

2009-2010 Minutes Compilation
Ben Brubaker

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Minutes: Chapter I

Hey everybody,

As promised, I come to you bearing the first of a series of minutes. Of minutses. Whatever. The point is, I'm experimenting with a new style for this electoral term: each set of minutes will form one installment in a continuing narrative to unfold throughout the quarter. Obviously, I have no idea what will happen later in the quarter. So where is this story going, you ask? Good question. We'll see if it works. Until then, enjoy, and stay tuned for Part II.

-B²

PS: Section Representatives, you guys are supposed to print these out and put them up in the bathrooms of your section, because bathroom reading material is essential. I have a printer, so if you don't, you can let me know, and I'll print them out for you.

I still remember the day that dame first waltzed into my office. I knew she was trouble the moment I lay eyes on her. There I was, feet up on my desk, rolling another cigarette, watching the rain beat down hard on the thick layer of grime coating the streets of the city like icing on a cake, but less delicious. This shitty city. This gritty city. Long nights of drowning my sorrows in gin, like unwanted kittens presumably in something other than gin, was making it hard for me think straight, and I couldn't come up with any more rhymes for city. Pity.

It then transpired that the dame had waltzed into the wrong office altogether, and she waltzed out again, but not before tripping into my coat rack and causing it to break in half, probably because she had to waltz everywhere rather than move like an ordinary person. Getting a new one proved to be a great deal of trouble, confirming my intuition. It was after I finished dealing with the coat rack that I noticed a man sulking furtively in the hall, like a rat, sulking furtively in a hall. I knew I recognized him from somewhere as sure as I knew my similes needed work.

"Listen, buster," I said. "I don't know who you are, but I'm a private eye. That means this property is *private*, and it belongs to *I*. To me. So why don't you start by telling me exactly what you're doing here. You're Lyndon LaRouche, aren't you?"

"No," said the man who was not Lyndon LaRouche. "You might know me as Bartley. We have to talk."

"Oh, right. You're the other guy who loses elections. I heard—"

I didn't get further than that, because Bartley pulled me into the office and slammed the door. He reached into the pocket of his trench coat and pulled out an ID that read *Bartholomew Nath*. A different part of the ID read *CIA*. There were other things on the ID as well, but they struck me as less important.

"Listen," said Bartley or Bartholomew. "We don't have much time. I see you've already heard about my recent electoral failures. But I bet you didn't know that it was really part of an elaborate plan by the CIA to infiltrate the government!"

I knew there would be trouble as soon as he mentioned the feds. The kind of trouble that could end in a broken spine instead of a broken coat rack. I didn't like it one bit.

"Isn't the CIA part of the government?" I asked.

"It's all part of the plan," said my binominal guest. "The reason I've come here is because we need you to accept a position in the new government, and then report back to me with whatever you can discover. We have insider information claiming that they're already planning on offering you the job of minister of propaganda."

I refrained from asking why they needed a man inside the government when they already had insider information. Instead I asked the other question, the one I had asked far too often recently.

“Why me?”

“You made a name for yourself last year by speaking out publicly against corruption in Franco’s administration. The Jorgonaut likes that. He’s a sworn enemy of Generalissimo Franco, but we have reason to believe his reign might be even worse.”

“Such as?”

“Such as the fact that he promised at least four years of tyranny and egotism in his first public address after seizing power.”

I pulled my fedora over my eyes and said nothing.

“Listen, why don’t you think it over, and give me a call when you’ve come to the right conclusion. Here’s my card.”

He fished around in his pocket for a while and handed me a jack from a worn bicycle deck. The ‘J’ in each corner had been covered with a piece of masking tape with ‘N’ written on it.

“N stands for Nathan the same way that J stands for Jack,” Bartley explained. “It’s supposed to be badass, but it’s still a work in progress. It would have been so much easier if my name was Jack.”

I had no idea what to say, so I just stared at him.

“Never mind,” Bartley said, and slumped out of my office like a cat with its tail between its legs. I sat back at my desk, pulled my fedora even lower over my eyes, and rolled another cigarette. That part was hard, because I couldn’t actually see anything other than the brim of my hat. When I was finished, I gazed off at the brim of my hat, and thought about everything Bartley had said.

Jorgen Harris. Men had lived in terror of him for centuries. He’d been known by many names over the years. Jorgonaut. Jorgmungandr, the World Serpent. The Jorgan Grinder. Jorj Bush. If he really was the new ruler of Hitchcock, the nation, perhaps the whole world, was knee deep in shit, like a thirteenth-century cesspit cleaner. I didn’t like it, but Bartley was right. Somebody needed to keep tabs on him, and unfortunately, for me, I happened to be somebody.

I stood up, accidentally put out my cigarette on my own hand, and then remembered to adjust my hat so I could see again. It was time to hit the streets and ask questions in the underworld. Visit bars. Squeeze people, but not too hard, because I had learned from experience that the bigger ones tried to squeeze back. I returned to my office in the wee hours, with all the information I needed as well as a complementary nasal realignment.

It turned out that the Jorgonaut had stacked his cabinet with crooks like they were dinner plates. Ashley Altman, his Vice President, had no prior political experience, and no platform other than insatiable ambition. Sam Spiegel, Minister of the Treasury, was a world famous gambler and

con-man known wanted in nine countries on seventeen separate counts of fraud. He was known as The Numismatist because money that wasn't watched closely had a nasty habit of winding up in his "collection." Elizabeth Gray became Minister of Immigration by default after it turned out that one of her rivals was a sexual predator, another an escaped convict, and a third totally insane. In a nominally unrelated election, Bryce Lanham became the president of the Hitchcock Historical Society, but rumor has it he came out of the whole process with a lucrative, government-financed book deal.

What was I getting myself into? Only time would tell, but time had been keeping awful quiet of late. What I really needed was a more audible clock. For the time being, I decided that if time wouldn't tell me, I wouldn't tell time, and threw my clock out the window. I still had no bed after a similar falling out with sleep two weeks ago, so I lay back in my chair, kicked my feet up, and listened for signs of the future.

TO BE CONTINUED

But first, a message from the publisher...

Hiya folks,

We here at B&B Books are sure glad you've picked up this latest serial work from Ben Brubaker. He really is one of our finest writers: real exciting, real hard-boiled. Our latest experiment in publishing sunny side up detective novels didn't prove too lucrative, so we're glad to be back on track with the demands of our fans. There's just one thing about Brubaker's writing, though: many of our readers have complained that they haven't the faintest idea what on earth he's talking about fifty percent of the time. This is kind of a big deal, so we've decided to include a helpful appendix after each installment describing what happened in clear, uncluttered prose. Some of this stuff didn't actually make it into the final version of the book, but trust us, it's actually more important than most of what did. Without further ado:

-The Hitchcock House Council consists of **Jory Harris** (President), **Ashley Altman** (VP), **Ben Brubaker** (Secretary), **Sam Spiegel** (Treasurer), **Bryce Lanham** (Historian), **Yuto Nakafuku** (IHC), **Steven LaRue** (HARC), **Lib Gray** (PSAC), **Elizabeth Lee** and **John Bobka** (IM Sports), **Sam Bowman** and **Talia Penslar** (Social Chairs), **Max Falkowitz** (Bartlett and Section I), **Austin Feller** and **Aaron Space** (At Large), **Erica Fagin** (Condom Czar), **Glenn Wang** (Section II), **Jesse Roth** (Section III), **Graham Albachten** (Section IV), and **Natalie Levy** (Section V). Phew.

-The Hitchcock front door will be locked starting Monday, on account of those pesky traveling salesmen. You can open it with your CX60 key, which is the one that says "CX60" on it.

-There is such a thing as Richard III. Moreover, you could sign up to go see it!

-There is also such a person as Robert Grider. He will fix your computer.

-Bad Movie Night at 10PM Sunday in the Rec Room.

-Also Sunday at 10PM (I think) is a study break with food brought to you by Aaron Horton.

-Jordan Phillips may or may not have your jacket.

-You could have gotten a flu shot, but by now you can only get the flu. Sorry.

Minutes: Chapter II

Please note that all resemblances to real persons, living or dead, are purely coincidental, and nothing in these minutes even comes close to expressing any view that ever has been or will be held by anybody. Thank you.

“Hey, wake up.”

He probably isn't talking to me, I reasoned astutely, and resolved to fall asleep again. Then I felt a jab against my ribs. *He probably isn't poking at me*. It was a noble effort, but even I couldn't believe that, and I had been known to believe just about anything. I opened one eye.

“You've been sleeping continuously for seventeen hours,” said Bartley.

“So why you gotta interrupt me?”

“Because there's another guy who's going to be sleeping continuously for the rest of eternity. He's dead. Wake, up, kid. You're a private eye. This is Christmas come early.”

I got out of my chair and put my hat on. With my hat on, I was ready for anything.

“Who's dead?”

“Steven LaRue.”

I hadn't been ready for that. I staggered back into my seat and took my hat off. Steven LaRue. The new face in town, from Breckinridge far to the east. He came to Hitchcock an idealistic reformer, a white knight determined to take a stand against corruption and end Hitchcock's decades of isolationism. His message of hope spread through Hitchcock like wildfire, and soon enough, you couldn't turn a corner without seeing an “I believe in Steven” sign. He was elected in a landslide victory to represent Hitchcock in HARC, an international institution committed to multilateralism, and immediately won a Nobel Peace Prize for being such a good guy.

“He went pavement diving from forty stories up,” continued Bartley. “And I don't think he was an extreme sports aficionado, if you catch my drift. It's happening already, the trouble I warned you about. You need to find out what Jorgen Harris is up to.”

“Jorgen Harris? You think he's involved in all of this?”

Bartley laughed. “Does a pig fly?”

“No.”

“Oh, wait, shit. I mean, does a bird fly?”

“Yes.”

“Well, there's your answer. That is to say, yes, I do think he's involved. And I'm afraid I'm next on his hit list. I'm gonna have to lie low for a while. You won't be seeing much of me, starting now.”

“Wait, Bartley—”

But he was gone. It didn't make much sense, but I decided it was high time I oughta be gone as well. On my way to pay the president a visit, I picked up a paper and glanced over the state of the world. There was no mention of LaRue's untimely death. But I did learn that nearby Snell had been conquered by the Alans, who, as far as anybody could tell, were a confederation of nomadic pastoralists last seen in North Africa in the first century AD. And that Erica Fagin, minister for sexual health, had fled the country with our entire stock of contraceptives, and pregnancies were spiking already, which really made no sense if you started to think about it.

For the sake of my sanity, I didn't think about it, and tossed the paper aside, for I had reached Jorghannesburg, the enormous, opulent palace complex our new president had built upon coming to power. All around the grounds were devotees of the Jorgonaut's Armadillo Cult, who were encouraged to ritually mutilate their bodies and sell themselves into slavery in an effort to become “deformed but useful.” At least it wasn't as bad as Generalissimo Pranco's Kermit Cult. As I walked up the drive, flanked on either side by thirty-foot tall armadillo statues, I concluded that worrying about the state of the world was a luxury not permitted to those living in a state ruled by total fucking lunatics.

When I entered his throne room, the Jorgonaut was being debriefed on the condition of different parts of his realm.

“Most gracious supreme leader,” Jesse Roth began. “Section III still hasn't received the federal subsidies we requested last month. Discontent is widespread, and if aid doesn't come soon, I'm afraid the people may join the citizens of Section II in open rebellion.”

“What are you talking about? There is no rebellion in Section II,” said Glenn Wang quickly, perhaps too quickly.

“That's right,” said the supreme leader. “Besides, as far as we're concerned, there's no such place as Section III. It isn't mentioned in any of our records.”

“Um, but I live—”

“Silence!” roared the Jorgonaut. “Out of our sight, all of you! Oh, and Albachten, Keep sending us those cookies, and we will look favorably on your province. We do enjoy our cookies.”

Graham Albachten, who had put on about thirty pounds since I'd seen him last, smiled smugly, and exited with an extravagant bow. The other section representatives tiptoed out behind him meekly, and almost collided with Sam Spiegel, who barged through the door with a shovel over one shoulder and an sack overflowing with wads of hundreds over the other.

“Don't mind me,” said Spiegel. “This is entirely legal.”

“Ah, our dear friend the minister of propaganda!” exclaimed Harris, turning to me. “Let’s propagate. Not in the sense of increase and multiply. You know what we mean. First of all, there’s this troubling business of LaRue. What a shame. Such potential. Totally accidental, of course.”

“Yes, of course, supreme leader. A wise insight. You’re completely right,” I said, deciding it was better to be safe than sorry. Harris was famous for having no dietary scruples whatsoever, going so far as to occasionally eat advisors who displeased him.

“Of course we are. But the masses must not be informed of his death. They might get the wrong idea. We must come up with a different explanation. For instance, the general good demanded that LaRue retire from the public sphere to discuss quantum mechanics with the world’s most prominent physicists. That’s what you’ll write.”

“Sir?”

The Jorgonaut roared with laughter.

“We didn’t hire you to think, you fool! Your job is to write. If we wanted somebody to think, we naturally would have hired ourselves.”

Had the Jorgonaut been in a foul mood, My moment of imprudence might have cost me my tastiest limb. I was overcome with a newfound appreciation for my appendages.

“While you’re at it, you should draft a statement about how Mutually Assured Destruction is our official policy in the event of a barbarian invasion from Snell. And write a set-theoretical proof of the nonexistence of Section III. Go now. We have permitted the masses to enter our presence and kiss the hem of our robe. Which means we need to acquire a robe.”

As he plodded away in search of the requisite article of clothing, Spiegel grabbed my sleeve and pulled me into the hall.

“You seem like a smart enough guy, Brubaker, so I’ll get right to the point,” he said. “If Steven LaRue’s death was an accident, I’ll eat my shovel.”

There was an awkward silence as I waited to see if he would eat his shovel, and he focused intently on not doing so.

“You win, kid,” I said at last, impressed with his perseverance. “Go on.”

“My predecessor, Josh Lerner, was no friend of LaRue. He put a lot of time and energy into promoting his friend John Bolton’s bid for HARC Representative. Bolton never stood a chance in the first place, of course, because he’s gone on record saying he doesn’t believe HARC actually exists. But now Lerner and Bolton are back with a vengeance. It looks like they’re determined to make conservatism politically relevant again. I think they’re out to get me next,

since Lerner lost his life savings when I took his place as secretary. Don't worry, that was also entirely legal. The point is, you've got to protect me!"

"Why me?"

"You control the flow of information, and as I've always said, that's where the real power is. On the other hand, the real power also lies in controlling the money, which is what I do. So I figure us guys with the real power should stick together. On yet another hand, the power that lies in being able to throw people out of windows shouldn't be underestimated. So actually, I guess I have no idea. I don't have enough hands to figure it out."

I left Spiegel trying to figure out how best to graft mechanical arms to his back. His argument was as full of holes as a hunk of swiss cheese. On the other hand, there were many other varieties of cheese with holes. I was having a hard time pinning down the metaphorical significance of this observation, but I was pretty sure it meant I shouldn't dismiss Spiegel's accusation out of hand. How far could I trust a guy who walked around with a shovel and two million dollars in cash? Probably no further than I could throw him, and I was out of practice. I was determined to get to the bottom of this mystery, even if, like a beneficiary of plastic surgery, it had a false bottom. I would have to pay a visit to Josh Lerner.

BUT WAIT, THERE'S MORE:

-**Tom Wood** said **something I missed**, because I arrived thirty seconds late. It probably **wasn't very important**.

-**Grider** says get on **CAAlert**. Grider speaks the **truth**.

