching their weight with one leg, then the other, while twisting their body and turning their face away from the hotly lit scene, a scene soaking up a staggering array of HMIs, most of their barn doors closed or partly so... Supermarket-promotional sungalsses are doffed and neckline-hung as the Narrator's eyes adjust to the corners of the dim, otherwise-unlit lab. There's a door. A hand makes purchase on a Schlage Elan as a duct-taped tennis shoe fulfills an arc four feet below. SHNNG!

The Narrator walks down an empty but fully lit hallway, turning their head to see if anyone else is around at this hour. No. Nobody else. Just flocks of empty furniture so modern, unadorned, and indestructible (the tables, at least, ostensibly life-sized grey-white plastic pizza savers) that the Narrator thinks up a scenario for them: The Narrator imagines such bulk-sleek furnishings originating from an eccentric company of metrosexually-bearded lumberjacks felling sparkling-new wind turbines instead of broad-barked trees, misery-whipping (two-man sawing) those eco-friendly redwoods, "timberrr!"-ing them horizontal-like, then river-driving—no, ocean-driving—them down to the mainland(s) from the fridgid North Atlantic. Why down from the North Atlantic? Because these imaginary wind turbines were once spinning up there atop enormous, blue-white plateau-glaciers, of course. Yeah, that's where these urbane lumberjaXs got 'em from... And so they are nudged into the world's shipping yards, where titanic cranes take their bows and stack these stripped 'logs' into pyramids (in contrast to the more common cuboids shipping containers fill out)... The rest of the fantasy includes unspecified but exacting techniques of shaping and molding the trunks the Narrator isn't too familiar with or concerned over, but the end result would be a teflon-carved stool, table, or fixture that, in the context of human history, had never existed before, but would now, at least, last forever. Uncomfortably. Modernly. Forever... Though, a few specimens were actually quite comfortable; while most of the furniture on this level of the facility was too unsalvagably firm for proper respite, the Narrator's chrome-wheeled chair was the exception, contoring At The Back and swaying just like those imaginary turbines over those unreal icebergs swayed, carefully yielding to the mysteries Of The North Wind...

The Narrator could not imagine nights like these without this chair, only wishing the rest of its ilk were as form-fitting and inviting. Higher-ups, professionals, and lab leaders would use the chrome-wheeled chair during the day, but it was the Narrator's completely by night, and the Narrator thought themselves uniquely capable of appreciating its luxury from still having to spend so much time in those other, more uncomfortable chairs, particularly the other chairs in that same room that they had just left—which was more of lab, really... The narrator makes a 90º-left towards the outside of another lab marked FABRICATION, where the level's vending machines have been permanently located, each dispenser a vibrantly colorful NPC in an un-unpluggable video game, doomed to indiscriminately and ceaselessly hail passers-by with their friendly, silent and, oftentimes, hazardous textual-prompts. Each machine had it's own peculiar latent machine-hum, each of which you could hear before your 90º-turn, altogether belting out a low hissing chord. One machine, the last one in line, had the loudest background humming, but it was really more of a rushing whoosh than a hum. Now, just to be clear, it's not like these things are jet turbines or anything—It's just real quiet this time of night and these types of invisible sounds can take up a lot more clearance than they usually do, 'coming to life', so to speak.

So a glass pane seperates each enclosed victuals-vivarium from the Narrator, most if not all harshly fluorescently lit. The first machine a org-chart hierarchy of office supplies that are not exactly edible (unless you're past prayer, of course, and the ink and paper start looking like wine and bread), the second machine a sweating biome of pregnant but definitley phallic-looking bottles, the third machine a hive of shinily cacooned, indifferently incubated corn syrups, and the fourth and final machine (the whooshing one), well, an a Metaphorical elusion. See, this last machine does not have a glass pane exposing an office-supply or junk-food ecosystem. Not only that, but the light glowing behind its broad, barely translucent plastic-placard may or may not be fluorescent (the plastic being too yellow-brown honeyed to tell). While the other machines stand at attention, rigid and concave, this one pot-bellies out, a bright, opaque, tubby metal monolith, advertising with its placard a Brobdingnagian pool of froth-tipped sepia. Yes. The Coffee Machine. This was the only coffee machine on the whole level, maybe even in the whole building, a veritable mafia-revenue-generating relic from the 70s whose presence there, in this of all buildings, was as inexplicable as its bizarre flavor selection:

