



THE ARK

ANNABEL SMITH

THE ARK

ALSO BY ANNABEL SMITH

Whiskey and Charlie
Sourcebooks USA

Whisky Charlie Foxtrot
Fremantle Press Australia

A New Map of the Universe
UWA Publishing Australia

**THE
ARK
ANNABEL SMITH**

thearkbook.com

Copyright © Annabel Smith 2014

The moral rights of the author have been asserted.

All rights reserved. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study, research, criticism or review, as permitted under the Copyright Act, no part may be reproduced by any process without written permission from the author.

ISBN 978-0-646-92310-9

For Duckers

Book One
2041

Kirk

Chaos Cult Bunker Unearthed at Mount Kosciuszko

Seventeen people have been recovered from a bunker built into Mount Kosciuszko in south-east Australia, where they have been living in total isolation for almost five decades, since the government collapse in the wake of the post-peak oil chaos in 2041.

The find has sent shockwaves through the international scientific community, as the bunker, the most sophisticated of its kind to be unearthed, houses a vault containing thousands of seed specimens, including some from plants previously believed to be ex-

tinct. In size and scope its collection exceeds those of both the Millennium Seedbank in London, and the Svalbard Global Seedbank in Norway, known as the 'Doomsday Vault'.

Hikers sheltering from a sandstorm were astonished to discover the concealed entrance leading to a bunker which was 'like something out of a science-fiction movie'. A reintegration team has spent the last three days preparing the inhabitants for their transition to the world at large. The men, women and children are now being treated at a Post-Chaos Rehabilita-

tion Centre, on the north-east coast of Australia.

Roscoe Baker-Albright, who was taken to the bunker by his parents when he was only 15 and is now the oldest inhabitant at 67, revealed that of the original 26 people who moved into the bunker in 2041, only four remain. The rest of the survivors were born in the facility, including one six-year-old girl, a third generation bunker baby.

Rosalie Ornish, director of the Rehabilitation Centre for almost two decades, reported that though suffering from acute culture shock, the group is in the

best physical health of any she has treated. She believes that this may be attributable to their diet: despite the low quality of the soil, they have apparently been successful in growing enough edible crops to meet all their nutritional needs.

Pedro Ramirez of the New World Health Organisation announced yesterday that 'the significance of this discovery to the global food crisis cannot be overstated.' It is hoped that an in-depth investigation will reveal the full story behind the creation of the bunker.



To Employees

Date 11.04.41

From Aidan Fox

Re Closure of The Ark

This unencrypted memo is an **apparition**[™]. It cannot be printed, saved, forwarded, or replied to. Within 5 minutes of being opened it will be irretrievably deleted from your system and will leave no trace. Read it carefully and ensure you understand its contents.

Recent events have necessitated the closure of the National Arboreal Protection Facility aka the Ark. The Ark will be sealed at 2359 hours, TOMORROW, April 12th, 2041.

Transport to the Ark has been arranged for employees and those members of their families approved for Ark habitation. Those who wish to be admitted prior to the closure must be ready for collection at the previously arranged location from 1600 hours tomorrow.

As agreed in your contract, your departure must not be disclosed to any parties, under any circumstances. Those who breach security may be refused transportation. Unapproved persons will be refused transportation. Approved inhabitants accompanied by unapproved persons will be refused transportation. Reasonable force will be used, if necessary.

Each inhabitant may bring one bag of personal items, measuring not more than 90 by 75 by 43cm and weighing

not more than 23kg. It is not necessary to bring clothing as suitable attire will be provided for all inhabitants.

Sanctioned items include:

- » Photographs & personal memorabilia
- » MyBytz (NB: these will be quarantined upon arrival)
- » Personal valuables, e.g. jewellery
- » Prescription medications (recommended five year supply), accompanied by documentation

Contraband items include:

- » Non-prescription medications & illegal narcotics
- » Non-essential electric/electronic appliances, e.g. electric shavers, hairstylers
- » Weaponry and self-defence apparatus
- » Pets & plant-matter

Regards

Aidan

Project Manager



To Ark Inhabitants

Date 13.04.41

From Aidan Fox

Re Welcome

Dear friends

Welcome! It's wonderful to have you all here, and a special welcome to those of you who have brought family members. I'd like to ask everyone to do their best to help our new arrivals find their way around and feel comfortable. We will have a full team briefing and guided tour this afternoon, but in the meantime, I'd like to let you all know exactly who we have on board so that we can start to get to know each other:

OPERATIONS & ADMINISTRATION

Gabriella (Gab) Portelli is our manager of Information Security; she's been with the Ark since its inception and knows the facility better than anyone.

Huyen Phan, Ali Abdullal and **Etienne Delorme-Hart** are respectively our Mechanical, Electrical and Hydrolex Engineers and it's thanks to them we have fresh water, light, hot showers and everything else that makes our lives comfortable down here. Etienne has brought his wife, Ava, and their 8-year-old daughter Isadora with him.

Felipe Morales-Parker is responsible for maintenance – you name it, he can fix it. He's here with his wife Paige, and kids Louis, aged 6, and Clementine, aged 4.

Alejandro (Alex) Lopez-Gordieva is our doctor and psychologist. Those of you with prescription meds would have registered with him already; he's also the person to talk to about any stress or anxiety from the journey here, or trouble settling in. He's come with his wife **Darya**, also a qualified MD.

Koshan Shahriyor is responsible for technology and communications. You would have all met him when you surrendered your MyBytz on arrival – he's working furiously to disinfect them all and should have them back to you in a day or two. In the meantime you have access to the stations in the Hub, which you must have found, otherwise you wouldn't be reading this!

Mia Baker-Albright is our Futurologist. She has brought her husband, **Griffin**, and their children: **Roscoe** (15) and **Marigold** (10).

LABS/GARDEN

Our labs and G.A.R.D.E.N. (Growth Apparatus for Regenerative Development of Edible Nourishment) team

are responsible for the Ark's core work – protecting and building knowledge of our collection of seeds:

Rudolph Schwab – Chemist

Haruki Nishimura – Microbiologist

Nisha Lakhani – Food Scientist

Pilot Nielsen – Botanist

Caitlin Wood – Agricultural Scientist

Maribel McLeod – Soil Scientist

Kristjan Sepp – Horticulturalist

Leilani Rivera – Biologist

I hope this gives you at least a rudimentary knowledge of who to ask for what and I look forward to seeing you all in the Hub this afternoon to share more information.

Regards

Aidan

Project Manager

13.04.41 Kirk >>> Aidan

Aidan, there've been some disturbing rumours circulating this morning about an emergency closure of The Ark. I've no idea how it got started but it's causing a frenzy here as you can imagine and I've already got someone from Global breathing down my neck.

I'd appreciate it if you could get in touch as soon as you get this so I can reassure the powers that be that everything is proceeding as planned.

Global are monitoring dailemail™ so please use gopher until further notice.

Regards

Kirk

Chief Executive Officer
SynBioTec Australasia
289 Elizabeth Street
Sydney 2000



sender>
-Aidan Fox

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 13-04-2041

sub> Ark Closure

Kirk

For once the rumours are true - unfortunately recent events have necessitated the closure of the Ark.

The impact of the Chaos has been more pervasive of late and I've been increasingly concerned about a number of my team members. With the pressure mounting both inside and out, I suspected it was only a matter of time before someone cracked.

I don't need to tell you, of all people, the dangers of the general public knowing of our existence. The fact that news of the closure has already reached you proves my hunch, so the closure couldn't have been more timely.

I apologise for not communicating the news sooner - needless to say the last 48 hours have been filled with more immediate concerns.

I'll be in touch again once things have settled down here.

Regards, Aidan

Project Manager

National Arboreal Protection Facility

13.04.41 Kirk >>> Aidan

Aidan, have you lost your mind? Concerns about your team members do not constitute grounds for unauthorised closure of the facility! Even if your suspicions prove correct and the security of the Ark is deemed to be in jeopardy, the decision to close is beyond your jurisdiction. It is unthinkable that you would make such a decision without consulting me. You've put me in a most compromising position.

I have, of course, denied the rumours about the closure. But Global is demanding a report on the matter so we're going to have to put our heads together and come up with something plausible – a security systems test or some such. I'll have to come down and check things out for appearances' sake – I'll be arriving late tomorrow evening.

I'll expect the facility to be open for business as usual by the time I arrive.

Kirk

PS Use gopher™ if you need to contact me.



sender>
-Aidan Fox

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 13-04-2041 sub> Maximum Security Implemented

Kirk

I understand your concerns, given SynBioTec's investment in the Arboreal Protection Project. In fact, your interests were a primary factor in the decision - early closure seemed the only course of action guaranteed to protect SynBioTec's assets.

Unfortunately, it won't be possible for me to reopen the facility or for you to gain access. Under the circumstances it seemed prudent to implement maximum security by activating a five-year time-delay lock.

Please advise your superiors in the Global office that we continue to operate in SynBioTec's best interests, and in accordance with the Covenant, and rest assured I'll keep you regularly updated with any developments here. If you have any specific concerns or questions in the meantime, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Regards
Aidan



13.04.41 Kirk >>> Aidan

Don't bullshit me, Aidan, have you forgotten who you're talking to? I helped design the security systems, remember? There is no five-year time-delay lock and we both know it.

You leave me no choice but to bring a SynBioTecSecure team with me. I'm obliged by law to warn you that if we don't arrive to find those gates wide open we'll use whatever force is necessary to get inside.

And in the meantime, use the fucking gopher.



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Gabriella Portelli

date> 13-04-2041 sub> Unauthorised Closure

Gabriella

I learnt this morning that an unauthorised closure of the Ark has been implemented. I'm aware of how persuasive Aidan can be but I've never doubted your ability to keep him in check. I sincerely hope you won't give me cause to doubt it now.

I assume there's a reasonable explanation for this commotion. We can have an in-depth discussion when I arrive tomorrow but I'll expect to hear from you before then.

Regards
Kirk



sender>
-Gabriella Portelli

recipients>
-Aidan Fox

date> 13-04-2041 sub> FW> Unauthorised Closure

FYI. Do you really think he'll come?

sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Gabriella Portelli

date> 13-04-2041 sub> Unauthorised Closure

Gabriella

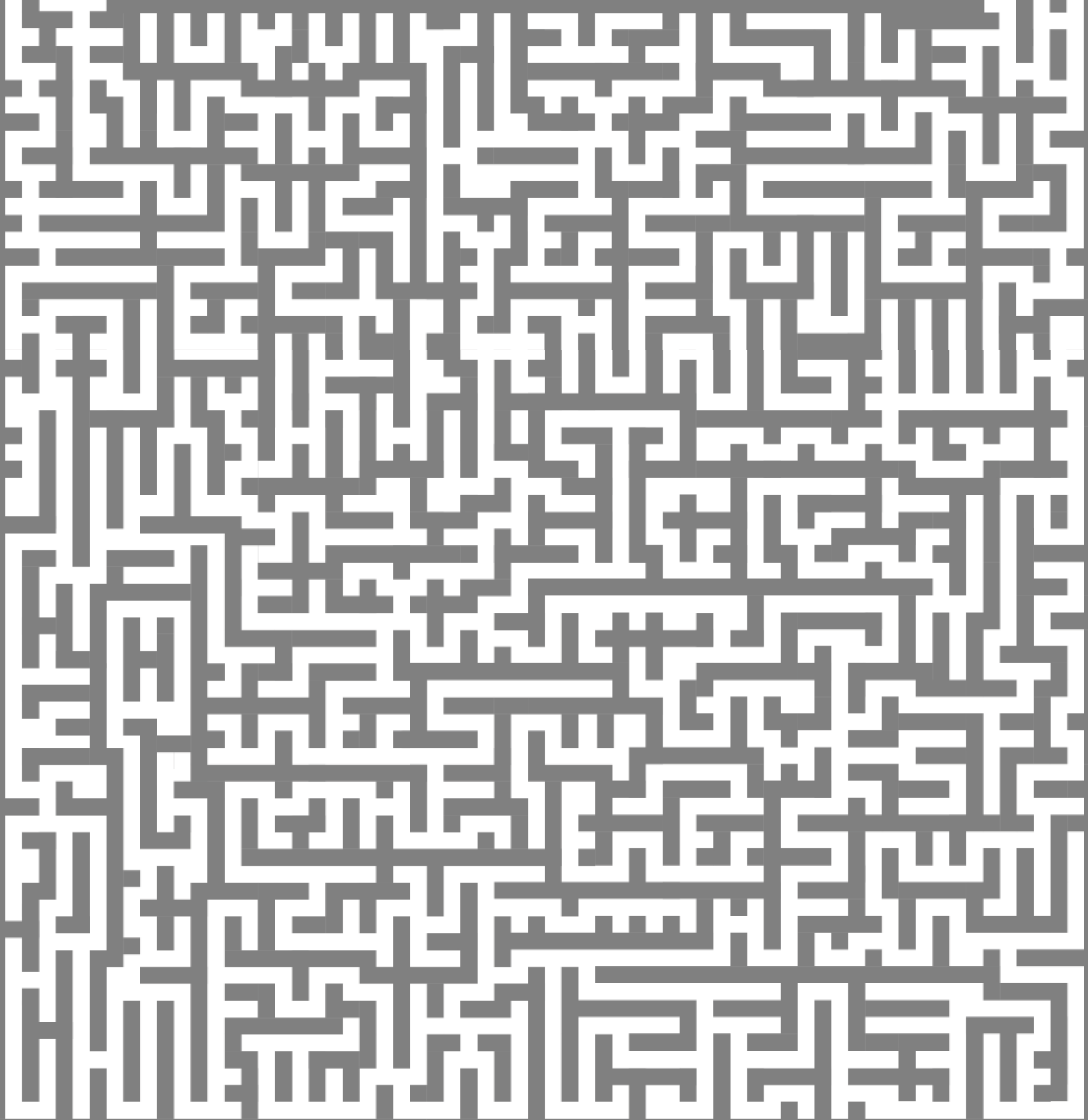




13.04.41 Aidan >>> Gabriella

He'll be wasting precious fuel. I'll take care of it. We'll keep in touch via gopher, for obvious reasons.

AF



SynBioTec Global ®
1-5 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY
USA 10011

Mr Aidan Fox
3/12 Yarrandabby Street
Elizabeth Bay NSW 2011

April 14th 2041

Mr Fox

It has come to our attention that the National Arboreal Protection Facility, also known as the Ark, has been closed.

According to article 213b(iv) of the agreement between NAPF and SynBioTec Global, dated September 23rd 2034, the closure of the Facility requires the written permission of a SynBioTec Executive.

Since no such authority has been issued, the closure of the Ark constitutes a direct contravention of The Agreement. You are hereby ordered to reopen the Ark and report to the office of SynBioTec Australasia within 48 hours.

Failure to comply with this directive will result in legal proceedings.

Meeting needs through seeds,



Juan Carlos Almodovar
President

copy: klongrigg@synbiotec.com.au



LetterLike



sender>

-Juan Carlos Almodovar

recipients>

-Kirk Longrigg

date> 14-04-2041

sub> The Ark Closure

We both know that letter's going to achieve sweet fuck all. What's your real plan?

dailyemail™



sender>

-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>

-Juan Carlos Almodovar

date> 14-04-2041

sub>Re: The Ark Closure

Juan Carlos

We're using a three-pronged attack:

1. Regaining the cooperation of Gabriella Portelli (Head of InfoSec)
2. Enlisting the support of employees
3. Activating our plant for inside intel

I'll keep you in the loop with any developments.
Kirk

dailyemail™



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Gabriella Portelli

date> 14-04-2041

sub> Maximum Security Implemented?

Gabriella

I'm disappointed not to have heard back from you. When I confirmed your appointment as Head of InfoSec I thought we had an understanding about where your obligations lay. Nowhere did it include the appropriation of SynBioTec's intellectual and physical property. I'm sure I don't need to spell out the legal implications of such insubordination.

However, provided you can guarantee me your unequivocal assistance in bringing the Ark back under SynBioTec's control, I'm prepared to overlook this aberration.

First and foremost, I require from you the repudiation of the existence of a supposed five-year time-delay lock which Aidan claims to have activated.

I await confirmation of your cooperation moving forward.

Kirk

14.04.41 Aidan >>> Kirk

That's rich, Kirk, accusing me of bullshitting you and then in the same breath threatening me with a Sec Team. We BOTH know you won't bring a Sec Team down here because you wouldn't want any of those leadheads knowing the whereabouts of the facility.

And as for that letter supposedly from the king dick himself, what do you take me for? You probably got some secretary you're screwing to type it up for you.

If I'd waited for written permission from every joe who has an interest in this facility it would have been too late. I did what had to be done, and that's why you put me in charge here, because I could think for myself and make tough decisions when they needed to be made

Pull yourself together for fuckssake.

14.04.41 Kirk >>> Aidan

You always were an arrogant little prick Aidan. Don't make the mistake of assuming you've got SynBioTec all worked out. Surely even you aren't stupid enough to think those gorillas you saw at the Radical Rally are the only type of Sec Teams we have? We've got guys that make Darth Vader look like a fucking retard. And believe me, you don't want to get on the wrong side of them.

We own you, Fox, don't ever forget that.

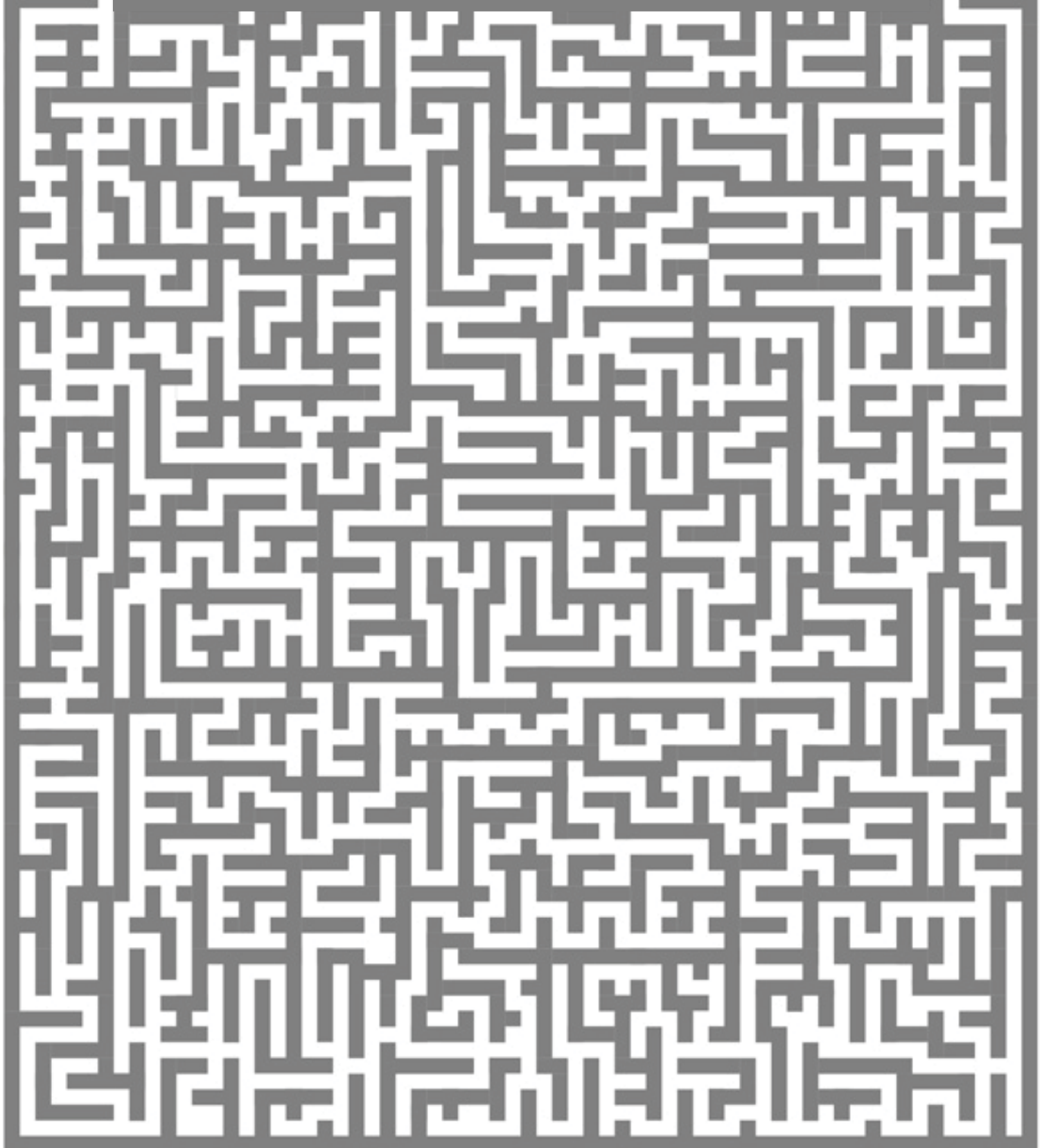
14.04.41 Aidan >>> Kirk

You might own me but for the next five years I own your facility.

14.04.41 Kirk >>> Aidan

Fuck it, Aidan. Let's give up trying to call each other's bluff. We've known each

other a long time and both our necks are on the guillotine. I give my word it'll just be me and my sec guard. We'll talk it over and I'm sure we can work something out that's agreeable to both parties.





sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Gabriella Portelli

date> 14-04-2041 sub>Fw: Maximum Security Implemented?

Gabriella

I'm still awaiting your response to yesterday's email. You should be aware that failure to cooperate may result in charges of hijacking a national trust facility under the latest anti-terrorist legislation.

I trust I will hear from you without further delay.
Kirk



sender>
-Juan Carlos Almodovar

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 14-04-2041 sub>

Enough pussy-licking, Kirk. What do you think we employ you for? This is not a negotiation. If you don't get down there and get this situation under control in the next 12 hours, I'll find someone who can.



Attn: Ark Employees

April 16th 2041

It is with regret that I write to inform you that Aidan Fox has been removed from his position as SynBioTec's Arboreal Protection Project Manager, effective immediately.

Until a suitable replacement can be appointed, I will be assuming Mr Fox's duties. For the time being, all employees of the Arboreal Protection Facility will report to me.

All employees of the Ark have been informed of the situation. However, this is a confidential matter which must not be discussed with any other party, including colleagues and family members. In particular, since the arrangements regarding Mr Fox's departure are not yet finalised, this matter must not be discussed with Mr Fox himself.

We appreciate your discretion and loyalty to SynBioTec.

Meeting needs through seeds,



Kirk Longrigg
Chief Executive Officer
copy: jcalmodovar@synbiotec.com





sender>
-Rudolph Schwab

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 16-04-2041 sub> Removal of Aidan Fox

I'd like to know on what grounds Aidan has been removed from his position.

Rudolph Schwab, Chemist



sender>
-Mia Baker-Albright

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 16-04-2041 sub> Removal of Aidan

Mr Longrigg

Allow me to introduce myself: My name is Mia Baker-Albright and I have been the futurologist here at the Ark for four years. Recently, my husband and I made the decision to move into the facility with our two children, aged ten and fifteen.

Despite repeated assurances from the government about safeguards for 'law abiding citizens', the impact of the Chaos is becoming more evident by the day and it seemed that being here would be best for our children's welfare in the short term. However, as I'm sure you can imagine, it was not an easy decision to take them away from friends, schools, grandparents and so on.

A large part of our willingness to move here was based on our faith in Aidan's leadership. You can imagine our consternation then, to receive your letter this morning. To be told that Aidan was to be removed from his position was not welcome news.

I understand there may be privacy conventions preventing you from revealing the reasons behind Aidan's removal. However, Griffin and I would

appreciate it if you could at least give us some information as soon as possible which would provide a clear picture of the ways in which this change will impact the facility and us, as employees and inhabitants.

Thanking you in anticipation

Yours sincerely

Mia



sender>
-Nisha Lakhani

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 16-04-2041

sub> Aidan Fox

Mr Longrigg

My name is Nisha Lakhani; I am the food scientist here at the Ark. Respectfully, I think you should know that your letter has caused something of a panic here today.

I'm sure I don't need to point out to you that the timing is less than opportune, since it has been only a matter of days since we all arrived at the Ark for habitation and we are still going through the process of adjusting. As I expect you can imagine, the confinement, the atmosphere underground, the new routines and living as a community take some getting used to.

To be frank, if a reappointment at this level needed to be made, I think it would have been better to have it finalised before habitation occurred. It is one thing to agree to live and work under the leadership of someone you know and trust, and altogether another to live and work under the leadership of an unknown entity.

I think we are all feeling in need of additional information and reassurance at this point in time.

Yours faithfully
Nisha Lakhani



sender>
-Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 16-04-2041

sub> Team Wellbeing

Mr Longrigg

My name is Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva and I am the Vitality Coordinator for this facility. I have been with the team for less than six months, as obviously there was no pressing need for an onsite medic until habitation became a real possibility.

As the newest member of the team, I have not yet had the opportunity to form the close relationship with Aidan that many of my co-workers have. Some team members have reacted to the news of his removal as Project Manager with concern and there is considerable apprehension about a replacement. Personally, I would not presume to ask for the reasons behind the decision to remove Aidan, but as the person responsible for the wellbeing of the Ark employees (and their families), I believe an explanation would assist them in adjusting to this unexpected change.

Though I do have experience in psychological practice, it is not my primary field of expertise, and I believe in a situation like this the team may benefit from either group and/or individual consultations

with a practitioner who has experience in this type of situation. Is there any possibility that such a service could be arranged?

In healing

Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Ark Employees

date> 17-04-2041

sub> Human Resource Changes

My colleagues

Thank you for your prompt responses to my letter. It is heartening to be presented with so much evidence of your dedication to the Arboreal Protection Project and your loyalty to your former leader.

I apologise for not being more open in my first letter. As such steadfast employees, it is only proper that you receive an honest explanation for this unexpected human resourcing change.

A few days ago it came to my attention that all Arboreal Protection team members had been instructed by Mr Fox to proceed to the Ark for closure. No authority for this closure had been given and by issuing this directive, Mr Fox transgressed the boundaries of his role as Project Manager of the facility.

It is understood that Mr Fox claimed the closure was a response to an alleged security breach. Mr Fox has been integral in designing, implementing

and maintaining myriad measures to protect SynBioTec's investment in the Arboreal Protection Project and maintain the secrecy of the Ark. There is no evidence of any of these systems being breached, or even so much as threatened.

We are awaiting a complete diagnosis from our wellbeing experts, but, regrettably, signs indicate that Mr Fox is suffering from psychological strain which may be impacting on his critical thinking and decision-making abilities.

Mr Fox's condition is, of course, a highly confidential matter which would not usually be shared with colleagues. However, the SynBioTec legal team have deemed these to be special circumstances. They have advised that withholding this information would be neither right nor fair to those of you who have been affected so directly by Mr Fox's actions.

Your wellbeing is our first priority in this situation. For your own protection, it is imperative that you do not attempt to confront Mr Fox, or reveal the content of my communications. As previously mentioned, he is in a volatile psychological state and any antagonistic behaviour may trigger an unpredictable, or even violent, response.

On behalf of SynBioTec I would like to apologise for the considerable inconvenience caused by Mr Fox's actions and to assure you that we have a specialist team working round the clock to ensure this delicate matter will be expeditiously resolved in a manner satisfactory to all parties.

**Yours faithfully
Kirk**

**Kirk Longrigg
Chief Executive Officer
SynBioTec Australasia
289 Elizabeth Street
Sydney 2000**



sender>
-Rudolph Schwab

recipients>
-Aidan Fox

date> 17-04-2041 sub> FW> Human Resource Changes

Presume you're monitoring all incoming? Wanted to make sure you'd seen this:

sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Ark Employees

date> 17-04-2041 sub> Human Resource Changes

Rudolph



sender>
-Aidan Fox

recipients>
-Rudolph Schwab

date> 17-04-2041 sub> Re:Fw: Human Resource Changes

Thanks, working on a response now, will BLiPP shortly, see you in the hub.
AF



SENDER
> AIDAN

RECIPIENT/S
> ARK EMPLOYEES

- > team engagement
- > immediate
- > hub
- > minors to media pod

BLiPP™

Date> 17-04-41

Drafted & Delivered> Aidan Fox

Form> Focused Communication

Location> Hub

[Businesslike] Welcome, and thank you for responding so quickly to my BLiPP. I know for many of you, the decision of whether to attend this engagement was not an easy one because it contravened the orders you had been given by your so-called new manager. I appreciate your loyalty in making the decision to come and your willingness to allow me to explain what's behind Longrigg's communiqué.

[Heartfelt] The Arboreal Protection Project is without doubt the most important biodiversity project in Australia, possibly even the world. I believe in it with every fibre of my being. [Grateful] What touches me so deeply is the knowledge that every one of you believes in it as fervently as I do.

Over the last few months I have been consistently amazed by the depth of commitment shown by each of you. [Dramatic] Every time you left your homes to come here you faced untold menace, risked never seeing

your loved ones again. Touched though I was by your devotion to your work, I felt increasingly uncomfortable with what was being asked of you.

As you well know, one of SynBioTec's guiding principles is 'our people are our most valuable resource'. Yet, when I raised my concerns about your safety with [Sarcastic] our esteemed leader, his response was, and I quote, [Cold] There'll always be collateral damage. You don't stop the whole production line just because one worker cuts off his hand.

[Pause] The callousness of his words shocked me. [Plaintive] Initially I felt powerless in the face of an organisation which so blatantly neglects its duty of care to its people. I came to see that the only way to safeguard your welfare was to take the responsibility upon myself.

I told Kirk that the Ark had to be closed because there had been a security breach. [Compassionate] But the truth is, I closed those doors because I saw no other way to protect you and your families from the perils that jeopardised our lives in the world outside.

As I'm sure I don't need to tell you, SynBioTec asks a great deal of its employees. But of all the demands, the


most stringent is the demand for unwavering loyalty. [Menacing] Anyone who questions, doubts, challenges is amputated like a gangrenous limb, the blow so swift and sharp they hardly feel it. But before the blade even falls, irreparable damage has been done: their personal and professional integrity in ruins, their financial security in jeopardy. SynBioTec obliterates its former allies as it would its most formidable enemies.

[Regretful] Over the years I have seen enough lives destroyed to have no doubts about the fate that would befall me by closing the Ark without seeking approval. [Brave] When I closed those doors I knew I was sealing my own fate. And yet, I did it gladly, because I value you more than I value my reputation. [Rousing] Because of far greater importance than my own livelihood is the success of this incredible and important project which we have the privilege to be part of.

Was my decision reckless? Possibly. Was it the act of a madman? [Solemn] That is for you to decide. [Doubting] Will you accept the diagnosis of Longrigg's wellbeing experts, a team apparently so refined in their expertise that they can draw conclusions about my condition without even the most cursory of examinations? [Trusting] Wouldn't you rather make up your own mind? Use your

eyes and your ears. Use the critical judgement that has made you so indispensable to the success of this project. Take a moment to reflect.

Do you see before you the violent lunatic Longrigg described? [Forgiving] If so, I give you my blessing to accept his leadership. [Humble] But, if you see the man you've worked alongside, a man who has acted from the purest of intentions, who has put your best interests and the interests of the facility before his own, I ask you to come now and stand beside me. For I can lead you without SynBioTec's sanction. I can do without a title, a BizChip, a DigiFon. [Brotherly] What I can't do without is your support.



sender>
-Huyen Phan

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 17-04-2041

sub>Re: Human Resource Changes

Mr Longrigg

My name is Huyen Phan; I'm the Mechanical Engineer here, as you may remember. I've worked with Aidan for nearly a decade (since the design phase of the Ark). I don't know the first thing about psychology but I know Aidan as well as anyone here and I can tell you that there is nothing wrong with his mind. I don't know where you're getting your information but you should check your sources because I think someone's feeding you a line and frankly, all this brouhaha over getting someone else to take the wheel is making it hard for us to do our jobs.

My suggestion is that you come down here so you can see for yourself that he's perfectly sane and in fact, doing a bloody good job. In my experience these things are always better dealt with face-to-face.

Thanks for your time.

Huyen



sender>

-Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

recipients>

-Kirk Longrigg

date> 17-04-2041

sub>Re: Human Resource Changes

Mr Longrigg

Thanks for your email and for taking on board my suggestion of providing more explanation for Aidan's departure. Unfortunately, it had the opposite effect than I'd hoped for. Your doubts about Aidan's mental health have caused distress to many team members, especially those with families who feel they've put their partners and/or children at risk by coming here. And among those who know Aidan better, the general reaction has been confusion as they can't see anything out of the ordinary in his behaviour.

Based on my own observation, Aidan seems wholly rational. In fact, given the circumstances, I would say he's extremely calm. He's working with the team to resolve any teething problems and is maintaining a positive demeanour despite the incessant demands on his time and attention.

I'm doing my best to talk to people and keep things calm, and have dispensed meds in a few cases. But, I feel that now, more than ever, some additional psychological support would be a big help, and I hope you'll think again about my suggestion to employ a consultant practitioner.

In healing

Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

date> 17-04-2041

sub>Re:Re: Human Resource Changes

Alejandro

Though I'm sure your observations are well-intentioned, as you yourself said, psychology is not your area of expertise, so let's leave a diagnosis of Aidan's condition to the experts, shall we?

Kirk

Kirk Longrigg
Chief Executive Officer
SynBioTec Australasia
289 Elizabeth Street
Sydney 2000



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Ark Employees

date> 18-04-2041

sub> Liberation

Thank you for your patience. I am pleased to inform you that a SynBioTecSecure team will be arriving at the Ark within 24 hours to reopen the facility and liberate you and your families. For your own wellbeing, you will be brought to our national office for a situation debrief, before being returned home.

In addition, I am delighted to announce that SynBioTec Global has put together a most generous package to compensate you and your families for the inconvenience caused by this unfortunate episode. The contents of your package will be revealed upon your arrival at our offices; we look forward to making you welcome.

Warm regards
Kirk



sender>
-Huyen Phan

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 18-04-2041 sub>Re: Liberation

Mr Longrigg, you seem to be labouring under the impression that we're being held here against our will. We all came to the Ark willingly and have no need to be either 'liberated' or debriefed. What we'd like most of all is just to be able to get on with our work.

Huyen Phan

daily  mail™



sender>
-Aidan Fox

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 18-04-2041 sub> Proposed 'Liberation'

I don't know how to make this any clearer - THE TIME-DELAY LOCK HAS BEEN ACTIVATED. The only copy of the disarm codes has been INCINERATED. (Oh, and did I mention that 5,000 heirloom fruit tree seeds have been stored in special chambers adjacent to the entrance?)

The only way into this Ark is with enough dynamite to render every credit you've spent a credit wasted. Not even God Almighty and a choir of angels could open these doors now.

See you in five years - if you're still alive.

daily  mail™



sender>
-Gabriella Portelli

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 19-04-2041 sub> New Distribution List

Kirk

Because the issues which have been raised in the emails circulating since the closure of the Ark affect not only employees of the Arboreal Protection Project but also their family members currently residing in the Ark, it has been deemed appropriate for those parties to be included in all group e-comms.

I thank you to use the attached Ark Inhabitants list for all future communications.

Kind regards
Gabriella



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Gabriella Portelli

date> 19-04-2041 sub>Re: New Distribution List

Have you taken leave of your senses? It's been six days since the illegal seizure of the Ark; you've failed to respond to my critical communications and the first I hear from you is a request to amend my distribution list!

I can't hold the dogs off anymore. This is your last chance to come over.

Kirk



19.04.41 Aidan >>> Rudolph

Org a media leak, ostensibly from w/in
SynBioTec? Something about me having a
history of mental illness/drug abuse, etc.

Thanks, AF

National Arboreal Protection Project Manager Fired

Aidan Fox, Project Manager of the National Arboreal Protection Facility, has allegedly been removed from his position by his employer, global seed giant SynBioTec.

SynBioTec was last year absolved from responsibility for the worldwide crop failure caused by Pro-Maize and its partner product Gro-Maize, despite their scientists having initially developed both products.

Their multi-billion dollar ArborealProtectionFacility, hidden below-ground in a top-secret location, is designed to withstand

environmental, nuclear and political catastrophe. The most sophisticated facility of its kind, it houses more than 4 billion seeds from around the world.

Mr Fox has been Project Manager of the Arboreal Protection Facility since its inception in 2130.

An anonymous source from within SynBioTec revealed that Mr Fox had a history of substance abuse and that evidence had recently come to light that Fox has become addicted to the drug MdP₂, more commonly known by its street name, friek.

Ina Grundtal, spokes-

person for the federal drug recovery program Kick It, said that there has been a spike in use of the drug since the Chaos began to impact on corporate bottom lines. The effects of the drug, which include dramatically enhanced brain activity and seemingly infinite energy, have made it popular with executives in positions of extreme stress.

Ms Grundtal said that due to initial minimal side-effects, there is a perception among users that the drug is safe. However, Ms Grundtal warned that

with regular use MdP₂ quickly becomes addictive, and with habituation more severe side-effects, including aggression, paranoia and hallucinations, begin to manifest.

A spokesperson for SynBioTec declined to comment on the allegations of Mr Fox's drug abuse. They did confirm that Mr Fox was being replaced as Project Manager for the Arboreal Protection Facility, although the replacement had not been finalised.

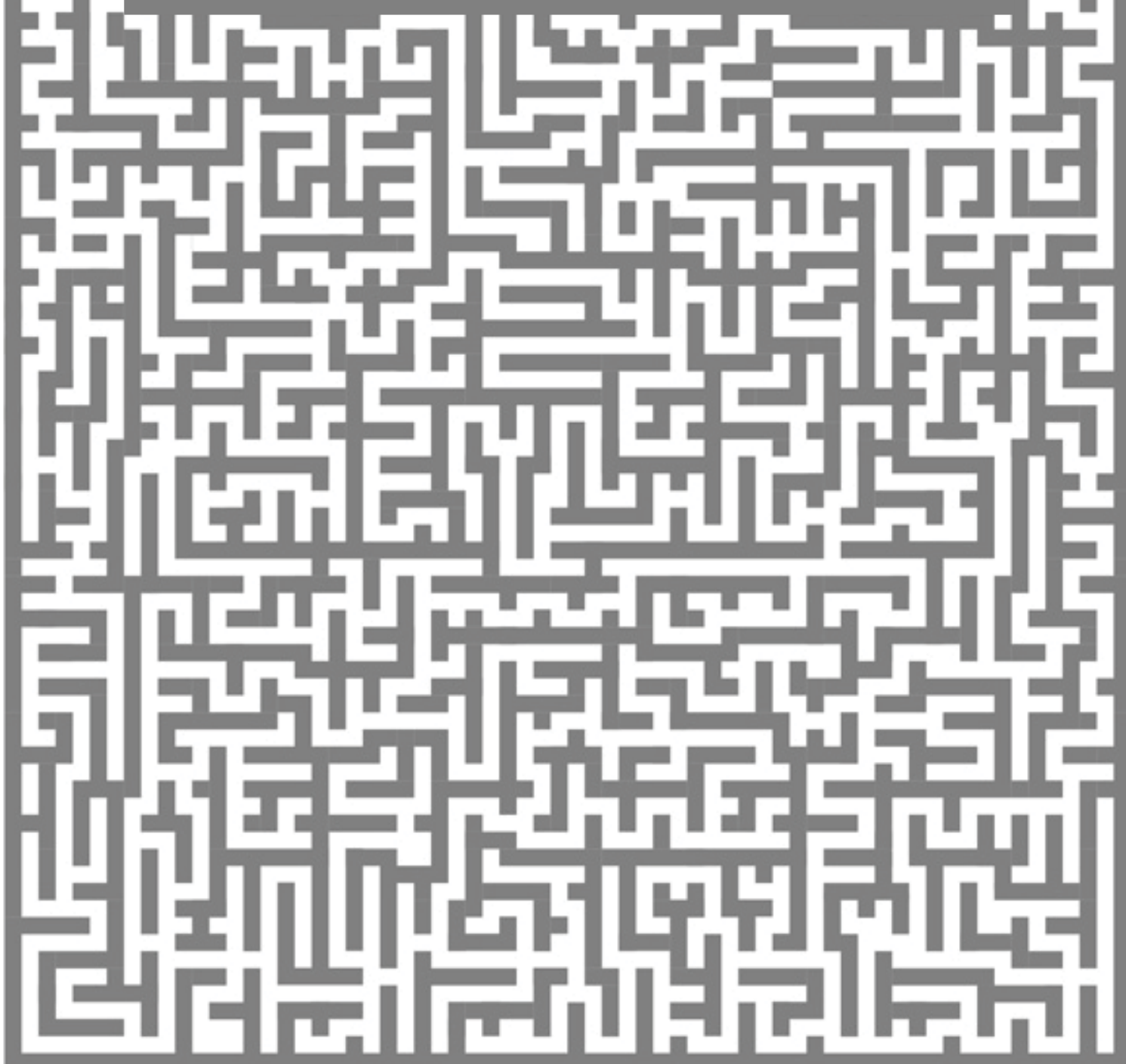


20.04.41 Aidan >>> Rudolph

Perfect. Take a cleanskin urine sample out of the archive, put my label on it and give it to Alex for testing – say I insisted.

Thanks

AF





sender>

-Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

recipients>

-Ark Inhabitants

date>20-04-2041

sub>Re: NewsBLiPP

Some of you may have come across the attached NewsBLiPP. I'm sure none of us believed it for a moment but Aidan insisted we do things by the book and I'm glad to tell you his tests came back clear; not a trace of 'frieK' in sight. I think in future we can safely disregard any information that comes from 'an anonymous source within SynBioTec'!

In healing, Alex

ëKLiPP :: National Arboreal Protection Project Manager Fired



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Juan Carlos Almodovar

date> 19-06-2041 sub> Resignation

Juan Carlos

I regret that I am not writing with better news. We have exhausted every possibility (both physical and electronic) for accessing the Ark, and all attempts have failed.

We can at least be proud of having built an impenetrable facility.

I would like to take this opportunity to tender my resignation, effective immediately.

Yours faithfully

Kirk Longrigg

Chief Executive Officer
SynBioTec Australasia
289 Elizabeth Street
Sydney 2000

Ava



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 13-04-2041 sub> Our New Home

Dearest Tillie, I'm writing this from the seedbank bunker, where we are now (semi-) permanent residents. I feel terrible for leaving without saying goodbye but we had less than 24 hours' notice and it was all very cloak and dagger - the security of our own places here was threatened if we told anyone. We had to put Isa's safety first. I knew I could trust you, of course, but Etienne insisted that we follow protocol. He said you would understand.

The journey was horrendous. We came by bus, through some neighbourhoods where the Chaos has already done its worst, and it was frightening, lying on the floor, not being able to see but hearing crowds of people outside jeering, things hitting the bus, some of them even coming through the open windows. Isadora was too terrified to even cry. Now we're here I feel somewhat better although it's terribly strange and I don't know if I'll ever get used to it. Hopefully we'll be out within a few months depending on how things go.

I miss you terribly already. We have no phone access, unfortunately, but unlimited e-comms so please write soon and tell me you forgive me.

Ava xxx



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 13-04-2041

sub>Re: Our New Home

Oh, Ava, what a shock to get your email. And not, of course. I suspected you would find your way there eventually, but I suppose I hoped it would not be so soon. Two thoughts are chasing each other around in my head: Thank goodness they're safe, hotly pursued by, What will I do without them? If I was a better person, I suppose I would not be having the second thought, or perhaps I would not admit to it, but Mama always said I was selfish and I don't suppose I'll change now.

I'll give you my blessing as long as you promise to write to me EVERY day and spare me no detail: the petty squabbles; the dreadful dehydrated food; the intolerable habits of the other inmates and their brattish children; the thrilling mystery of the mould on the petri-dish. Tell me all.

Give my love to my ugly brother-in-law and my beautiful beautiful niece.

Big kisses

Your one and only sister Tillie xxx



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 14-04-2041 sub> Petty Squabbles

You do make me laugh, Tillie. How like you to imagine bunker life is going to be so full of thrills. As yet there hasn't been a single squabble. Everyone's being terribly polite so far. Even the allocation of sleeping quarters, which you might have expected to be difficult, went smoothly, perhaps in large part due to the Project Manager, Aidan, who seems extremely well-organised.

We have a tiny little Family Pocket, with four bunks. I must confess that I find it a little claustrophobic but Isa thinks it is wonderful. She sleeps below and climbs up the ladder in the mornings to wriggle into bed with us. As you know, I was always vehemently anti-cosleeping but in here it feels comforting to have her so close to us. And, as Etienne keeps reminding me, we are lucky to have a Pocket to ourselves - those who are unpartnered have to share Single-sex Pockets.

Sorry to disappoint but so far we haven't eaten any astronaut food. There is an amazing space in here called the GARDEN - Growth Apparatus for Regenerative Development of Edible Nourishment.

So we're actually eating more fresh vegetables in here than we ate outside. Plus the range of vacuum-sealed and cryogenic food has to be seen to be believed - there must be enough for a decade (I hope they don't think we'll be in here that long!).

On a different note, as I recall it, Mama never said you were selfish, she just said *Don't* be selfish.

Your ugly brother-in-law and beautiful niece send lots of love, as do I.

Ava xxx



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 14-04-2041

sub>Re: Petty Squabbles

Does your naivet  know no bounds, Ava? A group of people (how many are there of you anyway?) in a confined space for an indefinite period and you think they're all going to get on like a house on fire? Think again! Of course, everyone's on their best behaviour now - no-one wants to get sent back to the badlands, do they? But give it time, people will start to get complacent and then they'll show their stripes: the marital strife, the parenting issues, the struggles in the corridors of power (are there even corridors, or do you just wriggle through sandy tunnels, like burrowing animals?).