-**Josh Lerner** wants you all to go see **John Bolton** speak, because otherwise he's out like a billion dollars. Keep in mind that Josh Lerner and John Bolton may be responsible for the death of Steven LaRue.

-**Steven LaRue** is not dead, but he was replaced as **HARC Rep** by **Mandy Stafford** in a special election

-**Jordan Phillips** wants to start a **Google Calendar** for the house. You can talk to him about this.

-**Talia Penslar** loves you and your music, but sleep is marginally more important to her.

-**Bad Movie Night** Sunday at 10PM: the movie is called **The Apple**

-**Study Break** by **Malika** Sunday at 9PM: the food may or may not involve **apples**

-**Aaron** says that we're going to have a **House Homecoming** at some point. This may or may not have something to do with the fact that we **won a sports match**.

-You could talk to **Yuto Nakafuku** about transportation or dining issues.

-**House Meeting** will become **House Meeting: The Musical** next week. You should tell **Jory** about any musical ideas you might have, and he may **spare your life**.

-**Peer Health Exchange** is an organization that talks to high school kids about **important things**. You should contact **Grace Evans** if you're interested.

-**Some** of the words in **this part of the minutes** will be in **italics** (just kidding).

Minutes: Chapter III

In which more people die.

-Ben

Killing off fictionalized versions of people you know who bear very little resemblance to their real-life counterparts since October 2009.

I grimaced in disgust as I walked down the wide, spotless boulevard and imagined the fat cats of Section IV, leering at me through the windows. Albachten's cookies were making them corpulent and complacent, while the threat of starvation in Sections III and V loomed larger with each passing day. Even though Spiegel had apparently ended up with his life savings by means of some legal loophole I didn't fully understand, Josh Lerner could still somehow afford to live here, in Section IV heights, far from the filth overflowing from the gutters in the rest of Hitchcock. It made me sick, but now was no time to start hurling, except insofar as hurling meant hurling people in to walls. It was high time for that.

"Lerner!" I shouted up towards his windows.

"Who is it?" said Josh Lerner.

"Brubaker, the private eye. Open up."

There was a long silence.

"He isn't home. This is Bryce," said Josh Lerner, entirely unconvincingly.

"Listen, bub," I said. "This kinda thing might work over the telephone. But I'm on the Street Where You Live. You could play nice and let me in, or I could sit down right in front of your door and pass the time with a cigarette. And I got a lot of cigarettes."

He got the hint and opened the door. I put out my cigarette.

"Alright, bub," I said, stepping inside. "Start talking. I came here to do two things: get information and smoke cigarettes. And I'm all out of cigarettes."

"But that's not fair! You said—"

"Life ain't fair. When ya try to cut a pie into equal slices, ya end up making the whole pie smaller. It's a property of pie crusts, see. We got Trouble, Lerner. Right here in Hitchcock city. With a capital T and that rhymes with B and that stands for Bolton."

"I had nothing to do with that," said Lerner quickly. "What are you talking about?"

"What are *you* talking about?"

"You didn't hear? Vanished. Nobody's seen him since Tuesday, when he spoke before a crowd of thousands to propose a three-state solution to Hitchcock's problems."

"A three-state solution?"

“Cede Section I to Snell and Section V to Anatomy. It’s not a bad plan, really. Everybody knows that first-years and upperclassmen can’t coexist peacefully. And upperclassmen can’t govern themselves. Just look at the Jorgonaut and Franco.”

I grabbed Lerner and tried rather ineffectually to hurl him against a wall. I think I must have sprained my wrist in the process.

“I’m not here to debate politics,” I said, nursing my wrist. “You’re going to tell me where Bolton is hiding. Steven LaRue is dead, and I want answers.”

“That’s what I’m saying,” Lerner insisted. “I can’t tell you where Bolton is. He’s missing, presumed dead, which is why I’m hiding. They’re after me next, I just know it!”

Hmm. There seemed to be an awful lot of people they were after next. But I still didn’t know who *they* were. Lerner was telling the truth. He knew nothing. It was past time to be gone.

“Sorry about trying to throw you into a wall,” I said. “Can’t make an omelet without breaking a few eggs, which, in this case, represent the ligaments in my wrist. On the other hand, the eggs also represent eggs.”

I went into his kitchen and made myself an omelet. Then I left, and wandered back through the deserted streets towards Section I. So Bolton was missing. That certainly complicated things. Maybe Spiegel was right, and Bolton had killed LaRue and then fled the country. Or maybe Spiegel had orchestrated it all as part of a diabolical scheme to get rid of his rival Lerner. Maybe it would turn out that I had multiple personality disorder, and I was really behind it all. Or maybe some hardcore isolationist was trying to make sure Hitchcock would never have another HARC representative. There were so many possibilities. *With a little bit of luck I won’t get stuck*, I told myself. But it looked like I was stuck.

“It sucks to be you!” echoed the booming voice of the Jorgonaut from the grounds of his palace complex. “It sucks to be starving, disenfranchised, and not have a clue! It sucks to be you!”

Ah yes. It was “Exult the Glory the Supreme Leader through Song and Dance Week.” The infamous assassin Aaron Horton, called “Whacky Guy,” because he had no compunctions about whacking people, had accepted the Jorgonaut’s offer to become chief of police, and it looked like he was in charge of security. It was depressing to see him sink so low, but, then again, what do you do with a B.A. in English?

The cacophonous mixture of sounds was giving me a headache, so I ducked into the closest doorway, which happened to be one of the ubiquitous Bartlett eateries, which were owned and operated by the state. I needed a bite to eat anyway, and my definition of “eat” had always been generous. A sudden and inexplicable instinct drove me away from the shepherd’s pie I had been eyeing, and I wandered over to the Euro-French *Haute Cuisine* Provencal Station de Cordon Bleu, where they were serving fried chicken, and decided I’d stick with that.

I sat down at an empty table, and took a bite, then immediately spit it out again. *What on earth?* I thought. *It's fried chicken. Even Bartlett can't mess it up this bad.* But when I looked down at my plate, I found to my surprise that the morsel I just ejected wasn't chicken at all. It was John Bolton's mustache.

DUN DUN DUN...

(The dramatic sound effect, not, y'know, the color)

IN CASE YOU DON'T CARE:

-**Tom Wood** has **nothing to say**.

-**House Homecoming** will happen, according to **Aaron**.

-**Bad Movie Night** at 10PM Sunday. The movie is **Surf Nazis Must Die**.

-**Snell** House Trip to **some musical or other** by the creators of **Urinetown**. Talk to **Stacy Hackner** if you're interested.

-If, on the other hand, you're interested in **Wilco**, you should talk to **Kai Eldredge**. You're not allowed to be interested in both.

-**Alan** from Snell wants to invest in **pool supplies**. The billiards kind of pool, not the swimming kind of pool. Alan hates swimming. Also, Alan, not Allen. Allen hates both kinds of pool.

-Speaking of which, **Adam Janofsky** broke one of the pool cues in half. Adam obeys **Newton's Third Law**, and has therefore consented to being **broken in half** by a pool cue.

-Somehow, we continue to win at **Sports**.

-**Max Falkowitz** will be showing **Battlestar Galactica** in his room after House Meetings.

-**Talia** talked to the head chef of Bartlett, and can swear that he's a **decent human being**. If you want to talk to such a human being, you could talk to him to. Specifically, about allergies and stuff.

-**Jory** has supplies from **KENYA!** You could buy it and support women and children in **KENYA!** And once you're wearing a bunch of stuff from **KENYA** people will think you're from **KENYA** and you'll be able to run as fast as **KENYANS!**

Minutes: Chapter IV

Arrived late, much like Cornchip Eleanor Weaver, to whom they are dedicated, and in whose name (the cool one, duh) they are delivered* to you.

-Ben

*: If I told you there was no pun intended, you wouldn't believe me. So I won't even try. But by telling you about how I'm not going to tell you, I've actually told you. This is a rhetorical device called praeteritio in Greek. You probably don't care.

I kept my eyes fixed on the bottle of kiwi-lime sauce and waited, not daring to risk a glance at either the glass of brackish fluid that was supposedly orange juice to my left or the anonymous grey slab of “Salisbury Steak” to my right lest the contents of my stomach should try to flee in terror. The kiwi-lime sauce, I realized, was probably the only edible thing for miles around. Nor did I dare to look up at the dour visage of the man who sat on the other side of the table, peering down at me like a bird of prey: Falko Falkowitz, Czar of Kitchengrad and the right-hand man of the legendary Frank Dickinson Bartlett, Ghost King of the Dining Halls and also of Manly Sports. *More like Vulcho Vulchowitz, the way Bartlett’s been scavenging these days.*

“So, what precisely is your complaint?” the Bartlett representative said at last.

“That was supposed to be the obvious part. There’s a dead man’s mustache in my chicken. For starters, I want to know what happened to the rest of him. Then we can talk about entrees.”

“Did you know the dinee personally?” Falkowitz replied without batting an eye.

“The *dinee*?”

“It’s simple terminology, really. You were the diner. Bolton was the dinee. Did you know him personally?”

“No, but that’s not important. What’s important is he’s *dead*, don’t you understand?”

“If you didn’t know him personally, there’s no basis on which you can lodge an official complaint.”

I blinked.

“Come again?”

“We’re trying to forge a sense of class consciousness amongst our patrons by having people from different social groups eat each other. Naturally, if you had eaten a friend of yours, we would have offered you our deepest condolences and two free swipes. We keep telling Immigration to stop sending us multicultural prospies. Eating them offends *everybody*, so what’s the use? But I digress.”

“God Damn it, Falkowitz, I want answers!” I said, slamming my fist down on top of the table. “Who killed John Bolton?”

Falkowitz’s whole body suddenly seemed to undergo a violent spasm, and electricity arced for a moment across his chest.

“You selected John Bolton,” he said in a voice devoid of emotion. “During what times would you be most likely to use this service?”

“What the fuck?”

“You selected ‘What the fuck?’ During what times would you be most likely to use this service?”

It seemed Falkowitz was a robot. He could be of no further use to me. Perhaps I had found the last cylon. But I had neither time nor patience for such concerns. These are for schizophrenics and the hopelessly obsessed.

* * * *

Meeting with Falkowitz left bad taste in mouth, so bad, have forgotten how to use pronouns and articles. Nabbed that tasty kiwi-lime sauce on way out; drank some, and soon remembered language. Fun while it lasted, though. Felt like Rorschach.

It seemed like every angle at which I tried to approach the case just led to another wall. Or perhaps the same wall, I wasn’t quite sure. It all depended on whether the half-length of the wall was greater than the sine of the angle at which I was approaching it. My head was spinning. I needed to talk to somebody, and who better than the one man who always contradicted me, and generally tried to make my life as difficult as possible?

Austin Feller saw me before I saw him, snuck up behind me, and punched me twice in the back. *This is what friends are for, I suppose.* Austin and I had been on the run from the Pranco regime together last year, and, while I had been offered a cushy cabinet job when the new administration came to power, he was still wanted by the state, for whatever reason. He asked me why I had come, and I briefly recounted the events of the past few days, starting with Bartley’s mysterious visit and culminating with my unfortunate encounter with Falkowitz.

“Sounds like Bartlett has some real sanitary issues,” Austin said, completely ignoring the bulk of what I had said. “Speaking of which, I have something to tell you. And this isn’t just about how the math department periodically sends its students reminders not to shower by email. This is—”

Everything he may have said after that was swallowed by an awful screeching sound from the next room over, which lasted for three and a half minutes, and was followed by an exuberant “Shazzam!”

Ah, yes. Dr. Aaron Space, until recently president of the Hitchcock Academy of Sciences, now on the run from the law after it was discovered he had diverted the entirety of the nation’s science budget to the pursuit of his personal dream to land a blue whale on Neptune. Just when he was about to have the museum named after him, too.

“Does he do that often?” I asked after the noise finally subsided.

“Every time I ever have anything to say. *You* try being at large with him.”

“Hmm. Well, I came here to warn you about John Bolton, not to flee from justice in the company of an eminent physicist. I need to know who killed Bolton, and why.”

“I heard he’s been working for the government since ‘01, derailing diplomatic approaches to delicate situations. Maybe this was a political killing?”

“Maybe. Or maybe someone’s picking off HARC representatives. Who’s next, Austin? Aaron Space? Mandy Stafford? Me? You?”

I realized immediately that I wouldn’t have another opportunity to make a dramatic exit on such a dramatic high note for probably another five years, so I left without saying another word. Austin had told me nothing, partly because I hadn’t given him any time to reply, partly because of Aaron Space, and partly because Austin never told me anything. I was back to square one. Until out of nowhere came an inexplicable flashback:

“Maybe. Or maybe someone’s picking off HARC representatives. Who’s next, Austin? Aaron Space? Mandy Stafford? Me? You?”

My very words! Still, I wasn’t quite sure *why* I had had this flashback, when the events I was supposed to be flashing back to were still entirely fresh in my memory. And then it struck me. Three of the people I had mentioned weren’t affiliated with HARC at all; the only reason I mentioned them in the first place was to give my statement the rhetorical oomph it otherwise would have lacked. But if neither me, nor Austin, nor Aaron Space was next, then Mandy had to be next! My logic had more holes than a diffraction grid, which probably explained why it was so good at interfering with itself. But I resolutely ignored the fact that I had spontaneously created meaning out of rhetorical oomph. There were deaths to prevent, and I had to improve my track record somehow.

* * * *

“Hello?” said Mandy Stafford as she stepped into the small room hidden in the heart of the bureaucratic clusterfuck of the Reynolds Club. The lights were off, and all was silent. “Is anybody here?”

“It seems *you* are the only one here, Ms. Stafford,” said an ominous voice from deep within the gloom. “*You* are the only one left in HARC.” Mandy froze as she heard the door lock behind her.

“But, please, make yourself comfortable,” continued the ominous voice. “We’re going to be here for a while.”

(Excerpted from Brubaker, B. Michael, *Being and the Perennial Question in the works of Ben Brubaker*, Cambridge: Harvard, 2036.)

[...] and thus the onus lies with the reader to problematize the notion that it is even *conceivable* to overemphasize the importance of Brubaker's writing for language, the literary culture of early twenty-first-century Hitchcock, and the moral and spiritual well-being of humanity more generally. I argue at length in Chapter 12 that not only can humans not really be said to have been human *in esse* before Brubaker, they cannot be said to have been mammals at all, and in fact more closely resembled our most recent common ancestor with arthropods. At the very end of Chapter 4, as we have seen, Brubaker revolutionized the literary world by inventing *third-person narrative*: the brief scene between Mandy Stafford and the person with the ominous voice actually occurs *outside* of the presence of the protagonist Brubaker: as commonplace as this may seem to contemporary readers, we must remember that such a narrative decision had *never been made* before Brubaker. And this was just the beginning of Brubaker's experimental phase: in subsequent chapters, he employs meta-textuality so extreme you'll probably shit yourself [...]

AW, SHIT, HE STILL MAKES JOKES IN THIS PART:

-**Noah Moskowitz** and **Shola Farber** confirmed as associate members.

-**House Meeting** will continue to take place on **Thursdays**

-The **party line** on **parties** is don't be **lyin'**. Tell the Resident Heads. Also, don't do **lines**. Coke is bad.

-The **Off-Off Campus** show, Give Me Liberty or Give Me Meth, is now playing on Friday evenings at **University Church**. Don't give them meth. Meth is bad.

-**House homecoming** (hereafter housecoming) is **still** happening.

-**Regular homecoming** happened, and some of you went, which was **unprecedented**.

-We are good at **soccer**. We may or may not be good at other sports.