"A: french Roast"
[sic; uncapitalized-f]

"B: S'more"

"C: Banana Nut"

"D: Pabst's Select"
[typo-indiscernable/-unconfirmable]

"E: Past's Select DECAF"
[typo-indiscernable/-unconfirmable]

"F: _____"

"G: _____"

"H: ___OUT___"
[see below*]

*The last option just reads "H: OUT", or, at least, it did until the Narrator added a label-maker-made 'S' before the 'H' some years ago. The 'S' is still there, but not officially included in the listing. An '!' is reportedly in the works.

This Nixonian bulk of black, low-whooshing metal was the machine the Narrator now, for the fourth time this week, stood in front of. Now the Narrator did say they were 'getting a soda', but they lied, truth-sweetened; they were really getting Banana Nut Coffee. The Narrator 'lied' because ‘soda’ sounded like the most refreshing, the most thirst-quenching, and the most self-deprecatingly idiotic beverage to interrupt the scene over. And so five dollars go into the machine, and two dollars come out. CLNK CLNK CLNK, and now a big WHHHOOOOSH, and hot water pours out. The dispensed bills go into the Narrator's money clip, and coins go into some pocket (these coins mingling with the coins collected earlier in the day—change from purchasing a hammer and wall hangers). Now tired, colorful fingers are surrounding the rim of the warming paper cup, the Narrator's palm eating its rising steam, and now the Narrator traces a more controlled, careful stride back to the lab marked DESIGN, softening those once-sharp turns. And now a swipe of your ID with your other hand (the ID taken out of the Narrator's money clip when they had put bills away), and another SHNNG! of your ripping open the door. Almost now... Elevenish more careful strides over the dim burgundy-lour carpeting, setting the banana nut coffee down, ID tucked away, next, to affix sunglasses, check the minute-, second-, and frame-abacuses and... I’m here... What the hell? You've already been eaten by the snake?!

PRESS G FOR song3
PRESS FORWARD-SLASH FOR image3

Peace does not come when The Snake's maw is around your ears like a tight, wet, warm, welcome-to-the-putrefaction-fulfillment-center balaclava. It doesn't come an hour later after you're gone either, when your brain-chemistry gone—Those unfused mandibles are just now getting to your hips, and The Snake is going just CRAZY about getting further, shimmying you in millimeter by millimeter. No, peace comes about two days later, after much effort and toil spent on The Snake's part in hauling the both of You (The Snake + you) back to where The Snake belongs, comes from, resides, dragging a swelled cigar-corpus to a lair so shaded and safe it might as well be a whole other dimension, Un Un-Universe whose elementary particles don't include photons...

And it's here, in this Darkest Darkness of Darknesses, katana-sliced nostrils silently respirating, where The Snake is the only thing breathing, you a lump of protein and cloth convecting beneath a farrago of

- dew and then
- dried blood and then
- the tips of your fingernails and then
- older, dryer blood/bloods, and then finally
- scales. But really finally
- less and less of
- the other pieces of
- you...