So marrying Etienne turns out to have been a good decision, despite his bulbous nose and club foot - just think, if you hadn't, you'd be in a shared dorm. Quelle horreur. I can imagine how well you'd adjust to THAT eventuality. Still, the Family Pocket doesn't sound like it would do wonders for your sex life...

Re: Mama - seeing as you were only five when she shuffled off this mortal coil, I don't know how you can possibly remember things she said. But you are in fact right. She did say, Don't be selfish.

It's just that she said it so often she might as well have said that I was.

So what do you do all day in there, anyway? Are you writing (I mean apart from emails)?

Love Tillie xxx



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 15-04-41

sub> An Alphabet of Bunker Dwellers

Dear Tillie, in answer to your question, there are exactly 26 of us. The Project Manager, Aidan, who seems unusually sharp-witted, said our collective noun should be an 'alphabet', which I thought was clever. But I do wish we could have brought you. Etienne looked into it, of course - you know we wouldn't have thought of leaving without you.

There are the 17 people who work here - mostly scientists, and others, like Et, who contribute to the running of the facility. Then there are the hangers-on, like me and Isa. Those who have a job to do are doing it. Those who don't are in the process of working out ways in which we can be useful, which for now, includes finding our way round, cooking and keeping the kids entertained (four others apart from Isa). My half-finished PhD doesn't look as though it is going to be of much use, so watch this space for the exciting announcement of my future role.

The facility is nothing like a burrow, more like a spaceship! I've told you about the GARDEN and the dorms; aside from those areas we spend most

of our time in a kind of mess-hall known as the Hub. The kitchen and laundry are there and it's also where we have our meals and our meetings, exercise, watch movies, you name it. Beyond that are the labs, which I haven't seen much of yet, and the vault itself, where the seeds are stored.

Re: our Family Pocket, yes, it's not exactly conducive to 'intimacy' as you guessed, but of course they have thought of this along with everything else, and there is a tiny space called the Privacy Pod which we can book time in as a couple. Not very spontaneous but better than nothing. It appears to be in relatively high demand actually, as it's the only place in the entire bunker where you can be completely alone.

And what about you, Tillie? We read about the food distribution shootings. The Chaos Control Corps terrifies me - as if the police weren't bad enough, they're now giving guns to trigger-happy sixteen-year-old halfwits, and that's supposed to make us feel safe. I'm frightened for you.

Ava xxx



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 15-04-2041

sub>Re: An Alphabet of Bunker Dwellers

Surprisingly enough, I do feel safer now the CCC is supervising food distribution. The shootings were terrible, but the gang members who died were absolute low-lives; they had organised a full-scale mugging network around the food centres and a number of their victims had been brutally beaten. Now at least ordinary people can get food without fear. Although I must admit I don't love having a pimply-faced teenager with a gun trained on me at the checkout.

Anyway, enough about me. So, the Privacy Pod... sounds romantic! What does it mean when you say a 'pod' or a 'pocket' anyway? I'm having trouble imagining what it's like in there.

I can't believe that your PhD isn't going to be utilised in there. Surely an extensive knowledge of despotic leaders and their sidekicks is going to be tremendously useful. That type of information is so broadly applicable to a whole range of circumstances, isn't it?!

Tillie



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 16-04-2041 sub> Unsettling Development

An odd turn of events today - Et (and all other employees as we later found out) received a letter from SynBioTec (the organisation that runs this place) saying the Project Manager's been fired (they didn't say 'fired' of course, some ridiculous euphemism like 'removed from his position') and we are now to report to the CEO in Sydney, who nobody has ever even met. No explanation offered, and we're under strict instructions not to discuss it with the one person who might shed some light on it (the Project Manager himself).

Ava x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 16-04-2041

sub>Re: Unsettling Development

What did I tell you? Less than a week in and the dramas are already starting. What's the word in the burrow on why they're getting rid of the top dog? I hope someone is running a covert bookmaking operation. I'd put my money on the fact that he was sleeping with the head honcho's wife. What's your theory?

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 17-04-2041

sub> Bad News

Oh, Tillie, I wish it was something as uncomplicated as an affair. Unfortunately it is much more serious. Following yesterday's letter from the CEO, this morning brought a longer email which told us more. Apparently the Project Manager took the decision to close the facility without even consulting the company that manages it. Of course, all parties (including us) had assumed the closure was official and no-one thought to question it. Even more disturbing, according to the email, Aidan is mentally unstable (which explains why he'd make such a crazy decision) and potentially even violent. There I was thinking we'd be safer here and it turns out we're locked underground with a lunatic in charge. You always said it was too good to be true and it seems you've been proved right.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 17-04-2041

sub>Re: Bad News

I'm so sorry for joking about it. How on earth could SynBioTec allow something like that to happen? What are they doing to sort things out? Is there anything you can do to protect yourselves in the meantime? Please write back soon, I'm worried.

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 17-04-2041

sub>Re:Re: Bad News

I don't know how they're going to sort it out. I hardly slept a wink last night, worrying about it. They're 'working on it' apparently - some comfort that is. I realise now (too late) that we didn't look into things anywhere near thoroughly enough before making the decision to come. I want to blame Etienne because he's the one who had been here, and he painted such a rosy picture. But of course, I'm as much to blame because I was in a constant state of anxiety about Isa's future so instead of taking my time to really consider whether this was right for us, we jumped at the first thing that came along. Anyway, all's not lost of course. I'm not sure how we'll do it because we're in the middle of nowhere, but we'll be leaving as soon as an opportunity presents itself. I'll keep you posted.

Ava x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Mia Baker-Albright

date> 17-04-2041 sub> Kirk Longrigg's email

Hi Mia, I'm so sorry to bother you as I know we barely know each other but I'm feeling anxious about Kirk Longrigg's email. I know we're not supposed to discuss it but I have to talk to someone. I thought we would be safe in here but if Aidan's mentally unstable I'm not so sure. Etienne thinks there's just been some misunderstanding with SynBioTec which will work itself out, but he's only been here a few months and hasn't worked that closely with Aidan. I don't know what to think.

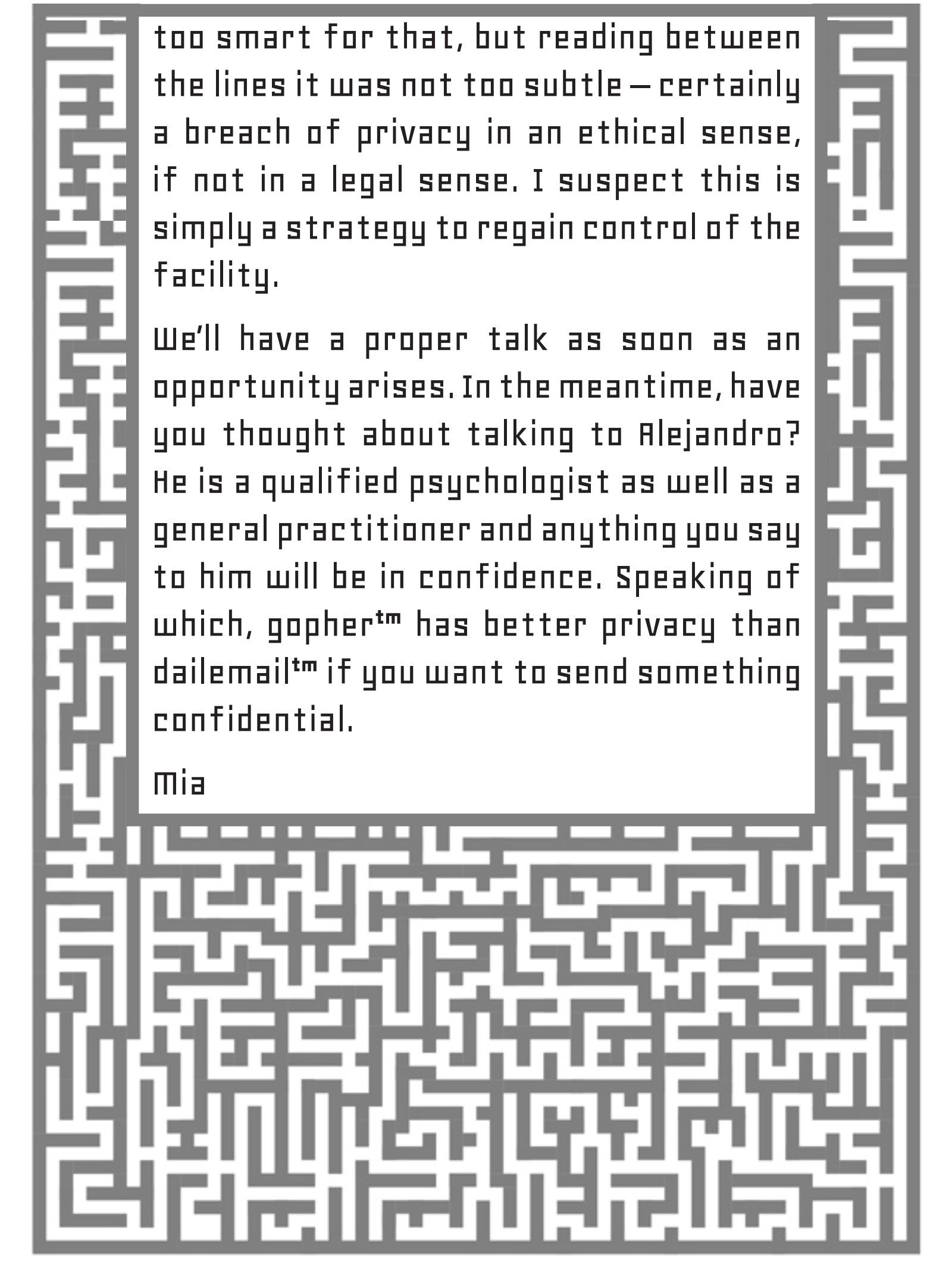
Ava (Etienne's wife)

17.04.41 Mia >>> Ava

I understand your anxiety, Ava. If I didn't know Aidan as well as I do, Kirk's email would have made me anxious too.

Personally, I think Aidan's as sane as you and I. I was surprised to discover that the closure was enacted without SynBioTec's approval. But Aidan never shoots from the hip. It's not his style. Knowing him as I do, I'm sure there was good reason for acting without the proper authority.

Of course, this is a multi-billion-dollar investment — SynBioTec is not going to be happy about any significant decisions being made without their say-so. I could be totally off the mark but my suspicion is they might be setting Aidan up so they can get rid of him more easily. The whole thing just seems really underhanded to me. I mean, if Aidan was on the verge of a breakdown it would be inappropriate to reveal that in writing to every employee. Nothing was explicit of course, they're

A large, complex maze with a white path leading to a white rectangular area containing text.

too smart for that, but reading between the lines it was not too subtle – certainly a breach of privacy in an ethical sense, if not in a legal sense. I suspect this is simply a strategy to regain control of the facility.

We'll have a proper talk as soon as an opportunity arises. In the meantime, have you thought about talking to Alejandro? He is a qualified psychologist as well as a general practitioner and anything you say to him will be in confidence. Speaking of which, gopher™ has better privacy than dailemail™ if you want to send something confidential.

Mia



sender>

-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>

-Tillie Hart

date> 17-04-2041

sub> About Face

You won't believe this, Tillie. Right after I emailed you we all got called into the Hub by Aidan. I completely refused to go - for all I knew he might be about to embark on a shooting spree. I hid myself and Isa in our Pocket and waited in a state of dread for Etienne to return. But he came back with good news. Aidan is perfectly sane. It seems SynBioTec are the villains in the piece. With the increase in attacks on private vehicles, Aidan had concerns about the team having to travel to and from the Ark and he didn't think SynBioTec were doing enough to protect them. He knew closing the Ark was the only way to keep everyone safe but they dismissed his concerns, so he decided to do it without their blessing.

I have to say I seriously doubt the wisdom of taking on a company like that and I think we should have been informed that it was an unapproved closure. On the other hand, I appreciate that he was putting people first, which is rare in this day and age. Anyway, I'm not sure yet where that leaves us - it seems inevitable that SBT will try to regain control of the facility. So there you go, you got your drama and all in the first week.

Lots of love, Ava x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 17-04-2041

sub>Re: About Face

My god, Ava, I can hardly keep up. I'm relieved to hear it's not a psychotic mutiny after all (although it did make for a better story). But are you absolutely sure you can trust Aidan's version of events? Is there any way to corroborate his story?

Till



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 17-04-2041 sub>Re:Re: About Face

No need to corroborate. After I talked to Etienne, I listened to what Aidan had told the others at the team meeting (which I am learning to call an 'engagement'). They have state-of-the-art technology in here and use a voice recording software program called articulate to record team meetings, so that those not present can listen online later. It is much better than reading minutes because you get to hear tone, which conveys a great deal more than a written transcript.

Aidan's speech was deeply moving. He's completely committed to the cause and I admire him in a way - I think it takes a lot of courage to take a stand against a company like that. Time will tell how effective his plan will be but it should at least make them sit up and take notice.

Ava x

17.04.41 Mia >>> Ava

Sorry we haven't had a chance to talk. Did hearing Aidan's speech make you feel any better? I was sure there'd be a good reason behind his actions.

17.04.41 Ava >>> Mia

Both. Better about Aidan, but worse about SynBioTec. They sound completely unscrupulous and yet they have such a squeaky clean reputation – obviously a good PR department... Anyway, I'm convinced of Aidan's sanity now and feel this is the right place for us to be. Thanks for checking in.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 19-04-2041 sub> NewsBLiPP

Dear Ava, I don't want to worry you, but I came across this article - I thought you should know about it, if you don't already.

Till

ëKLiPP :: National Arboreal Protection Project Manager Fired



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 19-04-2041

sub>Re: NewsBLiPP

This is EXACTLY what Aidan said would happen. Apparently SynBioTec are the masters of this kind of smear campaign. They make up the most outrageous lies and even if they're eventually proved as such, by that time the person in question has had their career obliterated. Reading this makes me admire Aidan even more - he knew they would tear him to pieces but he did what he had to do regardless. Thanks for passing this on - I'll make sure Aidan sees it.

And how are you? We're always talking about my life and never about yours. You're not keeping secrets from me, are you?

Ava x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Aidan Fox

date> 19-04-2041 sub> Smear Campaign

Hi Aidan, my sister came across this article and KLiPPt it for me, I thought you might want to see it, if you haven't already.

Regards, Ava

ëKLiPP :: National Arboreal Protection Project Manager Fired



sender>
-Aidan Fox

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 19-04-2041 sub>Re: Smear Campaign

Thank you Ava - I appreciate you passing that on.
It was nothing less than I expected - a leopard
never changes its spots, as they used to say.

Warm wishes, Aidan

Date> 19-04-41

Drafted & Delivered> Aidan Fox

Form> Focused Communication

Location> Hub

[Warm] You all know Gabriella. She's part of the furniture here, after being on board for more than a decade. I recruited her during the design phase of the Ark to ensure we created an infrastructure which would allow her to build a bulletproof system to protect our most valuable asset – our seedbank. [Awed] The systems which Gabriella created made our vault the number one choice worldwide for seed security. Let's take a moment to acknowledge once again what a truly phenomenal achievement that is. [Lead applause]

[Proud] When our research division opened three years ago, Gab's role expanded to include protection of our intellectual property. You would imagine staying on top of those two areas would be more than enough to keep her busy. [Familial] But we have one more asset here at the Ark, which is to me more valuable than the other two combined. I'm speaking of course of you: my team. And possibly, you're thinking you don't need protecting. [Solemn] I'm sorry to be the one to have to tell you this, but you do.

[Ominous] I've worked with SynBioTec for a long time, long enough to know that the day would come when the company which has shepherded this incredible facility would turn against us. [Dramatic] And that day, my friends, is upon us.

[Rallying] However, we need not fear. For I have planned for this day. For the last two years, Gabriella has been working in the utmost secrecy to install an impenetrable time-delay lock on our entrance system. [Excited] And I am thrilled to announce that upon your arrival, this time-delay feature was successfully activated.

[Triumphant] My foresight, combined with Gabriella's sectronic genius, has bought us 60 days in which we are protected from SynBioTec's vice-like grip.

Date> 19-04-41

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Etienne] Sorry to disturb, Aidan, I know you've got a lot going on right now but we're both feeling a little shocked by your revelation in the engagement.

[Ava] You can't really have locked us in here, can you?

[Aidan] Indeed I have. We have two months of protection from outside.

[Etienne] It's a time-delay lock, you said?

[Aidan] That's right.

[Etienne] But it could be deactivated, in case of emergency, or something...?

[Aidan] Unfortunately not. That would render it ineffective, from a security viewpoint.

** PAUSE **

[Etienne] Why weren't we told about this?

[Aidan] You just have been.

[Ava] But we needed to be told before the fact, surely you understand that. It's extremely upsetting to discover that we've effectively been imprisoned.

[Aidan] My dear girl, you're far from being a prisoner. You're one of the chosen ones. The Ark is your sanctuary from a mad world.

[Etienne] We never agreed to being locked inside.

[Aidan] Your contract agrees to appropriate means to ensure the safety of the facility and its inhabitants.

[Ava] Locking the doors for two months without telling us is not what I would call appropriate.

[Etienne] It does seem extreme.

[Aidan] You always knew that you were making a commitment. True commitment requires sacrifice. In return, your family has been provided with a safe haven.

[Etienne] But it's cost us our freedom. That's quite a price to pay.

[Aidan] You think so? People would sell their souls to be where you are now. I'm surprised that you can't see that. But then, they say the grass is always greener...

[Ava] Don't patronise us, Aidan. What you've done is wrong, it's dishonest, and I'm sure we're not the only people who feel this way.

[Aidan] You should be thanking me. I did it for you, for the trees.

[Etienne] I'm not opposed to it in theory. I just think we should have been consulted, maybe taken a vote or something.

[Aidan] Unfortunately, when it comes to security measures, you can't engage in a consultation process, because in most cases, the power of the measure is inversely proportional to the number of people who

know about it.

[Ava] Can't you see that you've done something wrong?

[Aidan] I did what was right for the Ark – for our community and for the seeds.

** PAUSE **

[Etienne] I think we need some time to process. Maybe we can talk again later.

[Aidan] My door is always open.



19.04.41 Ava >>> Mia

Mia, I really am sorry to keep gophering you but it's so hard to talk in private here and this feels safest. Etienne and I just went to talk to Aidan and I saw a side of him that scared me. He can't even see that it wasn't right not to tell us about the time-delay lock. It makes me wonder if Kirk Longrigg might have been right about his mental state. I'm having huge second thoughts about our decision to come here. I never would have brought Isadora if I'd known what I know now. How are you and Griffin feeling about your children being here?

Ava

19.04.41 Mia >>> Ava

I think the decision is harder to understand if you haven't worked here. The security's always been intense so I guess I just accepted the idea that there must be some kind of system which would effectively seal the Ark—otherwise there would be no real protection for the seeds. However, I was working on the assumption that we would be informed PRIOR to that system being activated, so that we could make a choice about whether to stay or go.

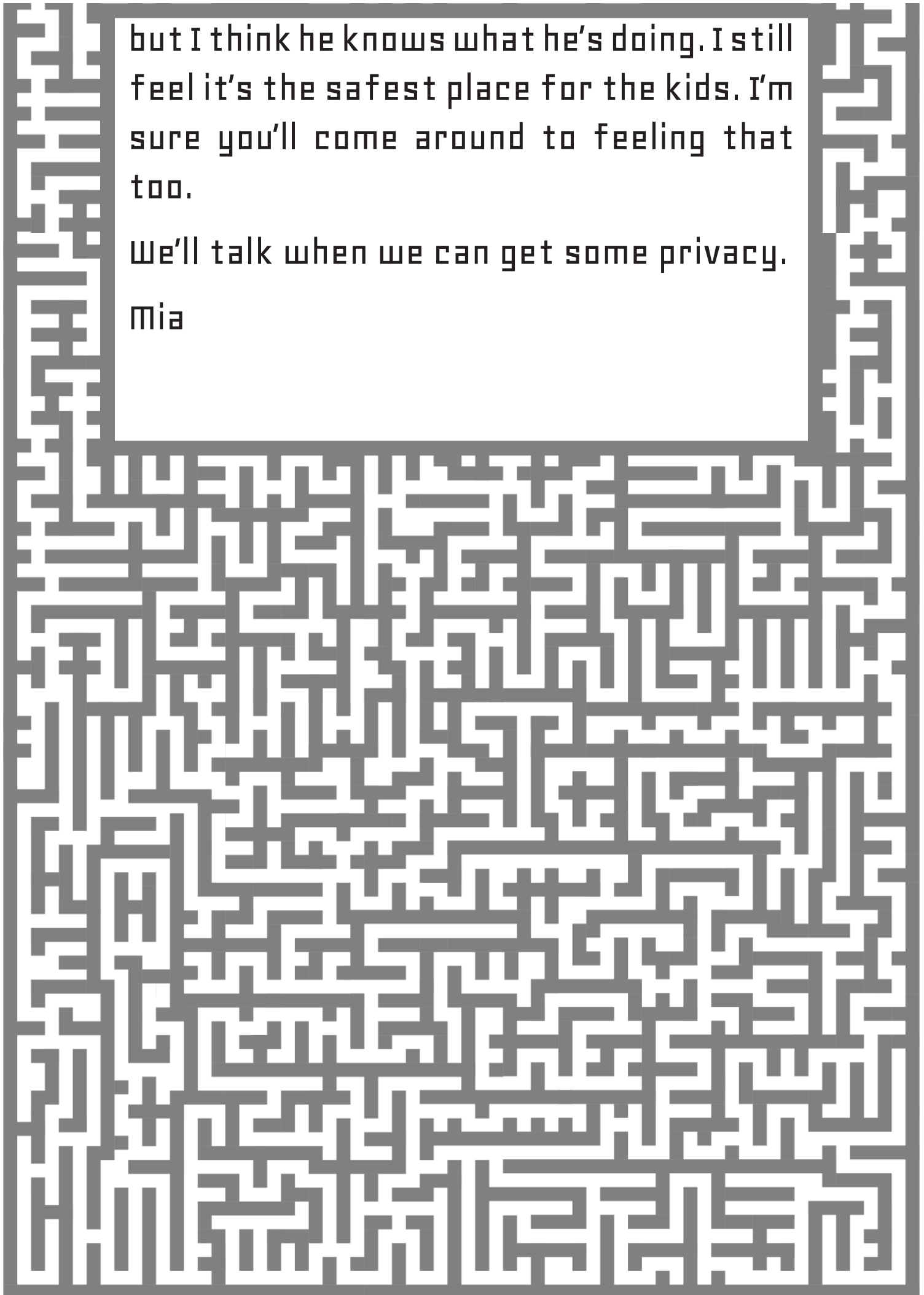
I'm unhappy about not being consulted but at the end of the day, nothing's really changed. When we came here, it was with the intention of staying put, potentially until the Chaos subsides. It's always been a long-term proposition, so to lock the doors for sixty days seems conservative in one sense.

You know I've worked here for a couple of years and I think I know Aidan reasonably well. Sometimes he can be bloody-minded

but I think he knows what he's doing. I still
feel it's the safest place for the kids. I'm
sure you'll come around to feeling that
too.

We'll talk when we can get some privacy.

Mia





sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 19-04-2041 sub> Locked in

My god, what a day. Aidan called a team engagement this morning and announced, completely out of the blue, that a time-delay lock's been activated, effective for 60 DAYS. Et and I went straight from the engagement to talk to him about it and he acted as though we were being hysterical for even questioning it. I don't know what to do.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 19-04-2041 sub>Re: Locked in

That's unbelievable. What was his justification? I wonder now if there might have been some truth in that NewsBLiPP after all. Do you think anyone else knew about it? Why don't you ask around, see how everyone else is feeling? Maybe as a group you might be able to persuade him to deactivate it.



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 19-04-2041 sub>Re:Re: Locked in

His justification was that if he hadn't done it, SynBioTec would have come out and seized control of the facility. It is their facility, of course, but I suppose we would all be sent home, and no-one wants that, for obvious reasons. His rationale was understandable, given the extreme circumstances, but what bothered us most was the fact that we weren't consulted. But he couldn't even seem to see that was a problem.

Probably the most disturbing part is that everyone else is acting as though nothing untoward has happened. The general consensus seems to be that we're stuck here for a while anyway so it doesn't make much difference if the doors are locked or not. And I get that. We're in the middle of nowhere; it's virtually impossible to leave. But no-one seems to have grasped the fundamental issue, which is that we weren't even asked if it was okay.

I still don't believe anything they said in that NewsBLiPP. Aidan's definitely rational. But perhaps that's the problem. He's hyper-rational - at the expense of seeing the human/emotional

perspective - a classic despotic characteristic.

Anyway, I'm sorry to have to bother you with this. I know you have your own worries. I hope I haven't upset you.

Ava xxx



sender>
-Kirk Longrigg

recipients>
-Ark Employees

date> 20-04-2041 sub> Secure Communication

I regret to inform you that your scheduled liberation has had to be postponed as it has become apparent that Fox has committed a second act of gross misconduct by installing and activating an unauthorised time-delay lock. Our most experienced Sec Team members are working in shifts to disable the lock and we will be in contact as soon as a breakthrough occurs. In the meantime, we ask you to stay calm and rest assured your ordeal will soon be over.

You may not be aware that Mr Fox has access to all incoming and outgoing dailemail; for this reason a headless horseman has been created to ensure we can continue to communicate without being censored or monitored. The horseman cannot be detected by voyeur systems and can outride all known e-mercenaries. Simply press your fingertip on the horseman icon to open a secure 'parchment'. The horseman automatically encrypts your fingerprint upon despatch to ensure your anonymity. Please use the horseman to keep us abreast of any further developments or additional information which may assist us, and know your efforts will be richly rewarded in due course.

Meeting needs through seeds - Kirk



sender>
-Gabriella Portelli

recipients>
-Ark Employees

date> 20-04-2041 sub> Headless Horseman

I understand we all received the same email from Kirk Longrigg which gave us access to a secure underground communication system known as a 'headless horseman'.

If you're anything like me, you'd probably rather make an informed decision about whether or not you want to use it. As it happens, I spent some time researching headless horsemen as part of an InfoSec project I worked on for the federal police, so I thought I'd share what I know.

Headless horsemen were originally developed by the Japanese organised crime network known as the Yakuza. They are now believed to be used by every large-scale crime network worldwide as they are the only e-messenger which can successfully 'outride' software programs designed to intercept underground communication systems.

Headless horseman programs are not for sale via any legally registered software outlet, nor are they available as freeware. In Australia, and many other countries with electronic security laws, possession of a headless horseman program is a

felony punishable by imprisonment. Even a single use of the program is a criminal offence under current Australian law.

Anyway, I hope you find this helpful - I'll leave you to draw your own conclusions.

**Regards,
Gabriella**

Parleyed by Ali Abdullal

Possibly most of us have run through the most obvious assumptions based on the little we know, i.e. if SynBioTec is using an illegal program favoured by crime networks, are they affiliated with organised crime and/or engaged in other illegal activities?

Obviously moving into the Ark was a big step and emotions are running high but we should try to apply the same critical questioning/problem-solving to this situation that we would apply to any technical or scientific issue we might encounter.

Parleyed by Haruki Nishimura

Headless horsemen are popular with organised crime because they are the only program which can evade capture and unlock systems, i.e. it is not only the best system of its kind but the only system of its kind. And what's wrong with a business wanting to use the best system available?

And okay, the system's not available legally, but what

of it? Who among us can say we've never downloaded pirated software, or burnt a DigiDisk?

I'm betting if you could hack into the ghost drives of Australia's top companies you'd find they were all using headless horsemen. If it wasn't for the Chaos it would probably only be a matter of time before some teen tech-head made their first billion by unravelling the code and making a legal version.

Parleyed by Nisha Lakhani

As Gab said, using the horseman is a criminal act, punishable by imprisonment. I hardly think it comparable to copying music onto a disk. A more accurate comparison would be distributing child pornography.

Parleyed by Haruki Nishimura

Child pornography has obvious victims. Who are the victims of using headless horsemen?

Parleyed by Nisha Lakhani

It's a program which assists crime networks, therefore, its victims are as many and varied as the crimes themselves – drug addicts, petty drug dealers who are mur-

dered by other gangs, drug mules who are caught and executed, teenage prostitutes...

Parleyed by Rudolph Schwab

Aren't we missing the point here? I mean, why does Longrigg think we need to communicate in secret anyway? He's the only one saying things about Aidan that he wouldn't want him to read. No-one else is doing that. So why would we even waste time talking about this program?

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

On that note, I'd like to confirm that incoming mail is not being censored.

20.04.41 Aidan >>> Rudolph

We've got to nip this exchange in the bud – at this rate SynBioTec will be able to generate a personality profile on every team member by lunchtime. And once they know everyone's Achilles heel they won't hesitate to start firing their poison arrows to get people on their side.

I've been thinking about how we can use SBT's access to our e-comms to our advantage – perhaps you can join the debate in favour of SBT, and then suggest an engagement, which will enable the debate to take place beyond their reach?

Soon as possible

Aidan

Parleyed by Rudolph Schwab

There's obviously a lot of points to consider here. I suggest we meet this afternoon in the Hub to discuss it.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

Great idea, Rudolph. Let's confirm an engagement at 1600 in the Hub to agree on an approach to the headless horseman.

Parleyed by Ava Delorme-Hart

Before we meet, it seems important that we understand the aim of the engagement. Is it an opportunity to air our views and discuss the pros and cons of the horseman (as suggested by Rudolph) or, in fact, to reach a group consensus about its use (as implied by Aidan's *parlez*)?

I think it's worthwhile to consider all points of view but ultimately, regardless of whether we interpret this as a legal, ethical, or personal matter, I strongly believe each of us must be left to make the decision about whether or not to use the horseman for ourselves, without interference or judgement from others.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

You misinterpret me, Ava. Rest assured no-one will be forced to do anything that they are uncomfortable with.

Date> 20-04-41

Drafted & Delivered> Aidan Fox

Form> Focused Communication

Location> Hub

[Benevolent] It pleased me to read this morning's e-comms, to know that freedom of speech is alive and well in the Ark. And why should it not be? The Ark has never been an autocracy. It is one of the great strengths of this team - the broadness of your minds, your willingness to work through differences of opinion. We have no secrets from each other. [Curious] What need then for the headless horsemen?

[Factual] Kirk Longrigg understands that for the next 60 days he cannot regain control of the Ark by force. [Sinister] But there are other weapons in his arsenal. The headless horseman system allows Kirk to communicate with each of us as individuals. It invites us to confide our fears and uncertainties, our reservations and misgivings about this wholly new situation in which we find ourselves. He will then exploit these confidences, chip away at us, one by one, until we begin to doubt ourselves and each other, until we lose our sense of right and wrong. [Disgusted] Divide and conquer: the oldest trick in the book!

[Laudatory] Every employee of this facility was subjected to a rigorous recruitment process. You were selected not only for your outstanding expertise in your chosen field but for your insight and judgement, an intuition which borders on a sixth sense. I would challenge anyone to find a more keen-minded team anywhere in Australia. [Incredulous] And Kirk insults us by attempting to undermine us with a ruse that a handful of intelligent children could discern. Does he think we are so easily infiltrated?

Look at what we have achieved, as a team. [Amazed] We have built a seed vault inside a mountain. We have attracted deposits of rare heirloom seeds from all over the world, including the seeds of trees previously believed to be extinct. [Proud] People said these things could not be done. And yet, together we created a synergy, in which the seemingly impossible became conceivable. [Rousing] Our strength is our unity. Let us lock arms and retain this unity. Let us reject the headless horseman which would divide us.

[Huyen] Hear hear.

[Paige] Yes, well said, Aidan.

[Aidan] Thank you.

[Rudolph] Well he's underestimating us, isn't he? He's not going to play me like a fucking ukulele.

[Felipe] I'm with you, Rudolph. I don't think we should have a bar of it.

[Ava] Sorry to interrupt but, being new to the team, I wondered about the structure of this engagement. Are we going to take turns to share our thoughts?

[Gabriella] Anyone can speak up at any point. We usually try to keep things informal.

[Ava] Right. That's what I thought, but then when Aidan made a speech I wasn't sure.

[Aidan] Merely a few brief opening comments.

[Ava] Still, something you had time to prepare.

[Aidan] We've all had the same amount of time to prepare our ideas on this subject.

[Ava] True. But we weren't all offered the option of delivering a speech.

[Aidan] Would you like to make a speech? You're most welcome. You obviously have strong feelings about this, and I'm sure we're all interested to hear them.

[Ava] That's not really my point.

[Aidan] To be honest, I'm struggling to understand your point, Ava. We're all here to talk about the headless horseman. But you seem to want to discuss something else.

[Ava] All I'm saying is, everyone should be given the same opportunity to air their views, on an equal footing. But when you start a meeting like this with such a strong perspective, it's not a neutral beginning. It's intimidating.

It makes it difficult for people to express a different point of view.

[Aidan] You don't seem to have any hesitation about expressing your point of view, Ava. Although I'm still not clear what that viewpoint is.

[Ava] Well, perhaps it's more of a question than point of view. Are we to start every meeting or discussion with a speech from you? Is your perspective always to be the first we hear?

[Aidan] If we don't get on with things, mine will be the only one we hear.

[Nisha] Well, I've already said my piece in the parlez. The headless horseman is illegal and unethical. I'm one hundred percent against it.

[Felipe] I don't trust Kirk Longrigg. I don't think we should use it.

[Kristjan] I don't even see why we need to talk about it. There's no necessity to come to an agreement about it or even to understand each other's views. People should use it if they want to, ignore it if they don't.

[Rudolph] Didn't you hear what Aidan said? A chain is only as strong as its weakest link. If even one of us uses it, it makes all of us vulnerable.

[Kristjan] Vulnerable to what?

[Rudolph] To Longrigg. To SynBioTec.

[Kristjan] But what are we afraid of? They can't get in here. What can they do to us?

[Rudolph] It's not about what they can do to us. It's about giving a message, a clear message, that we're strong, that we're together in this.

[Ava] Well I think there's value in it. As you said, Aidan, Kirk's inviting us to discuss our fears and uncertainties about being here. And I think that's a good thing. I certainly have fears and uncertainties and I'm sure I'm not the only one.

[Aidan] I'd like to think we can discuss our fears and uncertainties with each other. You're new to us, Ava, and perhaps you don't realise yet, but we keep things open and transparent in here. We've done this in working together; it's no different now we're living together. My door is always open, and I'd like to think I'm approachable.

[Ava] I don't think that's enough. What if something can't be resolved?

[Aidan] Well I'm sure we can cross that bridge if we ever come to it.

[Ava] Well Etienne and I already have come to that bridge, in case you've forgotten. I'm still feeling extremely unhappy about the entrance being time-delay locked without our agreement and our discussion with you didn't make me feel any better about it.

[Etienne] I don't think this is the forum for that issue, Ava.

[Ava] That's exactly my point. There is no forum for voicing dissent. The headless horseman is the only forum.

[Gabriella] Ava raises a fair point. Perhaps there does need to be a forum for people to raise grievances. Should we make it part of our team engagement?

[Ava] It needs to be anonymous to be effective.

[Rudolph] Why?

[Ava] Sometimes people aren't comfortable openly opposing their manager.

[Rudolph] You don't seem to have any trouble with it.

[Ava] Aidan's not my manager, Rudolph.

[Rudolph] How do you work that out?

[Ava] Because I'm not an employee of the Ark.

[Rudolph] You are now.

[Alejandro] If I might be permitted to share my thoughts, from a wellbeing perspective, the issue of how to express fears, uncertainties and issues is an important one. I'd just like to remind you all that I am a qualified clinical psychologist, and that any concerns you raise with me are confidential.

[Gabriella] Thanks for that reminder, Alex. Let's have a think about the idea of airing and working through issues and discuss it when we next come together. In the meantime, does anyone have any more ideas about the horsemen? . . . Alright, let's get back to work then. Thanks everyone.

Parleyed by Leilani Rivera

As we all know, the initial plan was for us to continue with our usual work routines, communicating electronically as needed, apart from our weekly team engagement. I think most of us believed that going on with business as usual would help us to adjust to our new circumstances but when we agreed to that strategy I don't think any of us anticipated the impact of SynBioTec's influence.

The engagements we've had have helped me to gain a better understanding of the implications of things like sealing the Ark, using the headless horseman, etc. I'm wondering if it might be possible to have more regular engagements, at least until things have settled down. Does anyone else think that might be beneficial?

Parleyed by Huyen Phan

I like that idea, Leilani. It's so much easier to get a full picture talking face-to-face than through e-comms.

Parleyed by Mia Baker-Albright

All the literature on isolated communities such as ours

emphasises the importance of talking through issues and taking into account each other's views in order to reach consensus, and there certainly seems to be plenty to discuss at this early stage. So I'm definitely in favour.

Parleyed by Ava Delorme-Hart

I'm in favour as long as we're talking about a genuine opportunity to share ideas and make decisions, NOT a thinly-veiled opportunity for proselytising and forcing ideas on others.

Parleyed by Mia Baker-Albright

Perhaps we might start by agreeing on a format for the engagements to ensure all members of the community have the opportunity to air their views equitably.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Excellent idea, thanks for the suggestion, Leilani. My recommendation is we meet daily at this stage. This will stop the 'bush telegraph' and also means we can maintain privacy of communication (from SBT) as required. We'll start tomorrow, first thing after breakfast.



sender>
-Koshan Shahriyor

recipients>
-Ark Inhabitants

date> 21-04-2041 sub> Data Security

Hello all

After headless horseman debate I receive many question about data security. memo, dailemail, parlez-vite and BLiPP are all transmitting across SynBioTec auto-route. This mean:

1. SynBioTec can access
2. All people in Ark can access, if have permission

If you want send a more private communication, best option is gopher as she is transmitting across in-house pathway. Just one problem is gophers can pass from one person to one person only, so are not useful to communicate in group.

Ask if you have other question.

Kosh



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Koshan Shahriyor

date> 21-04-2041 sub>Re: Data Security

Thanks for your email Koshan. Can I ask you to clarify - what do you mean when you say 'anyone' in here can access our e-comms 'with permission'? Who currently has permission? And who is authorised to give it?

Thanks, Ava



sender>
-Koshan Shahriyor

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 21-04-2041 sub>Re:Re: Data Security

All employee have permanent and forever access to own cache of e-comms, this include articulate transcript of engagement etc. She is stored in your STRONGbox and can be 'unlocked' by use your fingerprint.

As well, Gabriella and Aidan have access for all e-comms and according to 'philosophy and behaviour' section of the Covenant, other employee can ask permission to Director for access other people's e-comms for 'special circumstances'.

Hope that help

Kosh

Date> 21-04-41

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Aidan] Ava. How nice to see you. How are you feeling?

[Ava] Are you recording this conversation, Aidan?

[Aidan] The articulate software is creating a transcript, yes. Why do you ask?

[Ava] Why are you recording it?

[Aidan] It's standard procedure, according to our Covenant. All formal discussions which take place in this niche are recorded.

[Ava] Could you turn it off, please?

[Aidan] The procedures are in place for a good reason. I can't violate them without just cause.

[Ava] Don't talk to me about violating procedures. You're violating human rights here.

[Aidan] Which rights are you referring to, Ava?

[Ava] Surely it's not legal, or ethical, to record someone's conversation without their consent.

[Aidan] No-one's conversation has been recorded in this facility without their consent.

[Ava] Come off it, Aidan! I found the transcript from our conversation about the time-delay lock in my STRONGbox. How did it get there if you didn't record it?

[Aidan] I didn't say it wasn't recorded. I said it wasn't recorded without your consent.

[Ava] But it was! There's no record of you asking my permission in the transcript. You can check it yourself. I would never consent to being recorded.

[Aidan] You already have.

[Ava] I think I know what I've consented to.

[Aidan] Apparently not.

[Ava] What are you suggesting? That I don't remember?

[Aidan] It's in your contract, Ava.

[Ava] I haven't signed any contract.

[Aidan] You're covered by Etienne's contract, which binds you to the same agreements he's made as outlined in our Covenant, including the right for pertinent discussions to be recorded and archived.

[Ava] I'm an adult. Etienne can't agree to something on my behalf.

[Aidan] It was a condition of you and your daughter being accepted for habitation.

[Ava] But it can't be legally binding.

[Aidan] You may not know this, Ava, but I'm a lawyer, among other things. I wouldn't waste my time drawing up contracts which were not legally binding. What exactly is your concern about being recorded? Are you worried about saying something that you'll later regret?

[Ava] I couldn't care less about that. It's the principle. First we find out we've been locked inside this facility without

our agreement, then that we're having our conversations taped. I feel like I'm having my basic rights removed, one by one.

[Aidan] Let me email you a link to the Covenant. That might put your mind at rest.

[Ava] I doubt that very much. I dread to know the extent of what's been surrendered on behalf of myself and my daughter.

[Aidan] You're angry with your husband.

[Ava] Don't put words in my mouth. I'm angry with you. You wrote the contracts. You made the rules. You're the one who's set up this place like some secret police headquarters.

[Aidan] You should be careful making accusations like that, Ava.

[Ava] Are you threatening me, Aidan? I'm not going to be suppressed by you.

[Aidan] I have no intention of suppressing you. I admire your spirit. We just need to find a way to channel it in a more positive direction. I want you and Etienne to be happy here.

[Ava] Well, I'm not happy. And don't think this is the end of it.

[Aidan] I'm always available to talk. I hope our discussions might help you on your journey of acceptance.

[Ava] Screw you, Aidan.





Parleyed by Ava Delorme-Hart

I just wanted to make sure everyone knows this, as I discovered it by default: all our conversations are being recorded and archived without our consent. For those of you who are parents and already aware of the difficulty of maintaining control of our children's digital footprints, this is particularly disturbing. If anyone else has concerns about this I would be glad to discuss it.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

Ava is referring to the clause in our Covenant which refers to the recording and archiving of pertinent articulations (Section 7, part 3c, ii). It covers Team Engagements, Formal Explorations, Performance Appraisals, etc.

After the last incident I swore to myself that I wasn't going to write to you again about our troubles in here because I know that whatever challenges we're facing, you're facing more. But I have to tell someone outside about what's happening, because everyone in here is so adamant that everything's going swimmingly that I'm starting to wonder if I'm losing my mind.

After the time-delay lock fiasco we all got an email from Kirk Longrigg – the SynBioTec boss – giving us access to some type of ultra-secure communication called a headless horseman. There was some debate through our internal message board about the legalities and ethics of it (which was heartening and disturbing in equal measure, as some of the people here seem to have no moral compass whatsoever, though others, thankfully, still have a sense of right and wrong – one woman in particular, a food scientist called Nisha). Eventually it was suggested we should have an engagement so we could talk about it some more. The so-called engagement turned out to be nothing more than Aidan giving another one of his rousing speeches, and everyone else heartily applauding his sentiments. He reminds me

of one of those TV evangelists. It makes me sick to my stomach. They've supposedly assembled this crack team of some of the brightest minds in the country, and yet, these geniuses, or genii or whatever you want to call them, don't exhibit any critical-thinking skills whatsoever and just accept everything that Aidan says as some kind of gospel. It's baffling. And I don't want Isa to grow up thinking it's normal. It's important to me that she learns to think for herself and I dread to imagine what effect this cult of compliance will have on her.

Following that, I discovered that virtually everything we say in here is being recorded, without our consent. When I went to see Aidan about this, it emerged that in order to get approval for me and Isa to come here, Et signed some contract in which he consented, on behalf of myself and our daughter, to this and god knows what other violations of privacy, according to some 'Covenant'. (Which is a weird name for a Policies and Procedures document, don't you think? It's hardly the fucking Ten Commandments). Et thought it was merely a formality but it turns out to be legally binding, despite the fact that I have never even SEEN it. Just to test the waters, I put something on the message board to suss out whether other people

were aware of what was going on and received NOT ONE response, except from bloody Aidan, trying to make me look like I am overreacting.

Et says I AM overreacting – I'm sleeping badly and he thinks the pressure of being cooped up in here and the lower oxygen levels are getting to me, but I'm sure that's not it. I need someone I trust to tell me the truth.

Ava xxx

Don't be silly! Of course you can write to me if something's upsetting you. Isn't that what sisters are for? Firstly, you are NOT losing your mind. Don't even entertain that thought. And you are not overreacting. It is definitely NOT okay to have your conversations recorded, whatever it says in some contract. There is something badly wrong there if other people think that's okay. There must be some reason why people follow Aidan's leadership so blindly. Perhaps they're scared of him?

And you should definitely use the headless horseman thing (morbid name) to get in touch with Longrigg. He might be able to give you some information about what to do. And maybe you should follow up with Nisha, if you think her sense of right and wrong is more intact. It can't do any harm just to put some feelers out.

Now don't be angry but I'm going to write to Et too because I think he's out of order for not supporting you on this. Try to stay calm and see what you can find out. Let me know how you go after you've talked to Longrigg and/or Nisha. I'll be thinking of you.

Till x x x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 21-04-2041 sub> Official Complaint

Dear Mr Longrigg

I am the wife of Etienne Delorme-Hart, HydroLex Engineer here at the Ark, and I am writing to complain about the untenable situation here. You may be wondering why I am not using the headless horseman which was offered. The reason is that I wish my complaint to be on the record. I see no reason to hide what I have to say as I have already expressed my opinion to Aidan in person (and was unsatisfied with the outcome).