-There was a motion to **impeach Elizabeth Lee** for not being present to talk about **sports**. She has been given a week to come up with a defense. **Wearing a suit of unimpeachable quality** has been shown to correlate strongly with whether or not an elected official survives impeachment.

-Someone from the **SCC** will be coming to the dorm of November 4th to talk to **you specifically** about how to use a **condom**. Specifically, how to put one on **as quickly as possible**, with no thoughts for the **consequences**. The weekend of November 7th-8th will hereafter be referred to as **"Start a Family Weekend."**

Minutes: Chapter V

So last week I promised you minutes in a new file type.

Then I had writer's block.

And now I have midterms.

Which is why the minutes are late again.

And why the new file type

Isn't actually a real file type

At all.

Sincerely,

Ben

[Minutes.fml attached along with minutes in .doc and .pdf formats]

I rounded another corner, panting for breath, and almost ran right into a sign blocking the path: “Hallway Closed for Recarpeting until 2040,” it read, and then went on to explain that the current carpet situation wasn’t pedestrian-friendly, and had therefore warranted a three billion-dollar investment.

Shit, I said to myself. *Which way now?* I spun around, just in time to acquaint myself with the pickaxe that was destined to bury itself in my foot approximately two seconds into the future.

“We’re tearing up the existing carpet to try to make it look even older, thus justifying the decision we’ve already made to replace it with the new carpet,” said the man with the pickaxe in response to my howls of pain. “When we finish laying down the new carpet, we’ll probably tear that one up too. I mean, we’ve already invested in the pickaxes.”

“What are you talking about? I have an inch-wide puncture wound through the top of my foot!”

“Hmmm...” said the man with the pickaxe. “That’ll probably make you look older, thus justifying the decision to replace you that I’m sure somebody somewhere has already made. Not my responsibility. If you have a complaint, you can take it up with the Customer Satisfaction Bureau on the seventieth floor.”

I hobbled past him, back the way I had come, and turned left at the first opportunity. Over the millennia, the interior of the Reynolds Club had been warped until it resembled a gross physical reflection of the Escherian tangle of committees, bureaus, and special interest groups that comprised ORCSA. Rumor had it that even stepping on the wrong tile could leave the hapless explorer stranded inside for more than four years. But I gritted my teeth, and limped onwards. The seventieth floor, if it even existed, was far away, and there was little time. I had to find Mandy Stafford before it was too late.

I passed the room where the Bartlett Committee meeting wasn’t happening, because the Committee’s constitution included a clause specifying that a meeting could only be held if it had been so decided by majority vote at the previous meeting. I passed a room in which Resident Masters, Resident Heads, and Resident Assistants were amending their laws to allow for the existence of one Resident President and sixteen Resident Superfluities. Tom Wood, dressed to the nines, shot me a look that said “If you don’t tell the world how sharp I look, I’ll have you defenestrated,” only in a thick Australian accent. I even passed a room filled entirely with barrels of salted pork, which must have cost ORCSA thousands. Then, just when all seemed lost, I heard an anguished cry from the end of the hall:

“No! You’ll all be guilty! Killing me won’t bring back your goddamn job prospects!”

I raced forward and flung open the door to reveal Mandy Stafford locked inside a very phallic wicker contraption, surrounded by heaps and heaps of papers. Her preppily clad captors were all around, hauling papers towards the cage. It looked like they were planning to drown her in memos.

“IHC! Attack!” shouted their leader, whose face was hidden behind a sinister-looking crow mask.

[There follows a fight scene so contrived and poorly executed that we have omitted the details lest readers with any taste whatsoever suffer an aneurysm. Suffice it to say that the protagonist ends up dressed as a bear, punching a seemingly endless series of political science and economics majors in the face. A giant python also figures into it somehow. We will try to ensure that Brubaker’s literary talents never reach such an atrocious nadir again –ed.]

The leader was still alive, it seemed, and drawing in short, sputtering breaths, but the python’s fangs had done serious damage. He wouldn’t survive much longer. I lifted his mask hesitantly, and long blonde locks tumbled forward onto his brow. I gasped. My adversary was none other than Jordan Phillips.

“It was you all along!” I said, trying to process everything that had just happened. “LaRue, Bolton, and now this. Why?”

“I was just trying...to streamline...uchhh...the political process,” he managed. “HARC has long been...urghh...inefficient...”

“But at what cost, Jordan, at what cost?”

It was too late. He was gone.

“Phillips was just a wrench in the works,” came a voice from behind me. “I mean, a cog in the machine. The “wrench in the works” metaphor actually applies better to you or me.”

I spun around. Bartley was standing behind me, surveying the scene grimly.

“What I mean is, he didn’t plan all this himself. The Jorgonaut’s mixed up in it somehow, I just know it.”

“Bartley? What are you doing here? How did you even find me?”

“I came to deliver news of the outside world. You’ve been in Reynolds Club for a long time. While you’ve been gone, war broke out between Hitchcock and Snell!”

“War!?!” I replied, and silently congratulated myself on having vocally conveyed such nuanced punctuation. But there were more important things at stake.

“As you’ve probably heard, birthrates have been on the rise ever since Erica Fagin fled the country with all our condoms,” Bartley went on. “Then the residents of Section 4 witnessed something truly miraculous: Jacob Berman and a purple Mohawk both burst fully formed one evening from the forehead of Graham Albachten. The residents of Section IV interpreted this as a sign that the gods were on their side, and that they should take a stand against the tyranny of Section I. Section I replied by stepping up the tyranny to a whole new level. Caught in the

crossfire, many residents of Sections II and III fled their homes, and one, Adheeb Ghazali, made it to Snell, where he was allowed to settle in return for the access codes to Hitchcock's west gate. Even now, the armies of the Alans are pouring through that same gate into Hitchcock, slaughtering all in their path. Divided as we are, we don't stand a chance!"

"Um, hello?" said Mandy Stafford. "I still exist, y'know, even though I haven't been mentioned for over a page."

"Plus, we have this whole situation on our hands," Bartley went on, and picked up a folded piece of paper from Phillips' body. On it were scrawled the phone numbers and addresses of Erica Fagin, Ashley Altman, Max Falkowitz, and the Jorgonaut. "If you think this case is closed, think again."

"Like I said, still here. Can one of you take me out of this goddamn wicker phallus?"

I took my leave of Bartley and Stafford, found my way out of Reynolds Club, somehow, and began the long trek to Hitchcock across the wilderness of the quads. It was time to track down Jordan Phillips' contacts and get to the bottom of this. The plot looked to be much deeper than I had ever suspected. I dreaded to think of what might happen next. Evidently, so did the guy writing this story, because at this point, a Snellian bomber that looked oddly like a plot device passed overhead and released its load, knocking me unconscious and abruptly terminating this installment. Closure? What's closure?

THE HAPPENED/HAPPENING/WILL HAPPEN SECTION

-**House Homecoming** is happening (for real this time), on **Friday of 7th Week**.

-You know what happens at the end of Homecoming? (Hint: it also happens at the end of the word "homecoming"). You should have worn/should wear/should be wearing **a condom**. Condoms are on the **4th floor of Section 5**.

-**Section 2** won the **pumpkin** contest, after Tom altered the results by means of a secret formula consisting of **liverwort, regression analysis, and too much spare time**.

-The motion to impeach **Elizabeth Lee** failed due to insufficient zeal on the part of the impeachers. Which is peachy for the impeachee.

-You oughta increase your personal frequency of **ID Showing** by an iota. I oughta stop making such god-awful puns.

-There was a **great migration of peoples** to different parts of the dorm. Read all about it in the **actual minutes part of the minutes**.

-If you're here over **Thanksgiving**, you can participate in the Thanksgiving **Pot Luck**, organized by **Max Falkowitz**. More on that later.

Minutes: Chapter VI

Surgeon General's Warning: contains nothing.

The complete and utter lack of content in these minutes will leave you feeling similarly empty inside.

I came to and found myself seated in the middle of a cramped, dimly lit chamber. *I'm waking up*, I said to myself. *It must be the next installment*. Then I decided to stop being self-reflexive and determine my whereabouts. A throbbing pain towards the back of my head was making it difficult for me to think straight, so I squinted into the gloom, looking left and right for something, anything, that would tell me something about where I was and why. There was nothing. Blank, featureless, brick walls surrounded me on all four sides, with no visible doors or windows. *How did I even get in here? There's gotta be—*

Whack!

There's only one man in the world who can deliver a whack like that, I realized. And then:

“Alright, Brubaker, make it snappy,” came Aaron’s voice from behind me. “People are dead, and we want answers.”

“Of course people are dead! There’s a war going on outside!” I protested. “Listen, fellas, there’s been a mistake here. You’ve got the wrong guy!”

“Steven LaRue. John Bolton. Jordan Phillips,” said Malika, stepping out of the darkness in front of me. “These names don’t mean anything to you, hmm?”

“Now wait a minute, this is crazy! I’ve—”

“Hit him again, Whacky guy,” said Malika.

Whack!

Stars were dancing in front of my eyes, and I wasn’t interested in seeing *Dreamgirls*.

“I...I need to go to a meeting,” I managed. “Please! If I don’t write my weekly report on the state of the realm, the citizens of Hitchcock will be uninformed!”

“The Jorgonaut’s propaganda campaign, eh?” Malika laughed. “Well I’m not playing that game anymore. Aaron and I work for Tom Wood now. When the smoke from the war clears, he’s the one who’s gonna be running this country. What’s left of it, anyway.”

“I should note that he was looking particularly sharp about a week and a half ago,” Aaron added. “And you know what else? If you don’t deliver your “minutes,” or whatever you call them, nobody’s going to notice. Nobody even reads them, not even him,” he said, staring out of the page and directly into the astonished eyes of Tony Hoffman, who had been minding his own business in a stall on the third floor of Section IV.

I heard the sound of crumbling masonry behind me, and knew this was my chance.

“Aaron, you fool, you broke the fourth wall!” screamed Malika as I leapt out of my seat, ducked through the hole in the brickwork, and found myself outside on the quads once more.

I had no idea what that was all about, and I hadn’t come any closer to solving the mystery of the murdered HARC representatives. It was with a great deal of exasperation that I realized that I would have to wait for the next installment yet again for the plot to make any progress whatsoever.

I NO LONGER HAVE ANY IDEAS FOR WHAT TO PUT IN THE HEADING OF THIS SECTION. IF YOU DO, EMAIL ME AT BBRUBAKER@UCHICAGO.EDU AND I’LL GIVE YOU A QUARTER! A QUARTER! YOU CAN USE IT TO DO A QUARTER OF A LOAD OF LAUNDRY!

-**Ben Brubaker** invents two literary devices: **metatextuality** and **stalling**.

-**Anna Sarfaty** wants to get rid of the last few “Armadillo goyle perched on top of a pile of books” house shirts. Sign up for them at the beginning of next House Meeting.

-Submit your designs for **new house shirts** to **Jory**.

-Uncle **Sam** wants **you** to come up with ways to **spend our house funds!**

-Guess what’s still happening:

A) **The Spanish Inquisition**

B) **Healthcare Reform**

C) **House Homecoming**

D) **All of the Above**

-Guess what just happened: the **Banana Split Study Break**. If you missed it, there’s probably excess **Ice Cream** to be found in the **Hitchcock Kitchen**.

Answer: C)

Minutes: Chapter VII

So late they're practically early!

I made my way across the ruins of Section III cautiously, gazing around in silent terror at how much destruction could come of a few short weeks of war. It was quiet. Too quiet. So quiet I was positive that something would break the silence and interrupt me before I had to think of a sentence dramatic enough to follow “Too quiet.” *Goddamnit. You gotta do everything yourself these days.*

“Hello?” I shouted. Then all of a sudden it wasn’t quiet at all. I heard a bloodthirsty feline snarling sound in the distance that quickly grew too loud for my liking. *Why is it never exactly the right level of quiet?* I didn’t have much time to contemplate this question, because that was when Cullen Seaton tackled me, knocking me to the ground behind a pile of debris. Seaton motioned for me to be quiet, and whatever was doing the snarling passed by without seeing us.

“What was *that*?”

“The Bobcats,” Seaton explained. “A savage, half-crazed street gang that came to power in Section II recently. They follow a mysterious leader known only as John, who apparently oscillates wildly between purring softly and trying to have sex with everything in sight.”

“So the Bobcats are in control of this sector?”

“For now,” Seaton said, gazing off into the distance wistfully. “But soon, the day will come when the citizens of Section III will rise up and take back the land that is rightfully ours. Nathan Bartley will be our king—”

“What? What does Bartley have to do with this?”

“—And I will be his consort...”

Seaton was almost certainly delusional, possibly shell-shocked, and no longer paying attention to me in any event, so I decided to get moving. As I walked onwards through the ruins of Hitchcock, I heard the shouts of demagogues and agitators, clinging to their criminally inefficient political system for comfort as the world they had known collapsed in chaos and violence all around them.

“If elected, I will make it mandatory that all my subjects perform one year of corvée labor! I mean, community service!”

“Motion to impeach! Your position was never in the constitution to begin with!”

“Everything you’ve heard about communism is wrong! The word ‘communism’ doesn’t even start with a ‘c!’”

A tragic story. But neither it nor any of the other atrocities I had witnessed since returning to Hitchcock prepared me for what I saw when I reached the border of Section IV: Sam Spiegel

stood before me with six giant mechanical arms sprouting from his back. A small band of guerilla fighters was huddled behind him, and in the distance, the armies of Section I stretched out across the horizon as far as the eye could see. There must have been thousands of them.

“Tens of thousands,” said Spiegel, as if reading my mind.

“I did read your mind,” he added.

“How?” I managed. “And what are you doing here?”

“It’s simple,” Spiegel explained. “I grafted these mechanical arms onto my back, and now I can intuitively weigh the costs and benefits of any series of decisions with up to eight possibilities at each node! More to the point, when I drilled holes in my back to attach the mechanical arms, I accidentally drilled through the fabric of the space-time continuum and saw the future!”

A maniacal gleam entered Spiegel’s eye.

“And what a future it is! Galileo’s ancient prediction that $y = t^2$ will come to pass, and the end of times will come upon us. A post-apocalyptic Hitchcock will be submerged beneath the waves! We stand right now in the valley of the shadow of death! And although my metaphors mix the old and new testaments indiscriminately with stuff that sounds like it was pulled from the Da Vinci Code, we shall not fail! Glory to Section IV! Avenge Graham’s Mohawk, martyred in the struggle against tyranny! Charge!”

I looked on in horror as a horrendously overwrought fight scene unfolded before my eyes for the second time in recent memory. Lightning flashed overhead as Spiegel’s guerillas charged down the slopes with a mighty roar, only to break against the endless legions of Section I like waves against an overused metaphor. From that point on, things only more epic.

Now as the two came closing on each other:

Spiegel, octobranchian, endowed with prophecy by the immortal gods
and the Jorgonaut, scourge of mortal men, his soul black as pitch.

Spiegel, son of Spiegel’s father, whose name I don’t know, spoke: “Harris —
tyrant that you are! — though it is fated —

spun, measured, and cut according to the will of the immortal gods—
that hot blood will gush from my gaping wounds

onto mother earth who reared us all,

your lust for carnage will come to naught!”

So saying, he hurled his gleaming spear tipped with bronze,

but alas! his adversary’s thick armadillo hide deflected the blow—

it glanced off — and Spiegel proceeded to throw the spears

he was holding in his other seven hands: to no avail.

The Jorgonaut unhinged his jaw, according to the will of the immortal gods,
and ate Spiegel.