Why 'less and less'? Because your reptilian/Leviathan coffin is growing as you diminish, shrink, and deteriorate into it. You do this every one of The Snake's heartbeats, every THUMP comes a SLOSH makes LESS of YOU, the gastrointestinal beating of the waves, the primeval foam and fizz turning stone to sediment to sand to atoms to The Snake. THUMP... SLOSH... THUMP... SLOSH... Way past what used to be your heels, a primitive Brain slowy and darkly waltzes deeper and deeper into Itself through un-movement; The Snake-Skull just sits there, a heavy slab-boulder indenting the umbric soil like a saurian footprint. Inside of that tablet-cranium, The Snake is and will be swimming—or really just ecstasy-floating—through the bottomless pool of "Yesssss...-Good...-Yesssss..."-chemicals, the rapturous precipitate-yield from completing Earth's Oldest and (prim)Evillest ritualistic rain dance: Predatory Rumba. Instict? Mandate? Evolutional. Vae All Lazybones... which Mr. The Snake has gotten quite proficient at fulfilling over the years, a filmic career full to bursting of carefree, lazyboned fools like yourself, but of course you know that by now. You also know that it is Time to sssssleep now, understands The Snake, laying there, with dead, eyelidless eyes that never get sleepy but just get more dead. While your flesh-stone erodes into sand, The Snake's flesh returns to flesh-stone, understand? A slumber beneath slumbers: An ancient reptilian slumber... The Snake's Synapses reflecting darkened pleasure into Themselves, packed together like a crammed-dense geode miles underground, cradling a softly flickering flame, a lanterned parhelion core, The Snake still and statued, except for the subtle earthquakes of imagination. Goodnight. Pleasant dreams... THUMP... SLOSH... THUMP...

Here, the both of You will linger for at least a few weeks. You: Swallowed, Digested, then GONE-gone, in that order. The Snake: Sated, sated, then HUNGRY, also in that order but on loop... Oh, don't feel jealous, lover; you weren't the First and you certainly won't be the Last. But it is in that—in THIS interim, between meals, between 'vacancies', as your grey matter and every-other-color matter are mingling with enzymes so corrosive that they make the pH Scale seem like the Scoville (and you thought that some magic tree frog slime actually stood a chance against such witches'-brew chemistry), that, while being gastrically lava-lamped, whose to say, for an instant's instant (now, follow along), that your noble little synapses, the 'pieces' that make you You, reoriented themselves in this primordial you-soup that you're currently convecting in, to allow (and here's the objective) a single..... conscious..... thought..... before, of course, unspooling again, relapsing you back into your present state of entropy? Whose to say that can't happen? Not you, as you are now, at least.

What's that? You like the sound of that, except that you want your whole body back too? Not just your brain? Okay. Deal. But, again, it's only going to be for an instant's instant, a few frames, a fraction of a second—You're not walking away from this or anything, Buster (the dog). Here's what's going to happen: You're going to reform, retain bodily integrity for a moment AND THEN, as your body un-reforms, you will retain mental integrity for a moment, and then completely un-reform back into the sludge you are now. What? Why not both at once? Well, just so that there's a separation between what you want and what YOU want, of course. And you're not being swindled by the fine print here—You'll still get enough mental wherewithal during your bodily portion to act like your old self, just without the inner monologue (which is the sole goal of what happens next). That fine with you? Okay! Good! So... Just building you up here: What if Humpty O. Dumpty (The 'O.' now being

revealed to have stood for 'Osiris') is able to shell out another story? What if, like a profitable IP, it's time to 'Bring You Back For One More Momentary Adventure'? What if—

Hmm? But why, you ask? Why do this? Well, don't you think that everybody/anybody/somebody/nobody would at least be a little interested in what YOU (a literal no-body) would have to say? Think? You've had quite the experience here. Wherever you're at now must be worth sharing. That's why all of this is being proposed: To see what thought you form as You Yourself synaptically form. Now, tetherball-whacking the question back at you (or is it 'back at Yourself'?) why do YOU want your physical body back?

Okay... That makes sense... To get revenge. To cause the Mother of All Stomach Aches. Find The Snake In Anguish. You: Kicking and punching and biting some delicate, near-at-hand/-fist internal organ(s). To give The Snake as rude an awakening as The Snake gave you back in The Cave of the Primeval (which might even be back where the two of You are now, by the way). Yes. It's clear: You want to be corporally ressurected in order to wrap your knuckles on The Snake's interior, maybe even performing a little Mortal Kombat finisher, despite having to rejoin the afterlife again shortly thereafter. WOW! Quite intense for a pile of puke there, Ick-abod. Just so long as you can 'stomach' the pain long enough to one-inch punch. Oh yeah, you thought getting eaten was painful? Well building your nervous system back up brick by brick against the current of The Snake's macerating digestion is goiong to be, say, at least many times that. Huh? Doesn't matter? Power to you. Extremely intense. And apologies for the 'Ick-abod' remark, soon-again-to-be Iĉa-/Ina-/Neŭtra-bod. So... Okay then... That's all well and good—a little post-mortem revenge—but, like, (and you're more than a little curious here) how is this going to work exactly? Does it just 'happen'? Do YOU just 'happen'/'re-happen'? Well, maybe... This needs explaining...