My first complaint is about certain actions of Aidan's which I believe represent an infringement of constitutional rights and freedoms - namely the sealing of the facility without the consent of the inhabitants and the recording and archiving of conversations. When I raised my concerns about these actions with Aidan, he claimed that I and all other inhabitants had effectively signed away our rights in our contracts (in my case, signed by my husband on behalf of myself and our daughter).

My second complaint is about the negligence of SynBioTec in leaving this facility and its

employees, not to mention their children, under the management of a person with a history of mental instability, and failing to intercept the installation of an unauthorised time-delay lock. I believe these actions constitute a dereliction of your duty-of-care to your employees.

I would like to know exactly what is being done to resolve these issues and compensate for the misconduct which has created this situation.

Kind regards, Ava Delorme-Hart

22.04.41 Tillie > Etienne

Etienne, how are you? I think you should know I got a worrying daile from Ava yesterday about what's been going on in that bunker of yours. I don't know what the management structure was like before you went to live there, but it sounds as though this Aidan fellow more or less does as he pleases and everyone else has to go along with it.

Ava's terribly anxious about it all, especially in terms of the impact it's having on Isa, and she feels isolated, knowing no-one in there. She said even you're telling her she's overreacting, but surely you don't think so? The time-delay lock, the recording of conversations, etc., sound completely unreasonable. You can imagine how hard this is for me, being unable to be there for her in any way. She really needs your support right now.

Tillie x

Date> 23-04-41

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Aidan] Thanks for coming, Etienne.

[Etienne] Listen, I'm sorry about Ava. She's not...herself at the moment. She's not good with change.

[Aidan] It's not easy, I understand that. And it's still early days. I'm sure she'll adjust, in time. In the meantime, I wanted to talk to you about Kirk Longrigg.

[Etienne] I know that email was totally out of order.

[Aidan] I'm not concerned about that. But there are things about Longrigg which I think Ava would appreciate knowing.

[Etienne] What kinds of things?

[Aidan] How much do you know about him?

[Etienne] Virtually nothing. I've never had any dealings with him in the course of my job, if that's what you're asking. Until this week, he was just a name to me, really, someone I saw on VISO. I mean, I knew SynBioTec owned the facility but they more or less left us to it until now.

[Aidan] Have you ever looked him up, on Matt7 for example?

[Etienne] I did, actually, after he sent that email about

you being replaced.

[Aidan] And did you find what you were looking for?

[Etienne] I wasn't looking for anything in particular. I just wanted to get some sort of impression of how he works, what his agenda might be.

[Aidan] And?

[Etienne] He comes across as very personable, I think. I mean, there wasn't much about his private life, he doesn't seem to have had any sex scandals or any of that rubbish deemed newsworthy so it was mostly about his business dealings, announcements of scientific breakthroughs, partnerships, what have you.

[Aidan] What about his life before SynBioTec?

[Etienne] I didn't find much about that.

[Aidan] Does it strike you as strange, that a guy with a basically blank CV – no business profile whatsoever – would be appointed as CEO of a company of that size and stature?

[Etienne] When you put it like that, yes.

[Aidan] Would you care to hazard a guess about why he got the job?

[Etienne] I'm not much for guessing games.

[Aidan] Kirk Longrigg is an expert in mind control.

[Etienne] What do you mean 'mind control'?

[Aidan] I believe the layperson's term is brainwashing. Before he worked for SynBioTec, he was head of

intelligence in a secret military force. And you won't find that on Matt 7.

[Etienne] Why would SynBioTec want someone with that background as a CEO?

[Aidan] Because, Etienne, SynBioTec is at war.

[Etienne] At war with who?

[Aidan] At war with nature, at war with humanity.

[Etienne] Oh come on, that's a bit dramatic, don't you think?

[Aidan] Dramatic is exactly the right word for it. SynBioTec Global has been fighting this secret war for almost four decades.

[Etienne] A war? What kind of war?

[Aidan] Modifying plant strains, acquiring seedbanks.

[Etienne] That's what all seed companies do, right? I mean, that's their business.

[Aidan] Even as more and more people have been starving to death, they have been systematically destroying natural plant strains which competed with their genetically-modified disease-resistant strains, forcing farmers everywhere to buy their patented versions, so that in the precious few places where there was arable land left, every grain of rice, every ear of corn grown would fill their coffers.

[Etienne] They've been accused of that dozens of times and nothing has ever been proved.

[Aidan] That's exactly why they employ intelligence experts like Kirk. They have connections in the media, the government. They're unstoppable.

[Etienne] Surely they would have been exposed, if that's what they were really doing.

[Aidan] That's their genius.

** PAUSE **

[Etienne] Why on earth would you go on working for them, knowing this?

[Aidan] Because it's the only way I can make a difference. The Arboreal Protection Facility may be the only thing that stands now between SynBioTec and the worldwide decimation of crop diversity. We're talking literally about the future of human life on earth. And I made a decision long ago, that I'll do whatever it takes to protect that. We have to hold out until the Chaos renders SynBioTec utterly powerless and to do that it's critical for everyone in here to be together on this.

[Etienne] And Ava's undermining that.

[Aidan] Do you think you could help her to see the bigger picture?

[Etienne] I'll do my best.

[Aidan] Have faith in yourself, Et. I know you can do it. Let me know if there's anything I can do to help.



Date> 23-04-41

Location> Delorme-Hart Family Pocket

Form> Surveillance

[Etienne] Can we talk about your email to Kirk, Ava?

[Ava] I don't want to talk about it, I already told you that. Contractually speaking Isa and I may be viewed in here as merely some kind of appendage to you but that doesn't mean you're going to start telling me what to do.

[Etienne] That's not fair. You know that I don't view you as an appendage.

[Ava] You signed that contract without even showing it to me.

[Etienne] Nothing that is written in that contract could be worse than what we'd have been subjected to outside when the Chaos really takes hold. Have you already forgotten how bad things were getting? The energy rations, the home invasions? We didn't even feel safe in our own home.

[Ava] That is not the point, Etienne.

[Etienne] How can you say that, after what we experienced on the way here? That's the way things are going. We're talking about life or death, Ava. What difference does the fine print make? We're safe. Isa's safe. That's all that matters.

[Ava] Safe? We're locked underground with no natural light or fresh air. We're prisoners here, and we're being manipulated by a renegade control freak. That doesn't make me feel safe.

[Etienne] Have you considered that there might be reasons why Aidan turned renegade?

[Ava] I already know the reason. He's a megalomaniac who wants to take all the credit for the Ark for himself. He's got a messiah complex.

[Etienne] For god's sake, please don't start with your psychological labels. SynBioTec are not what they seem, Ava. They're trying to take control of crop diversity.

[Ava] People have been saying that about all the big seed companies for years.

[Etienne] Exactly! Where there's smoke, there's fire. They've been wiping out natural plant strains which compete with their genetically-altered versions, on a worldwide scale, for decades.

[Ava] I don't buy that, Etienne. They've been accused of that dozens of times and the evidence has always turned out to be falsified. If that's what they were really doing they would have been exposed by now.

[Etienne] Aidan said they control the media, the government.

[Ava] Listen to what you're asking me to believe, Et. SynBioTec are an evil empire just as people have always

said, but unfortunately it can't be verified because they control the media. So we just have to take Aidan's word for it. Doesn't that strike you as a little too convenient?

[Etienne] You're so bloody-minded. Can't you even admit that there's a possibility it might be true?

[Ava] We've got more evidence for my theory. And you won't admit that that could be a possibility.

[Etienne] The only evidence for your theory is your own paranoid imagination.

[Ava] I cannot believe you just said that.

[Etienne] I'm sorry, I'm sorry. I didn't mean it. This is a difficult situation. I'm sorry, I really am.

[Ava] I don't know what's happened to you since we moved in here.

[Etienne] Nothing's happened to me, Ava. I'm just under stress. We all are. It's so claustrophobic in here. There's nowhere to be alone. You're not the only one who's having trouble adjusting.

[Ava] I don't want to talk about this anymore.

[Etienne] Ava, please, it's important. If we don't stick together, SynBioTec will find a way in here, and once they've got control of this facility, they've got control of the world's food supply.

[Ava] That's just propaganda, Etienne.

[Etienne] Maybe it is. But what if it isn't? Whether people eat or starve will be in their hands. Do you really want

to be responsible for allowing that to happen?

[Ava] I can't believe I'm hearing this. First you try to reason with me, then you try to make me feel guilty for something that 'might' happen. That is so manipulative. Did Aidan coach you in these strategies?

[Etienne] Listen to me, Ava. Kirk Longrigg is a mind-control expert.

[Ava] Aidan's the mind-control expert. And he's obviously already got control of your mind. But he isn't going to get control of mine.

[Etienne] You have to believe me.

[Ava] Isa and I will sleep in the Women's Pocket tonight.

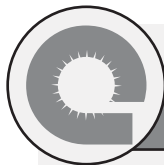
[Etienne] Ava, please. Ava?



23.04.41 Aidan >>> Alejandro

Alex, a delicate matter – I'm concerned about Ava's mental state – I think all the pressure from Longrigg is making her a little unstable. I know your wife is friendly with her – I wonder if you might plant the idea for Darya that Ava might benefit from some counselling with you.

Cheers, Aidan



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 24-04-2041

sub>Re: Ava

Tillie, it's good to hear from you - I'd been thinking about contacting you myself. I wish I didn't have to say this to you because I know you've already got enough on your plate dealing with the Chaos, but I'm worried sick about Ava. I think she is on the verge of another breakdown.

The journey here was harrowing - I won't deny that. Isa was so frightened she was almost catatonic. Her little body went all rigid and she wouldn't let us comfort her. We gave her earplugs to shut out the sounds and she went hysterical when we tried to remove them. She didn't take them out for three days. Ava was shaken up by it, understandably - we both were. But within a few days Isa seemed back to normal and the rest of us tried to put the journey behind us and move on, but Ava couldn't let it go.

There's a lovely young doctor here, with counselling experience, and I asked Ava to go and see him, not necessarily to be medicated (although I must admit, I thought that might help), but just to talk to someone who had experience dealing with these

kind of issues. She refused. She said her reaction was normal, and that the rest of us were callous and inhuman if we could put it out of our minds so easily.

She's got it into her head that she's different from everyone here. It's not quite delusions of grandeur, because I wouldn't say she thinks she's better than anyone else, but certainly she thinks she feels more than others do, and who knows, perhaps she does. She kept saying that she wouldn't be able to fit in, that no-one would be able to understand her, and it was a self-fulfilling prophecy. She resisted people's attempts to make conversation so after a while people left her alone.

Then she got a bee in her bonnet about Aidan, which she's obviously told you about. I must admit, being told about the time-delay lock came as a shock at first. But after we'd seen Aidan and I'd talked to a few people about it, I came to see that there was no other way. We knew when we signed up to come here that we wouldn't be free to come and go as we pleased. Maintaining the secrecy of the location is paramount to the security of the seeds, so movements around the entrance have to be kept to the absolute minimum. Aside from that,

the expense of transporting people this distance is phenomenal. So from the moment we arrived here we knew that we were committed to staying inside indefinitely. For all intents and purposes, the time-delay lock makes no difference. Plus, it protects us from being removed from the facility by SynBioTec.

But Ava can't accept that the decision is for the best. She confronts Aidan at Team Engagements about the pettiest matters, goes to his office, foaming at the mouth, telling him to screw himself. He's been understanding but it's mortifying in a community this size to have your wife behaving like this. In the last few days she's been obsessively going over her PhD notes, highlighting great chunks of text and even reading bits out to me, as if to convince me that Aidan's the next Mussolini. She's so mired in it she sees the despot in everyone. It's nothing but paranoia. I hope you can help me to talk some sense into her, Tillie, before she burns any more bridges.

I'm honestly at my wits' end with her, and exhausted by trying to protect Isa from the fallout. She knows her mother's not well - we haven't talked about it but children pick up on these things and it's been manifesting in her behaviour. She's been testing

boundaries, flying off the handle over meaningless things, clingy one minute and stand-offish the next.

On a completely separate note, I read on Matt7 the Supreme Court is expected to announce the outcome of the Chaos insurance debacle any day now - is it possible for you to work from home this week? Seems like it might be best to avoid the city, just in case the outcome is unfavourable.

Yours fondly, Et

PS You needn't bother with the headless horseman - it's just a move to stir up fear on behalf of SynBioTec, and Aidan knows Ava is not well so there's no need for secrecy.

Honestly, Et, I don't know what to think. I get one story from Ava and a completely different one from you. If I could only speak to you, see your faces, it would be easier – but with only words on a screen to go by, I don't know which version to believe. Don't get me wrong, I'm not suggesting you're lying to me – I know you better than that, it's just that Ava's been well for so long, I thought she was out of the woods. Having said that, it's understandable, I suppose, that the kind of stress she's been under, with the move there, has turned things upside down for her. She's never been good with change and I guess it's possible this was just more change than she could handle. On the other hand, I can't help wondering if this Aidan fellow is really what he seems – is there a chance Ava could be right and he's managed to deceive you somehow? I don't know where we can go from here. I want to support Ava, but I don't know how.

With regards to the Supreme Court decision, thanks for thinking of me. We've been advised not to come into work in case of unrest. Although I'm still holding out hope they will force them to pay out on the claims.

Tillie x

You won't believe what I discovered today. I was asked to assist with an inventory of supplies and in the Vitality Compact I found the most phenomenal quantity of antidepressant medication. I asked Darya, the doctor's wife, why on earth we had so much and she said all the literature predicted people would have a depressive response to bunker life and it had turned out to be true. I snuck back on my own later to look at the prescription records and more than half the people here are taking antidepressants! There's only one doctor and the minute anyone goes to him and says they're not feeling too good he just gives them a box of the magic pills and presto! It's on such a massive scale I don't know why they don't just put it in the water and be done with it. No wonder everyone's too apathetic to notice or care what's happening. Consequently, we have a crackpot leader, possibly fanatic, running the show and everyone blithely approving every whacko decision he makes. I wonder, in fact, if the doctor may even be in cahoots with Aidan and this is their way of keeping everyone under control.

And I was beside myself hearing the Supreme Court outcome on the Chaos insurance claims. 'Acts of

War' – what a feeble evasion. Who's at war? The insurance companies wriggled out of their liability for the crop-failure through some loophole, and now they've found another one – and the courts are backing them. It is beyond belief. Et said you are working from home, thank goodness. Stay safe x

26.04.41 Tillie > Ava

You know that I don't condone violence but I understand why people are rioting over this decision. The insurers are getting away with murder, literally – it is not an exaggeration to say that some of the people whose homes and businesses were destroyed in the crop-failure riots will die as a result of this outcome. I won't be leaving the house until things settle down so don't worry about me.

With regards to the depression meds, have you told Et what you found?



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Ava has been admitted to the Vitality Compact with a non-critical, non-contagious condition. She is currently resting and not receiving visitors.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

I have adjusted tomorrow's schedules to reflect Ava's absence from normal duties – please check for any consequent changes in your own duties. Isa will go to Context Learning as usual but if everyone could make an extra effort to keep an eye on her that would be helpful.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 28-04-2041

sub> Ava

Tillie, I'm sorry to be the bearer of bad tidings but I'm writing to you from the Vitality Compact. I came back from work to find Ava squeezed into the storage cavity at the bottom of our Sleeping Pocket, sobbing uncontrollably. I had to call for the doctor, and she is now sedated. I know this is upsetting for you but please try not to worry; you have plenty of your own concerns to manage out there and Ava is in very good hands. For obvious reasons, we are telling Isa she has a virus. I haven't yet had a chance to have a good chat with Alex (the doctor) but I imagine she will spend a few days here. If you send a message I can pass it on and I'm sure it would mean a lot to her to hear from you. Meanwhile how are things there? Is the unrest subsiding? I hope you are staying safe. Et



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 28-04-2041

sub>Re: Ava

Oh no. I so hoped it wouldn't come to this. Thanks for letting me know. Please tell her that I'm thinking of her and hoping she feels better very soon.

The VISO reports suggest they're getting things back under control but as you've probably read, the government has seized control of the media, so the official line's the only one we can get now and it's hard to know if they're telling us what's really happening or what we want to hear. At this stage we're still being advised to stay in our homes except in case of emergencies so that's what I'm doing.

Keep me posted if there's any change on Ava and give Isa a hug from me. I'm miles away but I'm with you all in spirit. And in microchip.

Tillie x

Parleyed by Etienne Delorme-Hart

Ava has been diagnosed by Alex as suffering with nervous exhaustion and will most likely be resting up in the Vitality Compact for a few days. Alex is advising no visitors as yet, but we'll let you know when she's feeling up to it.

Parleyed by Mia Baker-Albright

So sorry to hear that, Et, let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

On behalf of the whole community, I'd like to wish Ava well and hope she'll be back with us soon.

Parleyed by Nisha Lakhani

I'm sure we all appreciate your honesty in this difficult situation, Etienne – sometimes these things can be difficult to share but now that we know the situation we will be better able to support you, Ava and Isadora.

Parleyed by Paige Morales-Parker

Etienne/Alex – I would be glad to create a vitality plan which might help Ava get back on her feet – let me know what you think.

Parleyed by Etienne Delorme-Hart

Thanks so much for all your kind thoughts – I'm sure it was obvious to everyone that Ava was not herself so the Vitality Compact is the best place for her right now. Also thanks to those who are helping out with Isa – especially Mia and Darya.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

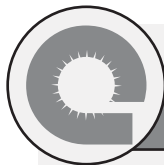
recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 29-04-2021 sub> Ava - update

Hi Tillie, well, the first piece of good news is that Ava had a good sleep, probably the best she's had since we arrived. (Probably she told you she's been waking frequently with nightmares - she's been averaging only a few hours' sleep per night). Last night the sleep hygiene monitor showed five unbroken sleep cycles so a few nights of that alone should make a big difference. I had a good long talk with the doctor about her symptoms and he has started her on an anti-anxiety medication - a high starting dose (intravenous) to flood her system so that she'll respond within a few days.

Isa is coping. School keeps her busy for much of the time and they have an entertainment pod with films and games and whatnot for the kids. There's another family here with a little girl and Isa has been spending time with her.

How are you feeling about the closure of schools and non-essential industries? Et



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 29-04-2041 sub>Re: Ava - update

Thanks for the update. I know from my own experience that when you're having trouble sleeping, nothing makes sense, so, as you say, some good sleeps should help her. Of course, it's easy to sleep well when a chemical is overriding the established brain patterns that usually wake you at 3am or whenever but if they can give her a sleep like that when she's used to only three or four hours a night, they must be quite potent, so what happens when she tries to come off them? Are there side effects? I must confess, I'm also a little bit concerned about you introducing the anti-anxiety meds without her agreement, only because before she specifically said that she didn't want to go back on them.

To be honest, I think most people are still processing the implications of the schools and services closure. Our jobs have been 'suspended', whatever that means. We're not working, we're not being paid by our employers but we haven't been made redundant either. The government is assuring us we'll be 'taken care of' but they can hardly suddenly start paying the entire population unemployment benefits - where will the money

come from? The global stock market has been 'frozen', so that it can't crash, which makes sense on one level - but isn't that a crash in itself? I mean, when manufacturing and construction grinds to a halt worldwide, where is there to go? We're in a strange kind of limbo and it's frightening to imagine what's on the other side of it.

Anyway, you've got your own worries so I won't go on. Please give Ava and Isa my best and let me know if there's any change.

Tillie x



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 29-04-2041 sub> Ava's meds

I know exactly where you're coming from about the meds. It's the last thing Ava wanted after all the side effects last time, especially the forgetfulness. I was absolutely against it but in the end the doctor talked me round. He has experience in the psychological/psychiatric side of things and he assured me there have been some significant breakthroughs in anti-anxiety meds since Ava was last on them, and they've engineered out most of those wrinkles. I'm still not totally convinced but it seems to be the best option for the time being, especially given the impact on Isa of Ava's instability. We'll see how it goes.

In terms of what's happening out there, I've been giving it some thought, and I think you would be safer at our place. Apart from the fact that the community itself is better protected, our Safe Room is fully stocked with everything you might need for the foreseeable future. Ava and I would feel so much better knowing you were there. Let me know what you think. Et

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Ava is still not ready for general visits but would like to see Isadora. Several short visits are probably preferable to fewer longer ones, so whoever has Isa for Context Learning, could you please factor in some time in your sessions to bring her to the Vitality Compact? Ava is still sleeping a lot so it would be best to BLiPP before you come to make sure she is awake.



sender>

-Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

recipients>

-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 01-05-2041

sub> Ava - discharge

Etienne

As you know, I took Ava through some hypnalysis to better understand what triggered her breakdown. Generally, patient confidentiality prevents me from disclosing the content of these sessions but in a case like Ava's, where there is a conflict of interest between confidentiality and patient wellbeing, I obviously prioritise wellbeing. The key things you need to be aware of are her feelings of guilt about leaving her sister behind, her uncertainty that she's made the right decision in terms of Isa's wellbeing and the sense that life both inside and outside is out of her control. For the time being she needs insulating from reports of the Chaos, reassurance that her sister is safe (difficult as that might be), that Isa is feeling comfortable and at home, and a feeling of possibility about positive contributions she can make to the Ark community. We can talk about this in more detail but I wanted to give you the broad strokes before I discharge her. We'll keep in close contact over the next couple of days - let me know if there is anything at all that concerns you.

Alex



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 01-05-2041

sub> Ava "home"

Hi Tillie, some great news, Ava has been discharged from the Vitality Compact and has come 'home' i.e. back to our Sleeping Pocket, which Isa is thrilled about (as am I). She's responded really well to the meds - no side effects so far, and is in much better spirits. She'll no doubt be back on her myBytz in the next few hours and I'm sure will be in touch with you herself. I know it's a lot to ask, because you're doing it tough, but if you could try to skip the gory details about life outside, it would really help her. (If you have to offload, or need advice, you can write to me.) And have you thought about what I suggested? About moving to our place?

Etienne



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 02-05-2041 sub> Bed rest

Well, I'm writing to you from the comfort of my bunk! As a rule, we're not encouraged to lounge around in our pyjamas all day, but I've been given special dispensation on account of not feeling too well. Nothing to worry about, and I am feeling much better, I just got overwhelmed by the move, I think, and it all got on top of me. But they are taking good care of me and I am on the mend now.

I don't know how much Et has told you but I more or less collapsed in a heap, and spent a few days in the Vitality Compact. The doctor here, Alejandro (Alex for short), is a young South American guy, Cuban, or Chilean perhaps, I can't remember, and he is assisted by his wife, Darya, the most gentle and lovely woman, from Chechnya originally, I think she said. Their married name is Lopez-Gordieva - isn't that exotic sounding? Darya was shocked that I have never read even a word of Dostoevsky and she spent hours sitting with me, reading to me from the aptly titled *Notes from Underground*.

Isa kept making little cards and came to see me several times a day. I was worried about how she

was coping with my absence but she was her usual self, talking non-stop, telling me all sorts of fascinating things she'd been taught in the labs. (Have I told you about the Context Learning?) Did you know, for example, that bamboo is actually a grass, and can grow almost a metre a day?

The Context Learning means she spends time with all the different staff and whoever brought her would stay for a little while and chat to me, so it was a wonderful way to get to know everyone better. Isa and I got to hear all the amazing stories about the beginnings of the Ark and the early days when it was just a skeleton staff, etc. - it is really an amazing place, Till. The technology has to be seen to be believed and the fact that they can grow a healthy, blooming garden underground never ceases to astound me. There is something special too about the seed vault itself - just knowing the importance of what those seeds represent makes the place feel almost sacred, despite the darkness. I wish you could see it - maybe someday, when all this craziness has passed. They will probably open it as a museum then and we will come back together and I'll show you where we used to sleep - it will be behind velvet ropes, like a queen's bedroom at a palace, and you won't be able to believe I spent night after

night sleeping in such a funny little place!

Anyway, I'll sign off because it's time for me to take a little nap. I'll write again soon, sending you all my love.

Ava x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 03-05-2041

sub>Re: Bed rest

Dear Ava, it was so lovely to get your daile. Et has kept me up-to-date on how you're going, and it sounds as though you are in good hands. It is wonderful to hear you sounding so much better and to know that you are out of the Vitality Compact and on the up and up. It's great that you got to know a few people better while you were in there - was there anyone in particular you clicked with? And also, you haven't told me about the Context Learning - what's that all about?

I had a visit from my neighbours yesterday. (Did you ever meet the couple who live upstairs, Padme and Suki?) They're smart young women and want to set up a co-operative in our building so that we can support each other more, which I think is a wonderful idea. We're going to have our first meeting tomorrow night and they came to ask if there was anything in particular that I thought we should discuss. I have been so starved for human contact since I stopped working that I'm looking forward to it as if it were some kind of party! I even thought about what I would wear which sounds silly, I know, but it feels like something of an occasion. Till xxx



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 03-05-2041 sub> Your offer

Thanks for your offer Etienne. I know your place is probably safer but I think I would be lonely there on my own. Some of my neighbours are in the process of setting up a co-op which should help us feel more secure as well as giving us something to keep busy, which is half the battle. I am well-stocked here too so you needn't be concerned on that score. The Chaos Control Corps 'ice-cream vans' come round every couple of days so I can duck out and top up on essentials if I need to. You get a BLiPP when they're on their way and you BLiPP back an order, then when they reach your street they BLiPP you again - literally 'come out with your hands up' - which was utterly terrifying the first time, but it's amazing how quickly you get used to things. Thanks again for the offer. Love to you all.

Till xxx



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 04-05-2041 sub>Re: Your offer

I understand, Tillie, but don't rule it out completely - the offer stands if you change your mind. The co-op sounds promising - let me know how it goes. You're in our thoughts.

Et



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 06-05-2041 sub> How are you?

Hi Ava, haven't heard from you for a few days, just checking in to see how you're going, hope all is well. xx



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 06-05-2041 sub>Re: How are you?

Sorry Till. I could have sworn I had written to you yesterday. I remember thinking of something I wanted to tell you, and perhaps I composed a daile in my mind, and then, who knows... Anyway, here I am. I can't remember what it was now that I was going to tell you so I suppose it can't have been important.

I've been busy actually. Alex says I still have to take it easy so I sneak off mid-morning and late-afternoon for a nap, but in between I am trying to make myself useful around the place, to make up for my silliness before. No-one has said anything about it, they are much too nice for that, but I want to show them that that I can be a contributor.

There is a lot to do here, as you can imagine. There are 26 of us (Aidan calls us an 'alphabet' of bunker-dwellers, isn't that witty?) so just cooking and cleaning up from the meals is a gargantuan effort, although of course everything is state-of-the-art so they have these whizz-bang kitchen-bots which can peel, boil and mash five kilos of potatoes at the flick of a switch. Of course, you still have to flick the switch, so that's my job - well,

someone has to do the dirty work!

I'm also going to be starting Context Learning soon, but I already told you all about that so I won't bore you with the details. I should go anyway as I have to empty the dryers. If only sleep pouches could re-make themselves. No-one's ever invented anything that good, have they?

Ava x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 06-05-2041 sub>Re: How are you?

PS What's news with you? I've lost touch with the outside world a bit, I hope you're staying safe. x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 07-05-2041

sub> Our meeting

Dear Ava, it's great to hear you sounding so well and becoming part of the community again.

We had our first meeting at Padme and Suki's yesterday, which was encouraging. Padme had read a survivalist guide and became convinced we would be safer if we can all pull together and share our resources with one another. Our 'homework' for this week is to go away and make lists. We have to make a list of suggestions for making the building more secure, plus any general maintenance work we have noticed that needs doing, any skills we have, and any resources we would be willing to share. It feels good to actually have something to do for a change, although I've had to really rack my brains about what skills I have!

Hope to hear from you again soon, Tillie x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 08-05-2041 sub>Re: Our meeting

Have I met Padme and Suki? You speak about them as if I know them. Anyway, it's good that you're getting together to help each other. We have a vast inventory here, which is constantly being updated, which lists a million and one weird and wonderful survival skills and I know you're going to ask me what they are but I can't think of a single one off the top of my head. Anyway, at each team engagement someone takes a turn to teach the rest of us a new skill. This week I learnt how to dress a wound, although seeing as we have a doctor on-site, fingers crossed I won't ever have to use that one! A x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 09-05-2041 sub> Survival Skills

Hello again. You've never met Padme and Suki, no, but I mentioned them in a previous email. They're very practical and organised and I'm feeling quite energised by the thought of working on a few projects with them, and some of our other neighbours.

I was really interested to hear what you said about survival skills. I suppose we've come to think of skills in a narrow, vocational sense. Probably a couple of generations ago everybody knew how to do things like lighting a fire with sticks but in recent times it seemed more valuable to learn how to booby trap your myBytz to give electric shocks to potential hackers! Do you think there's a chance I could get a copy of that inventory? We could use it as a starting point for our own list. I also like the idea of teaching ourselves and each other some of these things.

I can just imagine you having to dress a wound, while trying not to vomit or pass out. Some help you would be!

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 10-05-2041 sub>Re: Survival Skills

I've KLiPPt the latest version of the inventory for you, though I deleted the columns listing who can do what, as that is considered confidential. They're terribly strict about all that. X

ëKLiPP :: NAPF Skills Inventory 41-05-05



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 11-05-2041

sub> Back to the dark ages

Well, that is certainly an interesting list. 'Fashioning and using a bow and arrow' was my favourite. Is there really someone in your facility who knows how to do that? Sounds like something out of the wild west. Hopefully it won't come to that. The domestic skills helped me to beef up my new resumé though! Remember how I went through that crafty/home-made phase in my early twenties? I used to have those markets where I couldn't even give my stuff away. Turns out it wasn't completely pointless in the overall scheme of things because when something gets a hole in it, we won't be throwing it away and going to buy another one - it will be back to the dark ages of darning and patching and people will be lining up for my services! I don't have ANY skills in the DIY category - I barely know which end to hold a hammer, but that's the whole point of the co-op. I darn someone's socks, they fix my leaking tap. Everyone's happy. Well, happier. Or at least more comfortable.

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 12-05-2041

sub>Re: Back to the dark ages

According to the list, the chemist here can make a bow and arrow. I think he might have been in the army before or something. He's got one of those narrow faces and deep-set eyes. Very snakelike. And there's something not right about his skin. He looks like he's been boiled in oil. He makes me



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 12-05-2041

sub> Cliff-hanger

Did you accidentally delete something off the end of your last email? The suspense is killing me. I bet you were going to say that he makes you feel sick. I remember you always used to say that about mum's boyfriends. I must admit I felt sick just reading about him. I never trust anyone ex-military.

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 13-05-2041

sub>Re: Cliff-hanger

Sorry about that. Paige had an unexpected window so I went and worked with her and when I came back I pressed send without re-reading. Anyway, I can't remember now what I was going to say about Rudolph. I don't like thinking about him actually. He makes my skin crawl. Maybe that's what I was going to say. How's the co-op going?



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 14-05-2041

sub> Co-op

Who is Paige? Is she part of the Context Learning thing you've been telling me about? What letter is she in your 'alphabet'?

The co-op is going really well. When we met to share our lists of skills and resources, it made me feel so much more prepared for what may come than I did when it felt like it was just me against the world. We've got some projects happening now, to improve the security on the place and fix things that are breaking. You earn points for the work you do, then you can redeem them for things you need doing. It's useful but it's also a great way of getting to know your neighbours. I don't know why we never thought of it before.

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 16-05-2041

sub>Re: Co-op

Paige is the 'vitality coordinator' here. I'm sure I told you about her. According to Alex (the lovely doctor who looked after me in the Vitality Compact) I was suffering from Claustro-Stress and Depression Syndrome - what a mouthful - CSDS for short. Part of the treatment is regular physical activity so Paige has written up a program for me and is teaching me to use the associated gadgets so I can do it by myself. I started with yogatronics. That involves donning a bodysuit equipped with intelligent pressure pads which prompts me to correct my posture in an ever-so-soothing voice. Even more amazing is virtual Aqua-Pilates - the sensations are so real you would swear on your life that you were actually in water. Isa is doing that with me and she is obsessed with it! Anyway, I am feeling much much better so it seems to be working. And Paige is lovely. Not the brightest girl (she's a passenger, like me - here because of her husband) but she's sweet. And she makes me laugh.

What do you mean, what letter is she? Is that some kind of code?

The co-op sounds brilliant. But you're right. It's a shame it takes something like the Chaos to force you to help out your neighbour. For all our years of so-called progress, we humans don't seem to have much to feel proud of, do we? I'm ashamed of the world we're leaving for our children.

Ava



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 17-05-2041

sub> What letter is she?

It was just a little joke. Remember you told me that Aidan referred to you as an alphabet of bunker-dwellers, because there are 26 of you?

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 17-05-2041

sub>Re: What letter is she?

Oh, yes, I didn't realise I'd told you about that.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 18-05-2041

sub> Co-op?

How are things out there Tillie? Are you managing alright? I know you are playing things down for Ava but I've been reading Matt7 and I know things are looking bleak. How's the co-op going?

Et



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 18-05-2041 sub> Ava's meds

Hi Et, thanks for checking in. I have good days and bad days. I'm alright mostly. The co-op is keeping me busy which is helping. There were a few tenants who didn't come to the meeting, and a few others who decided they didn't want to be part of any co-operative movement, which made me angry, but anyway, there were enough who came and agreed to be part of it that we have a critical mass and we are getting things done, improving the security and sharing ideas.

I'm glad you got in touch though because I had been wanting to speak to you about Ava. She seems terribly vague. She thinks she's told me things which she hasn't told me, and then she tells me things she's already told me. Have you noticed anything yourself?

Till x



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 19-05-2041 sub>Re: Ava's meds

Hi Tillie, you're right, she is vague. I had a chat with Alex about it. He said it's still early days and it may be just an initiation side-effect which will subside once the meds are fully at home in her system. Fingers crossed. Meanwhile, she doesn't yet seem aware of being forgetful, so it's not bothering her like it did last time, so perhaps best not to bring it up. Thanks for your care, it means a lot to all of us. The co-op sounds great too, it's given Ava (and me) some peace of mind.

Take care, Etienne



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 24-05-2041

sub> Botany

You'll be pleased to know I have officially been taken off crackpot alert and been certified fit and well to begin my full Context-Learning program. Isa has been doing it since we arrived and now I've joined her. I have a little timetable, just like at school, and I spend a couple of hours each morning and afternoon with one of the 'real' workers, learning about what they do and supporting them in their work. I spent this afternoon with the botanist, Pilot. I hadn't had a chance to speak to him since I came out of the Vitality Compact and I was feeling self-conscious about whatever state he might have seen me in. But he said his fever was so bad he didn't even know I was there. I don't know if he just said that to be nice. Anyway, there I was learning how to germinate seeds and test for moisture, splice plants and goodness knows what else. I was never at all interested in biology at school but in here it is the be-all and end-all and I don't want to be left behind. Did you know botany is one of the oldest sciences? (I will be a fount of all sorts of fascinating facts like this now!) How are you keeping?



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 26-05-2041 sub>Re: Botany

Hi Ava, your Context Learning sounds fantastic. I'm sure you'll do well at it; you always were a teacher's pet. What other kinds of things do the 'real' workers do there?

I'm well, feeling better than I have since finishing work, thanks to the co-op. We have activities most days now - a meeting every few days, or working in teams to do things around the place, helping someone. Some of us are learning backgammon from a guy who lives downstairs - Chaff, he calls himself, I don't know his real name. He has an odd manner which I always interpreted as shifty somehow, but it turns out he is just terribly shy. One of my other neighbours told me he is a brilliant mathematician and actually relatively famous in some weird hyper-intellectual circles. We play with an actual board which is something different.

Till x



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 29-05-2041 sub> Moving to our place

Sorry I haven't been in touch for a few days. Now people have worked out I'm not completely useless I'm a bit in demand as a kind of lab-hand. We have to check batches of seeds for viability, test germinating them in different soils and in different simulated conditions, compare our results with other seedbanks, and so on. They are a nice team on the whole and I'm getting used to the way of life. Isa has settled amazingly - it's as though she never lived anywhere else. She's become practically inseparable from a gorgeous little girl called Clementine, who appears to have a phenomenally high tolerance to being bossed around!

We miss you though, and think about you all the time. I stopped looking at Matt7 for a while - doctor's orders - but I've been reading again lately and I get the impression the government isn't getting things under control. I hope so much I'm wrong. Et told me you didn't want to move to our place but I wish you'd rethink it - you'd be so much safer there. Will you give it some thought at least? Ava x



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 02-06-2041 sub> Are you okay?

Are you alright Tillie? We've been reading about the third wave of riots with concern.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 02-06-2041 sub>Re: Are you okay?

Things have deteriorated so rapidly. The cold weather's made people desperate. This morning I saw a young guy threatened at knifepoint in broad daylight on my own street and I didn't dare go out to help him, knew the police wouldn't come if I called - I felt so helpless. And yesterday one of my neighbours came knocking, a guy I hardly know, who had refused to get involved with the co-op. He had a terrible angry boil on his face and was looking for antibacterial cream, willing to trade, he said. I had some, but not enough to swap for something else I didn't need. I turned him away. And afterwards I felt terrible. But I felt like I had to put my own needs first. I'm so sorry to write this, I've been trying to be so upbeat with Ava but I'm frightened. People literally spend their days working out how to stay alive as long as possible, while simultaneously making plans to kill themselves painlessly should worst come to worst. What is the worst? Do we even know? Is it worse to die of starvation, or to be slaughtered in the street when you go out to look for food?



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 02-06-2041 sub> PLEASE go to our place

Tillie, will you please please please go to our place? You can lock yourself in the Safe Room and stay there til all this blows over. Ava's jewellery is in the safe - use it to pay for an escort if you need to. Please.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 03-06-2041 sub> Going to your place

I'm going to your place. Padme, Suki and Chaff are coming with me. I hope you don't mind. It's safer to travel in groups. And even if it wasn't, I don't want to die alone. Our escorts are coming at 6am tomorrow and we're carrying absolutely nothing - that way we have a better chance of being left alone. It'll probably take us most of the day. I'll mail when I get there. Don't mention it to Ava, just in case. Love to you all. x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 04-06-2041 sub> We're here

Et, I'm writing this from your place. It was a long walk and we passed a lot of gangs but we had nothing for them to take and our escorts were heavily armed so they left us alone. We're all a bit shaken up but I do feel safer here. Thank you. I'll write again soon.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 04-06-2041 sub>Re: We're here

I'm so relieved to know you're there. And of course I don't mind you bringing your friends. There's safety in numbers. Please make yourselves at home. Do whatever you need to do to feel comfortable and safe. And keep in touch.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 08-06-2041 sub> Martial Law

We got here just in time. The government declared martial law today. Field Marshall Jayden Carey is now Military Governor in control of energy, food, transportation and anything else you can think of. In his opening address he announced that the right to assembly has been suspended and those who break this edict can apparently be detained and imprisoned indefinitely without charges. I don't know whether to be horrified or relieved. There is not much comfort in being told that our 'constitutional rights may not apply'. But it seemed like it couldn't go any other way.

Tillie



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 12-06-2041 sub>Re: Martial Law

Tillie, we can't get Matt7 anymore, what's going on out there, are you alright?



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 12-06-2041

sub> Matt7/VISO

We're fine Et. There was a massive protest in Melbourne about the curfew and the Chaos Control Corps opened fire. Carey announced that he 'would not hesitate to take further action to sacrifice a few for the good of the many'. Initial reports suggested several hundred people were killed but the numbers are unconfirmed because within hours of the protest Carey 'decommissioned' Matt7 and VISO declaring them to be a threat to national security. It's awful to be so cut off. The four of us are basically glued to our MyBytz, sending emails to everyone we know, trying to get a picture of what's going on.

Tillie



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 13-06-2041 sub>Re: Matt7/VISO

Hang in there, Tillie. Things will settle down once people realise they can't win against these guys. Email anytime. We're thinking of you.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 16-06-2041 sub>Re:Re: Matt7/VISO

Any news, Till?



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 17-06-2041

sub>Re:Re: Matt7/VISO

Only bad news, Etienne. I've been in touch with practically everyone I've ever met and from Tasmania to Broome the reports are all the same - the slightest signs of non-compliance are being met with the utmost ruthlessness by the CCC. There's been no detainment. Anyone desperate enough to venture into the streets for food or fuel has been fired upon. Yesterday Carey announced via email that the Chaos had been 'contained'. But at what cost? We found your QuietExit kits in the Safe Room. I've been thinking about taking my dose. There's no coming back from the place we've arrived at.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 17-06-2041 sub> QuietExit

Tillie, you mustn't. Don't give up. You're safe there. You have everything you need. There is food, water, medicine, vitz - enough for a year or more. You just have to ride it out. Please.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 18-06-2041 sub>Re: QuietExit

I'm sorry about my last email. I think I was in a bit of shock. The Chaos was frightening but the force needed to stop it was worse. There's nothing that can prepare you for a situation like this. But you're right. We'll get through this.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 18-06-2041 sub>Re:Re: QuietExit

Thank god, Tillie. Thank god.



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 19-06-2041 sub>

How are things Tillie? Are you adjusting alright to the new situation? What are you doing to keep busy? To stay healthy? I think of you constantly.

With love, Ava x



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

date> 22-06-2041 sub>

We're managing fine, Ava. Your food stockpile is a lot more varied than ours were so we've been enjoying eating some different things. We cook and clean, try to stay in touch with the people we know, do some exercise. We're all getting very good at backgammon too. How are things there? Love to you, Isa & Et. xxx



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 25-06-2041 sub> News?

We haven't heard from you for a few days, how is everything? Have you found everything you need?



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 26-06-2041

sub>Re: News?

We have power-outs for a few hours most days. The government or Chaos Control Corps or whoever's actually running the show now hasn't bothered to make an announcement about it and without VISO or Matt7 it's hard to find out what's causing it, or if it will get fixed. There are a lot of theories circulating via email - it's a cost-cutting measure; it's a way to make people uncomfortable and defenceless; they can't maintain the infrastructure; it's an act of domestic terrorism. I don't know what to believe. Even when we do have power, internet access seems to come and go randomly, perhaps for the same reasons, who knows? So don't worry if you don't hear from me for a few days. It is probably due to some combination of those two things. There isn't much to report anyway. Till.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 27-06-2041 sub>Re:Re: News?

It must be awful not knowing anything. I really feel for you. Hopefully once things have calmed down the government will resume control and then more information will start to come through. Just remember you are safe there. You just have to wait things out.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 29-06-2041 sub>Re:Re:Re: News?

The government is not going to be resuming control. They've probably all taken their QuietExits already. I know we are 'safe' - when the power's on we set the perimeter alarm, we sleep in shifts, we've taught ourselves how to use the guns and if worst comes to worst we can lock ourselves in the Safe Room indefinitely. And we have food. We do exercise, jumping around in the living room like lunatics, stretch our fucking calf muscles, stay in shape, so that we can be ready. But for what? Every day the number of people who reply to my dailes dwindles. We can't go outside. Not tomorrow, not next month, maybe not ever again.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 29-06-2041 sub> Medication

What you're going through out there must feel devastating. Ava and I wish so much we were there with you. You don't sound like yourself at all and I'm guessing you're in shock so I want you to do something for me. Look in the MediPak for a package called SynSoothe. Take one right now, and one tonight and then two every day until you start to feel better. Even if you think it won't help. Will you write back and let me know you've done it? It might not seem possible right now but things will settle down in time, they have to. We're thinking of you. Et.



sender>
-Tillie Hart

recipients>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

date> 29-06-2041 sub>Re: Medication

I've taken it Etienne. It won't make any difference but if it'll make Ava feel better I'll do it. I'll be in touch again in a few days.



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 07-07-2041 sub> Server down?

Tillie, they're telling us the server's gone down. I don't want to believe it, I'm sure there must be someone somewhere still moving things around in the ether. Surely everything can't have collapsed in one go? Please write back as soon as you get this.



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 08-07-2041 sub>Fw: Server down?

I refuse to believe that just because the government server's collapsed there's nothing left. What about those so-called renegade servers? I'm going to keep trying you.



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 09-07-2041 sub>Fw: Server down?

It's me again. I'm not giving up. Someone said there's a possibility that some traffic is still getting through. So maybe you're reading these, you just haven't managed to get one back to me yet.



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 09-07-2041 sub>Fw: Server down?

If you're trying too, Tillie, don't stop. Who knows, one of our messages might get through. I can't bear the thought of not being able to get in touch with you. I miss you so terribly.



sender>
-Etienne Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Koshan Shahriyor

date> 10-07-2041 sub> Server Collapse

Hi Koshan, I'm sorry to bother you because you probably already have plenty on your plate with the server collapsing but I wanted to run something by you. Ava has been frantically trying to contact her sister by resending the same email over and over again. As I understand it, all digital traffic is at a standstill. But Ava's relationship with her sister means a great deal to her, and if there is a chance that something might get through then I don't want to discourage her. At the same time, if it is genuinely futile I don't want her to keep her hopes up. Of course, being cut-off is distressing for many of us and Ava is possibly not the only person resorting to desperate measures. Perhaps an update from you would help us all to come to terms with the new situation, if it's not too much to ask.

Many thanks, Etienne

Parleyed by Koshan Shahriyor

I have some enquiry about digital traffic in relation to collapse of government server. According my data, all government and commercial server now inactive. This probably because infrastructure which support digi-routes is not now be maintained. There are some rumour fly around inside Ark that some route still work and some comm might pass if keep trying but there are no evidences for this idea.