So ended the life of a great hero. I was pretty sure that, if graced with the opportunity to choose his last words, Spiegel would have said something along the lines of “Brubaker... Take up my mantle... Prevent... the end of the world... urk...”

I looked out over the battlefield. The forces of Section IV were either dead or in retreat. And then it struck me. *Spiegel was right. Or rather, Spiegel would have been right if he had actually said that, which he didn't. Somebody has to save the world.* For too long I had stood by passively as the world around me spiraled into political and literary chaos. *I'm supposed to be a detective*, I reminded myself, making sure that my Homerically-inclined creator got the memo. It was high time to return to detecting. I would start by figuring out what on earth Spiegel's prophecies actually meant.

THAT SMART-ASS ERIC DRISCOLL INFORMED ME THAT ONE QUARTER IS ACTUALLY ONLY ENOUGH FOR AN EIGHTH OF A LOAD OF LAUNDRY. NONE OF YOU GAVE ME ANY SUGGESTIONS, SO THIS HEADING WILL CONTINUE TO BE ABOUT LAUNDRY UNTIL YOU DO.

-Don't open the **door to the trash room** in the middle of the night.

-**Registration of bikes and laptops** by the UCPD continues on November 23rd.

-There may be a House Trip to **see a movie** over Thanksgiving Break. The official Hitchcock House Augurs have interpreted the motions of the heads of the populace to indicate that it is **the will of the gods** that such a trip should occur on Friday rather than Saturday.

-**Hilel** and **Todd** are new residents of Sections II and III, respectively. Stay tuned for more news on the **potential vampirism** of the latter.

-**Aaron Space** has been impeached as **At-Large Representative** for not attending meetings. Tonight, if he's present, he will have the opportunity to make an impassioned speech in his own defense.

Minutes: Chapter VIII: Part II

What's this? Two parts to the minutes? And why does Part II come before Part I?

As you know if you've been following the minutes, this is a trying and turbulent time in the history of Hitchcock. So turbulent that when I finally finished my problem sets and had enough time to write the minutes on Wednesday night, the second half of my word document slipped through a hole in the fabric of the space-time continuum and ended up arriving in your inbox two nights before I wrote it! Thanks to this totally unexpected violation of the physical laws governing the universe, you were able to find out about all the important things happening on campus sooner than one day before next house meeting!

You're very welcome,
Ben

-The **Latke-Hamentash Debate** occurred* on **Tuesday, November 24th**, 2009. Thanks to this message from the future, you didn't forget to attend.

-**Hitchcock Thanksgiving** sign-up sheet is by the front desk.

-The University will be **getting rid of CMail in 2012**. In 2012, you will probably have more important things to worry about, like your **job prospects** sinking faster than California will be sinking into the ocean when Roland Emerich **destroys the world**.

-Talk to **Jordan Phillips** if you want to have and/or be a **Secret Santa** and/or **Maccabee**.

-We are **undefeated in midnight soccer**. Apparently we're having some kind of rumble with the other house that's good at soccer to cement our status as **most athletic house**. Most historians have interpreted this totally unexpected turn of events as **a sign of the coming apocalypse**.

-Also, Hitchcock ended the quarter with the **best football season in recorded history**. Most historians agree that 2007 was the beginning of recorded history.

-**Jello Wrestling [Wrastling]!** Eventually! Green Jello! Or Red Jello! I don't remember! Stay tuned!

*: For all of you clever fuckers monitoring my chronology. I'm one step ahead of you.

Minutes: Chapter VIII: Part I

So, when I said Wednesday night, I meant Sunday morning. Obviously.

I adjusted the crest of my hoplite helmet as I waited and tried to take a drag on my cigarette, but found that the visor of my hoplite helmet was constantly foiling my best attempts to do so. I grimaced. *Stupid fucking hoplite helmet.* I misplaced my hat I don't know how many installments ago, and a diligent search of the battlefield had yielded nothing remotely in keeping with the detective aesthetic I was struggling to maintain. *It's kinda funny the places life can take ya,* I mused. *Roll out of bed one morning, ya end up wearin' a hoplite helmet. Where's the meaning in that?*

Having successfully converted my newfound headwear into an existential quandary, I turned back to Bryce Lanham, who was still staring silently off into space.

“Well, Lanham? You get paid to think, smart guy, so why doncha think about giving me an answer. What do you make of this mess?”

“Well, that's not entirely accurate. I have tenure now, so I get paid to *have* thought. My current research involves getting around to putting a video up on the internet, after which I might make a peach cobbler.”

“So that's what happens to you historians. Ya do all your thinking about the past tense, and before long the thinking itself is in the past tense. Clever, sure. All I know is it's *past* time to be gone, and I'm getting *tense*. I want answers. What do Spiegel's prophecies mean?”

“Hmm... $y=t^2$ is a tough one. Scholars have argued about it for generations. The current consensus seems to be that y represents the eccentricity of the earth's orbit and t represents the time, in seconds, since the foundation of the Catholic Church.”

“But that's not even a dimensionally correct statement!”

Lanham shrugged. “Galileo had to deal with a lot of pressure from the religious authorities of his day. It's understandable that he would have coded his most earthshaking discoveries in coded language we cannot even begin to comprehend!”

“Whatever. What else can you tell me?”

“Well, the part about ‘a post-apocalyptic Hitchcock submerged beneath the waves’ must be referring to the ancient prophecy that Hitchcock will be destroyed by a flood during the apocalypse,” Lanham said ever so helpfully. “If that's happening, then we're pretty much screwed. Tell me, does Hitchcock have any levies?”

“We have one Levi. But he couldn't stop a flood!” I grew increasingly agitated at the idea that anything of any importance whatsoever might depend on Levi. “He's so short that his value according to the discrete metric is one half!”

I was struck suddenly by a feeling of *déjà vu* so powerful it almost knocked me off my feet.

“Well, we can only hope he gets taller before it’s too late,” Lanham replied gravely. “I have one more piece of information that might be useful to you. You know how Ashley Altman has been shirking her vice presidential duties of late? Nobody seems to know where she took off to. Until now. One of my sources repeated seeing her amidst the chaos gripping Section III.”

Ashley Altman. A mysterious figure with a background in medicine and no prior political experience before she joined the Jorgonaut’s machine. And her name was on Jordan Phillips’ list. Maybe I could get some information from her. I took my leave of Lanham and began once again the dangerous trek across the desolate wasteland of Section III. There was no sign of Ashley Altman, no sign of anybody save for the piercing cry of a distressed baby. Make that several distressed babies. Come to think of it, there must have been thousands of babies to cause such cacophony. *Why are there so many babies?*

I was satisfied with this question. It was directly relevant to my present situation, and also managed to suggest profound inquiries into the nature of humanity and its purpose in the world. I gave myself a pat on the back, and as I looked over my shoulder, I caught sight of Erica Fagin, hiding among the ruins of an abandoned building. She saw me see her, and tried to run, but soon found herself cornered.

“Alright, Fagin,” I said. “Start talking. What was Jordan Phillips planning? And what did you do with all the condoms all that time ago. You’re not getting away this time.”

“Not true. I can still escape through this portal to my subconscious,” she said, and promptly did so. I leapt through before the portal closed and found myself in a nightmarish realm surrounded by pale, brooding vampires and Harry Potter characters performing acts that should not be named with their wands. I closed my eyes tight lest I lose whatever still remained of my sanity. But Fagin was not so lucky. The demons she had resisted so long while perusing fanfiction.net descended upon her, and she fell to the ground with an anguished cry.

I groped around blindly through the gloom, found her body, and hauled it back to the material plane, then patted myself on the back again for having accomplished so many totally unphysical acts in such a short span of time. She was covered from head to toe in vampire bites, and losing blood fast.

“Don’t die on me, damnit! I need answers! You’re the one behind all these goddamn babies, aren’t you?”

“That’s right,” said Erica Fagin triumphantly between rasping breaths. “When I fled the country with the Hitchcock condom stockpile so long ago, I escaped through a temporal rift...and stole all the condoms from nine months earlier. That’s how we got the birthrate to spike so suddenly. It was all...part of the plan. Now unwanted babies are but one of the plagues that have come upon the people of Hitchcock. You know how the expression goes...You can put lipstick on a pig, but that doesn’t change the fact that it has venereal disease.”

“What? That’s not how the expression goes at all! What are you talking about?”

But Erica just laughed.

“You’re too late...Ashley Altman’s plan is already in motion...This...is just the beginning...”

And so she died. My head was spinning. Were babies, war, and syphilis all tools of an enormous conspiracy to destroy Hitchcock? And what was Ashley Altman’s plan? I knew I wouldn’t be able to answer any of these questions before eating lunch, and I decided to ignore the nagging feeling that I wouldn’t be any better equipped to answer them after lunch. I made my way to Bartlett, but found the entrance blocked by a large crowd gathered out front.

“Hey, what’s going on here?” I demanded of Themis, who I recognized near the back of the crowd. “This is madness!”

Themis turned and regarded me with suspicion.

“Why are you dressed like Leonidas?” he asked.

“This was the only headwear I could find, okay! Just answer my question!”

“Well, tonight we dine in nowhere,” Themis replied gloomily. “Bartlett has closed its doors.”

“What?”

“More to the point, we’ve glued them together,” came the voice of Falkowitz from the front of the crowd. “Bartlett’s core mission has always been to provide a cohesive dining experience, and our most recent surveys indicated that not only was the cohesion between food items and house tables remarkably low, except in the case of sauces, the cohesion between the doors was totally minimal. Our chemists are currently hard at work designing more adhesive foods, but until they succeed, we’ve glued all food to various surfaces inside the eatery, and, as I mentioned earlier, we’ve glued the doors together, making it impossible for any of you to enter our establishment in the first place. We apologize for any inconvenience this may cause you.”

“But how will we eat?” Came a shout from the crowd. “We’ll starve!”

“Nonsense,” said Falkowitz. “Find a pig and go dig up some truffles. You’ll dine much better than you did under our roof.”

That’s when it hit me. They had planned it all out from the very beginning. Whoever wasn’t killed in one of the Jorgonaut’s wars or by the diseases unleashed by Erica Fagin would be left to starve by Bartlett. ORCSA was in on it too; their investment in so much pork barrel spending was all to prepare for this moment, to enable the conspirators to outlast the famine.

That’s when the second thing that hit me hit me. Snatches of conversation were swirling around in my brain. *Pork barrel spending. Pigs unearthing truffles. Lipstick on a pig. A pattern. But*

why? Could it have something to do with Ashley Altman's plan? Unless... No. Even they wouldn't go that far. But then a cry from the direction of Section III confirmed my worst fears.

“Swine Flu! Run for your lives!”

That's when the third thing hit me, and right in the face, too. The third thing was somebody's elbow, and it was a good thing I was wearing the hoplite helmet or I might have suffered more than a moment of dizziness. All around me, the terrified citizens of Hitchcock were scrambling left and right, trying in vain to escape the hideous, slaving pig-men who had already succumbed to the transformative powers of the plague.

I caught sight of Falkowitz taking advantage of the chaos and slipping away into the crowd. *I can't let him escape. Somebody has to account for all of this.* Dodging the snapping jaws of a nearby flu victim, I took off at a run after Falkowitz, into the night, as the first snows began to fall.

STAYED TUNED FOR THE MINUTES SEASON FINALE, COMING SOON!

Minutes: Chapter IX: Actual Announcements

Minutes: The Finale will appear towards the beginning of Winter Break. Stay tuned!

- The **Hitchcock House Fund** appreciated in value by **nine cents** over the course of the quarter. You can pick up your share of the profit, one eleventh of a penny, from **Sam Spiegel** in Room 432. You are entitled to raise a ruckus if he refuses to comply.
- Actually, you should raise a silent pantomime of a ruckus, as **24-hour quiet hours** have commenced.
- The **Mezuzahs** of two students were vandalized over the course of the past several weeks. If you know anything about this, **talk to the RHs**.
- Be on the lookout for **Iron Chef: Bitchcock** coming soon to a kitchen near you! Talk to **Steven LaRue** for more information.
- If you are female and interested in playing **indoor soccer** next quarter, talk to **Elizabeth Lee**. If there isn't enough interest, we may not be able to field a coed team.
- Ice Skating on the Midway** is now open. There will likely be a House Trip sometime at the beginning of next quarter.
- Chocolate Lovers Study Break** this coming Wednesday. Sans lovers.
- The Green Room will spontaneously become festive on Tuesday night as part of **Jordan Phillips'** nefarious plans to bring **seasonal cheer** to Hitchcock.
- The people rose up in revolt against the perennially absent **Aaron Space** and elected **Levi Foster** to the position of **Interim At Large Representative**. This actually happened two weeks ago, but I forgot to include it in the last minutes.
- Demonstrating a flagrant disregard for Constitutional precedent, Jorgen Harris unilaterally appointed **DJ LoBraico** to the position of **Interim Guy who makes sure Bryce Lanham doesn't break shit in the Green Room** after the incumbent, **Bryce Lanham**, was ousted due to a conflict of interest.
- Rod Blagojevich** will be at the University Bookstore Tuesday afternoon at 2PM for a book signing. Don't expect to get a free copy of the book, which in the immortal words of Mr. Blagojevich himself, "is a fucking valuable thing, you just don't give it away for nothing."

Minutes: Chapter IX

Please find attached the final installment in the first Fall 2009 Minutes Season. My creativity has now officially expired, and I will spend the next three weeks hibernating in an effort to revivify it.

Those of you whom I didn't get a chance to say goodbye to, have an excellent break.
(Those of you whom I did say goodbye to, I take back everything I said. Have an atrocious break.)

Best (Worst),
Ben

I stopped to catch my breath and looked around wildly into the night. Falkowitz was nowhere to be found. *I've lost him. Now what?*

“Psst! Ben!”

It was Brian Dressner. But how did he know my first name? First names didn't strike me as very detective-like, and I had never revealed mine to the residents of Hitchcock so that they would have no choice but to address me as they would an actual detective. Something wasn't right.

“What are you doing here?” I demanded.

“I willed myself into the minutes. I...I thought it would be fun. But now everybody I know has been turned into a humanoid pig! I never thought it would be this bad.”

“Minutes? What are you talking about?”

“There isn't much time to explain,” said Brian. “Suffice it to say, I'm not actually the Brian Dressner you know. I'm the reincarnation of Brian Dressner from ten thousand years into the future. The reincarnation of you from ten thousand years into the future will rediscover the events of the apocalypse of ten thousand years in the past, that is, from his point of view, and write them down.”

“But—”

“I came here through a temporal rift,” Brian continued, cutting me off. “And thus contributed to the problem. The problem is that temporal rifts keep opening up linking your time to a bunch of other times, and each temporal rift that opens weakens the integrity of the space-time continuum and makes it easier for another rift to open, which will only further weaken the integrity of the space-time continuum! I came from the future to warn you! Well actually, I came because I thought the past would be fun. It isn't! Everybody has swine flu! But now that I'm here, I'm warning you! Protect the future! Prevent the collapse of the space-time continuum!”

“Just tell me which way Falkowitz went, and I'll save your goddamn future,” I said. I hadn't understood the slightest bit of what he just said, but I thought it was a pretty badass response.

“To the great wall! Mandy Stafford was with him! Quickly, run, before it's too late! Before it will be too late! Before it has been too late! We use too exclamation points too liberally in the future!”

I took off at a run. The Great Wall of Hitchcock-Anatomy, built in the thirteenth century to defend against Mongol raids. If only the Mansueto dynasty hadn't insisted on digging a Hole to China, Mongol raids would never have been a problem in the first place. All of that was irrelevant now. What was relevant was Falkowitz, standing on the rim of the Mansueto Hole, clutching a struggling Mandy Stafford by the wrist.