In regard to your momentary ressurection inside The Snake, the odds aren't great, but (and please keep following along) steeper odds had to be surmounted for the Universe to exist at all, right? And, they do say, the normal rules don't apply inside places like these, Jonah, so your current predicament is actually a boon to this whole process. Now, your ontological domain may be restricted to a fleshy cylindrical cask of chyme, hair, and blood, but, hey, it's a mite better than the infinite and absolute..... "_____"..... that preceded 'The Big Bang!', so your odds not being great is actually proof this whole thing is going to go off without a hitch.

By the way, isn't it funny how people need to be reminded of that? "_____" existing indefinitely and inexplicably before Existence and all. How could somebody miss that? You're not one of those people, are you? You are. Well, it does not behoove someone in your current position, your state of matter to forget that most fundamental of fundamentals... No, not NIHIL, Chopped Liver... The deeper Truth that: Things Don't Make Sense, that everything—... Wait a minute... Hmm, guess you did already say something like that, ["It doesn't make sense, but the truest things don't!"], said it out loud in the jungle just before hallucinating an imginary person... So you've got your math right, but—Ah ha! The domain of your function is too small there, buddy. And no wonder, being as hyperfocused as you were there, literally running for your life. You have some time now to ruminate on some things now... as you yourself ruminate...

For instance: When it comes to 'NIHIL'/'NOTHING'/'Nothing'/Nothing(^tm), did you ever realize how many letters it takes, how many beleagured synapes have to fire, how much agony YOU personally had to go through just to get the faintest shadow of 'Nothing' as a concept across? How much effort it took to strain something so unwieldly through your head? Fun fact, in the context of human history, the mathematical concept of 'Zero' is actually quite new. The concept of OPHIDIORAMA (an even less simple concept, to put it generously), now brand new, but back to your pithy 'The truest things make the least sense' remark—Do you know what makes even less sense than circling 'N for Nothing' on an 'A/B/C/D' multiple-choice question? Or drawing in the margins and flipping the paper to create an animated snake that eats A, B, C and D? You know what's an even more 'out there' answer? Leaving A/B/C/D blank and still, inexplicably, getting the right answer. THAT is the furthest flight of sense—not by insisting on emptiness but by relying on omission (there's a big difference, you know), on trusting/keeping/leaving "_____" rather than being sucked away by imaginary vacuum cleaners, than painfully scrawling N I H I L, drawing some scary serpent, etcetera. Simply holding your breath and hearing your heart just beat and then—Green checkmark! Correct! That's the concept that fits, gels with THIS Universe the most, as well as with your current 'Universe', if you'll allow for the reincorporation of micro and macro.

What You're trying to get at here is for you to try and broaden your mind with the really unavoidable concept of 'what came before', as in, what came before your Nothing, what even lets you understand your Nothing, what—Look, everyone knows that this BEFORE stuff is undeniably (if unintuitively) BEYOND any fancy NOW stuff, the kind of now-stuff you can 'see' and 'feel' and 'think about' from your position on the board. Your a little bit biased because you've spent your whole life from within (and your whole afterlife thus far even deeper within). Positive and Negative Infinity are impossible to follow or get between, but a reality beyond them should be easy enough to understand. How can a fish in the ocean 'know' what the Solar System is? How can you in The Snake 'know' who You really are when you're talking to yourself like this? It's not that you can't answer; It's that you don't know the answer, but that's not even true because It means you know you don't know the answer. All this tangible stuff (the kind of stuff you're currently skeleton-deep in and biochemically steeped in), is solved, as far as You're concerned. The answer: "_____" . This "_____" which is somehow LESS but at the same time MORE than NIHIL, generated from simple questions like 'What was there before The Big Bang?' is The TRUE Alpha & The TRUE Omega, The Closing & The Widening. What did that other, warmer-blooded King of the Jungle call it? "The Deeper Magic from Before the Dawn of Time"? Let's just work with that... You'll thank me later...