We did have mostly access to HotLynkt sites, for example, industry partners in Svalbard and in Millennium Seedbank London, but HotLynks now seem to be become not so much reliable as they using some of same infrastructure as commercial server.

Parleyed by Pilot Nielsen

Remember that brouhaha a couple of years ago about the proliferation of unregistered private servers circumventing all the digi-comms regulations? Can we access those somehow?

Parleyed by Koshan Shahriyor

My system she monitor all traffic and activity has 'flat-lined'. I find completely zero. Unfortunately, these private servers 'parasitic'. This mean relying on existence of commercial servers. If mechanism that control sat-dish need adjusting, and no one adjust, no one getting connection.

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

This is obviously a distressing development for many of us. I have some ideas on how people might adjust/cope – would anyone be interested in attending a workshop? I'm also available for private consultations, on this or any other matter relating to psychological wellbeing.

Parleyed by Nisha Lakhani

I'd be interested in that, Alex.

Parleyed by Leilani Rivera

Me too.

Parleyed by Mia Baker-Albright

Griff and I would like to attend, thanks.

Parleyed by Paige Morales-Parker

Count me in, thanks.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Great suggestion, Alex, thank you. Sounds like you'll have a few takers. Perhaps we could hold it after our team engagement tomorrow morning? Or do you need more time to prepare?

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

That would be fine for me, I'll see you all then. Please feel free to bring questions etc



sender>
-Ava Delorme-Hart

recipients>
-Tillie Hart

date> 12-07-2041

sub> Not Goodbye

My very dear Tillie, I know now that you won't get this email but I talked to Alex about it and he thought it was a good idea that I write it, that I should imagine you reading it, and that would give me some kind of closure. I could write you pages and pages, but even I can see how pointless that would be. So I will just tell you the most important things. Firstly, I want to tell you how much I love you. I know you KNOW I love you but I want to say it. Even though we've had our differences over the years, I always felt lucky to have a sister who was also a friend. I also want to tell you that I'm praying for you, in my own, strange godless way. I pray that you're safe and warm and have enough to eat. I pray that one day, when all this madness is over, we'll sit together and have a cup of tea, or even a glass of wine. We might even laugh about things. So I'm not going to say goodbye. I'm just going to say take care.

Your loving sister, Ava xxx

Roscoe

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

goin under

11 APRIL 2041

So we're hittin a bunker no idea where. Blindfold/
midnight rendezvous setup. M'folkz got the data but
theyre not givin it up.

Guess I always knew this day woz comin but hoped it
wouldnt come so soon. Dont no how long we'll b gone.
Kinda sykt kinda freakt.

Alright gotta go pak - blind restrictions in that dept.
My guitars outside the specs but Im petcht if Im leavin
THAT behind. Gonna stuff all my schvitz inside it.

Next blast from underground. Wish me luk.

Pos ted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

d0t dash kinda freakt bout goin under? Im kinda freakt
bout stayin behind

MockinBurd mus b sweet 2 hav sumwhere 2 escape 2

mrw0lf howd u score a bunkbed? U a diplomats son or sumthin?

r0sk0 mums job - cant tell you mo than that or Ill hafta kill u

bullfighta straight from the compound 2 the bunker - congratz u misst the real world altogetha

n1ggeragua yeah mus b tuff when the hardest decisions wot 2put inside yr geetar - how bout u wish US luk mofo

r0sk0 u guyz r m'family course Im wishin u luk

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

protocol

16 APRIL 2041

Im back - sorta. Apolz 4 bein incommunicado. myBytz bin quarantined since we arrived. Worse - they dechippt me - m'whole nutshell gone. Never bin so petcht in m'life. Then had 2 learn the new tech which is actually old tech. We're talkin thorough historic. Am typin this post. What shakes with u guyz?

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

nlggeragua deeechippt? the fuk? rather hav m'legs cut off

dijitln8iv why'd they de-chipp u? neva heard o' that b4

r0sk0 insane security in this joint - powers that b wanna check evry word that goes outta this place 2 make sure we're not givin up our secrets 2 maraudin bunker invaders so thought comms totally outlawed

dijitln8iv they read all yr comms? human rights violation much? creepy

r0sk0 yep big bros watchin me probly delete 1/2 what Ive written

d0tdash whaddya mean typin? like a keyboard?

r0sk0 yep huntin & peckin 4 evry letter - takes eons

d0tdash dont tell me u hav 2 attach monitors?

r0sk0 nah they let us keep our palm screens at least

mrw0lf wot sorta old tech u got?

r0sk0 bunch o bootless packages obsolete since Y2K - had 2 recruit sum retro comms freak from Tajikistan - only joe on the planet knew how 2 set em up

MockinBurd see anythin worth reportin on yr way there?

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

journeyin by bus chaos -style

18 APRIL 2041

Came here by bus. Turnz out ppl do not like seein buses. Coupla clues: driver in bullet-proof pod. armoured guardz. glass taken out of windowz. seatz ript out. told 2 lie on the floor FACE DOWN.

Joes shootin at us non-stop. (not pip-popz) throwin firebombs rottin animals paint. Itz savage out there.

Pos ted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

bullfighta what'd u expect - a tickertape parade? letz cheer those lucky souls on their way 2 their fully equipt bunker while we contemplate our own doom

mrw0lf mus admit kinda strugglin 2 feel the sympathy here

StillH0peful how'd we all get so full -o -bitterness? we

should b happy 2 no sum ppl r safe from the insanity

nlggeragua guardz! always wanted guardz

ArtVsScience u shoulda seen that comin bro didnt
u smoke this? Bus Passengers Attacked by Starving
Mob in Ecuador

r0sk0 guess I thought that stuff wouldnt happen here
not yet anyway

MockinBurd me 2 - storys always other places hav
fallen apart but we're still holdin it together - seemz
like sum1s not givin up all the data

SoopaCynik looks like u supersleuths stumbled pon a
govt conspiracy! wake up bobos the chaos is HERE &
itz comin soon 2 a street near u

dijitln8iv y dont they jus tell the truth? least we could
get ready

bullfighta theyre the govt 4 chrissakes since when
hav they had any relationship with the truth?

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

mes tup

18 APRIL 2041

Is it my imagination or r thingz gettin mo mestup?
Any1 else see this MultiVitz Riot? Bobos literally
tearin each other 2 bitz 4 a satch of Vitz. Loco.

Pos ted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

dijitln8iv wotz with that? they bin tellin us 2
stockpile that stuff 4 eva

mrw0lf seemz like evry1 is strapt these dayz 2 - pip -
popz evrywhere

d0tdash cant believe we live in a world where kidz r
carryin gunz in their skoolbagz

MockinBurd could b worse - least theyre not real
gunz

dijitln8iv heard they dont even hurt - jus like gettin a vac or sumthin

nlggeragua I bin capt with a Pip-Pop - s'true they don hurt but u cant move a muscle not even yr eyez 4 like 10 minitz - itz a fukn horrorshow - smoke this Pip-Pop Tested on Death-Row Inmates

ArtVsScience howz the look on that bikies face when it hitz? killa

bullfighta poor lil r0sk0 saw sumthin critical on VIS0 - m'hood got LESS riotz now than a coupla monthz ago cuz all the martz've already bin looted - call yr blast Kaos Kronikles but U no nada bout wotz go-in on out there

r0sk0 jus callin it like I see it bullfighta - all got our own experience

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

ript

24 APRIL 2041

Argh bein undergroundz gettin 2 me already. I mean is it jus me or is any1 else feelin kinda ript? Like the future... wotz that? Im 15 Im not ready 2 die. But right now the chance of me even finishin high school is lookin kinda microscopic. I know Ive got it sweeter than most. But even if a few so-called lucky ones make it thru the next decade wotz the point anyway? Planetz gonna b sum kinda toxic waste dump. Srsly could our parents hav fukt things up any mo thorough?

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

OuterSpaceGurl lilbit cynical dontcha think?

EndlessWormhole u think? Chaos Spreads Unchecked in Middle East

Rmp1st1tskn European Chaos Control Strategy
Spectacular Failure

blakhat Chaos Rampages like Virus in South-East
Asia

OuterSpaceGurl OMG those poor kidz

blakhat think thatz acute? Heart of Darkness: Africa
Sinks into Chaos

OuterSpaceGurl the fuk? cannibalism? plz tell me
thatz fiction?

blakhat think those were actors? that look like fake
blood 2 u?

H1V1z heard people -meatz TASTY letz get into it

OuterSpaceGurl theyve always bin savages thatz not
gonna happen here

r0sk0 lilbit naive dontcha think? Australia
Unprepared for Chaos

Biblical Plague these guyz cant handle it no1 can US
Armed Forces Powerless Against Spread of Chaos

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

how 2 really decimate a planet in 6 ezy steps

27 APRIL 2041

1. Set up a world thatz thorough dependent on fossil fuels
2. Suck em up like theyre renewable
3. Clock theyre not renewable - do nada
4. Discover theyre runnin out thorough speedy but still do nada
5. Fight over wotevas left
6. Burn down all the planetz trees

OK folkz thatz a wrap! Any1 no any other habitable planetz?

Pos ted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

MrOriginal U Gen Alphas always talk as tho u live outside this society that depends on oil - well wake

up - the plastik in yr myBytz the electricity 2 hav it
broadcast on a server all comes from burnin fossil
fuelz. want 2 embrace a lifestyle without fossil fuelz?
stop blastin & go live in a cave. Good luck with it

dijitln8iv Wotz with that U Gen Alphas comment Mr0?
How wld u like 2 b born in2 a dyin world? Maybe if
u Gen X-ers had done sumthin b4 it woz 2 late we
wouldnt hav 2 bitch n moan bout it. Gen X know Y

Samedi369 I b pointin the finger a lil mo historic -
yr gr8grandies built the consumption monster Baby
Boomers Put Planet in 2 -Hard Basket

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

.CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

y didnt they try...

30 APRIL 2041

MrOriginals bitchin got me thinkin - woz it really a choice of fossil fuels or livin in a cave? Wot bout solar? Wind? Wave power? Hmmm. letz think - natch + renewable + no waste - there mus b a catch sumwhere. hey? Guess thatz y only the greeniez took em srsly

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

~~nature of ice~~ cant believe our bootless govt thought nuclear woz a sharper option

Voice -o -Reason woznt only our govt - soon as they woke up 2 how speedy the oil woz gonna run out govts all over dumpt renewables & signed up 4 nukes quicker'n u can say 'Duznt any1 remember Fukushima?'

ArtofDarkness Y r ppl so petcht over nukes? they shouldnt've scrapt em jus coz of a coupla accidentz Road Toll Exceeds Nuclear Casualties didnt scrap cars did they?

dijitln8iv smoke these pix Fallout Babies born with their brainz on the outside - theyre deaf blind & unconcscious - itz the sikist thing eva

MockinBurd wot bout these? Internal Wounds- Chernobyl ppl burned so bad they got blisters on their heart

dijitln8iv how bout sum Bleeding Eyes? Id say thatz a thorough sharp reason 4 hysteria. like 2 c u stay tidy when that happenz 2 u artofdarkness

blakHat u no if yr exposed 2 radiation poisonin they bury u in a lead coffin sealed with concrete?

MockinBurd thatz rong howz yr soul sposed 2 escape?

ArtofDarkness 4 fux sake yr soul? radiation eatz yr soul dontcha no? U ppl've got yr fukn brainz on the outside

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

.CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

politix

05 MAY 2041

Mad politix in here. Flipside of keepin undesirables OUT of a bunker is keepin evry1 else IN. 5 dayz in we found out sum kinda time-delay locks bin set up. We're stuck in here for 60 days which thorough no1s cool with. Sum1s already cracked up. Feelin on the edge m'self.

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

bullfigh1a like we giv a squinch bout yr bunker problemos

d0tdash no1s forcin u 2 tune in bullfigh1a

StillH0peful can u tell us more bout yr life in there? is it like the bunkers u see in movies?

nlggeragua only thing I wanna no - any tching gurlz

in there r0sk0?

d0tdash as if hes thinkin bout gurlz right now nigga

nlggeragua hes 15 d0t he's ALWAYS thinkin bout gurlz

R0SK0 there is sum1 whos pretty tching shes the (text removed) here but shes 25 so...

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

.CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

bunkerville

10 MAY 2041

Havent felt much like blastin. Bein underground seemz 2 scramble m'grey matter. Itz spooky down here. Dark obviously. Weve got (text removed) so we hav lites but energys a sharp issue so theyre all set thorough low. Theres a fake dusk from 6 to 10 when they get dimmer bit by bit but without that u hav no idea if itz day or nite.

Worse than sharin a room with m'family is sharin a bathroom with 13 other joes. Itz like the skool changeroomz (without the dissing). Plus the showerz r thorough bootless. U fingerprint 2 turn em on & they time off in 2 minitz. Itz barely enuff time 2 get wet.

We couldnt bring clothes with us so we hav these uniformz - they call em drillz but theyre made out of unbleacht hemp & theyre thorough like pyjamaz. Becoz itz blindin cold we hav these so called 'cloakz' 2 wear over the top which look like dressin gowns. Plus we hav woollen booties. Basically we look like the inmates of a psych ward. Makes it hard 2 take any1 srsly

Pos ted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

bullfighta U cannot be bitchin bout yr showers bein too short? cant condish yr lovely lox? hard to take U srsly

d0t0dash id take 2 minitz long as itz hot - so over cold showers

nlggeragua 1st guardz now cloakz - u getting evrythin on m'wishlist bro

ArtVsScience who needz lites? long as u can find yr own dick in the bathroom

StillH0peful that soundz savagely hi tec but kinda soulless

r0sk0 soulless exactly feel so disconnected from the world

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT



sender>
-Koshan Shahriyor

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 11-05-2041 sub> FW> Any Teenagers There?

Is this interesting for you Roscoe?:

sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Administration

date> 10-05-2041 sub> Any Teenagers There?

Erlend from Svalbard Global Seed Vault - 16 y.o. & looking 4
teenage residents 2 comm with. Thanks.

Koshan



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Koshan Shahriyor

date> 11-05-2041

sub>Re:Fw: Any Teenagers There?

Totally. Cheers.

Roscoe



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 11-05-2041 sub> Hey!

Hi Erlend so sykt 2 get yr daile! M'names Roscoe.
Im 15. Cant believe yr @Svalbard. Dont know y I
didnt think of contactin the other seedbanks b4.
So yr 16 right? Wot r u into? R u in contact with
ppl from other banks? Tell me bout life @ Svalbard.
Roscoe



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 11-05-2041

sub>Re: Hey!

Hi Roscoe cookt 2 hear from u. Would b tidy 2 mail u as there is no1 else my age 2 shake with here. R there many young people @ the Ark? How big is yr community?

There r 9 ppl here includin me & my mum. Most ppl with families left when the Tromso ship stopt runnin coupla yrs bak. Theres 1 other kid - Kjersti shes 10 - the rest r scientists - mostly pretty old.

Im in2 gamin blastin music the usual stuff. I no plenty bout plants now obviously.

Tried ALL the seedbanks. Sum hav thorough-strict bans on all non-critical comms - of the ones that r left there r no other kidz or only little kidz. Lookz like itz jus u & me.

Hope 2 hear from u again soon - Erl



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 12-05-2041 sub> The Ark

Hey Erl tidy 2 get yr message. So 1st question -
how come yr English is so good?

Evry1 here is younger than me - m'sister Marigold
is 10 - Isadora is 8 & Louis & Clementine r 6 & 4.
Theres bout 20 others mostly ppl who workt here
anyway plus their wives/husbands. The youngest
'old' person is Leilani (tching!) Shes teachin me
sum biol but other than that I cant really shake
with her.

So how long hav u been @ Svalbard? Wot woz it
like where u lived b4?

Cheers, Roscoe



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 12-05-2041

sub>Re: The Ark

Bin here a few years & a heap more when I woz a kid. We learn English in Norway from age 5 & Ive spent bout 3 lifetimes online so English feelz thorough like my 1st language now.

Hey yr facility is bout the sharpest Ive seen (cuz yr 1 of our global partners Ive been able 2 look @ yr site). Mus b tidy 2 b sumwhere that woz purpose built 2 house a community. Svalbard is ancient history as seedbanks go - so tho we're small we're thorough squeezed.



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 13-05-2041

sub>Re:Re: The Ark

Talkt 2 m'mum bout Svalbard. She said the Ark wouldnt exist if it woznt 4 Svalbard. Apparently tunnellin a seedbank in2 a mountain woz thorough cuttin edge when u guyz 1st did it. Our facility is supposedly the bizniz but . . . they didnt use their headz bout wot we'd actually do in here - itz coma-inducing. They hav these sphinct games called board games from bout 10 dex ago & the only VisBytz r animations 4 little kids. They hav actual books (on paper). Can u believe it? M'dad says we hav 2 return 2 non-electronic means wherever possible in case of loss of power - which kinda makes sense - but it duznt make it any less boring!

How come u've already lived at Svalbard 4 so long? Did the Chaos come early in Norway? Thingz seemed ok here til the last few months & we lived in a compound anyway so we didnt see much in face-time but I saw sum acute stuff on VISO.

So how long is yr facility sealed 4?



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 13-05-2041

sub>Re: The Ark

Unlimited access 2 deposits is 1 of the fundamental rights of our partners so theyd b thorough petcht if we sealed it. Bein on an island itz impossible 4 any1 2 get here anyway. Kinda ironic - pack ice all melted & all the sea passages open 4 the 1st time in recorded history but no1 can afford the oil 2 run a boat... Got the blast-proof doors airlocks etc case sum bobos stasht enough oil to get here. Is yr facility sealed?



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 14-05-2041

sub> Evil Empire

Yep. Head Honcho sealed it without tellin any1. We're Ks from anywhere but not as far off the beaten trak as u. Parently sum desperadoes might still get here & try 2 crack their way in 4 the seeds. Guess our partners r petcht but not as petcht as those muthafukas who spent 80 billion credits building it & r now lockt out. Parently they're sum evil empire tryin to control crop diversity. They tried to pull rank & get rid of Honcho but he laid a time-delay lock on the entrance so looks like we're stuck with him 4 a while. Sum mum fully crackt up over it which woz severe coz she woz the only 1 who stood up to Honch. Now theyve got her all hopped up on meds, walkin the line like a PA-Bot.



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 14-05-2041 sub>Re: Evil Empire

U cant go outside?



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 15-05-2041 sub> Syko Bears

U nailed it. No1 in no1 out. Got cabin fever thorough.
Wot about u? Arent there syko bears all over
lookin 4 human snax?



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 15-05-2041

sub>Re: Syko Bears

The bear thing is severe. Coupla the scientists got attacked a few months back. We carry these mad noisemakers & the bears usually bail soon as they hear em. But this bear musta bin so desperate he had a go anyway. Got Ditmar's head in its mouth, heard his skull crack when it bit down, bits o'the bears teeth stuck in his grey matter. Twenty-staple job. Jens had to shoot it. Mestup. S'not their fault theyre starvin. We're the ones who screwed their habitat.



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 16-05-2041

sub>Re:Re: Syko Bears

Severe.



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 16-05-2041 sub>

Feel 4 u - locked in. Wot do u do all day?



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 17-05-2041

sub> Context Learnin

Spend a lotta time playin m'guitar - gettin mad skillz! We all hav jobs 2 do - cookin cleanin that stuff. Plus Context Learnin. When we 1st got here the idea woz 2 keep goin with skool. But it felt thorough pointless doin algebra while the world outsides collapsin. Even m'sista Marigold whos a wonder-student from way back jus gave up afta bout 2 weeks.

M'dad woz a teacher on the outside & he came up with the idea 4 Context Learnin. Any1 who duznt hav a job directly related 2 the seed vault has 2 do Context Learnin so me & dad r fellow students now. I've bin givin him hell bout it! Context Learnins my kinda hype tho. I spend a coupla hrs evry am & pm with different ppl learnin how 2 keep the bunker runnin as well as all the seed vault stuff. Lotsa lab time - microbiol soil science food science in the vault checkin' seed viability plus the GARDEN (Growth Apparatus 4 Regenerative Development of Edible Nourishment). Think I jus like seein sumthin green. Not that there woz much green left outside but still it feelz like a dedzone in here sumtimes & the airs so stale like itz bin breathed 8000 times fore it getz 2 yr lungz.

GARDEN feelz so clean. Sumtimes I jus lie in there breathin.

Course if I had the choice I'd take the boredom of real skool any day specially if it gave me an excuse 2 shoot the shit with m'crew. But m' mum says u gotta look 4 the silver linin & so far this is it. Wot bout u? Skool?

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

cabin fever

16 MAY 2041

Itz thorough quiet down here - not in a peaceful sorta way but muffled - like u no theres noise out there but it cant get through. Mus b wot goin deafs like. Wotz goin on in the real world? Tell me bout the air. Tell me bout the starz.

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

0rtdash rather hear nada than the soundz of ppl screamin

n1ggeragua gimme screamin over moanin. U no those ppl who look 1/2 dead lyin on the ground mumblin n groanin? freak me mo than the screamerz

StillH0peful u seriously seen that nigga? couldnt u help 'em?

nlggeragua u japin? not in MY hood sista - not bout 2 start givin out food parcelz less I wanna get m'throat slit

MockinBurd they dont show that on VIS0 that is so mestup no wonder m'dad wont let us leave the house - no air no starz here

mrw0lf we bin inside coupla weekz now 2 - goin stir crazy m'self

StillH0peful we bin goin up on the roof at nite & the starz r mind-blowin - neva dreamed there could b so many. sure I miss lectrix much as the next gal but this is the best thing bout the Chaos no question. sumtimes when I look at em n think bout how we're just a speck. sumhow feel ok bout how the planetz probly gonna die out - know it soundz weird. but we're part of sumthin bigger

r0sk0 likin that thought H0peful

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

when I grow up

18 MAY 2041

Remember when u were a kid & ppl used 2 ask Wot do u wanna b when u grow up? (betcha no1s askin that question anymo). Always wanted 2 join the navy. Guess I can recycle that ambition.

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

StillH0peful want 2 b a dancer & still think 1 day I will - hold on2 yr dreamz r0sk0!

r0sk0 thanx 4 yr thoughtz Hopeful but doubt there'll even b a navy when all this is over

ArtVsScience u could b a pirate dont guess theyll eva die out

MockinBurd no how u feel r0sk0 - wanted 2 b a grafix designer but feel like I wont get the chance

SoopaCynik U could b a hooker. they always prosper in hard times Cant Get Enuff - Aussie Brothels Report Record Number of Roots!

dijitln8iv dont get that how can ppl think abt sex when they're dyin?

MockinBurd y did u even respond 2 that insane post dijitl?

SoopaCynik no offence M-Burd - thought bout hockin m'own ass on the streetz if needz be - fact is closer death gets the mo ppl want 2 fuk each other - itz the animal in us - instinct 2 procreate trumpz all others

MockinBurd u r so full of schvitz

SoopaCynik cant remember where I heard this but sum buildin collapst & when they finally dragged all the bodies out a whole stak of em were found with cum on their pantz

dijitln8iv fiction

SoopaCynik scout it

dijitln8iv as if. search terms - collapst buildings + cum?

ArtVsScience scouted those terms jus 4 the helluvit
Match #1: Earthquake Victim Masturbates While Dying

MockinBurd hope Id hav mo dignity than spendin
m'dyin momentz jerkin off

ArtVsScience reckon Id give it a go

ROSKO U guys r kinda off topic here dont u hav any
ambitions?

6TLites I jus wanna b a mum. I no thatz bootless but
even if I survive this doubt Ill wanna bring a lil person
in2 the wreckage

d0tdash Im with u 6T itz not jus havin no career
choices - even the most basic thingz hav bin taken
from us - most of the time I try not 2 think abt it coz
when I do I cant stop bawlin

Arrhythmia 4 me itz the micro thingz - wanna see
Tender Machete play live wanna drink champagne
wanna eat an apple

mrw0lf wanna see the world - wotz left of it -
m'grandparents went everywhere - when I look at
their pix feel so petcht that Ill probly neva go mo than
100ks from the place I woz born

ArtVsScience jus wanna get laid - plz god dont lemme
die a virgin!

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 17-05-2041

sub>Re: Context Learning

Wot do u play on yr guitar? I spend most of m'time in the vault. We hav this botanist called Elina - shes ancient & sorta exentrik but thorough respected - she plotted this scheme 4 us 2 become human memory stix 4 the seed data in case of computer failure. So we spend our days memorisin. I no the names & characteristix of a coupla hundred seedz. Sum of our botanists've bin workin here 3 dex & they no thousands but we're also tryin 2 memorise a visual of wot each seed lookz like & I hold the record on visuals. Mum says m'brains mo lastic cuz Im younger. Maybe it soundz kinda pointless cuz between the whole lot of us we probly cover less than 10% of the collection. But we figure 10%^s better than nada & wot else is there 2 do?



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 18-05-2041

sub> Playlist

Used 2 play mostly electro-country, Tender Machete, Perfect Void, Cauchemardesque but I only brought an acoustic with me so now itz jus country! Our Mech Engineer Huyen mus b pushin 60 but hes really into his music - put me onto sum alt-country US bands from 4 or 5 dex ago - REM, My Morning Jacket, Wilco - bin learnin sum of their stuff. M'playlists got thorough eclectic since I bin down here actually. Takin requests from all over the joint - learnin sum thorough historic stuff. Wot r u into?

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

groundhog day

20 MAY 2041

Any1 eva see that movie from bout 5 dex ago? Guy has 2 live thru the same day over & over & he cant even die. Kinda lol in that historic way. Thatz wot itz like down here. Lites go up lites go down same 10 roomz same 25 ppl round & round we go.

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

mrw0lf u r so fukn lucky u hav no idea - thingz got so crazy here now - cant leave the house cant sleep - too spookt thinkin bout looters breakin in - rationin the food gettin colder - Id sell m'soul 2 b where u r

nlggeragua not me man gotta keep it eklektik - gimme riotz over boredom - I pity u teamster

r0sk0 sorry wolfman I feel 4 u hang in there

BibilicalPlague ok lemme see 1. freeze 2 death 2.
starve 2 death 3. get yr limbs ript off in a fight over a
satch of dried peaches 4. get yr throat slit 4 a 100ml
can of oil. Itz thorough hard 2 choose... suicide any1?
Wait I forgot - thatz ILLEGAL

ArtVsScience wouldnt risk m'limbs 4 peaches - dried
mango well thatz anutha story

n1ggeragua Id let em rip m'whole head off 4 dried
mango long as they let me eat it 1st!

Aafta-Daark who needz suicide when u can jus
walk down 2 yr local beach & get stung all over by a
jellyfish swarm - gone in 60 secondz!

n1ggeragua Nyce plan AD parently itz the most
horrorshow way 2 die tho

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 21-05-2041 sub> Gurlz

Saw yr blast. Ive klipt sum GURLZ on here case yr lonely.

ëKLiPP :: Brunette 224; Blonde 368; Redhead 153



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 25-05-2041

sub>Re: Gurlz

Erlend Bakke UR the man! Is there sum award 4 servics to bunker joes? Im nominatin u. Took me 4 days 2 get those pix releast (all inbound KlipOnz hav 2 b quarantined in case of eMites). But it woz worth the wait! Those gurlz were tching!

Im thorough petcht cuz I hardly eva get a chance 2 gander @ em. I luv m'family but that duznt mean I luv sharin a Pocket with em. Itz thorough microscopic. We hav bunkz - me & Marigold (m'sista) r down below parentals up top. Turnz out dad snores & the 1 thing they forgot 2 stockpile in here is - u guesst it - earplugz.

Yr neva allowed 2 b on yr own in here less yr takin a dump - I dont no wot theyre so freakt bout - maybe they think sum1s gonna lunatise & try 2 blast their way out! We got rulez all over this place - they werent even gonna let me bring m'guitar - head honcho said it didnt fit the size specs -I thorough hate his gutz! Hes a megalomaniac from way back. Hey that rhymz! Whos in charge @ Svalbard?

Roscoe



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 26-05-2041 sub> Gamin?

Gregers (head botanist) is kinda in charge here but itz not really an issue - most decisions r made by consensus evry1s pretty much on the same screen now weve bin here so long.

Hey u in2 gamin? The Arks HotLynkt 2 Svalbard so I could paste sum games in yr cache & we could DigiPlay in realTIME if u want sumthin 2 do.



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 27-05-2041

sub>Re: Gamin

Y didnt we think of that b4? Yr genius knows no bounds! Back 2 u when Im up 2 speed.



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 31-05-2041

sub> En Garde!

Im back! Bin gamin with Kristjan (the Joe I do the GARDEN with) 2 get in shape. Tsunamis mestup but Alien Plagues m'fave. Kristjan makes up thorough evil plagues like parasitic ones with pustulous tumours & bleedin eyes. Hes got a thing 4 bleedin eyes - sik bleacher!! Think Im ready 2 take u on now. Yr 8 hrs behind right? Midday yr time?



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 06-06-2041 sub> The Folkz

Tidy game last night Erl, U thorough decimated me with those arachnid-cactus spores! So wotz newz IRL? Realised I neva even asked u wot yr folks do?



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 09-06-2041 sub>Re: The Folkz

Respect 2 yr exploding e-coli turds 2 bro!

My mums a botanist. My dad workt in partnerships & media. His job woz 2 persuade other diversity vaults round the world 2 store copies of their seeds here also he had 2 make sure Svalbard maintained a reputation as an independent international organisation. Wot bout yr parents?



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 10-06-2041 sub> Wot If?

Mums a futurologist. She spendz her time mappin out wot if scenarios. On the outside Dad taught Global Transformations but in here hes a student like me!

Wot duz yr dad do now? Guess the whole partnerships thingz thorough dead if u cant travel.



sender>
-Erlend Bakke

recipients>
-Roscoe Albright

date> 11-06-2041

sub>Re: Wot If?

B4 the fuel crisis my dad travelled plenty which is probably y my parents divorced. When I woz 11 him & me went 2 live in Tromso on the mainland. Mum came 2 visit evry few months. Then when the crisis broke the boatz between Tromso & Spitsbergen stopt & I didnt see my mum 4 a year. That woz when I woz 13. By then things had become thorough acute in Norway & my parents decided it would b safer 4 me @ Svalbard. My dad died takin me back. Itz still kinda hard 2 talk bout it - Ive klipt on a NewsBLiPP if u wanna no the details.

Since then neither my mum or me hav left Svalbard - we feel safer here.

ëKLiPP :: Svalbard Executive Brutally Executed by Oil Bandits

Svalbard Executive Brutally Executed by Oil Bandits

Olav Bakke, Manager of Partnerships & Media at Svalbard Global Seed Vault, died in an oil mugging on a disused quay at Tromsø Port last night.

Bakke had arranged a rendezvous with his ex-wife at the obsolete Hurtigruten Quay, abandoned when their cruises were discontinued in 2029. The former Mrs Bakke had chartered a boat to take their 13-year-old son, Erlend, to the Svalbard Global SeedBank on the island of Spitsbergen, where she lives and works as a botanist.

Mr Bakke and his son

arrived at the port close to midnight and were attacked by a trio of masked bandits while waiting for the boat to arrive.

One gang member slit Mr Bakke's throat with a sborsjek-style knife while a second shot his son with a chemical pip dispenser, commonly known as a pip-pop. The third bandit siphoned the oil from the tank of the car and the trio escaped cross-country on skis.

Mr Bakke bled to death. His son was temporarily paralysed but otherwise unharmed physically.

Once Mr Bakke's body

had been recovered by medics, the boy and his mother embarked on the four-day journey to Spitsbergen. Mrs Bakke said a memorial service would be held in the town of Longyearbyen following their arrival on Spitsbergen.

Olav Bakke had worked at Svalbard Global Seed Vault for six years, during which time the collection of seeds, including rare and

endangered plant species, more than doubled, to reach 5 billion in 2036.

Gregers Caspersen, Head Botanist at Svalbard, said Bakke's death was a 'great loss to the facility and to his family' but that Mr Bakke would be 'immortalised' through his contribution to plant biodiversity.

Tromsø Police are investigating.



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 11-06-2041 sub> Sorry

That is so acute. Im thorough sorry. I totally clik now y youd rather b in Svalbard. Even tho I bitch bout bein in here I no m'mums right - that we're better off than the joes outside. The Chaos is mestup.

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

incommunicado

12 JUNE 2041

Yall ok? I bin tearin m' hair out watchin those ledheds from the Chaos Control Corps. But we cant get VIS0 or Matt7 in here anymo so I no nada - relyin on u guyz 2 tell me wotzup out there.

Posted by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

mrw0lf s' not jus u - Colonel Trigga-Happys lokt all comms - newz seemz all bad any which way

r0sk0 thanx 4 checkin in wolfman - keep fightin

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT

SIGN IN

SHaRe

CreAte BLaST

NeXt BLaSt

Report aBUsE

KAOS KRONIKLES

the kidz dont stand a chance

any1 out there?

12 JUNE 2041

How u guys doin? Nigg? Mr Wolf? U hangin in there?
Im lost in space. Dont give up on me amigos.

Post ed by r0sk0

blast yr brains out

BITCHIN N MOANIN

U THINK IT WE SMOKE IT



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 08-07-2041 sub> Crasht

Hey Erl apolz 4 bein incommunicado - our external servers crashed. Blitzt itz lasted this long.

Woz a govt server which means the govts finally collapst - suck schvitz! The Chaos is all their fault, they coulda seen it comin bout 5 dex ago - leadheads. Anyway it woz grande news here they called a meetin which I woz given the 'privilege' of goin 2. Evry1 woz freakt.

Aidan (head honcho) said it woz 4 the best - that we're 'free now 2 control our own destiny'. Thatz the kind of schvitz that pours outta his fat beak. Hes thorough pleased with himself like hes led us to the promised land. Neva mind that evry1 we no is probably toast by now.

Now we only hav our fallback server which has super-low capac = bad news 4 us. Adios realTIME DigiPlay. Aidans monitorin all e-traffic so Ive bin on the down-low - dont want him sniffin in m'folders - he might hav a heart attack if he took in sum of those pix I peeled off yr cache. Or maybe thatz the answer 2 all m'probs - outrankin dipschvitzer - Id dance on his grave. Reckon hes got sumthin

goin with the maintenance joes wife. Shes not the most sophisticated chip in the network but shes pretty tching. He mus b using her 4 sumthin. Snake.

S'bendin m'grey matter havin no VISO. Blasts dead too - tried to log in yesterday - no dice. Whole planet coulda exploded 4 all I know. But allz not lost - yr still alive right? Parently we should still b able 2 comm thru the HotLynX. Send me sum good news.

Ros



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 10-07-2041

sub> Freakt

Howzit Erl itz bin a while. Kosh (our comms Joe) says even HotLynkt sites r pretty loose now so dont no if u got m'last mail. Maybe we're all jus freefallin in our own lil cyberworldz now. Hope not. U were m'only connection 2 the outside - no that soundz loopy cuz yr underground 2. But at least yr in a different bunker - somewhere else - least when I shake with u I no the worldz still there.

Bin thorough freakt since the server went down. Made a list of evry1 I no outside whos probly dead now. It woz blindin long. Part of me wonderz if Id b better dead.



sender>
-Roscoe Albright

recipients>
-Erlend Bakke

date> 11-07-2041

sub> Adios

Pretty thorough yr not goin 2 get this. Maybe Im losin it even writin it - but jus on the off chance, wanted 2 say adios amigo. Bin gr8 shakin with u. Ill miss u. Hope u make it out the other side.

Ros

Pilot

13.04.41 Kirk >>> Pilot

Dear Pilot

As I recall, when I put you forward for the position of botanist at the Ark, I specifically requested that you keep me informed of anything out of the ordinary that happened there. You can understand my surprise then, when I discovered, from other sources, that all Ark employees had been sent an apparition™ announcing the premature closure of the Ark. That didn't strike you as noteworthy enough to report to me???

Aidan's decision to close the Ark was made without authorisation. As such, it will have to be reversed immediately. Unfortunately, it won't be a simple process and dealing with the fallout will undoubtedly require an investment of time and money which would have been better spent elsewhere. If you'd kept your side of our bargain, Pilot, all this could have been avoided. I trust you'll be more diligent moving forward.

Kirk



sender>
-Digby Nielsen

recipients>
-Pilot Nielsen

date> 16-04-2041

sub>

Pilot, just had a none-too-pleasing email from Kirk Longrigg - apparently you've absconded to that seed bunker under some crackpot mutineer. What the hell were you thinking? And why in god's name didn't you talk to your mother and me about this? Or at the very least Kirk? Now you're up shit creek and you're going to have to paddle hard with your bare hands to get out of it. Make sure you do whatever Kirk asks you. Don't disappoint me.

Dad

16.04.41 Kirk >>> Pilot

Dear Pilot

With hindsight, I perhaps should have warned you about Aidan before you accepted the position at the Ark. Unfortunately he is not at all what he seems to be. Our communications with him have revealed him to be in a confused and highly agitated state. I could not be frank like this with anyone else but his assertions of a security breach are paranoid delusions. He has a history of mental illness and signs suggest that he is in the throes of a complete mental breakdown.

Doubtless, you are questioning why I put the Arboreal Protection Project in the care of such a man. The truth is, I pride myself on giving people second chances, and extensive psychological testing indicated that Aidan had made a full recovery from his earlier breakdown. His recent behaviour suggests that, far

from having recovered, he has merely become adept at self-medicating, when necessary, to hide the effects of his illness. I trust, of course, that this will go no further. I say this only to protect you, as a family friend. I do not wish to alarm you, but you and your fellow employees may be in danger. It is imperative that we re-open the Ark and restrain Aidan as soon as possible, before any real damage to people or property can be done.

I am, to be frank, disappointed that you were not honest with me about Aidan's plans to close the Ark. If you had confided in me, I could have spared you this ordeal.

You know you have a bright future awaiting you at SynBioTec. I cannot emphasise enough the importance of your role now – having your eyes and ears inside the Ark is critical to your ongoing safety and that of your colleagues. I trust you will keep me informed of any developments so that we can bring this situation to a conclusion expeditiously.

Your friend, Kirk

PS Make sure you use gopher to communicate with me; Aidan's tracking all dailemail

19.04.41 Kirk >>> Pilot

Dear Pilot

Since you haven't responded to my last email, I assume, with deep regret, that you have fallen victim to Aidan's psychological manipulation.

Before you dismiss me entirely I ask you to do one thing: Scout Aidan's PhD thesis and then listen again to one of his rousing speeches and see if you feel the same.

I'll be waiting to hear from you.

Kirk



sender>
-Digby Nielsen

recipients>
-Pilot Nielsen

date> 19-04-2041 sub>

Jesus Christ, Pilot, what the fuck is going on down there? Don't tell me you've been drinking the Kool-Aid? Surely I taught you better than that? As if it isn't bad enough that you haven't responded to my email, you haven't even got back to Kirk. Have you lost the plot entirely? Kirk stuck his neck out to give you that opportunity, and how do you think it makes me look that you're now fucking him over from the inside? You better pull your head in boy or you'll have the two of us to reckon with.

SEEK: AIDAN FOX PHD

MATCH #1:

SEDUCTION OF A NATION: THE
ORATORY GENIUS OF ADOLF HITLER//
//UNIVERSITY OF SYDNEY/DEPARTMENT
OF HISTORY/ DOCTORAL THESIS/
AIDAN FOX/AWARDED 2016

MATTHEW 7:7™
SEEK & YE SHALL FIND

20.04.41 Pilot >>> Kirk

Dear Kirk

Sorry it's taken me a while to get in touch. It's all been pretty intense in here and it's taken me some time to process things. To be honest, we've been bombarded on both sides and it's been difficult to know which version of events to believe. Reading Aidan's thesis made everything clear and I want you to know that I'm on board now.

Aidan's made a few incredibly persuasive speeches—I can't attach them to a gopher, as you know. Is there any other way I can get them to you without him knowing? The gist is that SBT is neglecting our wellbeing and Aidan can protect us from them. My impression is that almost everyone has bought this 100%

So where do we go from here?

Pilot

20.04.47 Kirk >>> Pilot

Dear Pilot

What a relief to hear from you. Thank god you've come to your senses.

The good news is, Aidan's behaviours are conforming perfectly to our expectations, which means our profile of him is accurate and makes it possible for us to predict his next move.

However, he is not to be underestimated. As we already know, in part thanks to your assistance, he is using his tremendous oratorical skills to influence the behaviour of your colleagues. This is his overt and most powerful control mechanism. But he has other, more covert means of psychological manipulation at his disposal, so be wary.

Our first priority is to verify his claims about time-delay locking the facility for five years.

I look forward to your prompt response.

Kirk

20.04.41 Pilot >>> Kirk

Five years? He told the team the time-delay lock was set for 60 days.

Pilot

20.04.41 Kirk >>> Pilot

Alright, so he's lying to us, or he's lying to them—or both. See what you can discover but tread carefully; it is imperative that you do not reveal your allegiance at this stage.

Kirk

20.04.41 Pilot >>> Kristjan

Don't know about you but I've been finding it hard to stay on top of who the good guys are!

Then I stumbled across this PhD thesis on Matt7: 'Seduction of a Nation: The Oratory Genius of Adolf Hitler'.



Guess who wrote it?

Yep; our own Fox.

It kind of spooked me. Am I being paranoid?

Pilot

20.04.41 Kristjan >>> Pilot

Hmmm. No, not paranoid. That's freakt.
Let's talk.

Date> 23-04-41

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Aidan] Gabriella. How are you faring?

[Gabriella] I just caught Pilot messing about with the ramparts around our DigiVault.

[Aidan] Doing what?

[Gabriella] I'm not sure yet. He won't talk. He says he found his way there by accident, was just having a poke around, but he's obviously lying. He's a botanist, no IT background - I checked - but he'd hacked in through Koshan's profile, which is no easy task, so he must have been operating under instructions.

[Aidan] Longrigg?

[Gabriella] Could be. Or a third party - another seed vault, a terrorist organisation...

[Aidan] We need to know.

[Gabriella] What do you suggest?

[Aidan] Rudolph's good with this kind of thing.

[Gabriella] Pilot's young, Aidan. We're all under pressure. He might just need re-educating.

[Aidan] We'll find that out.

[Gabriella] Good. We'll tell the team Pilot's unwell? Quarantined, just to be on the safe side?

[Aidan] Perfect. His myBytz?

[Gabriella] I confiscated it. Kosh's going over it.

[Aidan] Excellent. You'll move this transcript into MaxSec?

[Gabriella] Consider it done.

ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

23.04.41 Kirk > Pilot

A debrief would be useful at this point.

Date> 24-04-41

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Aidan] Pilot's a plant, no pun intended. His father knew Longrigg through the military.

[Gabriella] My apologies. I should have uncovered something like that in my recruitment checks. What was he trying to do to the ramparts?

[Aidan] Install some kind of trapdoor to give SynBioTec access.

[Gabriella] Well, he bungled it. Where does that leave us?

[Aidan] It shows how desperate Longrigg is, getting a botanist to do an IT op.

[Gabriella] Was he working alone?

[Aidan] He thought he had Kristjan onside, but he turned out to be an unreliable ally.

[Gabriella] Do we need to talk to him as well?

[Aidan] We already have. He's been in touch with Kirk, via the headless horseman, but it seems he's just keeping his options open.

[Gabriella] You're sure?

[Aidan] Rudolph made sure.

[Gabriella] Are they alright?

[Aidan] Kristjan's fine. He was honest so it was easy. Pilot put up some resistance. He'll be alright in a few days. Did you find anything on Pilot's MyBytz?

[Gabriella] What we expected. Some gophers from Kirk. I've put them in Pilot's file for you to read. Kosh's set up a flytrap for any incoming e-comms from Kirk. They'll go to you and me and we can decide whether to allow them through to the team or not.

[Aidan] Great job.

VITALITY Report

Date 24-04-41

Patient Pilot Nielsen

Complaint Confusion, elevated body temperature, elevated heart rate, pupil dilation, sensitivity to light

Diagnosis

- Fever

Treatment

- Isolation in darkness
- Medication: Ibuprofen, 2 x 200mg, until fever subsides

Physician Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Verification Thumbprint: MXX-7450895

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Pilot has been admitted to the Vitality Compact with a fever and other flu-like symptoms. The medical screening on arrival should have eradicated any viral threats, but he will remain in the Isolation Pod just in case. I thank you for your understanding and will keep you updated on his progress.