“You’re too late, Brubaker. The plan is in motion. HARC will be undone, and the world will be unmade!”

“Unmade?”

“What did you think this was all about? You see, HARC is an anagram of char. Which means that when HARC no longer exists, this world will burn!”

“What about arch?” I said.

“Arch?”

“HARC is also an anagram of arch. So what does that mean? Also, I thought the world was supposed to get flooded.”

Falkowitz’s eyes narrowed.

“Don’t bandy words with me. The people of Hitchcock have grown decadent. Look around you: they eat fruit that’s supposed to be decorative, they cavort with the likes of Rod Blagojevich, they play six hours of Starcraft every night. It all ends now. The master awaits!”

So saying, he leapt headfirst into the abyss, dragging Mandy down with him

“But I never even got any character development!” she wailed as she fell, and then all was silent.

So Bartlett had been behind it all along. Bolton, Mandy, and probably LaRue as well. But why had Falkowitz jumped to his death, or more precisely, to an eternity of simple harmonic oscillation around the center of the earth? And who was this master he spoke of? Then the realization descended on me like a reaver drop on an unguarded expansion. *Spiegel’s Prophecy*, $y=t^2$. $y=tt$. That means —it can’t be!— *Bartley and Bartlett are one and the same!*

“Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha! So you finally figured it out. The king of Bartlett has come home!”

I spun around. Bartley had appeared inexplicably behind me, as had done so often in the past. But this time, things were different.

“You? Why? Vee? I mean, How?”

“At long last, my plans have come to fruition! HARC is no more, and the apocalypse will soon be upon us,” Bartley went on. “And it never could have happened without you. How does that feel?”

“But...you were the one who got me started trying to solve the murder of the HARC representatives in the first place. You were the one who convinced me that the Jorgonaut was up to no good!”

“And thus ensured that you never suspected that I was ultimately behind it, and that the Jorgonaut was really working for me! Pure brilliance!”

“The Jorgonaut’s wars, Fagin and Altman’s diseases, the famine engineered by Falkowitz, and the murder of the HARC representatives, all leading up to...what? What was it all for, Bartley?”

“To fulfill the ancient prophecies of the end of the world and weaken the fabric of the space-time continuum, of course. Listen, don’t beat yourself up over it. There’s nothing you could have done. According to the ancient prophecies of the end of the world, the only one capable of preventing the apocalypse was Levi Foster. Luckily for me, Levi turned out to be totally inept.”

“So it was all Levi’s fault!” I exclaimed. “I should have known.”

“Look behind you,” Bartley continued. “Even now, my minions are tearing down the Great Wall that has stood for centuries in the ground between Hitchcock and Anatomy. When the wall falls, the last remaining strand of the fabric of the space-time continuum will be broken, and temporal rifts will start appearing everywhere. In particular, one of the temporal rifts will be connected to a time when everything was under water, causing water to flood through the portal and drown Hitchcock!”

“There’s gotta be a simpler way to destroy the world,” I protested.

“But if my plan was less convoluted, there was no way I could have succeeded in stretching it out over a ten-week period. It was hard enough as it is.”

There was so much more I wanted to know. Was my interlocutor’s real name Nathan Bartley, Bartholomew Nath, Frank Dickinson Bartlett, or something else entirely? Why exactly was he so flawed? And why try to bring about the end of the world in the first place? This last question in particular struck me as quite important, and yet nobody had given me a satisfactory response.

But any questions I might have asked were cut off by the heavy thud of a wrecking ball colliding with the venerable great wall of Hitchcock-Anatomy. And then the world around me spiraled into temporal chaos. I took my chances and leapt headfirst into the nearest temporal rift. Where and when it would take me, I didn’t know. But just about anywhere was better than two seconds away from being crushed by a tidal wave. As I hurtled through an inter-dimensional vortex that was doubtless take me at least the duration of winter break to traverse, I knew one thing: somewhere, someday, I would live to see Bartley brought to justice.

***MINUTES: THE SANDS OF TIME* coming soon to a bathroom near you!**

Minutes: Season II, Chapter I

Dear house,

There are no more hard-boiled detective jokes. In fact, there are no longer even any jokes that might get away with pretending to be hard-boiled detective jokes. So, ladies and gentlemen, I present:

...

The British!

Sincerely,
Ben

To the recipient of this here epistle, whatsoever the geographic and temporal circumstances of your receipt thereof:

It began as a fine spring morning much like any other, sitting on the terrace with my custom'ry pipe and the latest *Telegraph*, watching sporting young lads playing cricket on the green. Then reality itself seemed to grow awfully tired of existing as it has since time immemorial, and something quite inexplicable happened.

In a sudden flash of inspiration, I realized that this young chap Einstein everybody's been talking about must have been right after all, and what I was looking at was a hole in *the very fabric joining space and time*! This was the last thing that crossed my mind before the rift enveloped me, only to deposit me G__d knows where and G__d knows when!

My younger and more imaginative readers are no doubt already grown frenzied, with such thoughts as: "Oh, jolly good! Just like in that smashing new novel by Mr. Wells!"

Think no such thoughts! For this land is bleak, bitter, and cold; there is nothing like the fine weather we experience so often in the isles! I spied two locals slipping and skidding as they tried to traverse a vast sheet of ice, and flailing about madly with what appeared to be brooms.

"Tell me, sirrah, what madness is this?" I entreated the first such ruffian. Or pray tell, in G__d's name, where have I ended up? And in which year of the lord?"

I did not give voice to the nagging possibility that I had arrived at some point in time so remote from nineteen-hundred-and-six that the true Anglican faith had been forgotten, or worse yet, not even revealed in the first place! How frightful! His replies, in a base vernacular so far removed from the purity of the English tongue that I will not reprint them here, chilled me to the very bone.

North Americer! And Chicago, that wild city of steel and slaughterhouses practically verging on the territ'ry of the natives! And the distant future, the year two thousand and ten! How I shall make my way and survive in this rugged dystopia, I know not.

Should this ever reach dear old England in a future more vivid[†] than the one I have had the misfortune to experience, perchance 'twill serve beneficial as a cautionary tale to the young scallywags of our day who spout all sorts of Bolshevik propagander and don't give a damn about fastening their knickers. I will now describe the most striking features of this harsh world in the form of a numerical list (using of course the civilized numerical system of the ancient Latins rather than the whimsical, serpentine numerals imagined by the sheiks of Araby! Heavens no!)

[†]: Nay, good reader, think not that the bleak circumstances in which I find myself have robbed me of my G__d-given ability to pun on erudite subjects in the time-honored British tradition of the Bard himself! Should it so happen that I meet a fine educated fellow from Cambridge (though I suppose Harvard will probably have to do; I hear even *Chicago* has a university now: Ha!), he will no doubt appreciate my ability to subtly reference grammatical

formulations in Latin that are really of no use to anybody whatsoever. For the rest of you uncultured plebians, I must resort to such explanatory footnotes as this.

- I: Ruined and crumbling mason'ry lies scattered across the ground with no rhyme or reason. It looks as if efficient central administration, never strong among those unruly Americans, has really vanished altogether.
- II: **Cats** appear to be venerated among certain fanatical sections of the populace. Does this signify a regression to the ancient animalistic cults of the mysterious Nile Valley empire of the pharaohs?
- III: Though I would it were not so, perhaps the most tragic indicator of how far humanity has fallen short of its G__d-given potential is the fact that humans seem to be engaged in a bitter uphill battle with particularly hardy representatives of **the murine species** for control of the few buildings that provide shelter from the biting cold. Perhaps this explains the growing popularity of the cat cult? Citizens are officially encouraged to pray at a mysterious shrine known only as the front desk in order to receive cunning traps designed to put an end to the invading rodents. However, a small faction of dissidents staunchly advocates humane treatment of the enemy. Perhaps there is something to this argument. If we lose our human dignity in destroying the mice, how can we claim to be any better than mere animals ourselves?
- IV: One small polity known as Snell seems to have adopted a curious political system in which the right to rule is held only by those named **Alan**. Recently a peaceful transition of power from one Alan to another occurred. Why the inhabitants have not realized the glaring flaw in this arrangement and named all of their children Alan is entirely beyond me, but I fear for the stability of the state when they inevitably do.
- V: For theatrical entertainment, it seems, the residents of Snell and neighboring Hitchcock prefer **crude Italian melodrama** over the many fine English and classical pieces so beloved in our times. Should this sham of an opera pique your interest for any reason whatsoever, seek out the uncouth rabble rouser known as **Mr. Samuel R. Bowman** or his associate **Ms. Hackner**. Mr. Bowman in particular seems to coordinate trips to other theatrical venues as well; seek him out if these are of any interest to you.
- VI: The fascination of these people with the Italian race extends further still: the government of Hitchcock has announced plans to celebrate its first successful survey of all its inhabitants by inviting them all to partake of **a vulgar peasant dish frequently consumed by Southern Italians**, that most unpleasant tribe of men. This is supposed to occur on Tuesday, 12 January.
- VII: **A wandering scholar** with considerable knowledge of antiquity, rare enough in these times, is due to arrive in the lands of Snell and Hitchcock on Thursday, 14 January. Should you wish to meet such a fine upstanding example of a man, simply inquire as to the remaining available space at the front desk.
- VIII: I happened upon a very curious gathering of the citizens of Hitchcock voting by an overwhelming majority to invest a significant proportion of their treasury funds in so-called **"Jell-O."** The proponents of this plan argued that "Jell-O" is more liquid than good old-fashioned paper money, and all of Hitchcock's truly liquid assets have frozen due to the cold. I fail to see the relevance to sound financial policy, but it demonstrates that the locals seem to have at least a rudimentary knowledge of chemistry.
- IX: At this same gathering it was announced that Hitchcock will likely be visited by **a roving band of nomadic "prospies"** in approximately eight weeks. Why anybody would care to

enter such a G__d-forsaken land by choice, I know not. But at least the residents of Hitchcock seem to care for their own. An expatriate named Claire Wolf was welcomed back into the hall by unanimous consent at the end of the meeting.

- X: It appears that the **distressing and possibly suicidal activity** noted above involving ice sheets and broomsticks is some sort of ritual of social cohesion. Those interested in ending their own lives should note that it occurs every Tuesday at 21:30.
- XI: Gentle reader, be advised that the week of 11 January marks beginning of a terrifying ritual practice known as **Kuviasungnerk/Kangeiko**. According to a number of eminent linguists, this name is apparently a concatenation of two of the putative six thousand Eskimo words for snow. Citizens are hauled from their snug beds before dawn and forced to run outside, often in the nude, for the amusement of the cruel Eskimo overlords. Tremble, good reader, tremble with fear. Lock your door at night lest this happen to you.

G__d save the Queen!

Benedict B. Baker, esq.

Minutes: Chapter II

BEN'S SECRETARIAL CREDENTIALS EXPLODE, LEAVING NO TRACE!

READ ALL ABOUT IT INSIDE!

THE SPORADIC PRAETOR-INQUISITOR

HITCHCOCK'S SECOND LEAST RELIABLE NEWS SOURCE

~~DAILY!~~ SOMETIMES!

FIVE (10) CENTS!

AARON SPACE REMOVED FROM OFFICE!

Dastardly Spaniards suspected!



LIKE AARON SPACE'S POLITICAL CAREER, THE U.S.S MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY INSIDIOUS SPANIARDS!

Green Room, HI. --In a scandal unprecedented since the birth of our fair nation, a beloved voice of the people was forced from his seat just three weeks shy of the midterm elections. Aaron Space, the first-term representative-at-large from Section II, has not been seen since he was interrupted at the podium by two hefty men who appeared inexplicably on the floor of the house, stuffed him into a burlap sack, and installed a puppet representative in his place.

Little is known about this interloper, one Levi Foster, save for his diminutive stature, but this publication managed to acquire a highly confidential roll of toilet paper listing his numerous deficiencies, most of which seem to be highly correlated with the aforementioned lack of height. As the nation still reels from the loss of its champion, enemies of the state have attempted to prevent investigation into the circumstances of his disappearance through the well-oiled cogs of their formidable political machines. But don't trust them! Let not that damned Iberophile President Harris and his cronies trample flag of our fair nation underfoot! Remember the Maine! --See *Space*, pg. 6

INSIDE:

Breaking News: Vice Presidents are Apathetic! -pg. 3
HARC Representatives swimming in a sea of unspent dollars! -pg. 5
John Bobka elected to Missionary Position! -pg. 12
Condom Usage plummets! Experts warn of massive population spike! -
pg. 6.4
PSAC: Our representative forgets to go to the only meeting of the year! -pg. 3i
Hitchcock loses in Broomball! Days of Athletic supremacy are numbered, say commentators! -pg. π

THE SPORADIC PRAETOR-INQUISITOR

HITCHCOCK'S SECOND LEAST RELIABLE NEWS SOURCE

~~DAILY~~ SOMETIMES!

FIVE (10) CENTS!

HOUSE BUDGET SQUANDERED ON JELL-O!

NO FUNDS REMAIN FOR LASER-POWERED ARMAMENTS!



THE U.S. NOVA MAINE WAS DESTROYED BY CYLARIANS, THE GALACTIC EQUIVALENTS OF SPANIARDS!

Section I, HI. -- In yet another scandal unprecedented since the birth of our fair nation, a vile cabal of peaceniks led by one M. Falkowitz scorned the threat of an extraterrestrial invasion when they diverted hundreds of dollars slated for the development of powerful laser-powered "tag rifles" to so-called "jell-o," a green substance that will enable the people of Hitchcock to pretend they have killed aliens, while the real intergalactic menace still lurks in the shadow of Alpha Centauri.

Cullen Seaton, formerly of the Department of Defense, has made known his plans to develop the guns himself with whatever funds he can scrounge up, and start a vigilante army properly equipped to deal with the aliens when they arrive. Citizens of Hitchcock, if ye be men and not lily-livered lasses, join him! Do your country proud! Remember the Nova Maine! --*See Lasers, pg. 8*

OUTSIDE:

- Read Sam Spiegel's email and take a survey about the house! Win 100 dollars for Hitchcock!
- Read the Shady Dealer, a finer publication than this!
- Malika will lead a trip to Ice Skating! Unheard of!
- Graham will be playing in a String Quintet on the 29th! Scandalous!
- Do your patriotic duty and vote on T-Shirts, or be prepared to hang your head in shame when the House chooses the worst design!
- The Secretary doesn't know what he is doing! He has resorted to gimmicks like "old newspaper font" to sell minutes! He can't even figure out how to format a Word document to look like a newspaper! Read all the juicy details in the next Sporadic Praetor-Inquisitor!

Minutes: Chapter III

This is your brain.

THIS IS YOUR BRAIN ON PHYSICS.

Esteemed housemates one and all,

I come before you today, humbly, not as a private eye, an Englishman, or a yellow journalist, but as myself, Ben Brubaker, secretary of Hitchcock House. You may have noticed, amidst the hustle and bustle of third week, a conspicuous absence of minutes from your inboxes of late. Resist the urge to pelt me with tomatoes next time you see me, tempting as it may be. The shocking truth is that the minutes didn't appear on schedule because last week's house meeting never actually happened. *It will be happening approximately 24 hours from now.*

How is this possible, you ask? The fluctuations in the space-time continuum reached a new extreme last week when the velocity of Snell-Hitchcock increased to within $1/(10^{25})\%$ of the speed of light, causing this week's house meeting and last week's house meeting, ordinarily separated in time by one week, to become simultaneous. Of course, the invariant length of the house meeting in space-time had to remain constant, requiring that the Green Room be separated from itself by approximately one hundred and nineteen billion miles. No, I did not make these numbers up.