So, now that story time's over, take this concept and apply it to yourself: What's stopping a little bit of this "_____", this Contradictory-Weirdness's 'Magic Dust' from finding you here and now, within the deepest straits of your present katabasis?... Nothing... You say, quite playfully... You realize that the only thing more obvious than the illusion is the solution itself: Sh*t happens, so it is time to get to work, right? What's stopping sh*t from just happening again? Your NIHIL/Nothing/nothing just helped out here too, making this whole process semantically true because—get this: Nothing stops sh*t from just happening, repeat, NOTHING stops SH*T from just HAPPENING! ESPECIALLY when you least expect it. If you still had a mouth, it would be smiling.

But enough talk! Let's get the new you started: A mangled synapse here, a piece of wombat nutrient there—Is that? Slowpoke! Howdy, buddy. Maybe we'll do you next. Okay, a few octillion cellular-interactive miracles here, there, and everywhere in between, and voilà! There you are! There's YOUR body again! If only just for an instant. Oh!—[SNAPPING SOUNDS, THE SOUND OF A MELTING RADIUS-ULNA PIERCING AND BURSTING A THROBBING WATER-BALLOON ORGAN, A SSSSSHOUT!... AND THEN SILENcE] Oof!... Ouch... The Snake's dead? You can't believe it, but it's done; it happened. RIP, MR. The Snake. Talk about a heart-breaking farewell. Add one more to the 'In Memoriam' compilation at the next awards show... Well... Now that that's done and out of the way, your body on the outs and your mind starting to take shape, synapse by synapse, You start to turn introspectively. Your mind is on the cusp of thinking again. Now, what now? There's nothing to clean, no chores to do, no trash to take out, no meals to prepare (too soon, I know), no soulmate, family member, friend, acquantince, stranger, mannequin or body pillow to interact with, if you can even still remember any of that stuff... No?... Well don't worry about all that—This is your Universe now. Here, right here, it’s just You. Right now, in this place, within your own personal wail-belly doling out '(lazy)bone-ifieds' in

unheard of degrees like a Behemoth University, You're operating beneath the bedrock of existence, a death-row inmate in an empty, foreclosed prison, utterly by yourself and granted a meager moment's helping of cerebral Life as your last meal. If something matters it has to be given voice right now in this moment. You are Alone. You are Alone. You are Alone. Now, the object of this little experiment: What do You think about?...

Maybe there's a few synapse stragglers that still need to get into position... When I wrote Alone in those few sentences of that last paragraph, did you take it as a Holden Caulfield-esque Alone? That is, an Alone defined by being bereft of other people. Alone? No? Then you must be one of those sick General Custer types who relish martyrdom, who not only picture, but cheer on their own crucifiction. Yeah, I thought that was you, asphole... Wait... That's wrong too? Well, why don't I tell you what my Alone is, and then you can tell me if I'm close. My Alone is —

Oh! You're about to have your thought! Okay. I'll be quiet now... Thanks, again. Thank you for this... Here You go...

"I... I think about how the snake was coming at me in what you called 'The End', and how my phone-LED died and you left me alone, and how, really, my phone-LED didn't really die, but just shut off, as it always does when my phone receives a call... I think about how I remember configuring my phone to answer calls just by pressing the Volume UP button, and how I answered that incoming call using the Volume UP button right there as the snake was coming at me. I think about how I answered that call, a call I got from the people I remember wanting to say goodbye to the most. I remember recalling everything about my life the moment I heard all of their voices, and then saying what I most wanted to say, over that brief but everlasting moment of Clarity and Worth and Comfort and Wherewithal. I think about what I said, what I didn't say, what I heard, and what I didn't hear. I'm thinking about it now, and will keep thinking about it, long after... after...—"