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

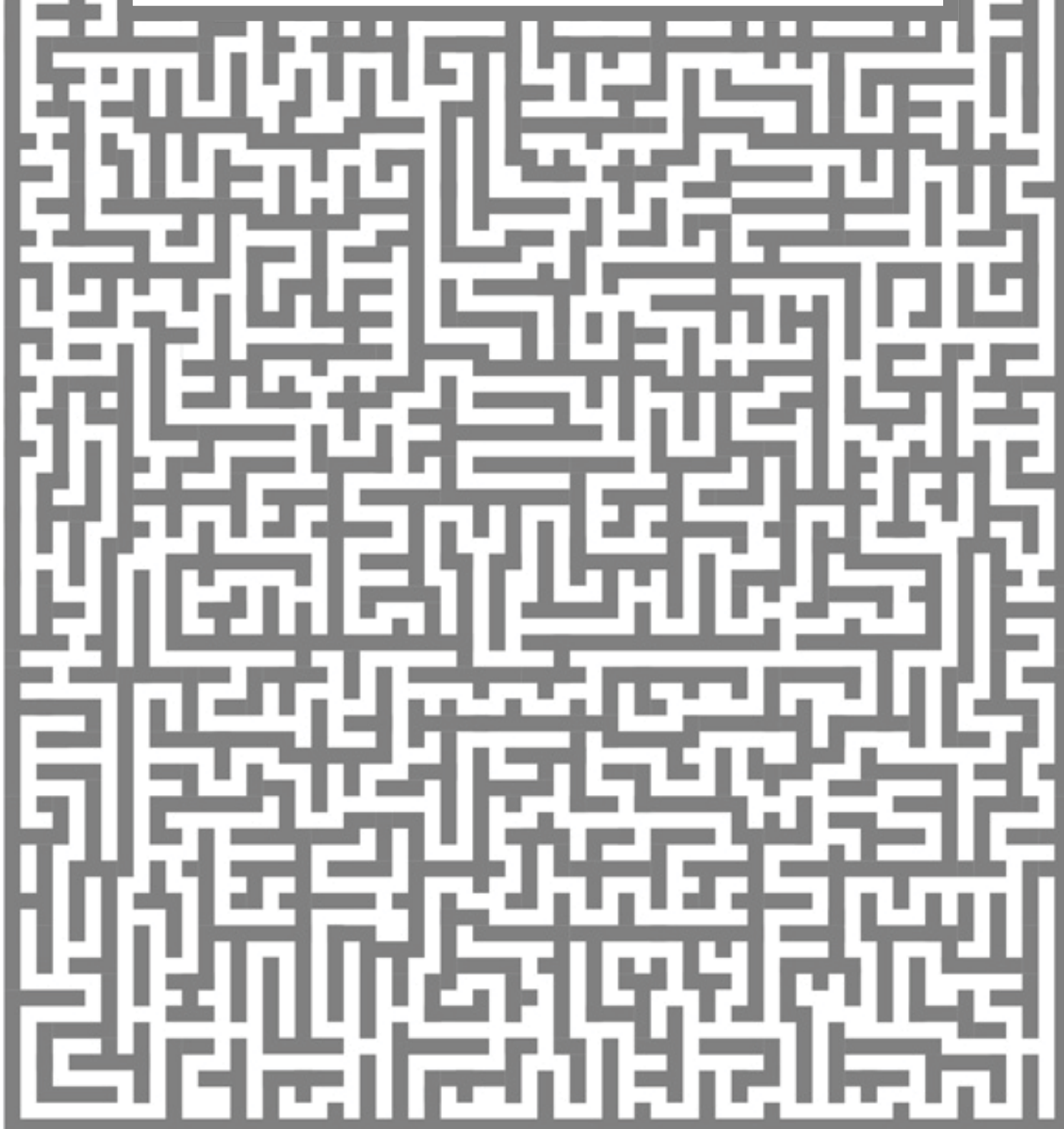
Pilot has been discharged – no virus detected.



26.04.47 Pilot >>> Kirk

I got caught. They've got my MyBytz. It's over.

Pilot



ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

26.04.41 Kirk > Pilot

IT IS NOT OVER, PILOT. It won't be over until we regain control of the facility. Don't worry about your MyBytz. You can send a horseman from your work station – you'll just have to do it when no-one's around. It's imperative that we get access to the DigiVault. I'll need to know what went wrong this time, so we can tighten up the strategy for your next attempt.

ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

27.04.41 Kirk > Pilot

We urgently need that debrief on the failed op. Will you have a chance to send a report tonight?

ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

28.04.41 Kirk > Pilot

You're worrying me, Pilot. I'm guessing they fucked you up a little bit to scare you. But, believe me, that's nothing compared to what we'll do to them when we get in there. We've got your back, Pilot. We'll get it right this time and then we'll get you out of there.

ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

29.04.41 Kirk > Pilot

Alright, you've had a few days to recover but I'm starting to run out of patience. I need you to man the fuck up and get into that vault. No excuses. I'll expect your report tonight.

ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

30.04.41 Kirk > Pilot

Pilot, I need to know, are you going to get the job done or not?

ヘッドレスホース

HEADLESS HORSEMAN

30.04.41 Pilot > Kirk

Negative.

02.06.41 Kirk > Pilot

Pilot, I know they scared the shit out of you with whatever they did to you. I know you don't want to take any risks. But if you want to escape from there, I need one more thing from you.

If Fox told you the truth about the time-delay lock, it'll expire in ten days or so. Our Sec expert says time-delay lock systems all have cooling-off periods. I don't know exactly when it was set but sometime between the 12th and 13th we should have a window to get you out of there.

If you have any info at all which suggests I'm right on this, send me an email asking me to stop contacting you. Aidan will read it, guaranteed, and there's no risk on your part.

Think about it carefully, Pilot. The way things are going, this might be your last chance.

Kirk



To Ark Inhabitants

Date 09.06.41

From Gabriella Portelli

Re Time-Delay Lock Expiry

Hi all

As you know, the time-delay lock on our entrance is due to expire in four days. However, SynBioTec have been more persistent than anticipated, and, in addition, as previously reported, our surveillance equipment has recorded organised entry attempts by other, unknown parties. Thus, for our own safety and the safety of the seeds, it will be necessary to reactivate the time-delay lock.

Unfortunately, the time-delay lock system has a 'cooling-off' period of six hours after activation which cannot be overridden. There will therefore be a period of six hours when we are vulnerable to attack from outside. As per the Covenant we have strategies in place to deal with this eventuality which will be discussed at the team meeting.

Regards

Gabriella

InfoSec Manager



sender>
-Pilot Nielsen

recipients>
-Kirk Longrigg

date> 09-06-2041 sub>

Enough with the fucking headless horsemen! I just want to do my job and be left alone. Nothing's going to change my mind. Let it go. It's over.

SENDER
>AIDAN

RECIPIENT/S
>ARK EMPLOYEES

- > code black
- > combat team to entrance

BLiPP™

SENDER
>AIDAN

RECIPIENT/S
>ARK EMPLOYEES

- > repeat
- > code black
- > combat team to entrance
- > all hands needed

BLiPP™

SENDER
>GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
>ARK EMPLOYEES

- > debrief
- > hub

BLiPP™

Date> 13-06-41

Delivered> Gabriella Portelli

Form> Team Debrief

Location> Hub

Thank you all for coming. I know it's been an anxious few hours but I'm pleased to let you know the time-delay lock has been successfully reactivated and the threat from SynBioTec has therefore passed.

As you know, Mia earned a PhD for her research on Post-Apocalyptic Bunker Survival from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which is one of the world's foremost institutions in the discipline of Futurology. Based on projections about the effects of the Chaos and the extent of SynBioTec's resources, and considering the substantial security risk posed by the cooling-off period, Mia advised me that the time-delay lock should be reactivated for an extended period of twelve months.

I'm aware that some of you have mixed feelings about the time-delay lock and I apologise that there was no opportunity for consultation on this matter. However, I had to make an urgent decision for the protection of the team and the seeds and I chose to take Mia's expert advice

as providing the best solution under the circumstances. If anyone would like to speak to me about this outcome, please feel free to come and see me after the meeting.

I would also like to acknowledge the efforts of the combat team, led by Rudolph, during the entry attempt. The SynBioTec team were prepared for all eventualities and it took wits to stay ahead of them. So let's once again show our appreciation to Rudolph, Ali, Mia, Haruki, Felipe and Caitlin.

** APPLAUSE **



SynBioTec CEO Found Dead

SynBioTec CEO Kirk Longrigg, aged 48, was found dead this morning in his home office.

His bodyguard noticed Mr Longrigg slumped at his desk when he made his rounds at 2am. 'I thought he was just getting a spot of shut-eye,' the security guard told police. He worked all hours. I didn't want to disturb him.

At 7am Mr Longrigg had not moved and after failing to rouse him, the guard called an ambulance. According to the guard, the paramedics said Mr Longrigg had been dead for several hours and they

made no attempt to revive him.

The cause of death is not yet known. Police said suicide was a possibility and that they had not decisively ruled out foul play. However, his estranged wife, Skye de Stijl, told reporters he had most likely died of a heart attack. 'His job was ridiculously stressful,' she said, in tears. 'It killed our marriage and now it's killed him.' An autopsy will be performed.

The private memorial service will be held on Tuesday, at Our Lady Sky of the Sea Church, Watson's Bay.

Book Two
2043



Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

As I'm sure you are aware, the time-delay lock (TDL) on the entrance to the Ark is due to expire on 12-06 at 1800 hours. At this time last year, continued entry attempts by Chaos survivors made it necessary to reactivate the TDL immediately upon expiry. However, there has been no visible human activity detected in the vicinity of the entrance for more than nine months.

Though precautions still need to be taken, it is my belief that from a security perspective, the expiration of the TDL will not pose a threat to the Ark's inhabitants or assets. I welcome your thoughts on this matter.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

What a triumphant moment for our community – we have passed safely through the storm!

Parleyed by Kristjan Sepp

Does this mean we can go outside?

Parleyed by Leilani Rivera

That will be amazing!

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

One step at a time, guys. We need to establish agreement about allowing the TDL to expire before we can consider venturing out of the Ark.

Parleyed by Griffin Baker-Albright

I'm in agreement.

Parleyed by Paige Morales-Parker

Me too!

Parleyed by Ali Abdullal

Likewise.

Parleyed by Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

Count me in.

Parleyed by Pilot Nielsen-McLeod

Yes from me.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Well, there seems to be a general tide of assent. If anyone has any objections or concerns, please make them known.

Parleyed by Caitlin Wood

We're all in favour in the labs.

Parleyed by Koshan Shahriyor

I say yes also.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Thanks everyone. I'll gather some data to help us in the consideration of an excursion.



To Ark Inhabitants

Date 01.06.43

From Gabriella Portelli

Re Excursion

Further to our parlez-vite: As previously mentioned, security footage suggests no human activity in the area, and locally imported air and water samples consistently indicate zero-toxicity. Based on these factors, the risks of an excursion seem relatively low. However, there are other elements for which we have no data, including flora and fauna activity. Because the value of the Ark's assets is so high, and the consequence of contamination potentially catastrophic, not only for our community but for humankind, it is imperative that we proceed with the utmost caution.

I propose that the first excursion should be limited to two inhabitants, who will be equipped with the highest-rated Personal Protective Equipment and will venture no further than one kilometre from the entrance. Furthermore, they will be quarantined for a minimum of 24 hours following their return to the Ark.

We will draw up an excursion brief at tomorrow's team engagement and once the specifics are understood, we will seek volunteers to undertake the outing.

Regards
Gabriella



To Ark Inhabitants

Date 02.06.43

From Gabriella Portelli

Re Excursion Brief

Further to our meeting this morning:

PURPOSE

- Obtain data pertaining to flora, fauna and any other elements relevant to ongoing health and safety outside Ark

DATE

- 13-06-2043 0800 hours

EXPECTED WEATHER

- -1°C; some light precipitation or snowfall

MISSION

- Gather soil and air samples within 1km radius of facility entrance
- Gather samples of any vegetation sighted
- Obtain images of terrain
- Record fauna activity

COMMUNICATION

- Walkie-talkies

LOGISTICS

- Etienne & Pilot to exit Ark at 0900 hours
- Ava & Leilani to assist with suiting up at 0800 hours
- Koshan to maintain communications through mission

SECURITY

- Retreat to the Ark at any sign of human activity, toxicity or threatening fauna activity.
- Use pip-pops/tasers if necessary to maintain personal safety, or the wellbeing of Ark inhabitants or assets.

EQUIPMENT

- | | |
|---------------------------|------------------|
| • Suits | • Spades |
| • Gloves | • Knives |
| • Helmets | • Oxygen |
| • Survival packs | • Pip-pops |
| • Walkie-talkies | • Tasers |
| • Image Recording Devices | • Drinking water |
| • Air-sampling kits | • Energy snacks |
| • Sample jars | |

Regards

Gabriella

User: Roscoe

Date: June 12th 2043

Hello? (echo sound). Anyone out there? For the longest time I haven't thought so. But today at 1800 hours the doors of our bunker were unlocked for the first time in more than two years. Tomorrow two people will go OUTSIDE. If they don't get eaten by feral animals, ambushed by Chaos survivors or taken out by a random anthrax spore on a gust of wind, the rest of us will follow. Just thinking about being outside, I feel somehow connected to the world again. And it's impossible to think there's no-one in it except us. I mean I found this site – code so basic my dog could have written it, but still – how is it even working? Someone got a generator? Connected to something, somehow? So here I am, blasting again, out into the ether – on the off-chance someone somewhere might pick up this signal.

SENDER
> GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
> INHABITANTS

- > Étienne & Pilot
returned safely
- > quarantine 24 hours
- > debrief 1000 hours
tomorrow
- > hub

BLiPP™

Date> 14-06-43

Moderated> Etienne Delorme-Hart

Form> Team Debrief

Location> Hub

[Etienne] As you know we left the Ark at eight, and returned a little before ten. I'll start with the technical stuff: it was zero degrees, there was drizzle but no snowfall, and no snow on the ground; the winds were between 12 and 22 kilometres an hour.

[Caitlin] What was it like to be outside?

[Etienne] It was overwhelming. How would you describe it, Pilot?

[Pilot] It was a lot to process. I mean it was great, it was amazing, but I also felt sort of exposed.

[Etienne] Exactly. If you'd asked me before I would have said I'd never got used to being confined in here. But once I was out there, I realised on some level I had. It felt so different, it made me uneasy, in a way.

[Mia] Are there any signs of other people?

[Etienne] No sign at all. Some makeshift camps which have obviously been abandoned for a long time.

[Ava] Bodies?

[Etienne] Just one.

[Mia] It's what we expected, but it's still hard to hear.

[Aidan] Yes. But it's a big positive in terms of our freedom to move around outside, ongoing.

[Maribel] And just because there's no-one out here, it doesn't mean there's no-one in the towns, right? I mean, once they realised they couldn't get into the Ark, there would have been no reason for anyone to stay.

[Etienne] That's true. In terms of other fauna, we had five brumby sightings – one single horse, two pairs and a couple of mobs of four to five animals. We also saw a lot of Kites and we actually got swooped a couple of times.

[Ali] Those whistling birds? I thought they only ate carrion.

[Leilani] They eat live prey sometimes too. Rodents, lizards, small mammals.

[Kristjan] I'd hardly call you guys small mammals.

[Leilani] There would have been a glut of carrion for a while and their population may have grown substantially. It would be safe to assume that now there's a famine and they'll go for any moving target.

[Nisha] Still, two adult men, that's pretty brazen.

[Etienne] I think they were checking us out more than anything, but I was glad of the protective gear. Anyway, that's it from me. Pilot's going to tell you about the flora.

[Pilot] I've done a full botany report but for those of you who don't know the Latin names, I'll put it in layperson's terms. The vegetation was very sparse. There's still some snowgrass, sedge, rushes – they survive the trampling

fine. But the noxious weeds have more or less taken over, especially blackberry and broom.

[Haruki] Is it worse than you expected?

[Pilot] It's not good, but it's basically exactly what we predicted. The brumbies spread the weeds, and then it's difficult for the other plants to grow back. The more brumbies, the more weeds. If you want more detail you can access the report on the drive.

[Etienne] Thanks Pilot. Rudolph – would you like to share your data?

[Rudolph] In terms of air quality the news is good. With regards to what we might call 'standard pollutants' – particulates, carbon monoxide, etcetera – the air quality has improved, not enormously, but enough to register. There was a lot of concern about how nuclear facilities would fare during the Chaos, plus risks associated with chemical weapons, so I also tested for radiation, nerve gas and a few other obvious-risk compounds and there were no concerns there. In short, we have breathable air.

[Roscoe] We could go outside without a mask?

[Rudolph] Yes.

[Etienne] Great news. Over to you, Alex.

[Alejandro] My assessment of Etienne and Pilot came up absolutely clear. They both had elevations in heart rate and blood pressure, which is to be expected given

the emotional states they described, and the physical exertion associated with moving around in the suits. But from a medical perspective, at this stage, there don't appear to be any health risks associated with going outside.

[Aidan] Well, isn't this wonderful? It's like the dove coming back to Noah with the twig. It means we can begin to think about replanting, taking some of our seeds back into the world.

[Kristjan] So we can go outside now?

[Gabriella] Let's not jump the gun. There are still risks. Any excursions will need to be carefully planned. We can organise a roster, perhaps.

[Roscoe] I don't know about everyone else but I'm keen to get outside ASAP. What do we need to do to get the ball rolling?

[Gabriella] We need to establish some health, safety and security guidelines for starters. As per Rudolph's report we can leave the masks and bio-suits but protective eyewear is essential – the light will feel dazzling. And I'd like everyone to carry walkie-talkies, pip-pops and survival kits.

[Huyen] How many sets of those things do we have?

[Felipe] We have enough survival kits for everyone, obviously. Walkie-talkies, maybe four or five sets. Pip-pops I'm not sure. Off the top of my head I'd say a dozen.

[Gabriella] There's no way we want a dozen people out there at once. Kosh wouldn't be able to monitor the comms effectively. I'd say two pairs at a time at most.

[Leilani] But couldn't other people on the inside help Kosh monitor the comms?

[Gabriella] Possibly. But we still need to be cautious.

[Griffin] What about four pairs, each with their own monitor?

[Gabriella] Let's start with three, as a compromise. We'll trial it, and if it goes smoothly we might be able to stretch to four.

[Roscoe] So when can we start? This afternoon? I'll volunteer for the trial.

[Rudolph] I'm sure many of us are eager.

[Maribel] I don't mind waiting, if other people feel they can't. What's one more day, after all this time?

[Kristjan] I'm afraid I'm not as selfless as Maribel - I'm chomping at the bit here.

[Haruki] If we make the excursions short - say an hour - there's no reason why we can't all go out today.

[Ava] I like that idea. Maybe we should choose a partner and put names in a hat?

[Gabriella] Alright, let's take five to do that.



To Inhabitants

Date 14.06.43

From Gabriella Portelli

Re Excursions

Hi all

The excursion roster is below – note comms people are in brackets. You will notice I have allowed a ten-minute changeover between groups. Please assemble at the Hub entrance at the previous group's return time for exchange of essential equipment.

Group 1: 11.20 – 12.30

Gab & Ali (Koshan)

Roscoe & Mia (Griffin)

Kristjan & Leilani (Pilot)

Group 2: 12.40 – 1.50

Aidan & Rudolph (Koshan)

Nisha & Darya (Alejandro)

Griffin & Marigold (Mia)

Group 3: 2.00 – 3.10

Ava & Isadora (Etienne)

Haruki & Huyen (Rudolph)

Caitlin & Koshan (Gab)

Group 4: 3.20 – 4.30

Paige & Clementine (Koshan)

Maribel & Louis (Kristjan)

Alejandro & Felipe (Darya)

Group 1 please head straight to the Horde to prepare for immediate departure; comms team to the Hub. Also, please be cautious and vigilant. Maintain contact at all times and return to the Ark if any security threats arise. Those accompanying minors, be particularly wary of Kite attacks.

Enjoy!

Gabriella

User: Roscoe

Date: June 14th 2043

Just came in from outside. Light so bright felt like I was going blind. Air so fresh it hurt to breathe. Wind and rain on our faces, all of us crying. Best day of my life.



To Inhabitants

Date 15.06.43

From Gabriella Portelli

Re Excursions

Dear all

I'm pleased to say yesterday's excursions went without a hitch. From the talk at dinner, it's clear we all felt the same sense of exhilaration at being exposed to the elements.

I know everyone is keen to get out there again ASAP, so Koshan has set up a roster on the shared drive. You need to log you and your partner's names and confirm a comms support person for each outing.

Alex has advised that we limit time outside to one hour a day at this stage, until we adjust to the light and mountain air.

The Kites are the only apparent threat at this stage but we need to keep our eyes and ears open for any unexpected activity – it is important that we don't let our guard down because of our excitement; there are still potential risks to be cognisant of.

Stay safe, Gabriella



To Inhabitants

Date 16.06.43

From Aidan Fox

Re Arboreal Replanting Pilot

Dear friends

What a thrilling week! Our freedom to venture onto the mountain signifies a very exciting new phase for the Ark, in which we can fulfil one of our primary obligations to humanity, by beginning to replant some of our seeds.

I met with the lab team early this morning and they are currently identifying which seeds would be most suitable for a limited replanting pilot-program, on a selected zone within a one kilometre radius of the facility.

The program will require careful soil testing, clearing of noxious weeds from the selected planting zone, soil conditioning and monitoring, and as such will require the involvement of the entire team. I look forward to working with you all on this landmark project and will keep you abreast of developments from the lab team, as they arise.

Aidan



To Inhabitants

Date 17.06.43

From Gabriella Portelli

Re Night Excursions

I've had a number of requests for night excursions. I'm extremely wary of these from a security perspective, as visibility is significantly reduced after dark. However, I'm prepared to trial it on the condition that parties stay within 100 metres of the facility entrance; this will minimise any potential threats. If you would like to apply to leave the facility after 6pm, see the new section of the roster.

Gabriella
Security

User: Roscoe

Date: June 18th 2043

What a night. Sunset. Colours I can't even describe. Stars. A handful at first, and then suddenly a billion, all flashing the same message: you're part of something bigger.

Date> 19-06-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Felipe] You sly fucker. I thought you were my friend.

[Aidan] Whoa, ease up there, Felipe. What's happened?

[Felipe] You fucked my wife.

** PAUSE **

[Aidan] Don't be ridiculous. Where's this coming from?

[Felipe] He looks exactly like you. I can't believe it took me so long to see it.

[Aidan] Who looks like me?

[Felipe] You know exactly who I'm talking about. Your son, Ruben.

[Aidan] Ruben is your son, Felipe. You were there when he was born.

[Felipe] I was. The only problem is I wasn't there when he was conceived.

[Aidan] I think you need to see Alex, Felipe. You're not well.

[Felipe] Don't play me, Aidan. I'll kill you, I swear it. Paige has already admitted it.

[Aidan] It isn't wise to make threats, Felipe. I should remind you this conversation's being recorded.

[Felipe] You fucked her! You're Ruben's father and you know it.

[Aidan] Where's Paige now?

[Felipe] You want to grill her on exactly what she's told me, before you decide how much to admit to?

[Aidan] You're quite worked up, Felipe. I'd like to make sure she's alright.

[Felipe] That's my concern.

[Aidan] As leader of this community, everyone's wellbeing is my concern.

[Felipe] Is that how you show your concern? Is there anyone else you've been concerned enough about to fuck?

[Aidan] You need to calm down, Felipe. I can't talk to you in this state.

[Felipe] What are you going to do? Call Rudolph? Put me in quarantine, spread a rumour about a high fever?

[Aidan] You appear to be suffering from delusions. Alejandro might be able to give you something to get you back on the level.

[Felipe] You're the one who needs to get on the level, Aidan. You're a liar and a cheat and you're going to pay for it.

[Aidan] Well, aside from the fact that you have no evidence...

[Felipe] No evidence? Are you kidding? Ruben looks exactly like you. I'm a fucking native South American and my kid has blue eyes and blonde hair. Everyone

kept telling me their eyes and hair can change, even up to two years old. And I believed them, because I couldn't stand to let myself think about the other possibilities. Can you imagine how much people have been laughing at me for buying that line? You've made a complete fool of me. And now I'm going to make a fool of you.

[Aidan] Let's drop the threats and stick with the facts, shall we? You believe your boy Ruben is, in fact, my offspring?

[Felipe] Not believe, Aidan. I know. Paige told me, remember?

[Aidan] Have you entertained the idea that Paige may not be telling the truth?

[Felipe] I practically beat it out of her, Aidan.

[Aidan] You what? Where is she, Felipe?

[Felipe] It's none of your business.

[Aidan] How badly have you hurt her?

[Felipe] We're not here to talk about Paige. We're here to talk about you.

[Aidan] Just tell me where she is. You're not yourself right now but you don't want any real harm to come to her, I know that.

[Felipe] Don't tell me what I want. You can't manipulate me anymore.

[Aidan] Think of Clementine and Louis, Felipe. They need their mother.

**** New Speaker****

[Rudolph] You BLiPPt?

[Aidan] Rudolph, Paige is missing. Organise a search party and take Alejandro, she may be injured. Keep me informed.

[Rudolph] Wilco.

[Felipe] Must be nice to have a little gang of disciples at your beck and call. People to fuck, people to do your dirty work.

[Aidan] Why did you hit her, Felipe? I'd rather you'd have hit me.

[Felipe] Oh, so you're admitting your guilt, finally.

[Aidan] Is that what you came here for, an admission?

[Felipe] You think you're God. You think you can do whatever you want, have whatever you want. But you're wrong. I've got you in a corner, I've got you on file.

[Aidan] You plan to share this conversation with other people?

[Felipe] You bet I do. This is going on the public record. I want everyone to know what you're really like.

[Aidan] What about what you're really like, do you want everyone to know that?

[Felipe] What do you mean?

[Aidan] You've threatened to kill me. You've admitted to hitting your wife. Do you want that on the public record? You want that to be something that your children might

listen to one day, when they're older?

[Felipe] You fucker. You tricked me into saying those things.

[Aidan] It's over, Felipe. Don't make it any worse for yourself. Just tell me where she is.

[Felipe] She's in the supplies room.

[Aidan] Aidan for Rudolph, come in.

[Rudolph] Go, Aidan.

[Aidan] Paige is in the supplies room.

[Rudolph] Roger, on my way.

[Aidan] I'll meet you there. Out.

VITALITY Report

Date 19-06-43

Patient Paige Morales-Parker

Complaint Bruising to the right cheek, split lower lip, chipped tooth.

Diagnosis

- Contact injury

Treatment

- Cold compress
- Medication: Ibuprofen, 2 x 200mg, until pain subsides
- Arnica cream, 3 x daily, until no longer required

Physician Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Verification Thumbprint: FCD-5478691

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY

SENDER
> AIDAN

RECIPIENT / S
> ALEJANDRO

> need to view paige's
vit report asap

BLIPP™

Date> 19-06-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Debrief

[Aidan] Alex. Thanks for coming down. How's Paige?

[Alejandro] She's fine. Why do you need to see the report? They're confidential, as you know.

[Aidan] You know I respect that. But the Covenant states that they can be viewed by relevant parties if they pertain to a community risk.

[Alejandro] I don't see how this qualifies. It's not a virus or anything. She just had an accident.

[Aidan] What did she say happened?

[Alejandro] She was looking for something on the top shelf, and a tin toppled off and hit her in the face. She's got some bruising, a split lip, a chipped tooth.

[Aidan] Did you notice anything unusual?

[Alejandro] I'm a doctor, not a detective. I attended to her injuries.

[Aidan] Think it over though.

[Alejandro] Now that you mention it...when we got to the supplies room, the door was locked. From the outside. Even if someone had locked it by accident, not realising she was in there - which seems unlikely - why didn't she bang on the door and call for help when she hurt

herself? Someone would have heard her. Rudolph said Felipe was with you when you BLiPPt him. Did he know she was in there?

[Aidan] He did.

[Alejandro] And? What did he say about it?

[Aidan] I'd rather not reveal the details of our conversation.

[Alejandro] As a doctor, I'm bound by professional confidentiality, as you well know. Besides, this is a medical matter, not a legal one. Unless he assaulted her. Is that what happened?

[Aidan] That's what he told me.

[Alejandro] Why would he admit to that?

[Aidan] He didn't come to confess. But it came out in the course of the conversation.

[Alejandro] What was the conversation about?

[Aidan] That's not relevant to your medical treatment.

[Alejandro] Right. I think I can probably take a wild guess.

[Aidan] He said they'd had a fight. He'd forced her to confess to something he believed her to be guilty of. He told me he'd beaten it out of her.

[Alejandro] Those were his words?

[Aidan] More or less.

[Alejandro] She didn't seem badly hurt. I'll check her more thoroughly.

[Aidan] I'd appreciate that. Could you examine Felipe also?

[Alejandro] For what, exactly?

[Aidan] Drugs maybe? He was pretty revved up. If this becomes a legal matter we need to be in possession of all the facts.

[Alejandro] Alright. Give me a few hours. I'll get back to you.

[Aidan] See if you can get Paige to talk. I'll get you a wire.

[Alejandro] That's out of the question, Aidan. If Paige wants to talk to me about what happened it will be as a patient speaking to a doctor and, as such, anything she says will be confidential.

[Aidan] Of course, you're right. I've got my legal hat on.

[Alejandro] Well take it off. I'm not going to be part of anything underhanded. I'm here to care for people's wellbeing.

[Aidan] Point taken. I'll wait to hear from you.

Date> 19-06-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Debrief

[Aidan] How did you go?

[Alejandro] I gave Paige a thorough examination. There were no other injuries.

[Aidan] So Felipe was exaggerating?

[Alejandro] It would seem so.

[Aidan] I see. And what's his status?

[Alejandro] He was extremely agitated. He had elevated blood pressure, which is consistent with a high-stress situation. I gave him a sedative. He's under restraint, just in case.

[Aidan] In the Vitality Compact?

[Alejandro] Yes. Paige is in the Female Pocket, with Gabriella.

[Aidan] I'll send Rudolph to keep an eye on Felipe.

[Alejandro] This is confidential, obviously. What should we tell everyone?

[Aidan] Let's run with the story Paige concocted.

[Alejandro] What about Felipe?

[Aidan] Well, if we say he was feeling unwell and is under observation, that would be true, wouldn't it?

[Alejandro] I'll send a parlez.



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Felipe is in the Vitality Compact with a minor non-contagious health concern. He is under observation and is not currently receiving visitors.

Paige had an accident in the supplies room which resulted in superficial injuries – she is resting in the Female Pocket with Gabriella on hand.

Parleyed by Maribel McLeod

Who's looking after the kids? I'd be happy to.

Parleyed by Leilani Rivera

I'm on crèche this afternoon – Ruben's with me til 5.

Parleyed by Pilot Nielsen

Louis is with me for Context Learning.

Parleyed by Nisha Lakhani

And Clementine's with me.

Parleyed by Maribel McLeod

I'll pick them up at 5 and take care of dinner/bedtime.

Can I take them to visit their parents, Alex?

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Felipe has been medicated and will be asleep for several hours. Gab, what's Paige's status?

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Paige says she'd like to see the kids, thank you for stepping up, Maribel.

CORRECTIVE EXPLORATION Statement

Date

20-06-2043

Councillors

Aidan Fox; Huyen Phan; Nisha Lakhani

Accused

Felipe Morales-Parker

Allegation

Assault of spouse: Paige Morales-Parker

Details

At approximately 3.15pm on 19-06-43, the accused struck his wife across the face with the back of his right hand, splitting her lip and causing bruising to the cheek, before locking her in the supplies store room.

Plea

Guilty

Penance

Probation

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

At today's Corrective Exploration, Felipe pleaded guilty to assaulting Paige. The council, comprising myself, Huyen and Nisha, agreed the following Penance:

14 days probation

Date> 21-06-43

Location> Morales-Parker Family Pocket

Form> Surveillance

[Felipe] Are the kids asleep?

[Paige] Mmhmm.

[Felipe] Can I lie with you?

[Paige]

[Felipe] That's nice. How's your cheek? Is it still hurting?

[Paige] It's okay. I'd rather not talk about it.

[Felipe] I feel so bad, Paige. I still can't believe it. I don't know what came over me. Can you ever forgive me?

[Paige] I've already forgiven you. I know you weren't yourself when it happened. The whole thing's my fault.

[Felipe] What did you tell the kids?

[Paige] I said we'd had an argument and we needed some space to think.

[Felipe] You didn't say that I...

[Paige] No, of course not.

[Felipe] Are they angry with me?

[Paige] No. They missed you.

[Felipe] Is that why you asked me to come back?

[Paige] I missed you as well.

[Felipe] I missed you too. It felt so lonely in the Male Pocket. I never thought about it before, what it's like for

them. I was freaking out. I was thinking Aidan would come in here and I'd have to stay there.

[Paige] Don't be crazy. I don't want to be with him.

[Felipe] Why did you do it though? How could you?

[Paige] I don't want to talk about it. It's over. It's been over for a long time.

[Felipe] I need to know, Paige. It's eating me up. I keep thinking about all those meetings you had with him when we first got here. I was so happy for you that you'd made a role for yourself and now I know you were just fucking each other that whole time.

[Paige] Shhh, you'll wake the kids. Stop talking like that.

[Felipe] I just can't stand the thought of it.

[Paige] I'm sorry, Felipe. You can't imagine how much I regret it. I wish I'd told you straight away. I wanted to tell you but then when I found out I was pregnant, I didn't know what to do.

[Felipe] How could you let yourself get pregnant?

[Paige] I don't want to go into all this, Felipe. I've tried to put it behind me. It happened more than two years ago.

[Felipe] I have to know. If you tell me the truth, I can stop torturing myself.

[Paige] You'll only torture yourself more.

[Felipe] I won't. Honestly, the truth could never be as bad as what I imagine.

[Paige] I just don't see what good can come of me telling

you the sordid details. It was a terrible mistake. I don't want to dredge it all up. I feel sick thinking about it.

[Felipe] If I tell you that I need to know, then you should tell me. It's the least you can do.

[Paige] What do you want to know, specifically?

[Felipe] Everything. When did it start? How? How often? Where? Why did it end?

[Paige] You really want to hear all that?

[Felipe] I have to understand it.

[Paige] You've just come back. It's our first night together. I don't want to spend it talking about him. And I don't want to speak about it in front of the kids.

[Felipe] They're asleep.

[Paige] It doesn't matter. It doesn't feel right.

[Felipe] Well when can we talk about it? This is the only chance we have.

[Paige] How about I write it down?

[Felipe] What do you mean?

[Paige] A letter. I'll send you a letter.

[Felipe] Just tell me, Paige. Just tell me it straight.

[Paige] I can't. I honestly can't. Don't keep asking me. I'll tell you everything, I promise. I'll put it all in writing. I'll start tomorrow.

** PAUSE **

[Paige] Can you just hold me now?

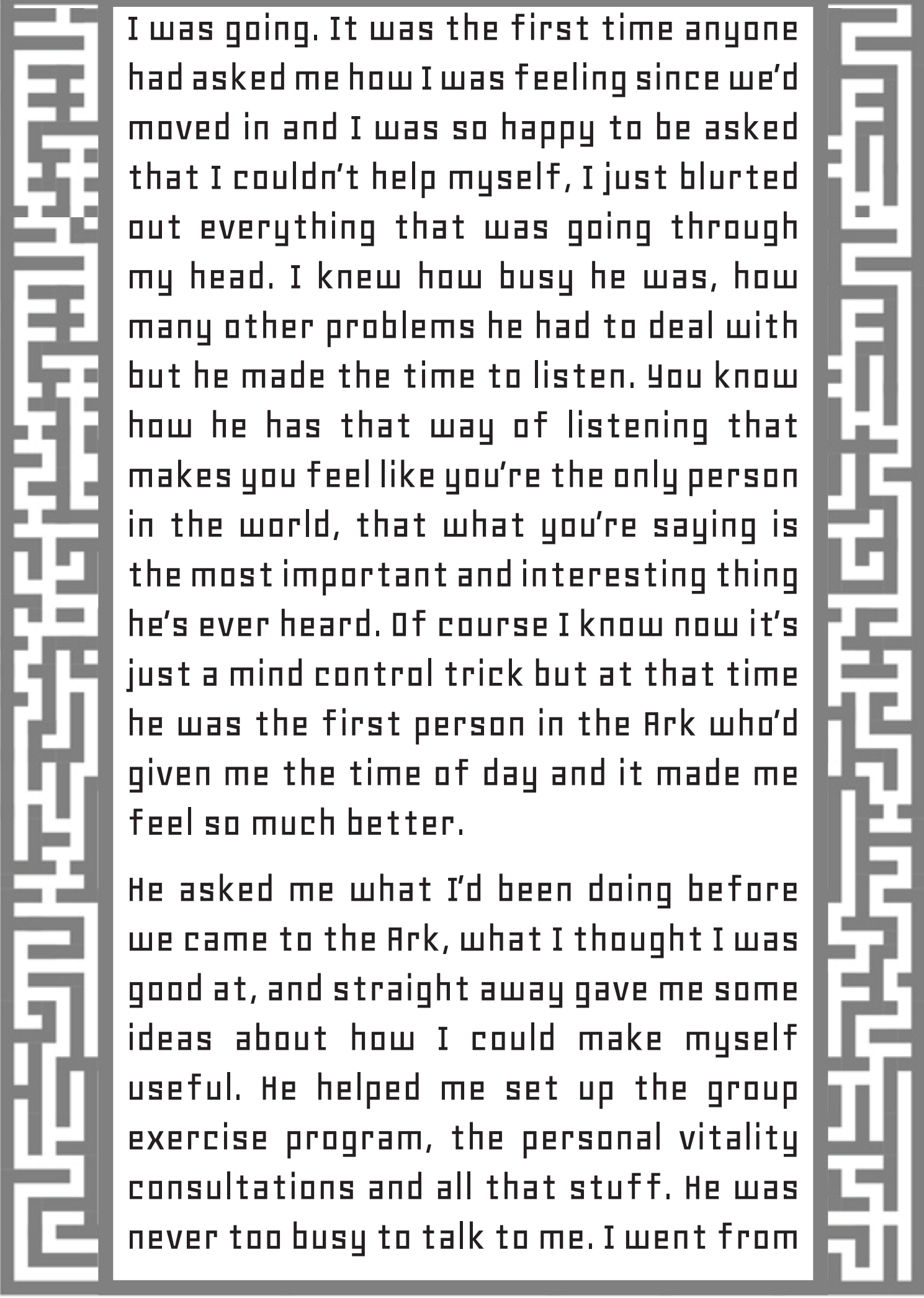


22.06.43 Paige >>> Felipe

Chulo, it's hard to know where to start telling you about what happened with Aidan. I've been trying for so long to put it behind me, it's tough to have to face it again. But I hear that if you say you need to know then I owe it to you to tell you, even though I wish I didn't have to.

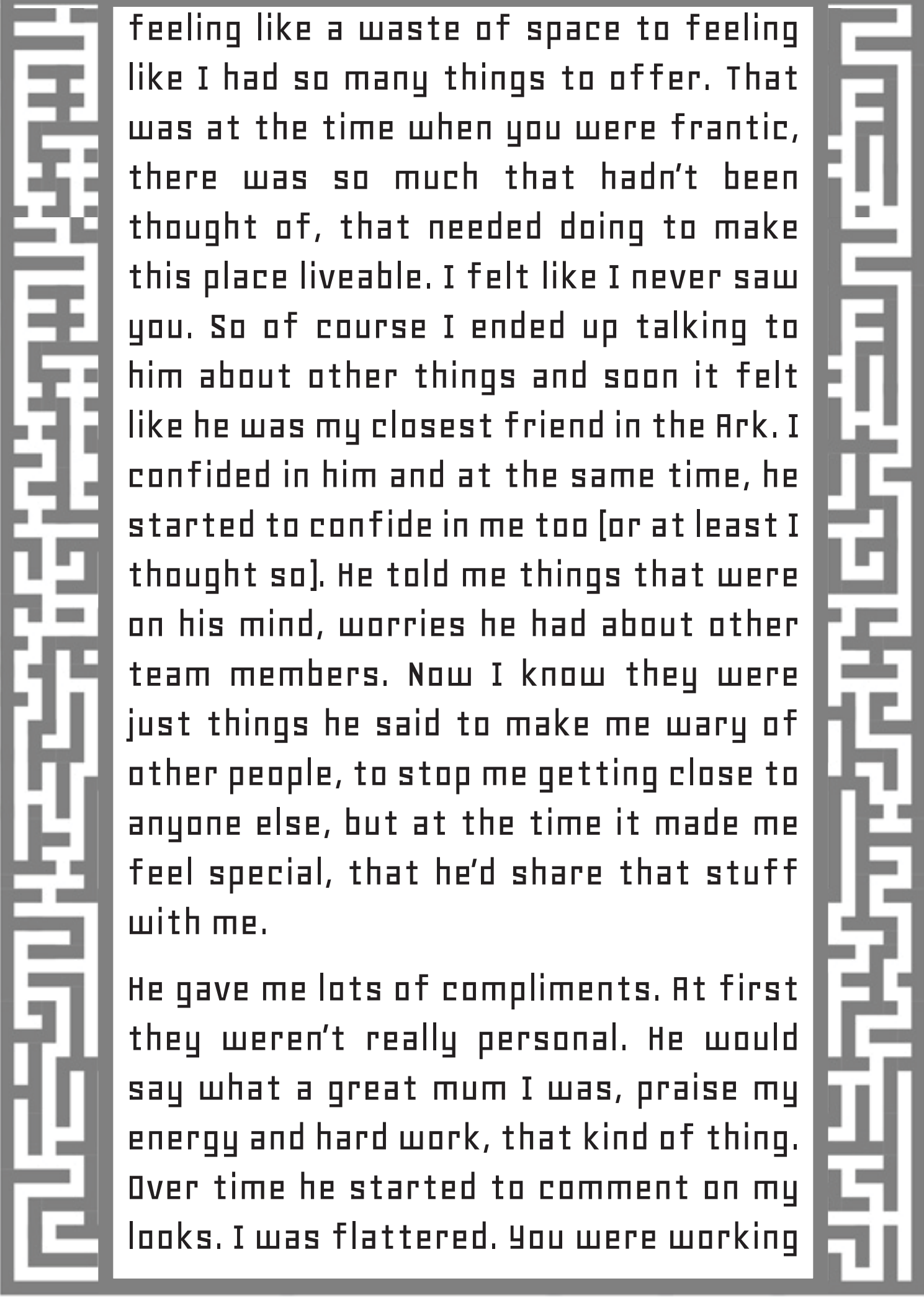
The first thing I want you to know is how much I love you and how badly I regret being unfaithful to you. I made a huge mistake and I'm so sorry for it.

When we first came to live here it was tough for me. It was a different world and the kids were upset by the change. You had an important job to do in getting things setup but I was a nobody. When we'd been here for a few weeks, Clementine ran off in a screaming tantrum one day and ended up in Aidan's niche. I was really embarrassed but he made me feel fine about it. He found Clem something to play with and sat me down and asked me how



I was going. It was the first time anyone had asked me how I was feeling since we'd moved in and I was so happy to be asked that I couldn't help myself, I just blurted out everything that was going through my head. I knew how busy he was, how many other problems he had to deal with but he made the time to listen. You know how he has that way of listening that makes you feel like you're the only person in the world, that what you're saying is the most important and interesting thing he's ever heard. Of course I know now it's just a mind control trick but at that time he was the first person in the Ark who'd given me the time of day and it made me feel so much better.

He asked me what I'd been doing before we came to the Ark, what I thought I was good at, and straight away gave me some ideas about how I could make myself useful. He helped me set up the group exercise program, the personal vitality consultations and all that stuff. He was never too busy to talk to me. I went from



feeling like a waste of space to feeling like I had so many things to offer. That was at the time when you were frantic, there was so much that hadn't been thought of, that needed doing to make this place liveable. I felt like I never saw you. So of course I ended up talking to him about other things and soon it felt like he was my closest friend in the Ark. I confided in him and at the same time, he started to confide in me too [or at least I thought so]. He told me things that were on his mind, worries he had about other team members. Now I know they were just things he said to make me wary of other people, to stop me getting close to anyone else, but at the time it made me feel special, that he'd share that stuff with me.

He gave me lots of compliments. At first they weren't really personal. He would say what a great mum I was, praise my energy and hard work, that kind of thing. Over time he started to comment on my looks. I was flattered. You were working

ridiculous hours, I hardly saw you, the only time we were together was when we were in our bunks and the kids were there too and in the beginning their body clocks were all over the place because of the fake light and they were awake at all hours. I'm not saying this as an excuse, I'm just telling you what was going on at the time for me. He started to talk about how lonely he was, how he'd never met the right woman and now he never would. He talked about how lucky you were to have me. He'd always say how happy he was to see me, how talking things through with me made him feel better, that I was the only person he could really be himself with. He called me his 'Mary Magdalene' — I guess that was his way of legitimising our relationship. He made me feel like I was so important to him that by the time things got physical I don't think I even thought we were doing anything wrong. I was so brainwashed he had me thinking that being with him was for the good of the whole community. Of course, after a

while, I started to feel guilty and I talked about ending it but he convinced me that he couldn't function without me and if I stopped seeing him everyone would suffer. I'm so ashamed to admit this now but I allowed myself to believe it.

I wish I could say that I'd been the one who'd come to my senses and ended things but with the end, just like the beginning, it was Aidan who was pulling the strings. When I got pregnant I freaked out. I know this part is hard for you to read and it hurts me to tell you but now I've started I want to be honest and say it all. I was sure the baby was his so I asked him if Alex could perform an abortion. He went crazy. You know his feelings about children, about how the future of the seeds depends on them. He said we had to end things, that I must never tell you. He knew the baby would be better off with you, that if you knew it wasn't yours you'd try to make me abort. He cut me dead.

After Ruben was born that was the worst part. You doted on him, just like you did

with Louis and Clem and I felt sick with guilt. Every time people commented on his blue eyes and pale skin I felt like I was going to throw up. I was sure you knew and there was still a part of me that wanted to tell you. The thing that scares me most is the thought that you'll stop loving Ruben and it breaks my heart because none of this is his fault. You're the only father he's ever known and that's not going to change. Even if you can't forgive me, and I would understand if you couldn't, I beg you to keep loving him because in all the ways that matter he's your little boy.

I know this letter will be really hard for you to read but in some ways I feel better that you know the truth now because however bad I felt about what happened, I felt even worse about not telling you. Please know that I still love you and I hope you can find a way to forgive me.