The bifurcation of the Green Room has resulted in a curious and highly precarious state of affairs in which the Green Room exists in two identical iterations separated by a length that is an appreciable fraction of our solar system, in which the same individuals participate in different house meetings simultaneously. This will persist until either the house government collapses as a result of being stranded in outer space, the probability function collapses as a result of somebody trying to measure one of the Green Rooms, or I collapse as a result of having slept too little before writing these minutes.

So, ladies and gentlemen, today I give you minutes. No funny business, just the facts of two rather muddled house meetings, as they unfolded chronologically over the span of thirty minutes and a hundred billion miles.

10:00:19: The Bifurcation occurs. Everybody who is not already in the outer space version of the Green Room by this point is unable to enter, as the door now leads to a bottomless void.

10:01:02: In Chicago, Jory Harris bangs his fist on the podium, calling the meeting to order. He congratulates Graham Albachten on his exquisitely prepared caviar appetizer. He asks the RHs whether they have anything to announce. Meanwhile, in outer space, Jory waits for more people to show up before beginning the meeting.

10:02:21: Tom Wood thanks 72% of the house for completing the housing survey and formally excommunicates the remaining 28%.

10:02:38: General chaos erupts in the Green Room suspended in outer space as its inhabitants realize that they are isolated from the rest of humanity by a thoroughly ridiculous distance. Levi Foster decides to test the properties of free space scientifically and steps out of the Green Room door with initial velocity v_0 . He floats off into the void and is never heard from again.

10:04:49: Malika informs the house that T-shirt designs were due yesterday, and therefore, not only will you not be getting new shirts, the RAs will actually be systematically destroying all the shirts that you already own.

10:06:26: Elizabeth Lee informs the house that Hitchcock's stellar sporting record has been growing patchier, and all of us need to get our respective heads in the game.

10:07:02: The excommunicated Hitchcockers, having been expelled from their rooms on several minutes' notice, show their solidarity by creating a facebook group called "Tom Wood is my Nemesis."

10:08:12: In outer space, Jory manages to get the house in order. A census is taken of the remaining inhabitants of the Green Room. Among them is Ashley Altman, who finally got around to fulfilling her Vice Presidential duties and going to House Meeting. Now she has no way to leave the Green Room. Oh, the irony.

10:10:53: Falko arrives in the Green Room with an overabundance of food stolen from Bartlett, and encourages residents to eat their fill of the limitless cornucopia to be found just blocks away. Residents of the earthbound green room reflect on the sweetness of life.

10:10:59: The inhabitants of the floating Green Room reflect silently on the fact that all of them will likely die of starvation within the week. They eye the solitary pack of Oreos left in the Green Room by Jesse Roth before she ran off to rehearsal, narrowly escaping a fate worse than death. Nobody moves.

10:13:42: Sam Bowman and Talia encourage residents of the Chicago Green Room to attend Iron Chef: Britchkenschnock and eat large quantities of sumptuous food, as if deliberately goading their famished extraterrestrial counterparts.

10:15:37: Space-Green-Room-Mandy gloomily remarks that HARC was actually going to have a meeting for the first time ever. The irony grows thicker.

10:17:55: Earth-Green-Room-Lisa reminds everybody in attendance to fill out a Scav Survey. Everybody does so. There is much rejoicing.

10:21:06: The residents of the interplanetary Green Room decide there's nothing much they can do other than continue to conduct house business as usual. The first order of business is electing somebody to the at-large seat vacated by Levi, who is by this point approximately 1200v₀ meters away from the door of the Green Room and still floating. Aaron Ewall-Weiss is re-elected to the position he held at the beginning of Autumn Quarter. The irony coagulates.

10:25:22: Ben falls asleep, leaving the account of the simultaneous events of next house meeting and last house meeting to be continued at an indeterminate time in a form more amenable to narrative.

Minutes: Chapter IV

If I were wearing a hat, it would go off to John Bobka, for giving me the original inspiration for this week's minutes. But I'm not, so he gets no recognition whatsoever.

-Ben

Dearest residents of Hitchcock,

It is my utmost pleasure to unveil a priceless artifact from the formative years of Hitchcockian civilization: a pair of weathered marble tablets were discovered lying by the side of the road just weeks ago by my distinguished colleague Dr. Sahlins, as he knelt down to hitch a customer's car to the tow truck. Since then, we here at the American Anthropological Association have scrutinized the physical properties of the tablets, probed the mysteries of their ritual uses, and debated their objective existence nigh continuously. It's been a very exciting time for all of us.

Using the most precise and cutting-edge dating methods, I was able to both guarantee dinner plans for this coming Saturday and reliably source the tablets to the spring of 2009; based on what we can glean from the few remaining contemporary sources, they appear to have been transcribed during a mysterious spring festival known as Ska'av, the purpose of which has long puzzled anthropologists. Before this, the traditions they contain had likely been transmitted orally for several generations.

The tablets contain a set of ritual commandments attributed in part to Orcsa, who appears to have been some sort of a whale deity, and in part to other figures in the pantheon of ancient Hitchcock, about whom less are known at this time. It is our pleasure to share with you the text of these invaluable relics whisked away from the heavy hands of time and weary metaphor.

Sincerely,

Claude Levi-Strauss,
Honorary President, AAA
CEO, AAA

Need something socially constructed?
Breakdown on the I-90?
Want to problematize those semiotics?
Call the American Anthropological Association today!
866-968-7222

I: THOU SHALT NOT FAIL TO ATTEND HOUSE MEETING FOR MIDTERM ELECTIONS. IF THOU ATTENDEST NOT, THE WORST GOVERNMENT WILL BE ELECTED, AND THOU IN PARTICULAR SHALT SEE AN INCREASE IN THY TAXES. AND LO, THOU SHALT HAVE TAXES IN THE FIRST PLACE, INSTITUTED SIMPLY SO THAT THEY MIGHT BE INCREASED. TREMBLE, MORTALS. TREMBLE WITH FEAR, AND FORGET NOT TO ATTEND HOUSE MEETING.

II: THOU SHALT GO FORTH DURING HOUSE MEETING AND BOLDLY ANNOUNCING THE STATE OF OUR FINANCES AT THE PODIUM, IF THOU ART TREASURER, EVEN WHEN THOU HAST NOTHING TO SAY. 'TIS A KNAVE WHO ACTS OTHERWISE, AND SURELY HE SHALL BE PONDED.

III: THOU SHALT NOT REMOVE THY PANTS DURING AN AT LARGE PRESENTATION. SHOULD THOU ATTEMPT TO DO SO, BEWARE! FOR I SHALL BEND THE LAWS OF THE UNIVERSE THEMSELVES TO FORESTALL THE OCCURRENCE OF SUCH A RUINOUS DEED. NOR SHOULDST THOU CHUG MILK FROM THE GALLON; SUCH BEHAVIOR LIKENS THEE TO THE FAITHLESS SARACENS.

IV: NEITHER SHALT THOU COVET THY NEIGHBOR'S PROSPIE, NOR THINE OWN PROSPIE NEITHER. WHOMSOEVER COVETETH A PROSPIE IS AS ONE NO LONGER OF MY PEOPLE, BUT SHOULD THIS PROSPIE COVET THEE, ACT THOU WITH IMPUNITY, FOR TRULY, TWAS A BAMF WHOSE MEREST PRESENCE CONJUREST SUCH BASE THOUGHTS IN ONE SO YOUNG, AND THE BAMF ARE ALWAYS AMONG MY PEOPLE.

V: THOU SHALT NOT MAKE WRONGFUL USE OF THINE OWN NAME BY ENGRAVING IT UPON A STONE TABLET, OR WRITING IT UPON A WHITEBOARD, OR YEA, UPON ANY OTHER SURFACE, WHEN THOU HAS COME TO THE FOURTH FLOOR OF SECTION V IN SEARCH OF CONDOMS. FOR TIS NOT FIT FOR THE EYES OF MORTALS TO BEHOLD RECORD OF SUCH DEEDS, WHICH SHOULD REMAIN BETWEEN THEE, THY GOD, AND THE PROSPIE WHO HATH INITIATED THEM.

VI: THOU SHALT NOT KNOW THE INGREDIENTS IN THY FOOD AT BARTLETT. THOUGH FALKOWITZ TEMPTS YOU WITH THE ALLURE OF THE IPAD, STRAY NOT FROM THE PATH I HAVE SET BEFORE YE. FOR THE KNOWLEDGE OF INGREDIENTS IS FORBIDDEN KNOWLEDGE, AND LO, I WOULD NOT HAVE MY PEOPLE FALL FROM INNOCENCE SO.

VII: THOU SHALT HAVE ALREADY SUBMITTED T-SHIRT DESIGNS. THOU SHALT NOT HAVE LAUGHED AT MY USE OF THE PERFECT IMPERATIVE. FOR THY GOD IS A JEALOUS GOD, AND A BIT TOUCHY; HE LIKETH NOT LAUGHTER.

VIII: THOU SHALT NOT EGRESS BY MEANS OF ANY WINDOW, NAY, NOR INGRESS NEITHER. FOR TO TRANSGRESS A WINDOW IS TO TRANSGRESS AGAINST MY LAW. NEITHER SHALL THY ILK PASS THROUGH A WINDOW, NOR THY PROPERTY NEITHER. WHATSOEVER PASSES THROUGH A WINDOW, SHALL BE REDUCETH TO DUST. FOR DUST ARE YE ALL, AND DUST TOO SHALL INHALE WERE IT NOT FOR WINDOWS.

IX: AND YEA, THOU SHALT CONTACT ME, THROUGH MY EARTHLY REPRESENTATIVES THE ELDER SAGES, IF THY PUNY MORTAL BRAIN CANST BUT THINK OF A BETTER WAY TO END COMMANDMENT VII.

X: LOOK YE TO THE HORIZON FOR WORD OF THE TOURNAMENT OF THE SUPER SMASH BROTHERS, FOR YEA, ON THE FIFTH DAY YET TO COME, THE SEERESS MANDRA STAFFORD SHALL ANNOUNCE ITS ADVENT, AND THE HEAVENS THEMSELVES SHALL RING WITH JOY. BUT HEAR YE, FOR SHOULDST THOU PLAY WITH KIRBY, SWALLOW NOT THINE ENEMIES WHOLE, FOR SUCH IS THE MARK OF THE GLUTTON. YEA, THIS IS MY COMMAND, AND I HAVE DELIVERED IT UNTO YOU.

Minutes: Chapter V

Delayed first by midterms, second by laziness, and third by stomach flu. Delayed no longer.

[1] *Magic* (the art whereby *wizards*, historical and contemporary, hath flagrantly violated the laws that govern the world) is by *science*, as in many other things, so too thereby and therefore, verily in this imitated, that it can make an artificial enchantment, although no contemporary wizards, not even those of the Coast, have heretofore seen fit to do so. And *time*, too, while it stradeleth the line separating imitation (*science*, as I have set forth thus far) from the original (necessarily *magic*, for the notion that *science* might be at once both the imitation and the original being thus imitated is an offense to right reason), doth itself imitate *magic* and is itself imitated by *science*. For how would time move forward relentlessly, and forward only, if not by *magic*? And when physics models time in order to understand it, what is this model but an *imitation*? Just as *science* imitates both *time* and *magic*, so too does my writing imitate that of Mr. Aaron Horton, but also that of Mr. Thomas Hobbes. It has often been said, among others by the worthy Mr. Hobbes himself, that nature is imitated by the art of man. Just so is *profundity* imitated by *obfuscation*, and so too are the walls of a CITY (in Latin URBS) by the WALL OF TEXT I have constructed around this argument imitated; whereas the one protects against unwanted intrusion, the other resists unwanted comprehension. And it canst but be providential that my argument has led me to the city, for it is only in the city that by a healthy dose of each of art, magic, time, and obfuscation is created that great LEVIATHAN called the HOUSE COUNCIL, a beast truly as terrible as its inexplicably biblical namesake, which hath the power to waste the time of several dozen good men on a Thursday evening and frequently abuseth it.

[2] To describe the nature of this artificial, magical, temporal, and by this point thoroughly obfuscated man, I will consider

First, the *matter* thereof, and the *force* which hath created it, both of which is *confusion*. Secondly, *how* and by what *distractions* it is made; what *limits* doth the Council place on the sovereign's ability to *trample* the *constitution*, if the existence of such limits, of which we are not yet convinced, is in fact rationally demonstrated.

Thirdly, what is the form of the *House Council in Hitchcock*.

Lastly, what is the *kingdom of darkness*.

[3] With the latter question we can dispense right away (and thereby violate the order of argument I have promised (for *my argument* does not imitate *time* in its natural inclination to move relentlessly forward (though it should be noted that *parentheses* imitate *doors* in their natural inclination to close having been opened))) : the *kingdom of darkness* is that place known to some as MAX PALEVSKY, its vile denizens having painted it orange so as to better disguise the *darkness* within. Be not fooled.

Concerning the first two questions we must likewise make no remarks, for it is a LAW OF NATURE that man seeketh to preserve his own life above all else, and if this manuscript be not finished before the morrow, mine own life may be foreit to that same *Leviathan* I have taken it upon myself to describe. Consequently we shall move directly to the nature and form of the HOUSE COUNCIL OF HITCHCOCK.

[4] Nature hath made men so equal in the faculties of body and mind that, were the STATE OF NATURE prolonged indefinitely, life would surely be boring, for nobody would ever *win*. When they saw this, the people of Hitchcock convened and by COVENANT elected a SOVEREIGN, whom they called JORGONAUT, who would thence proceed to rule for TEN THOUSAND YEARS, and decree that the most important words in every sentence should be in SMALL CAPS.

The Jorgonaut's first act as sovereign was to *eat Bryce Lanham*, the only resident of Hitchcock who had dared express opposition to his regime. In this we can see the workings of a LAW OF NATURE, which commandeth that the strong shall devour the weak.

Furthermore, it is made manifest that there can be no breach of the covenant on the part of the sovereign, for although the Covenant drawn up by the people of Hitchcock did explicitly contain the law "*It is unjust to eat Bryce Lanham*," any one who pretended a breach of this same covenant on the part of the Jorgonaut would then be eaten himself, and by NATURAL LAW, for any man to do anything that would cause himself to be eaten is itself unjust.

[5] Consequently, we see that the Jorgonaut is by NATURAL RIGHT guaranteed the ability to *trample* the same covenant on which his authority is predicated. The Jorgonaut demonstrated this in his second act as sovereign, wherein he *ate Austin Feller* for impeaching him for *having eaten Bryce Lanham*. The other part of the people kept silent during this process, lest they return to the confusion of a disunited multitude, and all the covenant have been for naught.

[6] And whereas Bryce had accomplished NOTHING as *Historian*, Austin had been a much beloved *At Large Representative*. Thus the people grieved much, although they could do naught, and sought to elect a worthy replacement. And since LEVI FOSTER is solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and, above all, *short*, they chose a *tall* representative in the person of GRAHAM ALBACHTEN so that Levi's less attractive qualities would be mitigated.

[7] LIBERTY, or FREEDOM, signifieth (properly) the absence of opposition (by opposition, I mean external impediments of motion), and consequently, the House Council of Hitchcock embodieth *the utmost of liberty*, for there was no *opposition* to the attempts of the TREASURER, SECRETARY, IHC REPRESENTATIVE, PSAC REPRESENTATIVE, HARC REPRESENTATIVE, BARTLETT REPRESENTATIVE, IM SPORTS REPRESENTATIVES, SECTION I REPRESENTATIVE, SECTION III REPRESENTATIVE, or SECTION V REPRESENTATIVE to retain the positions they presently hold. The opposition to the liberty of the CONDOM CZAR to retain her position was quashed.