The Narrator, furious at realizing their having missed the most important part of the whole story, turns off all of the remaining HMIs. This is what happens when every moment isn't supervised: Sentimentality is allowed to infect and taint an otherwise clean conscious, an otherwise sterile experiment... Perhaps deeper truths require more snakes... or fewer synapses... But time's probably up by now. They check their own life-sized phone—6:14 AM. It will soon be time to put the chrome-wheeled chair back. The Narrator turns back to the final scene—mangled bits of clay and fabric and armature cluttering a shallow, murky pool of dollar-store vinegar (a nightmare version of Thoreau's 'Walden Pond', or , a connotation-/denotation-collage of a lot of what the name/words Wollstonecraft has/have to offer). The Narrator, more dolorous than furious now, will just have to submit OPHIDIORAMA as is and suffer through the trite reactions that 'armor vincit omnia' has to offer, flicking back ON a black acrylic-painted peristaltic water/vinegar pump which the Narrator made and which makes noises like 'THUMP...' and 'SLOSH...' until the night's clay is broken down and washed away.

END OF 'OPHIDIORAMA', CHAPTER ONE OF 'FIND THE SNAKE IN ANGUISH'
first posted on /f/ April 12th, 2024
© Pant_Zipper !lk38OS7kEE

DETAILS/CREDITS

TEXT:_____

written by me. I used to write a lot using LibreOffice, but mainly use TextEdit now because I like the simplicity. this is "OPHIDIORAMA", the first chapter of "FIND THE SNAKE IN ANGUISH". the font is 12-pixel Menlo, drawn onto two 300x14000ish black-background pngs using Gimp (why two? because Ruffle doesn't like it when an image dimension is over 1600).

MUSIC:_____

written by me. written note-by-note in Garageband/LogicX. song1 is "Beating" (written last year); song2 is "Burnt Churros" (written 9-ish years ago); song3 is "Talk in the Dark with Me" (also written 9-ish years ago)

IMAGES:_____

the line+audio-progression pixel art is made by me. I used Gimp. all the other photos/art is public domain off of Wikimedia:

snake animation

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Phenakistiscope_Snakes_16_sections_-_animated.gif

image1

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Jungle_Warfare_Training_Center,_Okinawa,_Japan_in_2019_-_06.jpg

image2

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:ASTRONAUT_GROUP_-_TRAINING_-_JUNGLE_-_PANAMA.jpg

image3

https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Samuel_William_Reynolds_-_Lion_and_Snake_-_B1985.36.749_-_Yale_Center_for_British_Art.jpg

VOICE:_____

"whisper" text-to-speech on Mac ("w... wei... weir... WEIRD: Layer:01" ring a bell?). sped up and de-peaked in audacity. 16kb/s.

SWF:_____

written by me... after a LOT of rope-learning. ActionScript with Haxe/OpenFL; compiled command-line style on Mac Terminal (nope, no Adobe apps used, haha).

A THANK-YOU

I just wanted to voice my sincerest gratitude to anyone who bothered saving my music or posting my flashes: THANK YOU! It meant—MEANS a lot. Hope you enjoyed this SWF—It's no "Myriorama", but hopefully this "OPHIDIORAMA" will suffice... for now.

This chapter kind of became more of a novelette (~10,000 words) than a chapter, but I think it's a good start. I have like a dozen other chapters already written too btw, each around 4,000–5,000 words, but I'm probably going to puff them up like I did "OPHIDIORAMA". The next chapter is called... well, if you want to know, unlock all 3 easter eggs in this SWF to find out! Whatever it's called, it should come out next month (hopefully). Anyone who gets what the next chapter title is referencing gets a cookie—er, an overstuffed luncheon-basket. Thanks for all the fun!