Your Paige



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Aidan is in the Vitality Compact after sustaining an injury to his jaw. While he is indisposed Gabriella Portelli will be Acting Director of the facility, as per the Covenant.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

At today's Corrective Exploration, Felipe pleaded guilty to assaulting Aidan. The council, comprising myself, Griffin and Leilani, agreed on the following Penance:

- 24 hours solitary confinement, commencing 1800 hours
- 48 hours ostracism, commencing 1800 hours tomorrow
- 6 sessions counselling

Date> 25-06-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Aidan] Gab, thanks for coming to see me. I need to talk to you about Felipe's Penance.

[Gabriella] What about it?

[Aidan] The sentence was ostracism, 48 hours.

[Gabriella] That's right.

[Aidan] I've seen at least three team members talking to Felipe this morning. Was it not communicated clearly?

[Gabriella] You read my parlez. It was perfectly clear.

[Aidan] It's essential that penances are respected.

** PAUSE **

[Gabriella] It seems that in this instance there are members of the community who don't agree with the Penance.

[Aidan] It's not up to them to agree or disagree. The council decides the Penance as per the guidelines in the Covenant. The rest of the community must accept the decision.

[Gabriella] In principle, yes. But the punishment of ostracism requires the cooperation of the community. And it seems in this case the community isn't willing to cooperate.

[Aidan] Then we must find a way to enforce cooperation.

[Gabriella] I would advise against that.

[Aidan] On what grounds?

[Gabriella] The general consensus is that Felipe's actions were understandable, under the circumstances.

[Aidan] And what circumstances might those be?

[Gabriella] For goodness' sake. There's nothing to be gained by maintaining this charade with me. Everyone knows that Ruben is your son.

[Aidan] I would have thought you above listening to gossip, Gabriella.

[Gabriella] Gossip has nothing to do with it. I have eyes. I understand genetics. You would be better to come out and admit it. Your denial makes you ridiculous.

[Aidan] How dare you?

[Gabriella] Sleeping with someone else's wife in a community this size is unforgiveable for a leader.

[Aidan] I have no further wish to discuss this. I asked you here to talk about the issue of ostracism. Every team member who ignores the council's sentence of ostracism is in violation of the Covenant. If we allow it, the Covenant becomes meaningless.

[Gabriella] You want to have a hearing for each member of the community that's violated the ostracism order? You would be trying almost everyone.

[Aidan] Nevertheless, a point must be made.

[Gabriella] You're on thin ice, Aidan. There will be a

mutiny if you attempt it.

** PAUSE **

[Aidan] I'm disappointed in you, Gabriella.

[Gabriella] And I in you.





Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Clementine has been admitted to the Vitality Compact with flu-like symptoms. It is unlikely to be viral but she is being quarantined just in case.

Parleyed by Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

As you all know Clementine has not been well for a few days and Paige and Felipe have asked me to let you know that Alex's tests have confirmed that her leukaemia has returned. Obviously this is not the news we were hoping for but she will be starting a second course of chemo immediately and Paige and Felipe have high hopes that she will respond well to the treatment like last time.

It would really help Clem if you could all try to be really positive about it when you are around her, and as much as possible just treat her as you normally would. If anyone can beat it our Clementine can. Please give Paige and Felipe and the kids all the support you can.



Parleyed by Darya Lopez-Gordieva

Clementine has had complications relating to her chemotherapy and is undergoing intensive care for septicaemia. All non-critical medical consultations will be postponed until her condition has stabilised. For First Aid please BLiPP me.

Parleyed by Aidan Fox

Our thoughts are with Paige and Felipe at this challenging time. I have adjusted schedules to reflect their absence from normal duties until further notice – please check for any consequent changes in your own duties.

Parleyed by Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

I'll take care of Ruben and Louis outside of Context Learning/crèche periods.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Thanks, Maribel.

Parleyed by Mia Baker-Albright

We're sending all our love to Clementine, and to Felipe and Paige. Please let us know if there is anything we can do to help.

Certificate of DEATH

DETAILS OF DECEASED

Name Clementine Morales-Parker

Address National Arboreal Protection Facility, NSW

d.o.birth February 17th 2037

Age 6 years

Sex ☐ Male ☒ Female ☐ Intersexed

Next of Kin Paige Morales-Parker (mother)

p.o.death National Arboreal Protection Facility, NSW

Date/Time 02:24, July 25th 2043

Cause(s) Chemotherapy-related septic shock/
Acute Lymphoblastic Leukaemia

CERTIFICATION OF DEATH

Issued National Arboreal Protection Facility, NSW

Physician Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Authorised Thumbprint: DDE-7784312

Date July 25th 2043

Cert# NAPF-F2

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY

User: Roscoe

Date: July 25th 2043

One of our kids died today. Six years old. Leukaemia. Why did it have to be her? Why couldn't it have been someone who's had their shot at life – like the fucker who runs this place? Everyone's just sick about it. We all lost people, coming in here. We pretty much knew the people we left behind were going to die. But it was abstract. We didn't know where or when or how. So we tried not to think about it. But this happened right in front of our faces. The most beautiful kid, such intense curiosity about the world, would skip in the GARDEN like she was in an actual park, sing like a little bird while I played the guitar. I'll never forget you, Clementine.

Date> 27-07-43

Drafted & Delivered> Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

Form> Eulogy

Location> Hub

Welcome, friends. I am deeply honoured to have been asked by Felipe and Paige to speak on their behalf on this saddest of occasions, as we celebrate the life and grieve for the passing of their beautiful daughter, Clementine, sister to Louis and Ruben and friend to us all.

Paige told me that Clementine means merciful, gentle. It was easy to see those qualities in her. Clementine loved animals, as many small children do. When she first came to the Ark she was heartbroken at having to leave her pet rabbit Mascot behind. Keeping me company in the soil laboratory, she became attached to the worms, naming them and making up stories about them. Before Ruben was born, she spoke often of her desire for a younger sibling, a baby to pamper. In the meantime, she never went anywhere without her doll, Esme. She cradled her and sang to her, stroked her hair and explained the world we lived in. Early on, when she was still adjusting to her new life, I heard her telling Esme, *Don't cry, sweetheart.*

I know it's dark in here but this is our new home - you'll get used to it.

Clementine spent almost half her short life in the Ark, and though she was only six years old, her faith in our work was unwavering. Just four when she arrived, she could hardly remember the world outside, but her vision of that world in the future burned brighter than any fading memory of the past.

As we all know, Clementine idolised her friend Marigold, and thought of her as a big sister. Marigold is going to read us a story which Clementine wrote about the Ark:

Once upon a time there was a planet called Earth. From space it looked green and blue because of the plants and the oceans. As well as the plants there were animals living on planet Earth, including a type of animal called humans. The humans had never had their own planet before and they didn't know how to look after it properly. Still, for about 200,000 years, which is quite a long time, they did a good job. They shared with the animals and kept it nice and tidy. Then they started to get greedy. They used up everything that made the earth beautiful and they made the land and

sea and even the sky dirty. They dug ginormous holes, and made mountains of rubbish. The worst thing the humans did was to burn all the trees. Probably from space the Earth would have looked grey then, not green and blue any more.

Some kind humans saved the seeds from the trees and took them and hid them inside a mountain. One day, when the rest of the humans had calmed down the seed-savers came out of their home inside the mountain. They planted the seeds and watered them and slowly grew a forest. The forest was so big that even if you climbed to the top of the tallest tree you still couldn't see where it ended. There were birds building nests and monkeys swinging from the branches. Seeds from the forest were carried all around the world by the wind and by the birds and wherever they landed they grew. It took a long, long time but one day, even though they didn't fly into space any more, the humans knew that the earth was green and blue again.

As the youngest member of our original community, Clementine held a special place in our hearts. The thing she disliked most about the Ark was the darkness. To the rest of us, and especially to her family, she was a light in the darkness. And now that light has gone out.

But what better way to honour Clementine's memory than to ensure that her beautiful vision becomes a reality. Though she will never grow to maturity, to see that lush forest which loomed so large in her mind's eye, we will tend the seeds now, so that one day we can plant them, in her memory, let them live on in her place.



VITALITY Report

Date 14-08-43

Patient Felipe Morales-Parker

Complaint Difficulty falling asleep, restlessness, churning gut

Diagnosis ▪ Anxiety/grief

Treatment ▪ Relaxation therapy
▪ Medication: Diazepam, 5mg as needed, not exceeding 15mg/day

Physician Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Verification Thumbprint: PHR-4718544

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY

VITALITY Report

Date 29-08-43

Patient Paige Morales-Parker

Complaint Difficulty falling and staying asleep (frequent and early waking); double vision

Diagnosis

- Chronic insomnia (onset and terminal) due to grief/depression, leading to impairment of daytime function
- Patient exhibits increased alertness, however physical symptoms (eg dark circles under eyes) indicate exhaustion

Treatment

- Sleep hygiene education (food intake, exercise, lighting)
- Relaxation therapy
- Medication: Zolpax, 10mg for 7 days

Physician Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Verification Thumbprint: HHG-9878660

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY

Certificate of DEATH

DETAILS OF DECEASED

Name Paige Morales-Parker

Address National Arboreal Protection Facility, NSW

D.o.B March 20th 2008

Age 35 years

Sex ☐ Male ☒ Female ☐ Intersexed

Next of Kin Felipe Morales-Parker (spouse)

Location National Arboreal Protection Facility, NSW

Date/Time 4am approx, September 18th 2043

Cause(s) Suicide; fatal overdose
(cyanide, diazepam)

CERTIFICATION OF DEATH

Issued National Arboreal Protection Facility, NSW

Physician Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Authorised Thumbprint: WES-1021477

Date September 18th 2043

Cert# NAPF-F3

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY

Date> 20-09-43

Drafted & Delivered> Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

Form> Eulogy

Location> Hub

It is less than two months since we gathered to say goodbye to Clementine, and now, with deep regret, we come together again, to grieve the loss of Paige, wife to Felipe, mother to Louis and Ruben and friend to us all.

I'm sure I'm not alone in saying that Paige's death has come as a great shock. She was always so full of life, it's impossible to imagine that life has been snuffed out. I keep expecting to hear her laughing, to see her burst into a room; I keep waiting for someone to shush her for talking too loud when they're trying to concentrate.

We all know how deeply the loss of her daughter affected Paige. After Clementine's death it was as if her spark had gone out. She was grieving deeply. But it was early days. I thought – we all thought – that in time she would recover her spirit. Now it's clear that none of us understood the extent of her pain at Clementine's death. It was a weight too great for her to bear, a weight that crushed her.

In the last two days I have asked myself, how could I have failed to see what she was going through? What could I have done differently? If I had said something, done something, would she still be with us now? I cannot answer these questions. No-one can. There is nothing to be gained by dwelling on them, blaming ourselves. I'm sure that is not what Paige would have wanted.

It seems more fitting to remember Paige as she was before tragedy struck, to remember not her recent sadness but her huge, beaming smile, her irrepressible energy. Being with Paige was like drinking champagne. She was light, bubbly, fun. She never let herself get bogged down in the technical issues which sometimes disheartened the rest of us. She never took sides.

She was a wonderful friend and colleague, but most of all she was a loving mother. Her children were the centre of her life. And so, I leave you with a thought from Albert Einstein:

Our death is not an end if we can live on in our children and the younger generation. For they are us, our bodies are only wilted leaves on the tree of life.



Date> 23-09-43

Drafted & Delivered> Aidan Fox

Form> Focused Communication

Location> Hub

[Grief-stricken] What a tragic period this has been for our community. To lose little Clementine, then Paige, in such a short space of time has left us reeling. [Stoic] But we must gather together and go on, not forgetting them, and not forgetting the impact their lives had on our own, but carrying their spirits, their ideals with us.

[Inspiring] Just recently we began planning our first planting of seeds outside the Ark. Our plants will rise like a phoenix from the ashes of the Chaos. I know that Paige believed that and I think most of you still believe it too. I have gathered you together today to remind you that while it is natural to grieve the loss of members of our community, the Ark was built not to preserve humanity but to preserve the trees.

[Reflective] It is easy to reach your destination when you're flowing with the current. But to paddle upstream asks so much more of us: perseverance, tenacity, cooperation, and sometimes superhuman strength. [Empathic] Right

now we are floundering. Illness and death are like shallows on which we have run aground. We are weary. We feel like giving up. The way seems unclear, the journey too arduous. But what is the alternative? To let the current take us where it will? [Ominous] If we choose that path we may find ourselves in even deeper, wilder waters, riding the rapids, dashed on the rocks beneath the waterfall.

[Plaintive] I ask you now to move beyond your exhaustion, to think beyond your own life, to consider our children, our children's children, to imagine, as Clementine imagined, a world reborn, lush and verdant. [Stirring] You hold this world in your hands. Go deep inside yourselves. Find what you need to make this dream a reality.

[Weighty] If we are to succeed, it is paramount that we see ourselves as something grander, more profound, than mere humans, that we learn to accept birth and death and everything in between as part of a larger scheme, that everything we do, everything we give, everything we lose or sacrifice will be worthwhile when we reach our ultimate goal: the salvation of our race and our planet.

[Spiritual] I have thought of a way to keep our mission alive in our minds. We will renounce our old names, the names that reduce us to individuals, that remind us of our human frailties. Instead, we will take the names of trees that we may speak them every day, like poems, like prayers, like mantras. Naming ourselves for the trees we live to protect will forge a deep connection to our purpose and to each other. It will remind us, daily, hourly of why we are here.

[Valiant] As leader of this community, I know I must be the first to step forward, to break new ground. Thus, I hereby renounce the name Aidan Fox. From this moment forward I am Sequoia.

Date> 23-09-43

Location> Mission Control

Form> Informal Engagement

[Felipe] Shallows? Shallows we've run aground on? That's my wife you're talking about. My little girl.

[Sequoia] Felipe. I'm so sorry for your loss. You know that. I loved them too.

[Felipe] You didn't love them, you cold bastard, you don't even know how to love. You used them, the way you use everyone. And you're using them even now, when they're dead, to make some point.

[Sequoia] I know this is a hard time for you.

[Felipe] Paige would still be alive if it weren't for you.

[Sequoia] It's hard to know that.

[Felipe] I know my own wife.

[Sequoia] Of course you did. And it's all still very raw for you. I know what you're feeling.

[Felipe] You know nothing about what I'm feeling. You have no idea. You talk about...loss and...sacrifice but you don't even know what those words mean.

[Sequoia] You should be resting, Felipe. You need time to process things.

[Felipe] I can't rest, Aidan. I can't rest when my wife and daughter are dead.

[Sequoia] Alex will be able to help you with that. There's no shame in being medicated at a time like this.

[Felipe] Shallows we've run aground on.

[Sequoia] Let me call Alex.

[Felipe] I don't want to see Alex! I want my wife back.

[Sequoia] I understand that. I'm going to call Alex. Why don't you sit down?

[Felipe] I said I don't want to see him! I came to see you. Give me that!

[Sequoia] Please, Felipe, give me back the phone. I don't know what you want from me. I can't bring back Paige. No-one can. Seeing Alex will bring you relief. Let me call him. Come on now.

[Felipe] What the fuck? Is that a pip-pop?

** New Speaker**

[Rudolph] Aidan? Jesus!

SENDER
>RUDOLPH

RECIPIENT/S
>ALEJANDRO

- > code blue
- > aidan's niche

BLIPP™

Date> 23-09-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Alejandro] What's happened?

[Rudolph] Aidan's unconscious.

[Alejandro] What happened? Is Felipe injured too? Felipe?

[Rudolph] He's lost it.

[Alejandro] Go to the Vitality Compact and get the stretcher. Be quick. Are you okay, Felipe? Felipe! Are you hurt? What happened here?

[Felipe] Don't know.

[Alejandro] What's wrong with you? Come down here and help me.

[Felipe] Can't.

[Rudolph] Here's the stretcher.

[Alejandro] Good. Get down here Felipe, for god's sake. Aidan's seriously injured.

[Rudolph] He's cuffed to the chair.

[Alejandro] Felipe's cuffed? Why? Alright, take Aidan's feet, nice and easy. Ready?

[Rudolph] I think Felipe tried to kill him.

[Alejandro] What? Who?

[Rudolph] He tried to kill Aidan.

[Felipe] No.

[Alejandro] Kill him? No. Felipe? Is that true? We're going to lift the stretcher, on three. Nice and steady, one...two...three. I'll get someone to come for you in a minute, Felipe, alright? Hang in there.

SENDER
> ALEJANDRO

RECIPIENT/S
> GRIFFIN

- > first aider required
- > aidan's niche
- > urgent

BLIPP™

SENDER
> ALEJANDRO

RECIPIENT/S
> MARIBEL

- > code blue
- > vitality compact

BLIPP™

SENDER
> ALEJANDRO

RECIPIENT/S
> GABRIELLA

- > emergency
- > vitality compact

BLIPP™

Date> 23-09-43

Location> Vitality Compact

Form> Informal Engagement

[Maribel] I got your BLiPP.

[Alejandro] Aidan's unconscious. I'm initiating life support. Can you help me? Do you remember the drills?

[Maribel] I think so.

[Alejandro] Yes or no? I need to know.

[Maribel] I can do it. I remember. I can help you.

[Alejandro] Good.

**** new speaker ****

[Gabriella] I came straight here. What's wrong? Is that Aidan? My god!

[Alejandro] We're initiating life support.

[Gabriella] What happened? Is anyone else hurt?

[Alejandro] There's something wrong with Felipe. He's cuffed to a chair in Aidan's niche. Bring him back here. Rudolph will go with you. He has the keys.

[Gabriella] What? What on earth happened here?

[Alejandro] There'll be time for questions later, Gabriella, please.

Date> 23-09-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Gabriella] Felipe? Felipe? Are you alright? Are these cuts on your face? Are you hurt? What happened to Aidan?

[Felipe] I don't know. I don't know.

[Gabriella] What's wrong with him? He seems to be in shock.

[Rudolph] Guilt, more likely.

[Gabriella] What's that supposed to mean?

[Rudolph] Felipe beat Aidan over the head with a desk drawer.

[Gabriella] You saw that?

[Rudolph] He admitted it.

[Gabriella] How did you get him cuffed? Did he struggle?

[Rudolph] I Tased him first to make sure. I didn't want to get hit over the head.

[Gabriella] Felipe, talk to me. Tell me what happened.

[Rudolph] I've told you what happened.

[Gabriella] Well, he doesn't look capable of hurting anyone now. Can you unlock the cuffs? Up you get, Felipe, come on. Let's go...He can hardly stand up. Help me, Rudolph, you support him on that side.

[Rudolph] You want me to help you carry this piece of shit? I wouldn't piss on him if he was on fire.

[Gabriella] Can you put your personal feelings aside for five minutes?

[Rudolph] No.

[Gabriella] For goodness' sake, Rudolph. Help me out here.

SENDER
> GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
> KOSHAN

- > emergency
- > aidan's niche

BLiPP™

Date> 23-09-43

Location> Vitality Compact

Form> Medical Debrief

[Gabriella] We've got Felipe. Is Aidan alright?

[Alejandro] He's stabilising. How's Felipe? Lie him here. That's the way.

[Gabriella] He can't walk. I had to call Kosh. Rudolph refused to help me.

[Alejandro] Thanks Kosh.

[Gabriella] Why can't he walk? Is that from the Taser?

[Alejandro] What Taser?

[Gabriella] Rudolph Tased him.

[Alejandro] Why didn't you tell me that before? You didn't think that information might have been helpful to me? Look at the state he's in.

[Rudolph] He's a murderer. Why do we even care what state he's in?

[Koshan] Somebody can please to tell me what happen here?

[Rudolph] Morales tried to kill Aidan. That's what's happened.

[Gabriella] I can't believe Felipe would do that.

[Rudolph] Look at the evidence.

[Gabriella] Speaking of evidence, I'll need to take some photos.

[Koshan] I'll come with you.

SENDER
>GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
>ARK EMPLOYEES

- > all inhabitants
- > assemble immediately
- > hub

BLiPP™

SENDER
>GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
>ROSCOE

- > round up kids
- > media pod
- > thanks

BLiPP™

Date> 23-09-43

Location> Hub

Form> Team Debrief

[Gabriella] I'm afraid I've called you here with some upsetting news. Aidan has been seriously injured. He's unconscious, on life support.

[Mia] What happened to him?

[Gabriella] It appears there was some kind of incident between him and Felipe.

[Pilot] What do you mean by an incident?

[Gabriella] An...altercation.

[Maribel] Are you saying that Felipe hurt Aidan?

[Gabriella] We're not clear on the details. But the evidence suggests that, yes.

[Kristjan] Is Felipe hurt too?

[Gabriella] His physical injuries seem to be minor. But he seems to be unwell, psychologically speaking.

[Maribel] In what way?

[Gabriella] He's confused. He's in shock, perhaps. Alex is still examining him.

[Ali] What are we going to do?

[Gabriella] I don't really know. It literally just happened. There'll be a Corrective Exploration, I suppose.

[Ali] I mean, what are we going to do without Aidan?

[Maribel] Did Felipe admit to hurting Aidan?

[Gabriella] He doesn't seem able to talk about it at this stage.

[Haruki] Were there any witnesses?

[Gabriella] Rudolph was there, but not when it happened. Aidan was already unconscious when he arrived.

[Koshan] There will be CC-VISO, also articulate.

[Gabriella] Of course. I hadn't thought of that. Can you get those files ready for me, Koshan? And can you tell me who's rostered for the next Corrective Exploration?

[Koshan] Is Ali, and Huyen.

[Ali] When are we going to have the hearing?

[Gabriella] The sooner the better. Let's get it over with.

[Ali] I'm as ready as I'll ever be, I guess. Huyen?

[Huyen] Okay.

[Gabriella] Alright. I know this is a lot to process. I'll keep you all informed.

INCIDENT Report

Date

23-09-2043

Patient

Rudolph Schwab

Treatment

Shortly after the Team Engagement this morning I received an emergency BLiPP from Aidan/Sequoia. I went to his niche to find Felipe wielding a metal weapon and Aidan/Sequoia unconscious on the ground. I restrained Felipe and called Alejandro.

Outcomes

Corrective Exploration for Attempted Murder

NATIONAL ARBOREAL PROTECTION FACILITY



sender>
-Koshan Shahriyor

recipients>
-Gabriella Portelli

date> **23-09-43**

sub> **CCV Footage**

Hi Gab

CCV footage cut out 0943 hours, immediately follow Felipe enter Aidan's niche.

Koshan

Date> 23-09-43

Moderated> Gabriella Portelli

Form> Corrective Exploration

Location> Privacy Pod

[Gabriella] This hearing pertains to the attempted murder of Sequoia, formerly known as Aidan Fox, by Felipe Morales-Parker. Felipe has been deemed unfit to testify, based on a vitality assessment. There is no CCV footage available so we will review the transcript and hear testimony from Rudolph and Alejandro. There are also some photos I took at the scene.

[Ali] I thought the CCV in Aidan's niche was always left on, like the one in the Hub?

[Gabriella] That is the policy. But the system can be manually overridden.

[Ali] Felipe must have switched it off.

[Gabriella] It's fingerprint activated. Only Aidan and I are authorised.

[Huyen] So Aidan switched it off himself?

[Gabriella] That's the only possible explanation.

[Rudolph] Forget about the footage. Aidan was knocked out on the floor; Felipe was holding a desk-drawer – do the maths!

[Gabriella] You're a witness in this hearing, Rudolph,

not a councillor. I'll thank you to keep your thoughts to yourself.

[Huyen] A desk-drawer? Is that what you meant by a metal weapon?

[Rudolph] The drawer's metal.

[Huyen] Okay. But I wouldn't really describe it as a weapon.

[Rudolph] Anything can be a weapon, Huyen.

[Huyen] I suppose so.

[Ali] Was the drawer from Aidan's desk?

[Rudolph] One desk-drawer's much like another.

[Gabriella] Answer the question, Rudolph.

[Rudolph] I assume it was. What difference does it make?

[Ali] Well, if Felipe took the desk-drawer with him, that would make things look very different than if he just grabbed it because it was on hand.

[Gabriella] This photo here shows the recess in Aidan's desk where the drawer's been pulled out.

[Ali] So whether or not Felipe used it as a weapon, it wasn't premeditated, at least.

[Rudolph] Whether or not? He hit Aidan over the head with it. If that isn't using it as a weapon, I don't know what is.

[Gabriella] We haven't actually established with any certainty that Felipe hit Aidan with the drawer.

[Rudolph] So how do you explain the enormous bruise

on his head?

[Gabriella] Any evidence regarding Aidan's physical condition will be supplied by Alex, Rudolph. I know you're upset about this. We all are. But you're not here to give your opinions. What took you to Aidan's niche at that time of day?

[Rudolph] Aidan BLiPPt me.

[Gabriella] Can you show us the BLiPP?

[Rudolph] It was blank. That was his emergency signal.

[Gabriella] Why did Aidan have an emergency signal which came through to you?

[Rudolph] I didn't question him on that. He asked me and I agreed.

[Huyen] Can we go back a bit? We've jumped into the drawer thing, but it might be easier to piece things together if we take it chronologically.

[Gabriella] Yes. Let's listen to the articulate sound file.

***Replay 23.09.43_Informal Engagement_Director's
Niche_0943.art***

[Huyen] It sounds like Aidan threatened Felipe with a pip-pop.

[Ali] He must have shot at him. I heard it ping.

[Gabriella] How can you be sure, Ali, amid the other sounds?

[Ali] The ping comes before the scuffling sounds. Listen again.

***Replay 23.09.43_Confidential Engagement_
Director's Niche_0943.art***

[Gabriella] You're right. It's quite distinct.

[Ali] I thought personal weapons weren't allowed in the Ark.

[Gabriella] My understanding was that all weapons were stored in the locked vault, in case of emergency, which is as it should be. There's no justification for Aidan to have been carrying a pip-pop, or for Rudolph to have a Taser. We'll amend the Covenant to prohibit the possession of personal weapons. Alejandro, can you talk us through the injuries sustained by both parties and how they connect with the testimony we've heard so far, please?

[Alejandro] Felipe has puncture wounds and abrasions to the right jawbone, right shoulder, left forearm and both palms.

[Ali] Abrasions...that's cuts?

[Alejandro] Grazes.

[Huyen] How did he get those?

[Alejandro] I believe the injuries were caused by the Sequoia replica on Aidan's desk.

[Huyen] That plastic tree?

[Gabriella] It's heavy-duty plastic and steel.

[Alejandro] Felipe also has a fractured ethmoid bone which is the bone at the top of the nose, between the eyes. The impact which caused this fracture may also

have caused concussion.

[Gabriella] Is that what made him so out of it?

[Alejandro] Possibly. However, his symptoms – disorientation, distress – could also be attributed to being incapacitated by electric shock, and are also within the normal range of responses to overwhelming grief.

[Ali] How much force is needed to break that nose bone?

[Alejandro] Considerable force. It was a heavy object.

[Gabriella] Can you tell us about Aidan's condition?

[Alejandro] Aidan was unconscious when I arrived at the scene. He had suffered a blunt trauma to the head which manifested as contusion – or bruising – and swelling to the right frontal bone.

[Gabriella] From a medical viewpoint, does it seem plausible that the desk-drawer might have caused this injury?

[Alejandro] It does.

[Gabriella] Are there any further questions for any of the witnesses? In that case, I'll ask all except my fellow councillors to leave so we can agree on a Penance.

* * *

[Huyen] Do you think Felipe hit Aidan with the drawer?

[Ali] Aidan had been hit with something, that part's indisputable. If we accept that Felipe was holding the desk-drawer when Rudolph arrived, it seems the most obvious explanation.

[Huyen] So then he's guilty.

[Ali] I don't think he meant to kill Aidan. Sounds like Aidan started it by getting out the pip-pop. Can we charge him with grievous bodily harm or something?

[Gabriella] Malicious wounding. The Penance is the same, regardless.

[Huyen] What will it be?

[Gabriella] He'll be excommunicated.

** PAUSE **

[Huyen] That seems extreme. I mean, we've barely ventured more than a kilometre outside. We don't know what it's really like out there.

[Gabriella] Aidan's in a coma. He might not pull through.

[Ali] And Felipe's responsible.

[Gabriella] He can't continue to live among us.

[Huyen] I suppose not.

[Gabriella] I'll go to the Vitality Compact and tell him now. Can you find Maribel and ask her to bring the kids to say goodbye?

[Huyen] What are you going to tell them?

[Gabriella] I don't know. Maybe we'll say that he has to go away for a while. I'll ask Alex. He'll know what's best. Thank you for your help. We've done the right thing. I'll send a parlez to the rest of the community as soon as it's done.



Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

It is with deep regret that I must tell you that Felipe was found responsible for Aidan's injuries by the disciplinary council and has been excommunicated from our community.

All Ark community members may access the articulate transcript of the hearing for further details, if desired.



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Unfortunately Aidan has not regained consciousness which means he is now classified as being in a coma state. According to the Covenant, life support will be terminated within 72 hours unless there are signs of recovery. Anyone who wishes to visit him can make an appointment with me.

Date > NOT YET DELIVERED

Drafted > Gabriella Portelli

Form > Eulogy

Location > N/A

I worked with Aidan for almost fifteen years. People often joked with us that we spent more time together than most couples, and our relationship had lasted longer than the average marriage. It is certainly true to say that in that time I came to know Aidan very well.

Aidan dedicated his life to the preservation of seed diversity in the belief that this was a critical task to ensure human survival on this planet. In his personal life, like all of us, he made mistakes and it was one of these mistakes that ultimately resulted in his death. But let us not dwell now on his mistakes, let us forgive them and forget them, and think instead of his achievements.

He was a visionary. None of us would be here today if it weren't for him. He worked tirelessly to build a facility peopled by a team of brilliant scientists and caring individuals who could shepherd the seeds into a world beyond the Chaos. He faced enormous challenges in the establishment of the facility but he

had a tremendous self-belief which sustained him and kept him working towards his goals, even when they seemed impossible to obtain. He had many critics, as most visionaries do. People were threatened by his passion, his determination, his single-mindedness, his willingness to do whatever it took. He didn't play by the rules. He wouldn't take no for an answer. Failure was simply not an option.

Aidan believed there would be life after the Chaos: something worth staying alive for, worth preserving the seeds for. I think most of us still believe that too. We still want to live and work together, to complete the mission we started, to preserve the seeds for our children's children.

Only days ago, Paige's suicide left us shocked and confused, Aidan gathered us together to remind us that while it is natural to grieve the loss of a member of our community, the Ark was built not to preserve humanity but to preserve the trees. He suggested that we consider taking the names of trees to remind us of our purpose. And so we bid goodbye now, not to Aidan, but to Sequoia, a towering giant among trees and a symbol of all that our leader stood for.



User: Roscoe

Date: September 23rd 2043

Dark shit gone down in here today. A good man sent out to die. Only consolation is the one who caused it will soon be dead too.

Date> 24-09-43

Moderated> Gabriella Portelli

Form> Team Engagement

Location> Hub

[Gabriella] I've been approached by a number of people asking about the details of Felipe's departure yesterday afternoon. I understand the whole incident has been distressing. I thought it would be best to have a face-to-face exploration so that everyone can ask questions and share their feelings.

[Ava] We should have had an exploration before the excommunication.

[Gabriella] Everything happened so quickly. Once Felipe had been found guilty, we had to take immediate action.

[Ava] Why?

[Rudolph] We can't have murderers living among us.

[Nisha] Oh, really, that's unnecessary.

[Pilot] It's not even accurate. Aidan's still alive.

[Rudolph] Well in 60-odd hours he'll be unplugged and that will make Morales a murderer.

[Gabriella] Felipe committed a crime - an exceptionally serious and violent crime, and it required immediate action.

[Ava] Why immediate? It's not as if he was a threat to anyone else.

[Rudolph] What makes you qualified to make a judgement on that?

[Ava] I've lived with him for two years. I don't believe he would have hurt anyone.

[Rudolph] He has a history of assault. He beat Aidan with a metal drawer.

[Ava] We all know why he had issues with Aidan. I don't think he was a threat to anyone else. Even if you thought he was, he could easily have been restrained within the facility, or medicated.

[Rudolph] Well, I think he was unhinged.

[Ava] Unhinged? That's your professional medical diagnosis, is it?

[Rudolph] It's water under the bridge now. What's done is done.

[Ava] Isn't that exactly what we're here to talk about? The way this situation has been handled?

[Griffin] What are we here to talk about? That's a good question. Gabriella, you're the moderator, what kind of things did you envisage discussing?

[Ava] I don't even think it's appropriate for Gabriella to moderate this engagement, given that she was responsible for Felipe's excommunication.

[Ali] That's out of order, Ava. The decision was made by a committee. Gabriella bears no more responsibility for it than myself or Huyen. It was a group decision.

[Huyen] For the record, I don't feel good about the

decision we reached. But we had to follow the process.

[Ava] Why though?

[Gabriella] We have to be consistent, Ava. We all agreed to follow the disciplinary system.

[Ava] That's my point exactly. Just because we've agreed to something, it doesn't have to be set in stone. I don't think any of us ever imagined we'd have to deal with a case like this and I think it required a great deal more consideration before a decision was made.

[Rudolph] What are you suggesting, we just throw the rulebook out the window?

[Ava] Of course not. But these are exceptional circumstances.

[Gabriella] So you're saying that under exceptional circumstances – and who decides what they are – we revise the rules, set up some new system?

[Griffin] I think everyone would agree that these are exceptional circumstances.

[Gabriella] Granted. But what else constitutes exceptional circumstances? Everything becomes a matter of degree, a grey area, and then you're without a system at all.

[Rudolph] The Covenant was designed to accommodate exactly these grey areas. That's why excommunication was written into it, to deal with extremely violent crimes.

[Ava] I'm sick to death of hearing about the Covenant. Everything always comes back to that!

[Ali] We came here to talk about Felipe, not about the Covenant.

[Ava] The way Felipe was treated is being justified by what's written in that document.

[Nisha] I'm not sure about everyone else but I think we need to have a look at this section of the Covenant. It's been a while since I read it.

[Ava] You're lucky you read it at all. I apparently agreed to it without even seeing it.

[Etienne] Ava, come on, that's not relevant here.

[Ava] Of course it is. The Covenant is at the heart of everything we do. We signed it two years ago with no idea of its real implications and now we're governed by it at every turn and yet we can't change it or question it. Can't anyone else see that that's a problem?

[Griffin] I agree with Nisha. I think we need to know the exact details of the document in order to continue this discussion in a fruitful way. My suggestion is we take a half-hour break to review the document individually and reconvene to discuss it further.

[Nisha] Should we appoint another moderator for that?

[Pilot] Why do we even need a moderator? Why does everything have to be so hierarchical?

[Haruki] I'd be happy to do it. I think I'm reasonably neutral in this situation.

[Etienne] I think Haruki would be a good choice. Any objections?

Section 3: Discipline

Discipline is commitment to the Ark Covenant through self-control, self-reliance and teamwork, to protect the seeds and maintain the integrity of the Ark community.

Overview

A Corrective Exploration is an internal tribunal in which an inhabitant is tried for alleged violations of the Ark Covenant, including, but not limited to:

1. Murder (the premeditated killing of a fellow inhabitant)
2. Attempted murder and/or malicious wounding
3. Assault (physical injury of a fellow inhabitant)
4. Sexual assault (assault of a sexual nature on a fellow inhabitant)
5. Sexual abuse (forced undesired sexual behaviour on another inhabitant)
6. Incest (sexual relations between close relatives i.e. blood relatives and those who live in the same household, including those related by adoption or marriage)
7. Apostasy (acting in direct and deliberate opposition to the Ark community and its agreed Covenant)
8. Theft (appropriation of Ark property or the property of a fellow inhabitant).

Structure

A Corrective Exploration comprises the Director and two councillors, selected at random from the community. In the event that the Director is implicated in the Corrective Exploration (e.g. as a witness) or is otherwise incapacitated, an appropriate proxy may be used.

Procedure

1. The Director (or proxy) states the reported misconduct
2. The accused enters a plea of guilty/not guilty of the misconduct
3. (i) Guilty plea: the council agrees on a Penance
(ii) Not guilty plea:
 - (a) Evidence of the misconduct is presented. Evidence may include written or verbal statements by witnesses or other documents including vitality reports, transcripts, etc.
 - (b) The accused has the opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses
 - (c) The council has the opportunity to cross-examine the witnesses
 - (d) The accused presents evidence to support his/her not guilty plea
 - (e) The council has the opportunity to cross-examine the accused

4. The council agrees on the verdict and Penance

(a) No action. This is the result when the council determines that no offence has taken place. However, even if it is determined that an offence did occur, the council may impose no Penance and instead recommend consultation with the Director or a designated community member for counsel.

(b) Probation. This action temporarily restricts or suspends an inhabitant's privileges within the community in the way specified by the council. Possible actions could include exclusion from engagements, communications and community decisions.

(c) Solitary Confinement

(d) Ostracism. An inhabitant who is ostracised is still a member of the community but will be treated as absent by other inhabitants. If the ostracised inhabitant expresses repentance and abides by the conditions imposed upon him or her, a reconvened disciplinary council can remove the condition of ostracism.

(e) Excommunication. An inhabitant who is excommunicated is no longer an inhabitant of the Ark community. Excommunication is the most serious sanction a disciplinary council can impose and is generally reserved for only

the most severe offences. Excommunication may also be appropriate for members who have been ostracised and have not repented. An excommunicated inhabitant can never be readmitted to the Ark.

5. The verdict and Penance are communicated to the accused
6. The verdict and Penance are communicated to The Ark community
7. The accused may appeal the decision of the disciplinary council within three days of the decision being made. In the case of an appeal, a second Exploration will be conducted, comprising two new councillors.

Date> 24-09-43

Moderated> Haruki Nishimura

Form> Team Engagement (II)

Location> Hub

[Haruki] Alright, now we've had a chance to review the Covenant, what are people's thoughts?

[Griffin] Well it's clear to me the policy was intended to cover exceptional circumstances. Aidan's in a coma, which would qualify as malicious wounding, and excommunication is obviously the only punishment appropriate for a crime of that scale. It's fairly black and white.

[Ava] But the procedure doesn't cover situations where the accused can't even testify. Surely that changes things. I mean, we only heard one version of events. It's not fair.

[Mia] Who wrote this part of the agreement?

[Gabriella] Aidan wrote it.

[Ava] Surprise surprise.

[Rudolph] Well, so what? He's a lawyer. He's the only one qualified to write this kind of document.

[Kristjan] I thought he was a historian.

[Pilot] He studied law first. But he was never a lawyer. He didn't do his articles and was never admitted to the bar.

[Rudolph] Who told you that?

[Pilot] I looked it up.

[Leilani] Aren't we splitting hairs? So what if he wasn't a qualified lawyer? He still understood the law, and that made him the best person to write this section of the contract.

[Pilot] He didn't write it though.

[Haruki] Gabriella just said he did.

[Pilot] He claimed to write it. But in fact he plagiarised it from a religious cult.

[Leilani] Are you serious?

[Rudolph] That's absurd!

[Gabriella] That's completely unfounded.

[Haruki] Alright, everyone, calm down. Pilot. That's a big claim. I think you need to explain yourself.

[Pilot] Aidan was brought up in a fundamentalist Mormon offshoot church called The Loving Family of the United Order of Enoch. He had thirteen half-brothers and sisters.

[Gabriella] This story's ridiculous. Believe me, I did my due diligence before I came to work for Aidan and I looked into his background very thoroughly.

[Rudolph] I know for a fact that Aidan was an only child. His father died when he was seven.

[Pilot] He didn't die. He beat Aidan's mother so badly that she nearly died. When she recovered she ran away and took Aidan with her. And she changed their names

so that they'd never be found. Which is why none of this showed up in your sec-check, Gab. Because no-one ever looks further back than high school. And all this happened before that.

[Rudolph] Well how could you know about it then? You're a botanist, for Christ's sake.

[Pilot] Longrigg told me, after he found out about the time-delay lock. Turns out SynBioTec's sec-checks are a little more rigorous than average.

[Gabriella] Longrigg! I'm sorry to speak ill of the dead but he's hardly a reliable source. He would have told you anything if he thought it would help him to get back control of this facility.

[Pilot] I agree. I didn't trust him anymore than I trusted Aidan. That's why I went to the trouble of verifying everything he told me for myself. And every word was true.

[Rudolph] But of course you can't prove any of this, because we can no longer access the relevant networks.

[Pilot] That would suit you, wouldn't it Rudolph? But I thought this stuff was kind of important. So I saved it.

[Gabriella] You have evidence that Aidan grew up in a fundamentalist sect?

[Pilot] And that he changed his name.

** PAUSE **

[Leilani] Who cares? It's not his fault his father was a religious nut or that his mother changed his name. I don't blame her, I think it was a smart thing to do. I don't see what bearing it has on us, and certainly not on Felipe.

[Haruki] Leilani's right. We need to stay focused if we want to come to a consensus about the appropriateness of the disciplinary policy.

[Pilot] That's exactly what I'm talking about. I'm saying Aidan took our disciplinary policy from this crackpot church manifesto, practically verbatim.

[Gabriella] Again this is conjecture.

[Pilot] It would be, if I didn't have a copy of the manifesto. If you don't believe me you can check it for yourself. I'm happy to plug in right now and share it on all your screens.

[Haruki] I don't think that's necessary.

[Nisha] It doesn't really make sense to me. If he left the church under those circumstances, what would possess him to follow their teachings as an adult?

[Ava] It makes perfect sense to me. I've always thought he had a messiah complex. But I doubt very much that he follows their teachings. He's probably just cherry-picked the parts that suit him and left the rest, like most fundamentalists.

[Griffin] It would certainly explain why the term 'excommunication' is used. I mean, that's a religious term. I think it came from the Catholic Church originally.

[Haruki] If what Pilot says is true, where does that leave us?

[Ava] The policy clearly needs a complete rewrite.

[Gabriella] There's no need to throw the baby out with the bathwater. On the whole, it's served us well these past few years.

[Ava] On the whole? The only time it's really mattered it's guided us to make the wrong decision and condemn a member of our community to certain death!

[Gabriella] There's no need to be melodramatic.

[Huyen] I must admit, I've wondered myself how he's expected to survive out there.

[Alejandro] Felipe was provided with an extensive survival kit including protective garments, shelter, water purification apparatus, non-perishable food supplies, multivitz as well as a basic toolkit and vitality supplies.

[Caitlin] That sounds good in theory but I wonder how capable he is of making use of any of those items in the state he must be in.

[Nisha] I feel like he should have been given some time to gather his wits before he was released.

[Ava] Released? Forcibly ejected, you mean.

[Alejandro] I gave him a supply of medication to calm his nerves and keep his head clear for decision-making.

[Pilot] Which he'll probably use to kill himself.

[Alejandro] The medication has a slow-release formula which makes it impossible to overdose.

[Pilot] I bet he's really thanking you for that.

[Gabriella] I don't think those comments are constructive, Pilot.

[Pilot] Who said we had to be constructive? I thought this was an opportunity to air our views. Put yourself in his shoes. His daughter dies, his wife dies and then he's sent out into a toxic wasteland with a fucking goody bag! If I was him I would want to die.

[Rudolph] There's no evidence that it's a toxic wasteland.

[Pilot] We've barely ventured two kilometres from the facility. It's hardly a definitive assessment.

[Rudolph] You make me sick, Pilot. This whole thing is just a smear campaign against Aidan, now he's not here to defend himself. Don't you have any respect? Slandering a man who's in a coma?

[Pilot] Can you clarify your definition of slander, Rudolph?

[Rudolph] It's vicious lies.

[Pilot] I told you that Aidan never qualified as a lawyer, that he was brought up in a fundamentalist sect. That's hardly what I'd call vicious. And as for lies, as I said, I have evidence, if you wish to see it.

[Gabriella] Why did you never reveal this information before, Pilot?

** PAUSE **

[Pilot] Because he scared the shit out of me, if you really want to know.

[Haruki] Let's come back to the question of the policy. How should we move forward?

[Mia] I would suggest we all go away and take some time to consider it. We can come back together in a couple of days to talk about what changes we want to make – what we should keep of the original policy, if anything, what should be added.

[Haruki] Good idea. We can perhaps appoint a committee to take those ideas and draft a new policy. Does 48 hours sound reasonable?

[Ava] I can't believe we're even having this conversation. Have we missed the whole point? We came here to talk about Felipe. We've established that his excommunication was based on a policy of dubious origin, written by a person who lied about his credentials. Before we worry about rewriting the policy, what are we going to do about Felipe?

[Griffin] Ava's right. We have to reconsider the decision that's been made. There's a life at stake.

[Gabriella] What are you suggesting, that we could pretend he didn't put Aidan in a coma? That he could come back and be part of the community?

[Maribel] I don't think Felipe would ever harm anyone else. Aidan's actions ruined his life.

[Gabriella] That's irrelevant. A violent crime is a violent crime. It's not something that can be justified and forgiven.

[Nisha] I don't agree. I think there were mitigating circumstances. And from a humanitarian point of view,

I'm opposed to excommunicating someone who's psychologically disturbed. I think it's barbaric.

[Rudolph] I can tell you right now, if Felipe comes back, I'm going. I don't want to be part of any community where people can get away with attempted murder scot-free. I think you've all lost your minds.

[Ali] He wasn't convicted of attempted murder. The charge was changed to malicious wounding.

[Caitlin] I'd feel better if we could make the decision as a group. Maybe we could vote on it.

[Mia] I need some time to think about my decision.