Therefore no man can but admit the Sovereign's infinite mercy in permitting his subjects the liberty to preserve the STATUS QUO (in Latin STATUS QUO), for otherwise they would necessarily return to the WAR OF ALL AGAINST ALL, and all would be summarily *eaten by the Jorgonaut*.

[8] The VICE PRESIDENT, SOCIAL CHAIRS, SECTION II REPRESENTATIVE, and SECTION IV REPRESENTATIVE were deemed traitors to the commonwealth, and their names blotted out of the Book of Records. All praised the infinite wisdom of the Jorgonaut.

[9] Whereupon, since neither custom nor testament hath legislated against it, and the monarch's will being not averse, they constructed a PENIS OF SNOW upon the quadrangles, like as a testament to the rectitude of their commonwealth.

A Message Regarding Minutes

Dear Housemates,

As some of you may know, I did not attend House Meeting last Thursday due to being afflicted with the stomach flu. Even the most totally outlandish fabrications that I can come up with require a small kernel of truth to grow and flourish, and thus, I am unable to present you with minutes. Instead, since dyspepsia sounds kind of like dyslexia, I give you minuets.

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjuY9fTffc8&feature=related>
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sjuY9fTffc8&feature=related>>

(Bold, reflective, and poignant)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulMpKxednQc&feature=related>
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ulMpKxednQc&feature=related>>

(Gentle and affectionate)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=944E2kT1oes&feature=related>
<<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=944E2kT1oes&feature=related>>

(Useful for getting to the Forest Temple)

Sincerely,
Your secretary.

Minutes: Chapter VI

In which I earn the dubious distinction of having written a story driven primarily by an attempt to get as much mileage as I could out of the insert symbol function of Microsoft Word.

In those days, as the end of times drew nigh, there dwelt a mighty lord, Jorgumáendr son of Harald, who was also called the Demon King of all Midgard. He dwelt within a lofty mead hall called Hjijkøk battered by the fierce winds of the north, where he would dispense justice to all who cared to listen and many who did not. It was told of King Jorgumáendr that he was a just and noble lord; it was his wont to rise early and dine on thanes who displeased him. Many displeased him, and consequently his retainers were always well fed.

But now our story turns westward to the Snællian dales, the dwelling of Tod Isenstadt, Dark Lord of Isengard. It was often whispered in hushed tones that to speak his name was to know death itself. The lord of Isengard made himself known among the Hjijfolk, and entreated them to read and discuss great books, display his likeness in the halls of Hjijkøk, and hand over the One Ring. His wickedness and cruelty was thus made evident to all, and this was a time of much discontent.

When news of this reached King Jorgumáendr, he mounted his favorite roan Tbibû, donned his armor, and hastened hence to his mead hall to consult all his thanes about what would be done. So they convened the “Thing,” and many among them spoke their opinions.

“Let us command that he submit to the thane of Hjårk,” suggested thane Gråhåm.

“Nay, give him but the ring he seeks,” squealed the diminutive jester Lëvī, who stood upon a table to speak on account of his lack of stature. Thane Kjüllæn cut him short, as he had so often cut short the lives of bold Norsemen on the fields of war.

“As I ween, it is best to meet him in honor on the battlefield,” the mighty warrior answered him boldly. “Give the command, and I can have my finest zealots ready to storm Isengard on your command.”

By the door of the mead hall there stood a stranger, gripping a spear inscribed with potent runes. At this point he spoke:

“Tod Isenstadt is not the true threat to Hjijkøk. As you bicker and quarrel amongst yourselves, the end of times approaches!”

“What ho, stranger? Thou art not of the Hjijfolk. What business have you here in Midgard?”

“I am but a wanderer. I have come to deliver my warning. Know ye that Ragnarök is imminent, and band together as men, as mortals! Defy the gods!”

King Jorgumáendr snarled and said “And what makes thee say that Ragnarök is imminent?”

The wanderer answered “Well, the narrator said so in the very first paragraph, didn’t he?”

“Oh, he always says that. It makes the story more exciting,” Lëvī explained. “He’s been saying that for as long as we can remember.”

When the wanderer heard this, he scratched his head, much in puzzlement.

“So it’s not the end of the world.”

“No.”

“Oh. When am I, then?”

“In the present.”

“Yes, but when is the present?”

“Right now, of course.”

The wanderer threw up his hands in despair and departed from the mead hall. As he walked onwards on his journey, Lëvī ran after him, carrying a small table over his head. When he reached the wanderer, Lëvī set the table down, stood on top of it, and began to speak.

“After our tablet engraver stopped carving things that make sense, King Jorgumāndr had him eaten, and we have not kept any sort of records since then. But I hear the Robo-Muslims have a very advanced society. Seek them out, and maybe you will find the answers you seek.”

Stay tuned for an exciting and possibly nonsensical adventure in Mecha-Mecca!

Minutes: Chapter VII

In these minutes, I looked to the hallowed classical form of the minutes for inspiration. These minutes are also precisely late enough to no longer be relevant, like the hallowed classical forms themselves.

JORGON: What's new, Brubakes, that you should have left your accustomed spot in Harper on this evening to come before me and my tribunal. Surely you have not been summoned here unwillingly?

BRUBAKES: Truly it cannot be otherwise, noble Jorgon, for you have summoned me here yourself. As to whether I was summoned unwillingly, I ask you, is not the will the faculty according to which man's wants are apportioned?

JORGON: Good Willias, what think you of this?

WILLIAS DIXOS: That which he speaks is true.

BRUBAKES: And is it possible for man to want without knowing the object of his want?

JORGON: That which you speak is not possible.

BRUBAKES: Now I will that I not have come here.

WILLIAS DIXOS: A treasonous sentiment, but if you speak truth, continue.

BRUBAKES: But we have just agreed that a man may not have a will and yet not know of this having thereof.

JORGON: Certainly we did.

BRUBAKES: Then my knowledge of mine own will has revealed itself, and from this we must conclude that I was summoned here unwillingly.

JORGON: A worthy argument, but why did you come here if not by will?

BRUBAKES: Because you threatened to eat me.

JORGON: Indeed, it could not be otherwise.

WILLIAS DIXOS: Good Brubakes, know that we threatened to eat you because you did not write minutes last week. For Socrates says that justice is the state of each one practicing the function for which his nature made him naturally most fit. Thus we see that a secretary who does not write minutes is an unjust secretary.

JORGON: You know well that the laws of our land command that I should eat the unjust.

BRUBAKES: Good Willias, Noble Jorgon, allow me to speak in my defense. For I believe we've not properly considered the true meaning of justice, instead relying on the false authority of this

Socrates, whomever we may be. Tell me, whose duty is it to ensure that justice is maintained throughout Hitchcock? Is it not that of the ruler, Lord Jorgon?

JORGON: Truly, what you speak is truly not otherwise than true.

BRUBAKES: And if not for the ruler, would justice be maintained otherwise by others, or is the ruler necessary for the establishment of justice?

JOROGN: Certainly the latter, for otherwise I would be obsolete, and this is a condition forbidden by all our laws and customs.

BRUBAKES: Is not the ruler then the font of justice?

JORGON: Why, it could not be otherwise.

BRUBAKES: And what of the ruler's ministers, councilors, and other members of his cabinet? Are they not like Lord Jorgon in being party to the same government?

WILLIAS DIXOS: Purest logical form dictates that they could not be unlike.

BRUBAKES: And is that which one calls like, whether taller or shorter, or more or less bearded, the same as or different from that to which one makes the likeness, in the manner in which the likeness is made?

JORGON: What?

BRUBAKES: Just say yes.

JORGON: That's quite certainly entirely certain.

BRUBAKES: Good. What is the virtue of a pilot?

WILLIAS: The art of manning a vessel of the seas, and steering it through adversity.

BRUBAKES: And what of the virtue of a horse trader?

WILLIAS: Naturally, that of selling horses.

JORGON: It could not be otherwise.

BRUBAKES: Is the nature of the At-Large Representative not to prepare At-Large presentations?

WILLIAS: It could not be otherwise.

BRUBAKES: And the virtue of the Vice President, what might that be?

JORGON: Why, to preside over vice.

BRUBAKES: Is not Snell House a most vicious den of vice?

JORGON: It could be otherwise, but it isn't. Damn Snellians.

BRUBAKES: So it has been revealed that the nature of the vice president is to preside over Snell House Meetings.

WILLIAS: I'm afraid so.

BRUBAKES: What is the virtue of the PSAC Representative, given that this position is never mentioned in the founding texts of our constitutional government (properly called a polity)?

JORGON: Why, if the position is nowhere mentioned, its nature must be to not exist.

BRUBAKES: So we are in agreement that it is inscribed in their very natures that the At-Large Representatives prepare their presentations, the Vice President visit the House Meetings of Snell, and the PSAC Representative not exist.

JORGON: These are the conclusions at which we have arrived, yes.

BRUBAKES: And yet they act in direct opposition to these natures: The At-Large Representatives present not but mumble about watermelons, the Vice President refuses to set foot in Snell, and the PSAC Representative stubbornly continues to exist!

JORGON: Yes, perhaps they should all be eaten.

BRUBAKES: But were we not in agreement that the like is similar rather than different to that which it is like?

JORGON: Yeah, whatever.

BRUBAKES: And that the ruler is the font of justice?

JORGON: Indeed. Certainly it is certain that this is a certainty. Yes.

WILLIAS: Necessarily.

JORGON: Certainly.

BRUBAKES: Then the At-Large Representatives, the Vice President, and the PSAC Representative must also be paragons of justice, because they are like Lord Jorgon in that they govern our fair polity.

WILLIAS: Your logic is impeccable.

BRUBAKES: But didn't you say that justice is the state of each one practicing the function for which his nature made him naturally most fit, whereas now we see great exemplars of justice doing precisely the opposite.

WILLIAS: It was a definition I reached without proper consideration, which I now humbly retract.

BRUBAKES: It follows from this that I, by not undertaking the duties of my natural position, am not unjust, and therefore must not be eaten.

JORGON: Damn. Then who will I eat?

BRUBAKES: Yet we must not let this information reach the ears of the gross multitude. For the notion that we the house government do anything at all is a noble lie, which, according to my calculations, makes us 729 times happier than any others.

WILLIAS: Naturally, because of the square of the cube, extending on in this fashion, and so forth.

JORGON: Let us go then, and find a plebian to devour.

Exeunt.

Minutes: Chapter VIII: Speed Minutes

Because I didn't get the chance to do a Speed Lecture, these minutes were arbitrarily capped at 90 words. And no punctuation. Punctuation is for the punctual, which Lord knows I am not.

So house meeting happened on Thursday a week ago but nobody was there because of finals and laziness mainly laziness speaking of which William failed to attend but wait there he is talking about hunting and the University will never renovate Snitchcock but they will talk about the wall or lack thereof and now William challenges Tom to an NCAA duel and now everybody's excited because prospies are coming and it's okay because it was their idea to come that is I mean to come to the University of Chicago

Minutes: Season III, Chapter I

Hello everybody! The theme for this quarter's minutes is being better than last quarter's minutes. More specifically, minutes this quarter will appear in the vaunted "choose your own adventure" format.

The way it works: Read through the minutes, making choices as you go. Then, when you get to the end, email me the result you got. Whichever ending gets the most replies will be the canonical ending out of which subsequent installments of the minutes will grow.

-Ben

START: One fine spring evening, you approach the front desk of Hitchcock, thankful for the great weather and for the fact that you are still able to control your own decisions, as far as you can tell. But you know this state of affairs can't possibly last long. You do a double take: *Wait, what? I don't know that!* But that's all the reaction you have time for before your legs move, seemingly of their own volition, carrying you past the front desk before you even have time to flash your ID! In the ensuing struggle with the diabolical extraplanar entity that has your mind in its grasp, you manage to wrest control of your decision-making process momentarily: Quick! Before it's too late? Which way do you want to go?

To head back to your room, go to A. To do the sensible thing and try to find medical help, go to B. To see what's happening in the Green Room, go to C. To turn around and head to Bartlett, go to D.

A: You make it back to your room without any problems. Apparently, whoever or whatever has taken control of your actions is content to let you carry out your decisions once you have made them, even if he/she/it won't let you make your own decisions very often. You wonder why Ben has to take the premise of "Choose Your Own Adventure" so seriously, and then immediately wonder what on earth you're talking about. Rather, what you're thinking about. You decide to check your email, and are startled to see that your job shelving books in the Regenstein has been cut. What was once your salary is being used to support the University's new policy of tearing down and subsequently rebuilding every wall on campus. You wail in grief and contemplate suicide. Thankfully, at this point, you are allowed a decision.

To come to your senses and seek solace in the company of your sectionmates, go to E. To seek solace instead in the company of other peers with whose bathroom habits you are less intimately familiar, go to C. To give in to temptation and hurl yourself headfirst out the window, thereby defying housing policy with your final act and reaffirming the substantial role that scenarios ending in gruesome death have traditionally played in the "Choose Your Own Adventure" Series, go to B.

B: Just kidding! You survive the fall, and are rushed to the hospital in critical condition. If that last sentence didn't make any sense to you, then read this one instead: You head to the hospital. Either way, you're now at the hospital. No doctors will see you, however, as they are all too busy attending to the gruesome spectacle of a man who appears to have been skinned alive by a local psychopath who apparently really wanted to be an O-Aide. Since your condition has miraculously stabilized and/or was stable to begin with, depending on how you got to this paragraph, you have no choice but to leave.

To see what's happening in the Green Room, go to C. To see what's happening in Bartlett, go to D.

C: You wander into the Green Room. Whaddaya know, it happens to be time for House Meeting! You've missed most of it, though; it's general announcements now, and Malika is talking about White Sox tickets. You should probably give her money or something. You try to

move further into the room, but now a bunch of people are streaming past you to watch William Dix get poned. You accidentally bump into somebody who looks to be about seven feet tall: at first you think it's Graham, but it turns out to be Levi! "Hey, watch it, bub," he growls. "Wait a second! Didn't you once make fun of me for being short? I think it's time you learned some manners." You have no idea how Levi managed to get hold of industrial-strength growth hormones, but now is not the time for idle speculation. You dash through the crowd in an effort to evade Mega-Levi, weaving left and right, and somehow end up inside the Resident Heads' apartment. You seem to have lost him, but now Tom, Sam, and Grider are staring at you. "What fortuitous timing!" says Tom. "We need somebody to apply to be a Student Director so our O-Aides don't have to report to a horrible pre-professional stooge from outside the dorm. Will you do it?" "Don't listen to him!" says Sam. "Be a Resident Masters' Aide so that people will have something to eat on Monday nights. The dorm will starve without your help!" "Nonsense!" says Grider. "Be the new RCA instead! NSIT needs you to stop the Chinese government from hacking the Uchicago servers and censoring Google!"

*Wow, so many choices! You did just lose your job, and possibly a few bones, so you should probably take one of the offers. To apply to be a Student Director, go to **F**. To apply to be an RMA, go to **G**. To apply to be the RCA, go to **H**.*

D: You wander into Bartlett. Whaddaya know, it happens to be time for dinner! You have this nagging feeling that it wasn't actually time for dinner until you decided to go to Bartlett, and hope you didn't accidentally cause a cat in a box to die by making the decision that you did. Things really seem to have changed around here: There's signs everywhere about how Aramark has adopted green practices. On closer inspection, you realize that they've actually just covered all the food in a thick layer of green paint. So much for that. But you are really hungry...