END (PRESS 1 TO RESTART FLASH)

Post Script:

Obviously some of the details/credits above are wrong:

1. The font is now 12-pixel Times New Roman, because I ended up writing so much more that monospace was no longer tenable.
2. This wasn't posted on /f/ originally on April 12, 2024, but instead today, January 16, 2025.
3. "Pant_Zipper !lk38OS7kEE" is indeed me, but because I'm slow on the uptake and only just recently realized the difference between a 'tripcode' and a 'secure tripcode,' I'm gonna just call myself "Pant_Zipper !!BCfeOlVwRRQ" from now on.
3.5. The story behind that secure tripcode has its roots on /lit/ where I used to post as "ineptia !FQ4R9ypnJQ" (finally adopting "ineptia !! BCfeOlVwRRQ") to wackily translate Latin in October of 2024; I also only mention it in case anyone wants to read some less serious stuff by me in the archives or whatever.

Now to draw the curtain on my psychosis:

It should be clear to see this was supposed to posted a lot earlier, or at least textually retooled—"Why not just change 'Menlo' to 'Times New Roman'?"—and I'm sure there are a few (glaring?; grammatical?!) typos in the story still, but I just can't go back to modify them at this moment—It hurts too much.
It's taken a lot of strength to even just refresh myself enough on the details/credits to write the above corrections. I'm not ready to re-read/re-write any of this; I've got this mental thing now where I can't—where I don't want to at all—change anything from the .txt I carried with me the night my sister passed away.
My sincerest attempt at an explanation: She didn't get a chance to edit or change or buff or delete anything. Why the FUCK should I be so lucky?! And no, this isn't part of the story or anything. I wish it was.
I want to move on, move on not from the sadness or pain (I know that's too much to ask), but just from the small-sharp self-stigma I feel every time I think about, "Oh yeah, remember, Me, you've still got to 'publish' Ophidiorama! After all, 'One Day I Am Going To Go Away...'!"
And I just NEED to just FUCKING do IT, and I hate the torment just writing this self-important bullshit is exacting on me and I promised myself this wouldn't take more than five minutes so I've got to finish up soon.
I want to one day be well enough to re-read everything I wrote here and make a final edit or whatever. I want to be okay enough to (re-)write and edit and post the other chapters too... But I'll never get there UNLESS I first upload the in situ .txt (plus this Post Script I guess) that was on the USB that was in the titanium keychain that was at end of the yellow paracord that's connected to my larger, deadlier chunk of titanium which I took with into the night after saying goodbye to the person I loved the most, the only person I knew who whole-heartedly worshipped creativity, passion, inspiration, and honesty above all. She made the most beautiful things and shared them with me of all people. I've tried so hard not to think of the story but she is my phone call at the end of the world. I don't want to be here so badly.
And no, I'm not suicidal or in crisis: I'm alluding to 'Going Away' (misheard lyrics; inside joke) and not being 'here' in the context of living in my house, which is tough without her to say the least.
After you devote four-and-a-half years to joyfully distracting someone from physical and mental anguish, at one point even pulling that someone back from beyond the event horizon, then you'll know what I'm talking about. I'll say it again: Believe me, I want to live as long as I can, because (unfairly) I am a part of her that still exists in this world, and I need to do everything I can to honor her with the time and health I'm granted.
In other news, I'm pretty sure I'm a hypochondriac now whose own demise selfishly always seems a day or an hour away, so making sure I get this (initial?) .swf out there takes a tiny load off my mind for "All the things I think I need to do before I might die" list and lets me focus more

on calming down and properly doing other things.
I'm sure reading this part of the flash is really depressing, but, hey, look at it this way: If I do ever post another .swf, it's, like, mathematically guaranteed to be less sad than whatever this all is/was.
I'll end with a neat-o fact: When I first "finished" this .swf in February last year, I was aghast at how textboxes wouldn't scroll in Ruffle (I was only ever testing with Adobe Flash until realizing /f/ (as well as the whole internet) doesn't use that anymore—I haven't been back in a looong time). Hence my solution to scrolling: The silly giant pixel-text .pngs.
Imagine my chagrin at realizing I've waited so long to upload this that in the meantime Ruffle actually updtated scrollable textboxes and /f/ (I think) now uses a such-capable version of Ruffle. LAVGH OVT LOVD.
Okay, that's it. One less thing to fear~