[Nisha] But he's already been gone for almost 24 hours. The longer we spend deliberating, the lower our chances of finding him.

[Gabriella] Finding him? Surely we're not going to risk people's lives by going out looking for him?

[Haruki] An hour? Would that be enough?

[Griffin] Is it possible to make it a secret ballot? It's such a loaded issue.

[Koshan] I can arrange something. We could fingerprint, that make sure we vote only once, then system could encrypt our identities before vote. I post a link in our shareHouse.

[Haruki] That's great. Votes in by 11am and we'll meet back here immediately afterwards to discuss the outcome.

Date> 24-09-43

Moderated> Haruki Nishimura

Form> Team Engagement (III)

Location> Hub

[Haruki] Out of 17 voters we had nine in favour of revoking Felipe's excommunication.

[Rudolph] I don't believe it.

[Haruki] Whether or not you agree with it, Rudolph, we're working on a democratic system at present and that's the majority decision. The question now is how we go about finding him.

[Rudolph] I'm not taking part in this.

[Griffin] I guess we need a search party of some description.

[Gabriella] This is madness. We don't know enough about the conditions out there to take this risk.

[Haruki] We've all been outside dozens of times in the last few months without a single incident.

[Maribel] I'll go with Pilot.

[Mia] That's a generous offer, Maribel, but Louis and Ruben have already been through so much. You're their closest person now, I don't think you should take any risks.

[Maribel] I don't want Pilot to go alone.

[Etienne] I'll go with Pilot.

[Pilot] Thanks, Et.

[Haruki] Is two enough?

[Griffin] I don't think so. We should stay in pairs for safety but we have no idea which way he might have gone so ideally we'd need to spread out in a couple of directions simultaneously. I don't mind doing it if someone will back me up.

[Leilani] I'll go with Griff.

[Ali] Is it really wise to send four people out there? That's a substantial proportion of our team to put at risk.

[Ava] We've been through this. The decision's made.

[Huyen] I'm with Ali. It feels like we're rushing into this. To reach a majority decision to revoke Felipe's sentence is one thing, but to send four people out looking for him seems to require more planning.

[Nisha] We don't have time for that. The longer we wait, the lower the chance of finding him. Let's go to the Hoard and get the packs ready.

[Alejandro] I'll organise the first aid kits.

[Haruki] What about comms?

[Koshan] We have got long-range walkie-talkie. They good for thirty kilometre approximately if you get unobstructed signal, which should be easy outside.

[Etienne] Can you check what time the sun sets?

[Koshan] 5.16

[Etienne] Alright, we've got about six hours of daylight. Let's get started.

[Haruki] Let's meet again at 5.30 for a debrief. Good luck.



Date> 24-09-43

Location> Director's Niche

Form> Informal Engagement

[Gabriella] Alex, how are you doing?

[Alejandro] I've been better, to be frank. Rudolph's in the Isolation Pod with Aidan. He won't come out.

[Gabriella] Since when?

[Alejandro] I stayed and talked to a few people after the search parties went out. He must have gone to the Vitality Compact then.

[Gabriella] What's he doing?

[Alejandro] He's just sitting there, next to the body.

[Gabriella] Have you talked to him?

[Alejandro] The room's soundproofed, so I can't talk to him from outside. I BLiPPt him, but he didn't respond.

[Gabriella] Why don't you just go in there?

[Alejandro] He seems to have installed some type of manual lock on the door, from the inside.

[Gabriella] Why would he do that?

[Alejandro] Grief does funny things to people. Maybe he just can't bear the thought of Aidan being unplugged.

[Gabriella] Strange. I mean, I know he was incredibly loyal to Aidan, but this seems like something more than that.

[Alejandro] Do you think they were. . .?

[Gabriella] No. Aidan loved women. That's one thing I know about him.

[Alejandro] That doesn't stop Rudolph having feelings for him though.

[Gabriella] True.

[Alejandro] What do you think we should do about it?

[Gabriella] You're the psychologist. What do you think?

[Alejandro] I think if he needs time to grieve, we should let him have it. He isn't doing anyone any harm.

[Gabriella] Let's just leave him then.

** PAUSE **

[Gabriella] I'm going to send him a BLiPP though. I think it's important for him to know we've made a considered decision to allow him to stay with Aidan. We don't want him to think he's calling the shots. He's too big for his boots as it is.

[Alejandro] I'll let you know if there are any developments.

SENDER
> GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
> RUDOLPH

> feel free to stay
with aidan for as
long as you need

BLiPP™

Date> 24-09-43

Moderated> Haruki Nishimura

Form> Expedition Debrief

Location> Hub

[Haruki] Both parties have returned safely but were unsuccessful in finding Felipe. Etienne, Griff and Pilot are going to give us a report.

[Mia] What about Lani?

[Griffin] She's in the Vitality Compact, with Alex.

[Koshan] She is injured?

[Griffin] No, she's just exhausted, and upset.

[Mia] What happened?

[Griffin] Nothing really happened, we just saw some things that were... disturbing.

[Ali] Where?

[Griffin] Thredbo.

[Ali] You made it to Thredbo? Was anyone left?

[Griffin] There was no-one left alive.

[Maribel] There were almost 1,000 people living there. They can't all be dead.

[Haruki] I'm sure we've all got a lot of questions but it's been a long day for these guys so perhaps we could get a brief report from each party about the search first, and afterwards we can talk more broadly about the

conditions, if they're up to it. Etienne, would you like to start?

[Etienne] Pilot and I headed north-east on the old Summit Trail to Charlotte Pass, past Seaman's Hut. We were hoping to get along the Kosciuszko Road towards Perisher Valley but the going was hard and it was already 3pm by the time we reached the Pass. We knew we'd be doing the last couple of kilometres in the dark as it was, so we couldn't push any further.

[Maribel] Were there any signs that Felipe might have gone that way?

[Etienne] None that we saw, but it's hard to tell. There's no snow so we couldn't look for footprints.

[Ali] No snow at all?

[Etienne] No. The wind's blowing hard and the sand's moving about a lot. Plus a lot of the trail was covered in that weedy plant we saw everywhere when we went out before. It clings to the ground and it's flat looking so it was hard to see if it had been walked on.

[Caitlin] You checked the hut?

[Etienne] Of course. It looked like it hadn't been used in a long time.

[Huyen] What else did you see?

[Etienne] We saw a couple of mobs of brumbies. That was pretty much it.

[Haruki] Any toxicity?

[Etienne] No. It was clean.

[Haruki] Anything else?

[Etienne] We saw a lot of Kites, like before. We got swooped a couple of times.

[Maribel] What was it like in Charlotte Pass? In the village, I mean.

[Etienne] It was just a ghost town. Completely empty.

[Maribel] Did it look like there'd been trouble?

[Pilot] No. I mean, the ski lodges had all been looted, but it appeared to be just people looking for food. Nothing else was damaged.

[Maribel] Were there any...bodies?

[Etienne] No.

[Haruki] Let's move on. Griff?

[Griffin] Leilani and I headed south-east to Thredbo. That's a shorter distance obviously, so we made it there by midday. We thought Thredbo was the most obvious place for Felipe to go so we spent most of the afternoon looking around. As Etienne said, it's windy and there's loose sand blowing everywhere so the chance of finding a trail to follow is virtually non-existent.

[Maribel] So where did you search?

[Griffin] We tried to be methodical. We started in the village square and worked our way east along Friday Drive and then back along Mowamba Place on the south side. We took the Thyne Reid Path to the end of the Village Green

and then kept going south along Diggings Terrace as far as Denman's Hotel.

[Ali] That's as far as you got? How come it took you so long?

[Griffin] We went inside every building. Every house, every shop, every lodge. We were calling out Felipe's name but we weren't convinced he'd answer. We thought he might even hide from us. So we had to be thorough. We came across a lot of...remains.

[Maribel] You mean bodies?

[Griffin] Just skeletons now.

[Ali] You think they all starved?

[Griffin] I don't know, starved, froze to death, some would have fallen ill, I suppose. There were a few in the streets. We thought they must have been shot, why else would they have died outside? But most people seemed to have died in their homes. There were a lot in beds. There were a couple of dozen in the church. That was hard to fathom. I don't know if there'd been some kind of mass suicide, or if people just went there to die.

** PAUSE **

[Haruki] It might be best to leave it there for now. These guys need a rest and I think we all need some processing time.



Parleyed by Griffin Baker-Albright

Leilani feels unable to continue the search for Felipe. I'd be willing to return to Thredbo if someone else will accompany me.

Parleyed by Nisha Lakhani

Judging by what you found in Thredbo it seems unlikely to me that Felipe would want to stay there. Might he have gone on to Jindabyne?

Parleyed by Griffin Baker-Albright

I think it's worth having another look around Thredbo. We certainly haven't exhausted all the options there yet. Besides, Jindabyne's a good thirty kilometres. Going that far would require camping out somewhere.

Parleyed by Kristjan Sepp

I'll come with you, Griff.

Parleyed by Griffin Baker-Albright

Great, thanks. If we leave at first light, even with two hours there and back that'll give us a good six hours in the town. That should be enough time to finish the job.



Parleyed by Griffin Baker-Albright

Regretfully, the search for Felipe has had to be abandoned. Kristjan and I found no sign of him as we completed our search of Thredbo today and no-one is willing to risk striking out as far as Jindabyne. I'm sure he's in all our prayers.

Parleyed by Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

I'd like to suggest we hold a memorial for Felipe, perhaps tomorrow in the Hub, after breakfast?

Parleyed by Griffin Baker-Albright

Has a memorial been planned for Aidan? I'm just thinking about timing.

Parleyed by Gabriella Portelli

Aidan's memorial is scheduled for the day after tomorrow.

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

From a psychological perspective I'm in support of a memorial for Felipe as it might enable us to have some

closure on this matter.

Parleyed by Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

What about Ruben and Louis? Do you think they should be there?

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

The research says yes. Let's meet and talk about how best to prepare them and support them through it, Maribel.

Parleyed by Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

Thanks, Alex. If anyone would like to contribute – perhaps read something, please let me know.

Date> 26-09-43

Drafted & Delivered> Maribel Nielsen-McLeod

Form> Memorial

Location> Hub

Thank you so much to those of you who've gathered here today to share memories and say goodbye to Felipe.

Felipe was an only child who never knew his father and who lived with his mother, Marita, and her unmarried brother, Pablo. Felipe told me that he wasn't 'book smart' and couldn't sit still for long enough to learn anything at school so as soon as he was old enough he left school and went to work as a handyman with his uncle. Felipe discovered he was good with his hands and when Pablo eventually retired he took over the business.

In 2032, Felipe met Paige, who he said was the light of his life. Within a couple of years they were married and their first child, Louis, was born. By then, the Chaos had begun and Felipe's business was floundering. It was at that time that Aidan, a long-time client of his uncle's, contacted Felipe and asked him to be involved in the fit-out of the Ark.

Felipe told me that his job at the Ark not only brought him security for his young family but it gave his life purpose. He said that before he came to work here he'd just drifted with the current, content to see where life would take him but becoming part of the Ark made him feel for the first time that he could make a difference, that his small contribution was part of something big, something special. He said he'd always known he'd end up living here one day and he used to joke that he'd adapted to life in the Ark so well, he must have been a rabbit in a past life, which was typical not only of his sense of humour but also of his humility.

Though he never finished high school and had no qualifications, Felipe had many talents. He was a skilled carpenter but was also proficient with electrical wiring, plumbing, welding – you name it. He was what you might call a 'can-do' person. All day long he got BLiPPs from people making demands but he never seemed flustered or stressed. He got a deep satisfaction out of fixing things, improving things, and he took as much pleasure in maintaining the Ark as if he'd designed it himself. You never saw him around the Ark without his tool-belt on, even when he'd supposedly finished work for the day. He would always find time to help someone

and if you mentioned you had a problem he'd come back to you a day or two later with the perfect solution, yet he never wanted to be acknowledged. Just doing my job, same as you're doing yours, he'd say.

Whenever he was concentrating on something he whistled. Once when I asked him about it, he told me he whistled Native American folk songs from the Andes, which his grandmother had sung to him as a child. He had long since forgotten the words but he remembered the tunes.

He was a loving husband and father. Even when his children were tiny he'd take them with him on his rounds, get them to 'help him' by passing him tools, always teaching them, explaining to them what he was doing, making them feel they were an integral part of a job well done. He was affectionate and never feared showing his emotions towards them.

Napoleon Bonaparte once said, It requires more courage to suffer than to die. If that's true, then Felipe had more courage than anyone I've known. In the last year, Felipe had his heart broken, not once, but twice, first through the death of his daughter, Clementine, and then through the death of his wife. I have the greatest sympathy for

his grief but at this moment I wish to remember him before he was struck by loss, as the cheerful, willing and dear friend and colleague who was the backbone of our community. Felipe, know that you were loved and will be missed. You're in our prayers.



26-09-43 Re> Aidan – Vitality Update



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

I am very pleased to let you know that Aidan has opened his eyes and made apparently voluntary movements with his hands. Please be aware that coma recovery is usually a slow and incremental process but rest assured I'll keep you informed of any further developments.

Parleyed by Ali Abdullal

That's amazing news.

Parleyed by Mia Baker-Albright

What a relief. Brilliant.

27-09-43 Re> Aidan Vitality Update II



Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Aidan is making an incredible recovery. Though still weak from his trauma he is now sitting up in bed and at this stage appears to have regained all faculties.

Parleyed by Ali Abdullal

This news is amazing. When can we see him?

Parleyed by Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

He's currently being briefed by Gabriella on the last 72 hours. After that he will need to rest. If he feels up to taking visitors later in the day I'll let you know.

Date> 28-09-43

Drafted & Delivered> Aidan Fox

Form> Focussed Communication

Location> Hub

[Tender] My dear friends. How wonderful to look around this room and see your faces. What a time we've been through. And yet, we endure.

[Sorrowful] As I lay on the cold, hard floor of my niche, five days ago, I felt with certainty that my time had come. In that moment I felt a terrible grief: grief that one I loved as a son had turned against me; grief about my own mistakes that had led to that moment. But most of all I felt grief that I would not fulfil the mission I had dedicated my life to, the sacred duty to carry these seeds into the future.

[Exultant] What an indescribable joy to wake, as if from a bad dream, to hear the voices and see the faces of those who had saved me from death. Alejandro – our doctor, our healer – whose knowledge and care saved me from slipping over the brink. And Rudolph – literally, my saviour. There is no doubt that if Rudolph hadn't come across me when he did – helpless, defenceless – I would

not be here now. My gratitude to him is fathomless.

[Gratified] And how full of pride I was to hear the way this community had dealt with this calamity. Despite the shock and horror you must have felt at the events which had unfolded, there was no cruelty, no rash acts, motivated by revenge. You turned to the Covenant for guidance. You followed the path to the action that was right and good.

[Awed] I have always been proud of the Ark. But never have I felt so acutely aware of what a blessing, what an honour it is to be part of this community, to share this sacred mission with you. [Profound] Coming so close to death I understood how deeply bound we have become to each other, to the trees. We are not the same group of individuals who entered the Ark. We are One.

[Fervent] And so once more, I ask you to join me in freeing yourself of the name that chains you to a world we have left behind. Let each and every one of us seek and embrace a new name, a new identity, one which will perpetually remind us of our mission, and of the ties that bind us. And in being renamed, may we reconnect with our purpose, as I have.



Date> 28-09-43

Drafted & Delivered> Sequoia

Form> Naming Ceremony

Location> Hub

Friends. Today is a new beginning. Today we renounce the names we were given in the impoverished, misguided world into which we were born. Today, we are renamed, and thus reborn – a new community, to protect and nurture the seeds from which a new world will flourish.

I hereby renounce the name Aidan Fox. Henceforth I shall be known as Sequoia. Please step forward and share the names you have chosen.

I hereby renounce the name Gabriella Portelli. Henceforth, I shall be known as Callitris.

[All] Welcome, Callitris.

I hereby renounce the name Huyen Phan. Henceforth, I shall be known as Dracaena.

[All] Welcome, Dracaena.

I hereby renounce the name Rudolph Schwab. Henceforth, I shall be known as Schinus.

[All] Welcome, Schinus.

I hereby renounce the name Griffin Baker-Albright.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Rhus.

[All] Welcome, Rhus.

I hereby renounce the name Mia Baker-Albright.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Nyssa.

[All] Welcome, Nyssa.

I hereby renounce the name Marigold Baker-Albright.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Idra.

[All] Welcome, Idra.

I hereby renounce the name Ali Abdulla. Henceforth, I
shall be known as Fraxinus.

[All] Welcome, Fraxinus.

I hereby renounce the name Maribel Nielsen-McLeod.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Banksia.

[All] Welcome, Banksia.

[Maribel/Banksia] On behalf of my adopted son, I
renounce the name Ruben Morales-Parker. Henceforth,
he shall be known as Phoenix.

[All] Welcome, Phoenix.

I hereby renounce the name Louis Morales-Parker.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Carpinus.

[All] Welcome, Carpinus.

I hereby renounce the name Haruki Nishimura.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Abris.

[All] Welcome, Abris.

I hereby renounce the name Nisha Lakhani. Henceforth,
I shall be known as Piper.

[All] Welcome, Piper.

I hereby renounce the name Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Argan.

[All] Welcome, Argan.

I hereby renounce the name Darya Lopez-Gordieva.
Henceforth, I shall be known as Nuytsia.

[All] Welcome, Nuytsia.

[Argan/Alejandro] On behalf of my daughter, I renounce
the name Raisa Lopez-Gordieva. Henceforth, she shall
be known as Juniper.

[All] Welcome, Juniper.

I hereby renounce the name Caitlin Wood. Henceforth, I shall be known as Kaya.

[All] Welcome, Kaya.

I hereby renounce the name Koshan Shahriyor. Henceforth, I shall be known as Bambusa.

[All] Welcome, Bambusa.

I hereby renounce the name Leilani Rivera. Henceforth, I shall be known as Sassafras.

[All] Welcome, Sassafras.

I am elated that so many of you have chosen to make this commitment to our community and to the future of life on earth. I understand that it was not an easy step to take – that it required a readiness to sacrifice the self for the sake of a greater good and that this readiness required a mature perspective, a long view. It is disappointing that some of those among us have not yet found the humility and courage to take this step. We must be patient with those people, under siege from their lesser selves, clinging to the old ways, fearing change and what it might ask of them. We must pray that they can find the strength to step forward and link arms with us as we move into this new and exciting phase of our journey.





To Ark Inhabitants

Date 28.09.43

From Sequoia (Aidan)

Re Naming Ceremony

Dear friends

I trust you will all honour the sacred ceremony we undertook this afternoon by using each other's new names. I've created a list to help us, and until the names become familiar all electronic communications will reflect both names.

Former Name

New Name

Gabriella Portelli

Callitris

Huyen Phan

Dracaena

Rudolph Schwab

Schinus

Ali Abdullal

Fraxinus

Griffin Baker-Albright

Rhus

Mia Baker-Albright

Nyssa

Marigold Baker-Albright

Idra

Ruben Morales-Parker

Phoenix

Louis Morales-Parker

Carpinus

Haruki Nishimura

Abris

Nisha Lakhani

Piper

Alejandro Lopez-Gordieva

Argan

Darya Lopez-Gordieva

Nuytsia

Raisa Lopez-Gordieva	Juniper
Caitlin Wood	Kaya
Koshan Shahriyor	Bambusa
Maribel Nielsen-McLeod	Banksia
Leilani Rivera	Sassafras
Etienne Delorme-Hart	TBA
Ava Delorme-Hart	TBA
Isadora Delorme-Hart	TBA
Pilot Nielsen-McLeod	TBA
Kristjan Sepp	TBA
Roscoe Baker-Albright	TBA

Regards

Sequoia/Aidan

Mission Captain

User: Roscoe

Date: September 29th 2043

Time for justice.

SENDER
>ROSCOE

RECIPIENT/S
>PILOT

- > anyl in yr niche?
- > need 2 show u
sumthin classified

BLIPP™

SENDER
>PILOT

RECIPIENT/S
>ROSCOE

- > by my lonesome
- > come on down

BLIPP™

SENDER
>PILOT

RECIPIENT/S
>KRISTJAN

- > can u come 2 my
niche asap?
- > on the down low

BLIPP™

SENDER
>KRISTJAN

RECIPIENT/S
>PILOT

- > intrigued
- > on my way

BLiPP™

SENDER
>KRISTJAN

RECIPIENT/S
>ARK EMPLOYEES

- > emergency team
engagement
- > hub

BLiPP™

SENDER
>SEQUOIA

RECIPIENT/S
>KRISTJAN

- > team engagements
need to be
authorised
- > report to mission
control to discuss

BLiPP™

SENDER
>KRISTJAN

RECIPIENT/S
>SEQUOIA

- > negative
- > see you in hub

BLiPP™

Date> 29-09-43

Moderated> Kristjan Sepp

Form> Team Engagement

Location> Hub

[Callitris/Gabriella] What's the emergency? Is someone hurt?

[Kristjan] No-one's hurt.

[Sequoia/Aidan] This is most unorthodox. Only Callitris and I have the authority to call team engagements.

[Kristjan] Except in case of emergency.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Well, where's the fire?

[Roscoe] Rudolph and Aidan should be charged with apostasy.

** PAUSE **

[Sequoia/Aidan] Apostasy! You're seventeen years old, for Christ's sake! You don't even know what the word means.

[Roscoe] I have some footage that people need to see.

[Sequoia/Aidan] This better be good.

[Pilot] I don't know if you'd call it good. It's certainly enlightening.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Put it on then. We're all waiting.

[Sequoia/Aidan] What is this?

[Roscoe] Your fight with Felipe.

[Callitris/Gabriella] There was no footage from that incident.

[Kristjan] No official footage.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Where did this footage come from?

[Roscoe] It's my own footage.

[Sequoia/Aidan] You have a camera installed in my niche? You little punk! How dare you?

[Rhus/Griffin] Roscoe, what were you thinking?

[Callitris/Gabriella] This is a serious violation, Roscoe, even for a minor.

[Roscoe] The serious violations are the ones you're about to see.

[Sequoia/Aidan] This is ridiculous. Turn it off.

[Callitris/Gabriella] We've already ascertained what happened during this engagement, and acted accordingly. I don't see what benefit there is from watching illegally-obtained footage at this stage.

[Kristjan] It turns out there were a few things the corrective exploration failed to uncover.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Pause it please, Koshan. Sorry, Bambusa. What things, exactly, Kristjan?

[Kristjan] Where shall I start? Rudolph drugging Felipe. Aidan regaining consciousness, Rudolph drugging Aidan...

[Schinus/Rudolph] Lies! Lies!

[Callitris/Gabriella] Are you telling me this is what the footage actually shows?

[Pilot] Watch it and weep.

[Sequoia/Aidan] Bambusa. I forbid you to play this footage.

[Callitris/Gabriella] There's only one way to find out if Kristjan's telling the truth.

[Sequoia/Aidan] We are not watching that film.

[Callitris/Gabriella] We need to.

[Rhus/Griffin] I feel like I need to see it, after what's been said.

[Banksia/Maribel] Me too.

[Ava] It's obvious that we have to watch it.

[Sequoia/Aidan] I'm not watching it.

[Schinus/Rudolph] Nor me.

[Callitris/Gabriella] This is a security matter. We will all stay here and watch it. Play the tape, please, Bambusa, and set articulate to create a transcript.

Date> 23-09-43

Location> N/A

Form> Video Transcript

[Felipe] Shallows? Shallows we've run aground on? That's my wife you're talking about. My little girl.

[Aidan] Felipe. I'm so sorry for your loss. You know that. I loved them too.

[Felipe] You didn't love them, you cold bastard, you don't even know how to love. You used them, the way you use everyone. And you're using them even now, when they're dead, to make some point.

[Aidan] I know this is a hard time for you.

[Felipe] Paige would still be alive if it weren't for you.

[Aidan] It's hard to know that.

[Felipe] I know my own wife.

[Aidan] Of course you did. And it's all still very raw for you. I know what you're feeling.

[Felipe] You know nothing about what I'm feeling. You have no idea. You talk about...loss and...sacrifice but you don't even know what those words mean.

[Aidan] You should be resting, Felipe. You need time to process things.

[Felipe] I can't rest, Aidan. I can't rest when my wife and daughter are dead.

[Aidan] Alex will be able to help you with that. There's

no shame in being medicated at a time like this.

[Felipe] Shallows we've run aground on.

[Aidan] Let me call Alex.

[Felipe] I don't want to see Alex! I want my wife back.

[Aidan] I understand that. I'm going to call Alex. Why don't you sit down?

[Felipe] I said I don't want to see him! I came to see you. Give me that!

[Aidan] Please, Felipe, give me back the phone. I don't know what you want from me. I can't bring back Paige. No-one can. Seeing Alex will bring you relief. Let me call him. Come on now.

[Felipe] What is that? Is that a pip-pop?

** New Speaker**

[Rudolph] Aidan? Jesus!

[Felipe] Rudolph, thank god. Can you get him off me? Aah!...Jesus Christ, what did you Taser me for?

[Rudolph] Aidan? Aidan? Can you hear me?

[Felipe] Is he alright?

[Rudolph] Does he look alright to you? He's unconscious. What did you do to him?

[Felipe] I hit him over the head. I'll call Alex.

[Rudolph] I'll take care of it.

[Felipe] Come on, Rudolph. He needs a doctor.

[Rudolph] Calling the doctor won't get you off the hook.

[Felipe] It was self-defence. He was laying into me with that tree thing.

[Rudolph] Well you must have asked for it.

[Felipe] He's got no respect.

[Rudolph] You're the one with no respect, Morales. You're going to pay for this.

[Felipe] You don't need to cuff me.

[Rudolph] I'll be the judge of that.

[Felipe] Are you going to get Alex?

[Felipe] Where have you been? Is Alex coming? Aidan's moving. I think he's coming round.

[Rudolph] Aidan? Can you hear me?

[Aidan] I can hear you.

[Rudolph] How do you feel?

[Aidan] My head is killing me.

[Rudolph] Can you sit up? Do you remember what happened?

[Aidan] I think I've got the gist.

[Felipe] You tried to pip me, remember that?

[Aidan] Why is he still here?

[Rudolph] Don't worry, he's cuffed. How many fingers am I holding up?

[Aidan] What are you, a paramedic now?

[Rudolph] I'm serious, Aidan. I need to know if you're compos mentis. Because I think we should implement the plan.

[Felipe] What plan?

[Aidan] Now?

[Rudolph] This is our chance. Who knows when we'll get another opportunity like this?

[Felipe] An opportunity like what?

[Rudolph] Shut the fuck up, Morales. Can you turn off the comms?

[Aidan] They're already off.

[Rudolph] We've been over it and over it. I already went and got the stuff. This is it.

[Felipe] What stuff? What are you talking about?

[Aidan] Alright. Let's do it.

[Rudolph] Are you sure? How many fingers am I holding up?

[Aidan] Four. You're holding up four.

[Rudolph] Good. I'll do you first. Yours needs longer to take effect.

[Aidan] Do him first. Otherwise he'll see everything.

[Felipe] Do what to me? What is that?

[Aidan] How long does it take to work?

[Rudolph] It's instant. He'll be a write-off now. Okay, here's yours. Remember what I told you?

[Aidan] Nauseous, light-headed. . .

[Rudolph] You'll have some paralysis, and trouble breathing. But then you'll pass out and I'll call Alex. I'll see you in a couple of days.

[Aidan] Don't fail me, Rudolph.

[Rudolph] I'll take care of it. Now try to relax.

Date> 29-09-43

Moderated> Aidan Fox

Form> Team Engagement (II)

Location> Hub

[Callitris/Gabriella] Can one of you explain to us what we just saw?

[Sequoia/Aidan] I don't think it needs any explanation. Rudolph did what was needed to get the situation under control. I can't understand why we've all been distracted from our work to see this.

[Callitris/Gabriella] What was the plan you were talking about?

[Sequoia/Aidan] What plan?

[Callitris/Gabriella] Can you bring up the transcript, Koshan? Look here, Rudolph says, 'I think we should implement the plan.'

[Sequoia/Aidan] I'd just been hit over the head. I barely knew what was going on.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Rudolph?

[Schinus/Rudolph] Schinus. My name is Schinus.

[Callitris/Gabriella] I think we can dispense with those names for now. What was the plan?

[Rudolph/Schinus] I was talking about the emergency plan. First aid and so forth.

[Argan/Alejandro] What did you spray in Felipe's face?
[Schinus/Rudolph] Something innocuous - ammonia and eucalyptus, something like that, in case someone doesn't come round after being Tasered. I'd have to check.

[Argan/Alejandro] But Felipe had been fully conscious for at least ten minutes. He got up by himself and sat in the chair so you could cuff him. He was perfectly lucid until you sprayed him.

[Sequoia/Aidan] He must have had an adverse reaction.
[Callitris/Gabriella] You knew he would have that reaction. You told Aidan he would be a 'write-off'.

[Schinus/Rudolph] This is not a corrective exploration. I don't have to answer these questions.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Well, let's make it a corrective exploration then. Start a new transcript, Koshan.

[Sequoia/Aidan] You can't just start a corrective exploration like that. There has to be a report made first. There's a procedure to follow.

[Callitris/Gabriella] We can do the paperwork later. I want to get to the bottom of this right now.

[Sequoia/Aidan] If you insist, there'll need to be two councillors appointed and the rest of the community will need to be dismissed.

[Pilot] I'm not leaving.

[Kristjan] Me neither.

[Callitris/Gabriella] No-one's leaving. We all need to know the truth.

[Sequoia/Aidan] What you're suggesting is a blatant breach of the Covenant.

[Callitris/Gabriella] You can't hide behind your Covenant anymore, Aidan. What have you and Rudolph done? We want some answers.

[Argan/Alejandro] What did you give Aidan, Rudolph?

[Schinus/Rudolph] Adrenaline.

[Callitris/Gabriella] But he was conscious. He was talking to you coherently.

[Schinus/Rudolph] His pulse was weak.

[Sequoia/Aidan] Rudolph did what he thought was best in the circumstances. It certainly didn't do me any permanent damage. I don't see the point in going over it.

[Piper/Nisha] But it was a medical emergency. Why didn't you call Alex?

[Schinus/Rudolph] I'm first aid trained. I was confident that I could handle the situation.

[Argan/Alejandro] But when I arrived at the scene, you neglected to mention that you had administered first aid to either patient, or that Aidan had regained consciousness. Why did you withhold that information?

[Pilot] Why are we wasting our time with these questions? It's obvious that Rudolph gave them both something from his black lab based on some plan they'd devised earlier

to get rid of Felipe.

[Etienne] What the hell is a black lab?

[Pilot] Poisons. You don't know about Rudolph's little torture chamber?

[Schinus/Rudolph] This is sheer fantasy.

[Kaya/Caitlin] What makes you say that, Pilot?

[Pilot] Remember that so-called 'fever' I had when we first came to the Ark?

[Argan/Alejandro] I remember. You were in the Vitality Compact for a few days.

[Ava] Yes. It was when I had my breakdown.

[Pilot] I didn't have a fever. Rudolph drugged me. He took me to his secret lair underneath Aidan's niche and injected me with god knows what. I thought I was losing my mind.

[Schinus/Rudolph] You are either totally delusional or an astonishing liar.

[Sequoia/Aidan] This story's ridiculous.

[Etienne] Did you tell anyone, at the time?

[Pilot] No. I'd made a mistake. I was working with Longrigg, trying to give him access to our comms. I didn't want to admit to that. I thought I would be ostracised. It seemed better just to keep my mouth shut.

[Argan/Alejandro] I took blood from both Felipe and Aidan. I haven't had a chance to run the tests, but it will give us some more information. We can see if there's

anything unexpected in either sample.

[Callitris/Gabriella] How long will that take?

[Argan/Alejandro] Not long. Less than an hour.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Alright, let's adjourn to wait for those results. In the meantime, I suggest Aidan and Rudolph should be separated. Can I ask for two volunteers to remain with each of them to ensure there is no communication between them?

[Sequoia/Aidan] This is an outrage. I'm the leader of this community and I refuse to be restricted.

[Callitris/Gabriella] I think it's safe to say that you've effectively relinquished your leadership with these actions.

[Sequoia/Aidan] What actions? May I remind you that I was the victim of a violent crime? I am still your leader.

[Callitris/Gabriella] I propose a vote of no confidence in Aidan's leadership. Will someone second me?

[Pilot] Gladly.

[Sequoia/Aidan] There is no protocol for a vote of no confidence! This is a mutiny! You will be the next to face corrective action, Gabriella.

[Pilot] All those in support of Gabriella's motion, raise your hands.

** PAUSE **

Let the transcript reflect a show of 15 hands. Looks like your reign of terror's over, Aidan.

[Sequoia/Aidan] How dare you? You snivelling runt! I'll crush you. I'll make you wish you were never born.

[Pilot] Surely you wouldn't want to do that. You don't want to get your own hands dirty. I'm sure Rudolph would be glad to do it for you.

[Callitris/Gabriella] That's enough! Ali and Caitlin, would you take Aidan to my niche? Haruki, Nisha, could you wait here with Rudolph? Maribel and Pilot, would you come with me to find this so-called black lab? We may also need to run some tests. We'll reconvene when all the data's in.

SENDER
>ARGAN-ALEJANDRO

RECIPIENT/S
>CALLITRIS-
GABRIELLA

- > search lab for
3-quinuclidinyl
benzilate (QNB) &
tetrodotoxin (TTX)

BLIPP™

SENDER
>CALLITRIS-
GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
>ARGAN-ALEJANDRO

- > found both
- > fingerprinting now
- > see you in hub

BLIPP™

SENDER
>CALLITRIS-
GABRIELLA

RECIPIENT/S
>ARK INHABITANTS

- > reconvene corrective
engagement
- > hub

BLIPP™

Date> 29-09-43

Moderated> Gabriella Portelli

Form> Corrective Exploration

Location> Hub

[Argan/Alejandro] Based on the blood tests I've conducted, I'm supporting Roscoe in charging both Rudolph and Aidan with apostasy. The evidence indicates that Rudolph administered illegal drugs to Felipe and Aidan based on a plan which Rudolph and Aidan had made to get rid of Felipe.

[Sequoia/Aidan] That is the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard.

[Argan/Alejandro] Rudolph claimed that Felipe's state was caused by an allergic reaction to ammonia. The blood tests revealed normal levels of ammonia in Felipe's blood. However, Felipe's blood had high levels of an incapacitating agent called 3-Quinuclidinyl Benzilate, which affects the central nervous system, creating confusion and disordered memory, among other things - exactly the symptoms Felipe displayed after he was sprayed in the face. Gabriella found a canister of aerosolised QNB in the secret laboratory underneath Aidan's niche.

[Schinus/Rudolph] I didn't even know that lab existed.

And I'm not familiar with that compound. Someone must have planted it.

[Callitris/Gabriella] How do you explain then that the only fingerprints on it are yours?

[Schinus/Rudolph] Well. I suppose it's possible I may have used it, some time ago, and my prints are still on it.

[Callitris/Gabriella] It was developed solely for use on humans. It has no part in a plant laboratory. And it's not listed in your inventory.

[Argan/Alejandro] I also found a chemical called tetrodotoxin or TTX in Aidan's blood. This is a puffer-fish venom, known to induce coma in humans, also found in the secret lab. The symptoms are exactly those the two of you discuss in the footage - nausea, paralysis, respiratory distress.

[Schinus/Rudolph] You must be crazy. You're suggesting I would deliberately put Aidan in a coma?

[Sequoia/Aidan] No-one would be willing to take such a risk. Why on earth would I agree to that?

[Callitris/Gabriella] Because you knew he had the antidote.

[Schinus/Rudolph] What antidote?

[Callitris/Gabriella] Frik. Which we also found in the lab.

[Argan/Alejandro] And which I'm certain we'd find traces of in Aidan's blood if we tested it now.

[Sequoia/Aidan] This is a waste of time. You have no real

evidence. You can't take this any further.

[Roscoe] The video footage is evidence.

[Sequoia/Aidan] The video footage is a violation of privacy and confidentiality, which you will now face corrective action for.

[Pilot] It's evidence of Rudolph administering drugs.

[Sequoia/Aidan] He was administering first aid.

[Argan/Alejandro] The blood tests are evidence that Rudolph did not administer what he claimed to administer, and that other compounds had been administered.

[Schinus/Rudolph] But the blood tests don't prove who administered those other chemicals.

[Callitris/Gabriella] We have proved possession of them.

[Schinus/Rudolph] Just because you possess a gun, it doesn't make you the person who fired it.

[Etienne] But there is a logical connection between the results of the blood tests, the possession of the chemicals and the video footage.

[Sequoia/Aidan] Logic is not proof.

[Piper/Nisha] But there seems to be no other explanation.

[Sequoia/Aidan] Lack of a plausible explanation does not create a licence to fabricate one.

[Callitris/Gabriella] The only thing that's been fabricated is Rudolph's ridiculous tale. Alex's theory is based on facts.

[Sequoia/Aidan] But the facts are insufficient to the charges. The law requires you to prove guilt beyond

a reasonable doubt. And you have failed to do that. Therefore, the charges must be dropped. End of story. Now, if you'll excuse me, it's been a long morning, I'm going back to mission control to review this transcript and make a report of corrective actions required.

[Callitris/Gabriella] You will not be leaving this room, Aidan, until this matter is resolved.

[Sequoia/Aidan] As far as I'm concerned, it is resolved. You have no grounds on which to hold me.

[Callitris/Gabriella] I'm prepared to use force if necessary.

[Sequoia/Aidan] How dare you? I made you what you are. Where would you be if it weren't for me? Where would any of you leeches be, you miserable ingrates! You'd have had your hearts torn out by vultures while you were still alive! You'd have sucked cock for a grain of rice!

[Callitris/Gabriella] For goodness' sake, Aidan. Get a grip.

[Sequoia/Aidan] I'll get a grip on you, you scrawny bitch! I'll tear your hair out. I'll—

[Callitris/Gabriella] Ali, quickly, the pip-pop!

[Schinus/Rudolph] Lay another finger on Aidan and I'll rip your arms out of their sockets!

[Callitris/Gabriella] One more word, Rudolph, and you'll get the same.

[Schinus/Rudolph] I won't be silenced by—

[Callitris/Gabriella] Thank you, Ali.

[Argan/Alejandro] Are you alright?

[Callitris/Gabriella] Yes. Yes, I'm okay. The pips last for ten minutes. How about we restrain the two of them in the Privacy Pod so that we can come to a decision in peace. Is everyone okay with that?

[Argan/Alejandro] I'll grab a couple of stretchers.

[Etienne] I'll come with you.

[Kaya/Caitlin] Can we please take a break, Gabriella? This has been really overwhelming.

[Callitris/Gabriella] A short break's a good idea. We'll just need a couple of people to stay and help carry the stretchers.

[Abris/Haruki] I'll help.

[Fraxinus/Alì] Me too.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Thanks. If everyone else could be back in five, we can get this over with.

[Callitris/Gabriella] Well, I don't think anything could have prepared us for this. Does anyone have any suggestions on how we should proceed?

[Roscoe] They should be cast out. Felipe's dead because of them. They deserve the same fate.

[Pilot] They deserve worse.

[Piper/Nisha] Before we start thinking about meting out judgement, let's be completely sure that they're guilty. Felipe might still be with us if his corrective action hadn't

been so rushed. We want to make sure we get it right this time.

[Ava] They're obviously guilty. I think we should get it over and done with. The further away from us they are, the better I'll feel.

[Kaya/Caitlin] No, Nisha's right. These decisions are irreversible. We don't want any more mistakes.

[Abris/Haruki] If we're saying they're guilty, what exactly are they guilty of? We can't just bundle everything together. They had different roles to play in what's happened.

[Kristjan] I think Rudolph's the main offender. He's the one who drugged them both. He's the one who initiated the plan. Plus he testified in a way that led to Felipe being cast out. He withheld information. He blatantly lied. He's as guilty as they come.

[Roscoe] Aidan's the mastermind behind it all, though. Rudolph just does his dirty work.

[Kaya/Caitlin] And what about the way Aidan laid into Felipe with that tree? Poor Felipe was just trying to defend himself. I can't believe we excommunicated him. It's Aidan who's guilty of malicious wounding.

[Ava] It's clear from their conversation that they had a plan worked out, to get rid of Felipe. Who did what doesn't seem that important. Both their actions led to Felipe being cast out. I think they're equally guilty.

[Piper/Nisha] But what about what Aidan said, about us having to prove their guilt beyond a reasonable doubt?
[Kristjan] He was just trying to confuse us with legal terminology. Based on the evidence, I don't have even a shred of doubt that they plotted to get rid of Felipe. Does anyone else?

** PAUSE **

[Banksia/Maribel] So then they should be cast out.

[Piper/Nisha] Are we certain that's the right action?

[Callitris/Gabriella] I think it's the only reasonable action, under the circumstances. After what we've seen, and the way they've behaved this morning, they couldn't possibly continue to live among us. It would be untenable.

[Argan/Alejandro] Let's prepare their kits then.

[Roscoe] They shouldn't even get kits. They deserve to die.

[Rhus/Griffin] Roscoe! It's not for us to judge who should live and die.

[Callitris/Gabriella] We don't need to stoop to their level. They'll receive the same provisions as Felipe did.

[Nyssa/Mia] Do you think they'll accept it? Could they be a threat to us, from outside?

[Callitris/Gabriella] If Longrigg and his men couldn't get in, no-one can. We'll have to set another time-delay lock though. Let's bring them back and deliver the verdict.

[Piper/Nisha] I don't think they'll go quietly.

[Callitris/Gabriella] No. We'll pip them and stretcher them out, if necessary.

[Argan/Alejandro] I'll go and get them.

[Fraxinus/Alì] I'll come, in case there's trouble.

[Callitris/Gabriella] For conspiring to have Felipe cast out and for misleading the community, the council has found you both guilty of apostasy. Your Penance is to be cast out, with reasonable provision for survival.

[Sequoia/Aidan] You can't do this to me! This is my Ark!

[Callitris/Gabriella] Not any more.

The Ark Manifesto

The Ark exists to protect the seeds. The seeds are protected to enhance the future of human life on earth. Without our protection, the seeds cannot survive. The seeds do not have higher value than the lives of those who protect them, rather the relationship is symbiotic: each nurtures the other.

All Ark inhabitants are equal. Decisions which impact on the Ark community as a whole will be reached by consensus, with due respect for the right to freedom of speech. Ark inhabitants will contribute to the furtherance of the community and the seeds to the best of their ability.

Ark inhabitants will behave at all times with integrity, and with respect for themselves, each other and the seeds. If the principles of this manifesto are violated, the end shall not be used to justify the means. Inhabitants will be subject to a disciplinary process and may be expelled from the community.

The Ark will prevail.

User: Roscoe

Date: October 1st 2043

We're locked inside again. But this time we chose it ourselves. The cancer in our roots has been cut out and we are finally free to grow, like the seeds we planted out there on the mountain, taking in the sun and the rain, waiting for us to join them.

thearkbook.com

Dive deeper into the world of the Ark at thearkbook.com. Tour the bunker, eavesdrop on conversations, learn about the inspiration behind the book, view deleted scenes or comment on Roscoe's blog posts.

Develop the world of the Ark by sharing your own content inspired by the book. Upload your documents, stories, artwork, audio recordings and videos to add to the narrative.

Acknowledgements

This novel was written with the assistance of a development grant from the West Australian Department for Culture and the Arts. The app was developed with the assistance of a Creative Australia Fellowship from the Australia Council. I feel incredibly privileged to have been supported by these funding bodies.

My long-term friends and writing colleagues Amanda Curtin and Robyn Mundy read uncertain early pieces of *The Ark* and encouraged me that it was worth pursuing. Amanda's suggestions helped me through a particularly difficult bout of writers' block and Robyn was the first to imagine the novel as an interactive e-book, which really gave it wings.

I am indebted to Jeremy Coggin whose conceptual brilliance helped me get clarity around the format the book and app would take and whose advice and input was undoubtedly instrumental in my successful funding application to the Australia Council.

A wonderful team of readers gave me feedback on various drafts: thank you Richard Sturman, Richard Rossiter, Kathryn 'LKH' Porter, Jim Gill and SA Jones. Kathryn Porter also gave me valuable marketing advice, as did Caroline McGrath.

It was a delight to have my manuscript edited by Susan Midalia. Her warmth, enthusiasm, perceptiveness and insight made the sometimes arduous process of editing much more enjoyable. Deb Fitzpatrick's eagle eyes did a wonderful job of proof reading and she was amazingly flexible and understanding when I repeatedly messed her around on deadlines.

I could not have been more thrilled with the beautiful cover designed by Ariane Palassis. Dr Beth George ran an architecture studio based on The Ark at Curtin University assisted by Nic Brunsdon. I'm grateful to the tutors and also the students for their extraordinarily imaginative visual interpretations of a world I'd created in words.

I also wish to thank Dr Stuart Medley who ran a graphic design studio based on The Ark at Edith Cowan University, and introduced me to Jacky Chum and James Redcliffe who designed most of the graphic elements of the e-book. Additional designs came from Nastaran Ghadiri and Eko Pam, to whom I'm also very grateful.

Beth George, Jimmy Thompson, and my husband, Anthony Duckworth-Smith, were my ongoing architectural consultants, endlessly patient in the face of my idiotic questions and inability to interpret their sketches and squiggles. Aaron Cunningham spent a gazillion hours creating a digital model of The Ark which surpassed all my expectations and and the gorgeous Bec Lewis, photoShopper extraordinaire made it look REAL! My clever brother Toby Smith-Tan created animations of the bunker's spaces.

Eric Hook from Bookbound did a fantastic job of laying out the book for print, and was a pleasure to work with, especially given the ridiculously tight time frames within which we were working.

My deepest thanks go to my husband, Anthony, for his unerring support of my writing, and a million other things, which would require a book of their own.

A Note on Designs and Fonts

Cover design by Ariane Palassis, using *Alpha*.

Articulate design by Anthony Duckworth-Smith, using *Zekton*, with a logo by James Rediccliffe.

Blipp design by James Rediccliffe, using *Dentritic Voltage*, *Joystix Monospace* and *6809 Chargen*.

Corrective exploration, death certificate, vitality report and incident report design by James Rediccliffe, using *Laconic* and *Amerika*.

Gopher design by James Rediccliffe, using *Geo*.

Headless Horseman design by James Rediccliffe using *Juice* and *VanBerger*.

Kaos Kronikles design by Nastaran Ghadiri, using *3Dumb*, *Dirty Ego*, *Cabinsketch*, *Astonished* and *Copystruct*.

LetterLike design by James Rediccliffe, using *Prociono* and *Arm Wrestler*.

Manifesto design by Anthony Duckworth-Smith using *Habibi*.

Matt7 design by Jacky Chum using *Color Basic*.

Memo design by James Rediccliffe using *Loaded*, *Dosis*, *After Shok* and *Amerika*.

News report design by Anthony Duckworth-Smith using *Habibi*.

Parlez-Vite design by Anthony Duckworth-Smith using *Cup Rum*, with a logo by Eko Pam.



photo by Eko Pam

About the Author

Annabel Smith is the author of *Whisky Charlie Foxtrot* (to be published in the US as *Whiskey and Charlie*), and *A New Map of the Universe*, which was shortlisted for the West Australian Premier's Book Awards. She holds a PhD in Writing from Edith Cowan University and is a member of the editorial board at Margaret River Press. She lives in Perth, Western Australia with her husband and son.

www.annabelsmith.com

annabelsmithaus@gmail.com

twitter.com/AnnabelSmithAUS

www.facebook.com/AnnabelSmithAUS

Thank you for reading *The Ark*. If you enjoyed it, please help other readers to discover it by reviewing it on Goodreads and/or your own blog, tweeting about it, choosing it for your book club or simply telling your friends about it. Thank you!

Praise for *Whisky Charlie Foxtrot*

It is rare to encounter fiction that so intelligently explores the downright messiness of family relationships through adult characters; rarer still to find an author who writes of traumatic injury and the looming shadow of death with such verve and sensitivity.

Australian Book Review

...the enduring sense of this novel is of having been in the hands of a storyteller with more than just a good story, one with something to say about how to live, and the energy and pluck to say it.

The Australian

...we learn a lot of home truths about our own beautiful but complicated lives... in this wonderful novel.

The West Australian

Intelligent fiction about families and love which will be a favourite with book clubs.

Bookseller+Publisher

Praise for *A New Map of the Universe*

Impressive in scope and beautifully written... Grace the protagonist is a character of considerable depth and subtlety.

The Australian

What stands out for me most in this book is a quality in the characters themselves – in Grace and Peter in particular – an ability to feel deeply and to cherish this ability in others.

Canberra Times

... even though it's her first published work, *A New Map of the Universe* bears all the assurance of an experienced writer, so deftly is it written.

The West Australian

In these days of high hysteria and over-wrought narrative, Smith's ability to create tenderness and feeling without excess is welcome.

The West Australian

An extract from

Whisky Charlie Foxtrot
aka
Whiskey and Charlie

Annabel Smith

Published by Fremantle Press Australia 2012
To be published by Sourcebooks USA 2015

Sitting beside him in the hospital, Charlie is thinking that if Whisky dies, he won't know which songs to choose for his funeral. Whisky is his only brother, more than that, his twin: Alpha, the first born – the brightest star in the constellation, the person Charlie has loved and hated, pushed and pulled against all his life. Now Whisky lies in a hospital bed in a maze of wires and tubes that connect him to the machines that help him breathe, keep his heart beating. He cannot move or speak and his only brother no longer knows him.

But this is no place to begin; in fact, this may very well be the end.

Alpha

Looking back, Charlie thinks it began when they were nine years old, the year Audrey moved to Australia. Audrey was his mother's sister. It was a Saturday morning just like any other when she came over to tell them. Charlie's father was playing squash; Whisky, who was still William then, was upstairs. He was supposed to be practising his trombone but he was rebuilding his Scalextric track instead. Charlie knew this because he had gone upstairs to get his Star Wars figurines and he had seen William kneeling on their bedroom floor with all the pieces of track out of the box, his trombone in the corner, still inside its case.

Don't tell Mum, William said. Charlie shrugged. He knew his mother would work it out soon enough when she didn't hear William sliding up and down his scales. She was sharp like that. But on this particular day his mother was distracted by what his aunt was saying.

Charlie wasn't listening at first. He was absorbed in orchestrating a furious lightsaber battle between Luke Skywalker and Darth Vader. It wasn't until he realised that his aunt was doing all the talking, that his mother wasn't saying anything at all, that Charlie began to take notice. You see, his mother usually kept up her part in a conversation. Vivacious, that's what people said about her, and although Charlie didn't know what this meant exactly, he knew it had something to do with her talking and laughing a lot. Her silence was a bad sign. It usually meant one of two things. One, Charlie or William or, worse still, both of them had gone too far and were in big trouble, or two, she had a bone to pick with their father.

Your mother's upset, boys, their dad would say when their mother went silent on him and then they would leave the

room, knowing an almighty row was on the horizon.

The calm before the storm, their father had joked to them once about their mother's silences and they had laughed, guiltily, not really understanding, but knowing their mother would not find this joke funny. Charlie had never known his mother to go silent on anyone else. He stayed where he was, crouched on the floor beside the armchair, but he stopped the battle between the forces of good and evil and began to listen.

I want to leave England, start all over again, his aunt was saying. I want to go somewhere where people don't know me as Bob's widow, where they don't feel sorry for me or give me the cold shoulder because they blame me for his death. I want to go somewhere where nobody will even know what happened unless I tell them myself.

Charlie realised that both his aunt and his mother had forgotten he was there. None of the grown-ups ever talked about Uncle Bob's death when Charlie and William were around. They wouldn't have known anything at all if William hadn't overheard his mother on the phone, talking to her best friend, Suzanne. Bob had committed suicide, their mother told Suzanne, because Audrey confronted him about the other woman.

Which other woman? William had asked but their mother had glared at him with such intensity that he had let it drop.

When they had asked their father about it later, he had snorted.

Other woman? he said. That's a laugh. Other women, more like it.

This comment had left the boys no closer to understanding why it had happened but their father did at least explain that committing suicide meant that Uncle Bob had killed himself, and he even told them how, explaining about the rope and his

neck breaking before their mother overheard the conversation and stopped him by saying, Could you occasionally engage your brain before opening your mouth?

Now Charlie stayed absolutely still, thinking he might at last be able to solve the riddle of his uncle's death and he felt a thrill go through him that it would be he who found it out. He couldn't wait to tell William.

You can understand that, can't you, Elaine?

Audrey waited for her sister to answer and in the silence, Charlie realised that his mother was crying. They had one of those shiny tablecloths that you didn't have to wash, you could wipe it with a sponge, and Charlie could see his mother's tears sliding off her chin and dripping onto it, plip, plip.

I'm not even forty yet, his aunt said, but I feel like here my life's already over.

This comment was so surprising that Charlie forgot about his mum crying, or finding out the secret about Uncle Bob's death. Of course Charlie knew that Audrey was his mother's older sister. He had never known how much older but if he had to guess he would have said twenty years at least. In fact, Audrey seemed so much older that Charlie tended to think of her as his mother's mother, rather than as her sister. This thought was partly left over from when he was younger and hadn't been able to understand why other people had two grandmothers and he had only one. For a while he had pretended that Audrey was his grandmother and not his aunt. He knew better now, of course, knew perfectly well that his mother's mother was dead, that she had died when he was three weeks old and that's why he couldn't remember her at all. But his idea that Audrey was older had got stuck in his mind.

Once his mother had shown Charlie a photo from Audrey's

wedding and Charlie could not believe that the woman in the white dress in the centre could possibly be his aunt. For some time afterwards he had tried to look for that skinny, pretty girl inside his aunt's soft and shapeless face but he had never seen it and after a while he had forgotten to look. But he had asked his mother once how Audrey got so old. His mother had sighed, one of those big long sighs she always gave when she talked about her sister.

She's had a very hard life, Charlie.

To Charlie, a hard life was being a beggar, like in *Oliver Twist*, or your whole family sleeping in one bed like in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. He did not understand how two people who lived in a big house with a golden retriever could have a hard life. Besides, he had heard his mother say lots of times how lucky Audrey was.

You're too young to understand this now, Charlie, but it's been a great disappointment to Audrey, not being able to have children ... she trailed off. Charlie looked at her. She seemed to be looking at something in the mirror. And then the cancer, she said, but she was not really talking to Charlie; she seemed to have forgotten he was there. She was really very young to have a mastectomy, she added, to no one in particular.

Charlie put his matchbox Ferrari on top of his mother's dressing table and made a revving sound. He didn't want to talk about that. His mother had explained it to him before they went to see Audrey in the hospital and it gave him a tummy ache to think about it.

Why else? he asked.

Why else what?

Charlie revved the car impatiently. Why else is she so old?

Well, I don't know, Charlie, isn't that enough? But, I don't suppose Bob's behaviour has helped.

Why? Charlie asked. What did Uncle Bob do?

Oh, Charlie, you wear me out with your questions, she said, suddenly coming to, and she started tidying the dressing table which meant that the conversation was over.

So Charlie had asked his dad, which was what he always did when his mother's explanations didn't satisfy him.

Did Uncle Bob make Auntie Audrey old? he asked.

Who told you that?

Mum.

His dad looked like he was about to laugh. I suppose you could explain it like that.

But how did he?

How did he? I suppose by being unfaithful, I think that's what your mother means.

What's unfaithful?

Well now, I suspect your mother might give me a bollocking if I told you that, boy. Nice try though, Charlie, nice try.

Unfaithful. It had sounded like something important, the way he had said it. Charlie had turned the word over in his mind. Faithful is what everyone always said about his grandad's dog, Tartan, because he always lay down at Grandad's feet and went everywhere with him, even sometimes on the tractor. But why would Audrey want Bob to lie down at her feet? Charlie hadn't been able to make sense of it and William, who was smart with those sort of things, hadn't been able to work it out either.

Thinking about it again, Charlie lost the thread of the conversation at the kitchen table. By the time he'd thought it all through his mum had stopped crying.

Australia! What an adventure, Audrey, she said as she put the teacups in the dishwasher. I suppose we'll have to come out and see you there one day.

Alpha and Omega, she said, when she explained it to the boys. Sometimes their mother spoke like that – bits of other languages, odd lines from plays she had read. Their father said this was because she had a brain but she didn't really get to use it, that it just boggled away inside her head and sometimes funny things came out. She said to Charlie and William that Alpha meant the beginning and Omega was the end and that for Audrey, moving to Australia was the end of one chapter and the beginning of another.

As well as being a new beginning for herself, in a way Audrey's Omega was also Charlie's Alpha. Because before she left for Australia she bought all of them lavish presents, the kind of things they would never have bought for themselves. She took Elaine up to London to see *Cats*, a musical they both had on cassette tape and had wanted to see for years, and she bought their father a crystal brandy decanter. But best of all she bought Charlie and William the walkie-talkies, which were the beginning of everything.

The first day you do not even experience as a day. There are only minutes knotted into hours in which everything you usually do is forgotten, in which even eating and sleeping are of no importance whatsoever.

They sit in the waiting room, Charlie and his mother, Rosa and Juliet and Aunt Audrey. There are other people who come and are sent away again – Whisky's friends perhaps, or colleagues, but afterwards Charlie cannot recall who they were. Sometimes he dozes, sitting upright in one of the hard plastic chairs, and when he wakes he cannot remember where he is or what he is doing there. He looks around and possibly it is the smell that reminds him, or the expression on Rosa's face: he is at the hospital, waiting to find out whether his brother will live or die.

By the time Charlie reached the hospital Whisky was already in surgery. Charlie cannot see him while he is being operated upon, none of them can; all they can do is sit and wait for a doctor to emerge with a progress report. Charlie has no idea how long they have been waiting. There is a clock in the waiting room but the movement of its hands has no meaning for him.

So far, what they know is this: Whisky is in a coma. He has a fractured skull, a punctured lung, a broken arm and broken ribs and one of his feet has been crushed. Charlie has no idea of the implications of most of the items on this list of injuries. He attempts to picture Whisky's foot. He pictures the bones in his own foot, the bones whose names he memorised for his human biology exams in high school and has long since forgotten. Crushed, the doctor had said. Other things have been broken, but Whisky's foot has been crushed. It sounds so much worse. The word broken somehow holds the promise of something that can be fixed – taped or glued or pinned back together.

But crushed sounds beyond repair. Charlie pictures tiny little fragments of bone all mixed together, an impossible puzzle. He thinks about gangrene, about amputation, briefly tries to imagine Whisky with a prosthetic foot and then just as quickly tries to wipe the image from his mind. He wonders about the impact of this injury on Whisky's surfing and snowboarding. Then he realises that he doesn't even know whether Whisky still goes surfing. He thinks about asking Rosa but when he looks over he sees that she is crying.

When at last a doctor comes out to talk to them, it becomes abundantly clear that Whisky's foot is the very least of his problems. The doctor explains that during the accident Whisky received a blow to the head which caused bruising to his brain, a leaking of the blood vessels which resulted in the brain swelling.

Unlike other tissues, the doctor says, the brain has no room for swelling. It is trapped inside the cage of the skull. The lack of space causes a rise in intracranial pressure leading to a decrease in blood flow which in turn impacts on the ability of the brain cells to eliminate toxins.

Juliet puts her hand inside Charlie's. He tries to think of something to say to her, something positive and reassuring, but nothing comes to him.

While Charlie has been worrying about crushed bones, a neurosurgeon has been repairing the damaged blood vessels in Whisky's brain, inserting a monitor to track the pressure and a device called a shunt, to drain off the excess fluid.

Charlie remembers seeing a documentary in which a 'trapdoor' was cut into a patient's skull to create more space and prevent further damage from the swelling following a head injury. In the same documentary,

part of a brain which was deemed to be damaged beyond repair was cut away to increase the chance of recovery for the undamaged parts of the brain. Charlie supposes that they should feel grateful that Whisky has not been subjected to such treatments. He takes it as a sign that things are not as bad as they might be.

That is until he sees Whisky. For the person whose bed they are eventually led to could be anyone. At least one third of his body is cased in plaster and most of his head is obscured by bandages. What Charlie can see of his face is so bruised and swollen that no features are recognisable. Worst of all, everywhere Charlie looks are tubes and wires connecting the body to machines transporting substances in and out, measuring god knows what. Charlie cannot believe that this wrecked and wasted creature could possibly be his brother. No matter how hard he looks, he cannot find anything of Whisky in that hospital bed. He stares and stares and then he rushes to the bathroom and vomits so violently he bursts the blood vessels in his eyes.

Charlie's next-door neighbour Alison had helped him make his costume for the play. While they made the costume she taught him the words to 'Pass the Dutchie'. Alison was thirteen and knew the words to all the songs in the charts. She was good at things like that. It was also an undisputed fact in the village that Alison was the best at costumes. She proved it by winning first prize every year at the Rose Queen Fete.

The year she moved to Everton she had dressed up as a Rubik's Cube. The rest of the kids paraded through the village in costumes that had been cobbled together the night before. They were ghosts with eyeholes chopped out of old sheets; cats with cardboard ears and laddered stockings for tails; miniature brides in communion dresses wearing veils cut from curtain netting. The Rubik's Cube caused a sensation and established Alison's reputation.

The idea for the pharaoh costume had come from a picture in Alison's encyclopaedia. According to the picture the Pharaohs didn't wear too much in the way of clothing. Charlie supposed this was on account of it being so hot in Egypt. All he was wearing was a towel wrapped around his waist. But he had a magnificent headdress and a golden collar and when he put them on, Charlie truly felt like a king.

That towel used to be a nappy, William said when he saw the outfit. Their mum said it wasn't true, that nappies were square and the costume was wonderful and anyway, she had given all their nappies to Auntie Sue when their cousin Hayley was born. Alison said that William was jealous because Charlie had a better part in the play. Charlie thought hard about this. William was better at soccer, better at telling jokes, better at conkers and marbles. When he added it up, William was better

at anything that Charlie could think of. It was something quite new for William to be jealous of him and Charlie found that he liked the idea of it.

Besides, he deserved a good part this year. Last Christmas, when they performed the nativity play, Charlie had been given the part of an angel. He had asked if he and Timothy could be shepherds instead but Miss Carty-Salmon had said there were already too many shepherds and that the boys should be honoured to play the angels.

But the angels are girls' parts, Timothy said.

If you took the time to read the Bible, Timothy, I think you would find that the angels were men.

Well then, why do they have girls' names?

Charlie's mother had told the boys that it was bad manners to answer a teacher back. Timothy had obviously been given different advice. In the end it made no difference to Miss Carty-Salmon but Charlie thought Timothy was right. Gabriel was a girl's name and if they were supposed to be boys, why did they have to wear costumes that looked like dresses?

This year the play was a shortened version of the musical Joseph and the Amazing Technicolor Dreamcoat, adapted by their teacher, the beautiful Miss Parker. All term they had been practising 'Any Dream Will Do', and Miss Parker, who had been to London to see the show, said they sang it even better than the real cast. The main part was Joseph, but the Pharaoh was the second best part and Charlie had spent weeks practising his lines, shouting, Throw him in jail! until his mother said if he wasn't careful he would wear out the words.

The night before, Charlie was so excited he couldn't get to sleep. He couldn't wait for his mum to see that now there was something he was good at; that for once, William wouldn't be the first, the best, the fastest. But on the morning of the play

their mother had a migraine. Their father had a big job to finish. So Aunt Audrey came to watch the play in their mother's place. Charlie was bitterly disappointed.

But as it turned out, Aunt Audrey was a far better audience member than their mother had ever been. She shrieked with laughter at all the jokes, started all the other mums and dads clapping along to 'Any Dream Will Do', and, best of all, when Charlie stepped forward to take his bow she stood up out of her chair and shouted, Bravo! Bravo! Charlie thought he had never been so happy. Bravo, he said to himself as he went to sleep that night. Bravo was the word that meant there was something Charlie could do better and he held onto it like it was a lifebuoy.

The night before she left for Australia, Aunt Audrey came round to say goodbye. She told the boys she had a special going-away surprise for them which they couldn't have now, but which would be waiting for them when they got home from school the next day.

Charlie and William ran all the way from the bus stop the next afternoon, rushed out of breath into the house to find their mother sitting in the armchair with Audrey's dog Barnaby at her feet.

Are we looking after him, William shrieked, until he can go to Australia?

Their mother smiled and shook her head. We're going to keep him.

Forever?

She nodded.

Does Dad know?

She nodded again. William and Charlie threw down their

schoolbags and did their Zulu warrior dance twice, slapping their thighs and beating their chests before dropping onto the carpet to roll around and bury their faces in Barnaby's fur.

Let's call him Bravo, Charlie said.

No, said William, let's call him Tomahawk.

His name's Barnaby, their mum said. You can't change a dog's name.

Barnaby was a golden retriever with velvet ears and his name was engraved on a silver tag which hung from his collar. He held his right paw in the air when his tummy was rubbed, would fetch a stick or a ball no matter how far it was thrown, stood on his hind legs with his front paws on the bench when the boys were putting food in his bowl. He had a lead but they never used it; they let him run ahead through the fields behind their house, let him get so far away they could hardly see him and then they sang out his name to call him back.

Baaaar-na-beeee! William would call.

Braaaa-vo! Charlie would silently correct him.

They had been looking after Barnaby for three months when he was hit by the car. Charlie was walking him that day and Barnaby was racing ahead as he always did, crossing the High Street, when the car came round the corner from Tempsford Hill. Charlie saw the car clip Barnaby from behind, heard him yelp, watched the car slow and then speed up again. He ran to where Barnaby was lying, panting, his fur already soaked with blood; knelt down and pulled the dog onto his lap, screaming and screaming until someone came out of the pub to see what the commotion was.

Then they were in Mary Partridge's car on the way to the vet; Charlie in the back holding Barnaby, stroking his head,

begging him not to die while his blood seeped onto the back seat; Mary Partridge behind the wheel, crying so hard she could barely see the road in front of her.

The vet came out to the car to carry the dog inside.

Hit and run, Mary said to him, what a crying shame.

What's his name? the vet asked.

Bravo, Charlie said. His name's Bravo. Is he going to die?

We'll see what we can do.

Mary sat with Charlie in the waiting room and held his hand until his mother arrived and then all three of them sat and the waiting went on and on.

When the vet opened the door to the examination room Bravo was lying on the metal bench with his eyes closed, breathing slowly. Charlie stood beside him and stroked his ears and said his name, over and over, so he wouldn't have to listen to what the vet was saying to his mother. When they came over to the bench Charlie's mother put her arm around him and Charlie held his breath.

One of his hind legs is broken, the vet said, but otherwise the damage isn't too bad. He's badly bruised but that'll heal. We can have a go at pinning the leg – he'll never run like he used to but he'll get by. The vet paused. There's a small chance of gangrene setting in, in which case we'd have to amputate. Your mother thinks we should give it a go but she said it's up to you.

The whole time the vet was talking Charlie had been stroking Bravo's ears, looking at his dry black nose, his whiskers twitching. He had thought Bravo would die on the road where the car hit him. He had thought Bravo would bleed to death in the back of Mary's car. He had sat for a long time on a hard chair waiting for the vet to come out and tell them that Bravo had died on that cold metal table while they were trying to

put him back together. He had wondered how on earth they would tell Aunt Audrey.

He can't believe it is only a broken leg. He is so relieved he can't speak. Even if they have to cut it off, it will be all right. Three legs are enough; Charlie only has two himself and he finds it plenty. He is laughing or crying, or laughing and crying, it doesn't matter which. Bravo will still be there, wagging his tail, pushing his wet snout into their hands when they get home from school. He'll still be able to catch a ball and hold a stick in his mouth and gulp his dinner down in five seconds flat. Broken leg or not, he'll still be their very own dog, their Bravo.

Charlie

For a long time Charlie had wished he wasn't called Charlie. In his school class alone there were three other boys with the same name. His mother, who loved the Royal Family, who years later would cry uncontrollably when Princess Diana died, said it was a fine name, a strong name, the name of the Prince of Wales, the man who would be King of England. Their father said Prince Charles was a pompous jug-eared fool but your name was your name and once you had it you were stuck with it.

But Charlie knew that wasn't true. After all, it was only a few months ago that Bravo used to be called Barnaby and no one ever called him that name now. And if a dog could have a new name then why couldn't he? The name that Charlie had chosen for himself was Steve, after Steve McQueen, who Charlie had been obsessed with ever since he and his dad had watched *The Great Escape* one Saturday afternoon when his mother was at the theatre.

It was Buddy who made Charlie change his mind about his name. Buddy had lived next door to Charlie's parents when they were first married and he was stationed on the US air base at Chicksands. Until Buddy came to visit them, Americans had only existed for Charlie and William on television. They were enthralled by Buddy, by his accent, by his strange habit of eating with his fork in his right hand, the way he said, aw c'mon guys or you betcha! No one had ever called them guys before.

Since Audrey bought them the walkie-talkies the boys had put away their Lego space station and their Playmobil fort, their Star Wars figurines and their Scalextric. Instead they played at being cops, or robbers, private detectives or secret agents. They used phrases they had heard in films and on tel-

evision, words they didn't even understand but had used so often in their games they had come to have a real meaning. They said, Do you read me? and Get the hell out of there! They said Meet me at the south-west exit at eighteen hundred hours. They said roger and niner and over and out. They said these things without embarrassment, with that nine-year-old conviction that they were saying all the right things in exactly the way they should be said. But when Buddy overheard them he started to laugh.

LAPD, twenty-six hundred! Buddy repeated, slapping his leg as he laughed. What the hell kind of crap are you guys spouting into those damn things?

So Buddy had taught them the two-way alphabet. And that was how Charlie found out that his name was a useful one, that it stood for something. That it was the third letter of the NATO phonetic alphabet, established in 1955 and approved by the International Civil Aviation Organisation. It had represented the letter C to the US Navy, the British Army, the RAF and, best of all, it had been used on board the aircraft in the Dambusters raid.

William was put out that his name wasn't part of the phonetic alphabet. To compensate he started calling himself Whisky. Their father, who they had always called Dad, became Papa; their mother, of course, remained simply Mum and Bravo, lucky Bravo, was spared a second name change since his name was already part of the alphabet.

Knowing the alphabet made the walkie-talkie games even better, though William could never remember the whole thing and would make up his own words under pressure, saying silly things like Mouse instead of Mike and Lulu instead of Lima. Charlie never corrected him but he remembered the words William could not, learnt to recite it backwards as well as front

ways and his command of the two-way alphabet, his place in it, was one small thing he had which his brother did not.

Charlie goes to the hospital first thing. He wants to be in and out before his mother arrives, dreads the thought of having to talk to her about the situation or, worse still, talk around it. Easier to avoid her altogether. Rosa will be there of course; she hasn't left yet as far as Charlie knows.

Standing outside Whisky's room Charlie sees her through the glass pane of the door. She is sitting with her head bowed, as close to the bed as she can get. Charlie thinks she must have fallen asleep, opens the door gently so as not to startle her but she looks up at once and speaks without greeting him and Charlie knows then she has been awake all night, thinking, wanting to talk, waiting for someone to come.

This is not the way he want to die, she says.

Charlie flinches at the word die, the word no one else in his family will say. He doesn't know if he believes that Whisky can hear them, but he doesn't want to stand right next to him and talk about him as though he's already gone. He pulls Rosa away from the bed.

You mustn't think like that, Rosa, he whispers. You know what the doctors said. There's a good chance he'll recover.

Fifty/fifty, they said, Rosa insists. This means good chance of dying.

Well, Charlie says lamely, that's the worst-case scenario.

Do you think so, Charlie? I think worst case is for months he stays alive like this, for years he lives, these machines doing the things he used do for himself. Worst case is he wakes up with brain damage and the Whisky we know is gone.

Her Spanish accent, somehow thicker in a whisper, makes Rosa's speech sound even worse than it already is.

Charlie sits down in one of the hard hospital chairs. It is less than twenty-four hours since he received the phone call from his mother and in those hours his only thought has been that Whisky must not die. He must not die because he, Charlie, needs more time. He and Whisky have not been friends, have not talked or laughed together for months, years. But he has never thought it will end like this. They're still young, only thirty-two; there should be forty or fifty years at least for them to sort out their differences. He has always thought there will be time.

Now he sees that there might be things worse than Whisky dying. That they might have all the time in the world and it won't make any difference.

He want to die in that crazy car, or jumping out of aeroplane, Rosa says.

Charlie thinks that if Rosa hadn't come along, Whisky would have died like Elvis, of booze and drugs and too many cheeseburgers, although knowing Whisky they would have been one hundred dollary cheeseburgers made of Japanese beef from calves that had been massaged with milk. He doesn't say this to Rosa. She is sitting with her palms up in her lap and he notices for the first time how small her hands are. He wants to give her something.

You're right, he says eventually. Whisky's always been a daredevil, even when we were little kids. Once, when we were about six or seven, he dressed up in his Superman suit and jumped out of a tree in our driveway with a rope tied around him. He probably would have broken his neck but the rope got caught under his armpit and he dislocated his arm instead.

He never tell me that, she says.

Charlie smiles at the memory. He had almost forgotten it himself.

Delta

Charlie found out about Delta of Venus on the first day of term because it was Whisky's friend, Grainger, who owned the book. But he didn't actually read any of it until a couple of weeks later, by which time every boy in the school was talking about it. Grainger had been on holiday to France and claimed to have bought the book from a kiosk, an ordinary kiosk, selling newspapers and chewing gum and cigarettes. It was a well-known fact that France was a land of sex maniacs, that you could buy things there that you couldn't possibly get your hands on in England and there were plenty of other boys who'd come back from holidays with dirty French comics. But Grainger's book was different. For starters, there were no pictures. In theory when you read something dirty you could make up your own pictures. But some of the scenes described in Grainger's book were beyond Charlie's imagination; he could find no place for them within his own concept of sex.

Not that he would have called himself an expert. At the age of thirteen, sex was one of those subjects that you pretended to know everything about whilst knowing almost nothing. If you asked questions you were exposed, tainted with the word virgin and would never live it down. Finding out more without risking exposure, that was the challenge.

Charlie had no sexual experience of his own to speak of, except for a fumbled kiss with Michelle Perry in a cupboard at a party, during a game of spin the bottle. Other boys had come out of the same cupboard with different girls and much better stories to tell. Tom Costello had put his hand up Louise Barker's skirt, Chris Lennox had felt Claire Corbett's breasts and, allegedly, Charlotte Graham had put her hand down Joel Orton's pants.

Would things have been different if it was Charlie who had ended up in the cupboard with Charlotte Graham? Would she have put her hand down Charlie's pants – down anyone's pants? Or did Joel possess some skill which Charlie had not yet mastered? Could Charlie have touched Michelle's breasts if he had tried? How did you know if a girl would or wouldn't? How could you change her mind?

These were the questions which plagued Charlie, questions which he could not ask and could not find the answers to: not in the encyclopaedias and medical books at the library; not in their father's awkward and incomprehensible talk about the birds and the bees, not in the explanation they had been given in Health Education by the dried-up, flat-chested Miss Pennacombe, who, it was agreed, could not possibly have ever had sex herself and therefore could have nothing to teach them. Certainly her interminable description of the sperm fertilising the egg had done nothing to help Charlie decipher the dirty jokes he heard, though he always laughed anyway, hoping he was laughing at the right moment.

He thought he understood the mechanics of it, the what-goes-where. But that, to Charlie, was not sex. Sex was what he had seen in the dirty magazines boys at school had pilfered from older brothers or stolen from newsagencies. Or at least, that was what Charlie had thought, until he read what was inside Grainger's book.

Delta of Venus, that was the title. Nobody knew what it meant exactly, no one could have used the words in a sentence, but they were passed from boy to boy, muttered and snickered over until they came to represent everything you needed to know about sex and didn't know how to find out. Very few people had actually seen the book. Apparently it had a very sexy cover: a picture of a naked woman, but not like a

centrefold, more arty, so that you couldn't see her face; in fact, you couldn't even be sure which part of her body you were looking at though you had a pretty fair idea. After the first week, no one got to see the book at all, apart from Grainger's close friends, Whisky included, who confirmed for Charlie that the rumours about the cover were true.

All the other boys ever saw were the photocopies. Grainger made the photocopies at his dad's office on a Saturday morning and at school on Monday you could buy them for 20p a page. You couldn't choose which parts you wanted, it was the luck of the draw. But according to Grainger, who claimed to have read the whole book, there wasn't a page that wasn't dirty so it really didn't matter which one you got.

The first week he made twenty copies and he'd sold them all before lunchtime on Monday. The following Saturday he made a hundred copies and he put the price up to 50p. It didn't matter if you'd paid 20p the week before; 50p was the new price, take it or leave it. You weren't allowed to show them to anyone else or swap them and anyone who tried to make their own copies wouldn't be sold anymore. Those were the rules. No one argued. Everybody wanted the photocopies and Grainger was the only one who had them. They were shocking and disgusting and he got rid of a hundred in two days. With the help of Whisky and his friend Joel, he sold them before school and after school, between classes, at recess and at lunch, in the toilets and behind the bike shed and on the school bus. Even when he made a hundred and fifty copies there still weren't enough to go round.

Charlie did not have to pay for the photocopies because Whisky got them for free, as many as he wanted. Charlie had mixed feelings about this set-up. On the one hand, he was relieved that he did not have to buy the copies himself. Once

he had read a few, he knew that there was something wrong about them, something that made him feel guilty and shameful. Charlie suspected he was not the only one who felt this way. He noticed that though everyone was talking about the photocopies, no one actually talked about what was in them. You bought them, put them in your bag and took them home and when you came to school the next day you said, I got the baron and the little girls, or, I got the woman and the dog. But you didn't talk about the things you read.

The story of the man who pulled the corpse of a naked woman out of a river and then had sex with her dead body was disgusting to Charlie but when he read it his penis got so hard it was almost painful. There were sentences he read over and over again until they got stuck in his mind and he couldn't close them out. Charlie had rubbed himself raw over the story of the Cuban and the nymphomaniac and for days afterwards one sentence went round and round inside his head. On the bus and in his maths class and at the dinner table it would come to him unbidden – She was moist and trembling, opening her legs and trying to climb over him – and it took all of Charlie's willpower and concentration to control his erections.

There was nothing you could say about that. So you didn't talk about the stories with your friends, you didn't talk to anyone about them. Even when he got the copies from Whisky, Charlie couldn't meet his eye. The thought of buying them at school, like the other boys had to, was unbearable. He was sure that if he had to make that transaction, in front of other people, every one of them would know what he was thinking, what he did alone in bed at night once the light was off. So he was grateful to Whisky for sparing him that humiliation.

At the same time he resented him for once again being at the centre of something that Charlie was on the outside of. For

although it was Grainger's book, Grainger was part of Whisky's gang which meant that in the eyes of everyone at school, Whisky was as much a part of it as Grainger himself: Whisky had seen the book, knew the story about where it had come from, was helping Grainger to sell the copies – it might as well have been his own book. Whereas Charlie, as always, was on the sidelines; hadn't so much as glimpsed the book, didn't even have the gumption to buy his own copies but had to get them second-hand from his brother and for that, Charlie hated him. For he knew that this book was just the beginning, that in sex, as in sport, Whisky would be Charlie's superior, that he would go further faster and Charlie would be left behind, as he had always been since the day they were born.

Delta of Venus dominated Charlie's life, all their lives, for a little more than four weeks. In the fifth week, Whisky, Grainger and Joel were caught selling the copies in the science block toilets and the jig was up. The book was confiscated, presumed destroyed; the boys were caned and suspended and the proceeds of their sales, which totalled almost two hundred pounds, were donated to the Salvation Army. The situation was evidently too scandalous to be handled by a woman – the special assembly, for the boys only, was addressed not by their headmistress, Mrs Aster, but by the deputy headmaster, who also happened to be the head of religious education. There was barely a boy in the school who wasn't implicated and the hall had never been so still or silent, two hundred and fifty pairs of eyes trained resolutely on the ancient woodblock floor as Mr Daniels spoke of his shock and disgust over the confiscated materials and his disappointment at the lack of moral fibre evidenced by this incident.

The assembly lasted less than ten minutes, long enough for Whisky, Grainger and Joel to be made an example of, long enough for the same fate to be threatened to any boy caught in possession of such filth.

The shit's going to hit the fan, Whisky joked to Charlie on the way home, but Charlie knew that Whisky feared their mother's reaction more than any punishment that could be meted out at school. To be caned was not a humiliation but a badge of honour, a sign that you'd been outrageously rebellious, and as such earned you the respect of the other boys. As for the suspension, Whisky looked upon it more as a reward than a punishment.

Though the boys knew their mother must have had a telephone call from the school, she was ominously silent when they arrived home. They slunk off to their rooms, assuming she was waiting for their dad to come in from work before she made her move. But at dinnertime she still said nothing, only glared at Whisky, and at Charlie as well, as though he too was implicated, though she could not have had evidence of that. Or could she? Charlie prayed that she hadn't found his photocopies, wedged beneath his mattress.

It wasn't until Whisky attempted to excuse himself that she finally spoke.

Sit down, William, she said in a low voice. What have you got to say for yourself?

Whisky shrugged, keeping his eyes on the table.

Look at me when I'm speaking to you.

Whisky looked up but said nothing, knowing from experience that whatever he said would only make matters worse.

She looked at their father. Bill, do you have something to say to your son?

This surprised Charlie. Their mother was the disciplinar-

ian, that was the accepted order of things. These were obviously deemed to be special circumstances as they had been at school; a man-to-man matter. But Charlie could see that his father was unprepared, stuck for words.

Not one of your better ideas, Whisky boy, he said eventually.

Their mother stared at him expectantly, waiting for him to go on. He let out a sigh, appeared to be thinking hard and then he began nodding his head; something had come to him.

Certainly very entrepreneurial though, I'll give you that.

Charlie cringed.

His mother exploded.

That's right Bill, encourage him, that's the idea! Your fifteen-year-old son is producing and distributing pornography and you tell him he's entrepreneurial! For pity's sake, is there anything at all between your ears?

All right, Elaine, calm down. I was just trying to have a joke. Whisky knows he's done the wrong thing, I don't think we need to labour the point.

Labour the point? She laughed then, a sharp abrupt sound like the bark of a dog who has been unexpectedly shut outside. No, you're right, of course, we shouldn't labour the point, better to make a joke of it, give him a pat on the back and with any luck he'll leave school at sixteen to become a pimp, is that what you want?

Charlie was shocked to hear his mother use the word pimp. He sneaked a look at Whisky but Whisky wouldn't meet his eye.

Don't be ridiculous, Elaine, you're overreacting.

Overreacting? Do you have any idea how many times I've had William's headmistress on the phone this term? He can't stay out of trouble for five minutes. I'm at the end of my tether!

Bill coughed. Well, perhaps you're right. But the boy's already been punished; I don't think there's any need for us to get heavy-handed as well.

Their mother snorted. One week off school! You call that a punishment? She turned her attention to Whisky. Charlie did not often feel sorry for his brother but he felt sorry for him then.

There'll be no bike-riding, no skateboarding, no television no Atari. No phone calls, no hanging around at the shopping centre, no listening to your records. And you won't be seeing your partners in crime, that's a certainty.

Whisky was flattened. What am I supposed to do then?

There are plenty of ways you can make yourself useful around the house, I can give you a list so long you won't have time to scratch yourself. And woe betide you if you defy me, William, because I'll find out, believe me, and then you'll really know the meaning of the word punishment.

By the time Whisky got back to school, the whole thing had blown over. Once the book was gone, the source cut off, the fever subsided. When people stopped talking about them, the photocopies lost their currency; Charlie gave up reading them, left them for weeks under his mattress, eventually threw them away.

Sex became once again about the girls you knew and how far you could go with them. As in the American movies they watched, progress was measured in bases. Since they had never played baseball and no one knew the rules, there was some confusion about exactly what happened at each base. First Base was kissing, that much was generally agreed. But to Charlie, even First Base was a grey area. Because as everybody knew,

there were two kinds of kissing.

There was the kind of kissing that took place during a game of spin the bottle, in which you were shut in a darkened cupboard with a girl you may or may not fancy (and who may or may not fancy you, although this was considered largely irrelevant) and you had thirty seconds to locate her mouth and work your tongue inside it. To Charlie's mind, this kind of kissing had more in common with pin the tail on the donkey than with baseball and he did not know if it counted as First Base.

He suspected that First Base meant the kind of kissing that happened at Year 9 parties, where no one played Spin the Bottle anymore, but people somehow paired off anyway; the kind of kissing where you locked lips with a girl and didn't come up for air until you had attempted to touch every square inch of her body with your roaming hands. The second kind of kissing Charlie had seen plenty of but had never participated in himself, which meant that depending on one's definition, he had never even got to First Base.

Second Base had to do with breasts, tits, jugs, knockers, baps or whatever else you might call them. A lot of the girls in Charlie's year didn't seem to have much to offer in that department, at least not compared to the women in the magazines Charlie had seen. But if he had to touch a girl's breasts in order to progress to the next stage he was prepared to do so, even if the girl in question was as flat as a pancake.

By the end of year nine, Second Base seemed to have been so widely achieved that it wasn't worth discussing anymore. A lot of boys claimed to have got to Third Base, some even further, while Charlie was still stuck on First. According to reports there were plenty of girls who'd let you touch their breasts or even slide your hand up their skirt. But Charlie always seemed

to end up with the frigid girls, girls like Alice Brown, who had kept her lips clamped shut when he kissed her so that he couldn't get his tongue in her mouth, or Susan Wilkes, who had gripped his wrists while they kissed so he couldn't touch her body at all.

Whisky, of course, had already made it to Third Base. He had got off with Louise Barker at a party and then gone out with her for about three weeks, before dropping her because she wouldn't 'go all the way'. What he failed to take into account was that when you dropped a girl because she wouldn't go far enough, she would want to get back at you. And the best way to do that was to get off with someone you knew and go much further with that person, maybe even all the way, and then to make sure you found out about it. If she really wanted to get back at you, she'd get off with one of your best friends or, better still, your twin brother. Which is how Charlie, in a surprise twist of fate, managed to cover three bases in one night.

It happened like this. There was a party at Tom Costello's house in the first week of the summer holidays. Because Tom's brother was sixteen, there was beer at the party which meant that by nine o'clock, everyone was getting off with someone. Charlie was in the kitchen, swigging his beer as though he loved the taste of it, when Louise's friend Claire came over.

Charlie! Where've you been? I've been looking for you! She said this playfully, as if they were good friends having a joke together, which confused Charlie, because although he knew Claire by name, he had never actually spoken to her before.

Louise wants you, she said, conspiratorially.

Louise Barker?

Claire rolled her eyes. Of course, Louise Barker, who else would it be? You know she's mad on you.

Charlie couldn't make sense of this conversation. He thought he must be drunk.

But Louise went out with Whisky.

Whisky! Claire scoffed. Louise hates Whisky. You're the one she likes. That's why she asked me to come and find you. She wants to talk to you.

Where is she?

She's upstairs, Claire said, in the first bedroom on the left. She's waiting for you. And then she took the beer can out of Charlie's hand and gave him a little push towards the stairs.

Charlie went upstairs slowly, trying to work things out in his head. It couldn't be true that Louise liked him when only a week ago she'd been so keen on Whisky. Probably she wanted to talk to him about Whisky, see if there was any chance of them getting back together, ask Charlie to put in a word for her. But if that was all, why did she have to send Claire to find him? Why couldn't she come and talk to him herself? Perhaps Claire was setting Charlie up, perhaps Louise was upstairs with some other boy, or wasn't upstairs at all and the whole thing was a wild goose chase designed to expose Charlie's desperation. But what if Claire was telling the truth and this was Charlie's big chance to make some progress on the bases? Charlie knew it was a long shot but it was this last thought which propelled him up the stairs and into the first bedroom on the left.

The room must have belonged to Tom's little sister; everything in sight was pink, except for Louise who was sitting on the bed on top of a Flower Fairies duvet cover.

Hello Charlie, she said, I've been waiting for you.

So that much at least was true. Charlie smiled, or perhaps grimaced, unsure of how to proceed.

You'd better shut the door, she said, and patted the bed enticingly.

Charlie sat down.

You look exactly like him, Louise said, staring at Charlie in a way that made him feel even more uncomfortable.

We're identical, Charlie said awkwardly. He hated it when people commented on how alike he and Whisky were. He especially didn't want to talk about it with Louise. But Louise continued to study him.

I think Whisky's a little taller, she said thoughtfully.

It was true, but Charlie was hardly about to admit it. He wanted to get off the topic of Whisky altogether.

Claire said you wanted to talk about something.

Well, we can talk anytime. Wouldn't you rather kiss me? Louise said. And then she leaned forward unexpectedly and pressed her mouth against his. Charlie had a moment's hesitation. It didn't seem right to start kissing without a little more chitchat. And given that Louise had just broken up with Whisky Charlie probably shouldn't be kissing her at all. But she smelt like fruit salad and her mouth was so warm and soft that Charlie couldn't help himself. He leaned in closer to her but she pulled away to look at him again.

It's so weird kissing you, she said. I feel like I'm still kissing Whisky.

There they were, back to Whisky already. But then Louise pulled his face into hers as though nothing else mattered and side by side in that pink and sparkly room they kissed until Charlie couldn't tell where his mouth ended and Louise's began. Without knowing how they got there, Charlie found that they were lying down on the bed, and getting to Second Base happened so quickly he barely had time to take it in. Even the fact that he couldn't undo Louise's bra didn't slow them; she sat up and took it off herself and though she had hardly any breasts to speak of, her perfect pink nipples were as soft as her

mouth and Charlie found that their size didn't matter at all. They were pressed thigh to thigh, hip to hip and Charlie had the biggest erection of his life.

When Louise looked at her watch and said, Imagine if Whisky knew what we were doing, Charlie knew something was wrong but when she undid his belt and put her hand inside his boxer shorts he didn't care, he didn't care. The feeling of Louise's hand wrapped around his penis was so intense, so consuming that he didn't even care when the door opened and he saw Whisky standing there, with Claire behind him.

Don't stop, it doesn't matter, Charlie groaned, feeling himself only seconds from ejaculating. But as soon as the door was closed Louise pulled her hand away and, seeing the look on her face, Charlie understood what he had taken part in.

It had all been for Whisky; Louise wasn't interested in Charlie at all. Now that Whisky had caught her with Charlie, caught her going further than she had with him, Charlie might as well not have existed. She didn't even look at him while she put on her bra and straightened her clothes. Charlie didn't care that he'd been set up, that Louise had used him. Those twenty minutes he had spent with her had been the best twenty minutes of his entire life. What he couldn't stand was that this moment, this triumph, was not his own. That even when he had overtaken Whisky it was Whisky who had helped him to do it, so the triumph, as always, was Whisky's.