*To decide that eating the paint-covered food can't be that bad for you, go to **I**. To give up on dinner and sit down at the House table, got to **J**.*

E: You head across the hall to see what everybody else is up to. One of your section mates has a prospie, which reminds you to sign up to host more often. The prospie's wide-eyed idealism makes you think back wistfully on a time when you too were young and innocent, and your suicidal urges begin to dissipate. Your friends are getting ready to go out, to show the prospie the wonders of college dining.

*It's peer pressure! Your only choice is to accompany them to Bartlett and go to **D**. You did get to have a marginally longer adventure, though.*

F: "Great!" says Tom. "You need nine letters of recommendation. Better get started!"

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **F** in the message body.*

G: "Awesome," says Sam. "Let's get to work on roasting that lamb!"

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **G** in the message body.*

H: “Cool!” says Grider. “Your first task is to delete everybody’s email accounts.”

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **H** in the message body.*

I: You were wrong. It is that bad for you. You die a slow and painful death accompanied by much internal hemorrhaging.

*Go back to **START**, with fifteen minutes of resurrection sickness.*

J: On your way back to the House Table, you are intercepted by a furtive-looking guy in a trench coat who pulls you into a corner and then reveals himself to be a mid-level Aramark manager. He explains that Aramark wants the honesty, gritty truth about the Bartlett dining experience, and they’re willing to pay you good money to become a “secret diner.” You start to protest that this job could not possibly pay enough if it involves actually eating Bartlett food, but he’s already gone. You figure you’ll cross that bridge when you get to it.

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **J** in the message body.*

Minutes: Chapter II

Are very late. Again, reply to this email with the letter you ended at.

-Ben

START: A feeling of dread wells up in the pit of your stomach as you approach Bartlett dining hall, and grows with each subsequent step. What kind of evil lurks within, you wonder, that they need to secretly pay students to dine there. What horrors will you discover? You enter the facility and swipe your card. A bewildering array of options presents itself. Where will you go?

To scoop out the Pasta Station, go to A. To taste one of the myriad Flavors of Asia, go to B. To see what's cooking at the Diner, go to C. To cover all your bases and hit up the Global Station, go to D. To get cold feet about the whole Secret Diner thing and head to Hutch to check out their new Late Night Breakfast, go to E.

A: You approach the pasta station to see Kevin flipping a tangled mass of spaghetti into the air and deftly catching it in a sizzling skillet. "Dude," he says, catching your eye. "Watcha need?" "Ah, yes, I'd like the penne with mushrooms and, uh, what sauce options do you have?" "We have the Marinara, and the Marinara-Marinara twist," Kevin says. You're feeling like being a cheeky bastard, so you say "you know what would be a real twist? If you actually had another sauce option." Kevin glares at you. "You know what would be a real twist? If I twisted your arm behind your back. Just sayin.'" You get the message, and decide it would be better to keep your peace. You collect your food meekly, and scurry to the table.

Go to F. No, you don't have a choice.

B: You head to the Asian station. Leroy sees you coming. "What can I get for you today? He asks. "Indo-Pak or Thai Dye?" "Uh...come again?" Your new conditions were pretty bad in parts of Asia, but you had no idea people had been reduced to eating garments. Still, it's a sobering thought. You collect your cooked made-in-Thailand hippy clothes and head to the table, grateful for having had such an enlightening trip to Bartlett.

Didn't I just say "you head to the table?" Do you think I'm about to contradict myself. Go to F.

C: Oh...*That's* what's cooking at the diner. Never mind then.

Go back to START.

D: You approach the global station, not quite sure what to expect. "Hi, can I have some food from the globe?" you ask. But all your apprehension disappears as Jose whips up a huge plate of delicious quesadillas smothered in his very own excellent salsa. You resolve to go to the global station every time you see Jose there for the rest of your stay at the university.

Go to F. Even though you end up in the same place as people who chose options A or B, you're much happier. I promise.

E: The minutes timestream works in mysterious ways, and pretty much as soon as you leave Bartlett, it's time for midnight breakfast. You head to Hutch, where you are subjected to a forty-minute line, but come out of it with a delicious meal of eggs, potatoes, cheese, and your choice

of bacon or sausage. “If only Ben had sent out the minutes earlier,” you say to yourself, “this might have convinced more people to go during the Midnight Breakfast trial period last week. All our hopes rest with the university now.”

*It's getting late. You should head back to the dorm. Go to **I**.*

F: You approach the table. Bartlett is oddly empty for this hour. One end of the house table is empty, and the other is occupied by Aaron Malika, Ren, and another guy that you don't recognize. You suspect it might be the new Hitchcock RA, who Tom Wood cautioned you was handsome but violent.

*To sit with the RAs, go to **G**. To flout authority and sit by yourself, go to **H**.*

G: You put your tray down at the table, only to realize that you forget to get a drink. As you turn back towards the dining enclosure, Ren shouts “Run for your life!” You freeze. Maybe he's just pulling your leg. Maybe he's talking to somebody else. But maybe, just maybe, the handsome new RA is as violent as they say. What do you do?

*To play it safe and make a dash for it, go to **I**. To stay and take your chances, go to **J**.*

H: You sit down at the end of the table to enjoy your meal in peace. All of a sudden, you see somebody else approach the table. It's Josh Knox, and it looks like he's headed for the seat directly opposite you. Terror grips you as you realize that you weren't the one to buy the “Josh Knox will never murder you, ever” item at Scav Auction. There's no telling what he might do.

*To play it safe and make a dash for it, go to **I**. To stay and take your chances, go to **K**.*

I: You flee Bartlett almost in a daze, panting for breath, and struggling to see through the gloom. Or else you just walk out of Hutch, feeling perfectly fine. If you were in Hutch before this paragraph, you have an eerie vision of what might have happened to you if you stayed in Bartlett, and you're really glad you made the choice you did. It doesn't look like anybody's following you now, although once again, if you just came from Hutch, you're not sure why you even thought anybody would be following you. Either way, you're pretty confused. You make it as far as the Hitchcock quad before you see a large contingent headed down to the Midway. It's midnight soccer time! Then again, you do need to get up early tomorrow...

*To go play midnight soccer, go to **L**. To go back to the dorm, go to **M**.*

J: You turn to face the RAs. Nobody is running after you with weapons. It looks like you're safe, for now. “Sorry if I scared you,” says Ren. “I just wanted to make sure you knew about the Relay for Life. It's happening this quarter, and it would be great if we could get a good turnout from the dorm. What are you doing right now?” You struggle for an excuse, but you're not fast enough. “Oh, nothing? That's great. We might as well get started now then. This way.” Looks like you're participating in the Relay for Life. Oh well. It's better than the relay for death.

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **J** in the message body.*

K: Josh Knox murders you, on a whim, with his power tools.

*You're dead. But, thanks to the miracles of video game logic, you can try again from your last checkpoint, which just so conveniently happens to be **START**.*

L: You're off to play midnight soccer! Exciting!

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **L** in the message body.*

M: You thought this was going to be the boring option, right? Think again! As you enter the dorm, Section V explodes! It must be the C4 that Josh Knox was fiddling with earlier.

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **M** in the message body.*

Minutes: Chapter III

The winning choice from last week involved Section V exploding. The fact that I am no longer officially alive in the canonical minutes timeline explains my general delay in getting these out.

START: You really were very ambivalent about whether to play midnight soccer or simply to go back to the dorm. Then 10% of you suddenly and inexplicably shifted its allegiance from soccer to returning home, so that's what you did, just in time to witness the explosion. You realize you aren't quite sure how you can be so specific about what fraction of you wanted to do what, and that just confuses you further. You wonder if maybe each of your decisions is the superposition of a set of many independent decisions. *Linearly* independent decisions. Wait, what the fuck are you doing debating the ultimate nature of your decision-making process? Didn't you just see a section of the dorm explode?

To explore the smoldering ruins of Section V, go to A. To totally ignore the spectacular calamity that just occurred before your eyes, and go to bed like you planned, go to B if you live in Section IV, to C if you live in Section III, to D if you live in Section II, and to E if you live in Section I. If you live in Snell, read your own damn minutes.

A: You take a deep breath and dash headfirst into the clouds of black smoke billowing out of Section V. The door to the RH apartment is ajar; it looks like they managed to escape. But others may not have been so lucky. Barely able to see, you press on to the third floor, where the smoke is thickest. The smoke is billowing out of one of the rooms on the southern end of the hall. You won't be able to hold your breath much longer. Quick! Make a decision!

To enter Josh's room, go to F. To enter Ben's room, go to G. This is one of those decisions that you have to make on the basis of limited information.

B: As you start up the stairs to Section IV, you run into Tom Wood, frenzied and bleary-eyed. "What horrible timing!" he says, shaking his head. "Of all the times the dorm could possibly explode, why does it have to be right after we finally get all the census forms in? You, you have to help me! Go back to Section V and find out who is still alive! The census forms must be accurate!"

You thought you could avoid going to A, didn't you. You can't. Go to A.

C: You've almost reached your room in Section III when you meet Cullen on the stairs, frantically scribbling on a clipboard. "This stupid explosion messed up all my Housing Lottery calculations," he says in frustration. "How am I supposed to figure out where everybody's going to live next year when a fifth of the dorm can just cease to exist just like that! You have to help me! Go back to Section V and find out which rooms are still inhabitable!" You start to protest that this makes C functionally identical to B, but Cullen doesn't understand what you're talking about. Sigh.

Go to A.

D: SECTION TWO!

You shout "SECTION TWO!" back and forth with your floormates for three or four hours. By the time you're finished, everything that you could have done in this installment of the Minutes has already happened, so you're going to have to wait until next week. Bummer.

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **D** in the message body.*

E: As you make your way up towards Section I, you run into Lisa Pawlowicz hurrying from door to door, asking whether anybody has anything interesting to report. "Since it looks like Ben was killed in the explosion, we need a new secretary, and I've volunteered myself for the job," she explains. "But the good news is, I get to ensure that all minutes from here on out must use the word "abscond," which is one of my favorite words. Hey, I know! Your job can be to abscond with things, so that I can report on said absconding. What do you say?"

*To agree to become the official Hitchcock House Absconder, go to **J**. To disregard this call to duty by absconding to a different section, choose any of **A-D**.*

F: You enter Josh's room. It's pretty obvious that this was where the explosion happened, judging from the absence of walls, ceiling, and pretty much everything else that you usually find in a room. Josh himself is miraculously in one piece, and appears very confused by the absence of magic cards. "You did this, didn't you!" you shout at him. "But why? How could you?" Josh shakes his head. "This wasn't me. Somebody else detonated the large stash of explosives I had sitting around in my room. You have to trust me!"

*If you decide to trust Josh Knox, go to **H**. If not, go to **I**.*

G: You enter Ben's room, relieved that the act of moving to a new paragraph has somehow allowed you to regain your breath. Then you see Ben, lying on the floor of the blackened shell of his room, motionless. It looks like he caught the full force of the explosion. The gravity of the situation suddenly becomes apparent to you. Forget the explosion; what will Hitchcock do without a secretary? Somebody needs to take his place!

*Somebody must still be alive in Section I. Go to **E**.*

H: You nod slowly. It looks like you and Josh will be working together from here on out, to try to find who *really* caused Section V to explode. Then maybe Josh will murder somebody other than you. That would be nice. All of a sudden Josh catches sight of a small group of people, huddled furtively on the other side of the quad. It looks like the organizers of the Campus Garden Initiative! What are they doing out so late? Looks suspicious. You'd better investigate.

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **H** in the message body.*

I: You protest that the evidence for Josh as the culprit is pretty overwhelming, and he responds by hurling you through the gaping hole where his wall used to be. You fall to your death. You should have trusted him after all. Or something.

*You know the drill. **START** over.*

J: Congratulations. You're now the quasi-official Hitchcock House Absconder. It'll become official at next week's house meeting, if there is one. After all, there's a gaping hole in the Green Room ceiling. These minutes were supposed to be about the dorm blowing up, weren't they?

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **J** in the message body.*

Minutes: Chapter IV

All the options for last week's minutes received the same number of votes. So your character did everything at once. Enjoy!

START: You sneak across the quad towards the Campus Garden Initiative Organizers, but it looks like your insistence on shouting “SECTION TWO!” while doing so has absconded with your sneakiness. As a result, the people you were trying to sneak up on hear you coming and abscond with whatever nefarious plans they were concocting. Luckily for you, one of them trips and falls flat on his face, causing the others to abscond without her. They also abscond with the word “abscond,” enabling me to write much less awkward sentences from here on out. You approach the fallen environmentalist. What do you say?

*Unfortunately, you can only think of, like, three sentences you could possibly say right now. Go to **A** to say “You! You’re with the Campus Garden Initiative! What are you doing here?” Go to **B** to say “All right, funny guy, start talking. What’s this all about?” Go to **C** to say “Latest Rumors.”*

A: He grimaces, and says “I guess you caught me. We were the ones who blew up Section V. Why, you ask? Well, it was occupying space that could have been used for gardens. For gardens! Don’t you understand?” He has a crazed look in his eye, and probably should be brought to justice, but before you can say anything in reply, a low flying plane zooms in over the horizon, dropping rapidly in altitude. It looks like it’s headed straight for Max Palevsky!

*To head over to Max P to investigate, go to **D**. If you’re tired of shit blowing up all over the place, and just want to go back to the dorm, go to **E**. If you want to pursue the storyline about the Campus Garden Initiative blowing up Section V, well, too bad. That’s all I got. Pick another option.*

B: “Yeah, that’s right, I am a funny guy,” he replies, with a glint in his eye. “Actually, I’ve been looking into theories of humor. And I discovered the funniest thing in the world. You want to see?” You lean in eagerly, and he knees you in the balls/[insert suitably painful female-gendered substitute]. By the time you recover, he’s scampered away. Rats!

*Due to a butterfly’s wings flapping in China and you getting kneed in the balls, a plane does not in fact crash into Max Palevsky at this point. Guess you just have to go back to the dorm. Go to **E**.*

C: You do realize that what you said wasn’t a complete sentence, right? Either way, your interlocutor doesn’t bat an eye. He says “I heard that Ralen Dranor up in Ald’ruhn has *a small favor* to ask of you.” For some reason, the peculiar emphasis he put on the words “a small favor” makes the prospect of repeating them right back to him incredibly tempting. Or you could see if he’s carrying anything valuable. Yeah, that sounds fun too.

*Your journal has been updated. To talk about “A small favor,” go to **F**. To try to pick his pocket, go to **G**.*

D: In accordance with the Second Law of Minutes, which states that anything that might explode, must explode, the plane crashes into Max Palevsky. You get there moments later to see

dozens of students milling about the quads in confusion, looking in terror at the blackened remains of the once candy-colored dormitory. You pester people to find out what's going on. It turns out Jory Harris, William Dix, Ben Brubaker (who miraculously returned to life after last week's minutes) were all on board the plane, and all of them were killed in the crash. They were headed to Max for negotiations on a political issue of utmost delicacy: the crushing defeat Max Palevsky sustained in last year's scavenger hunt. The last thing anybody needed was the death of half the Hitchcock government. Now tempers were high and tensions were spiking. You may be wondering how you managed to assess the situation so accurately within just a few minutes of the crash. Good question. Why don't you wait until next time?

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **D** in the message body.*

E: You head back towards the dorm, thinking you're finally going to get some sleep. Even allowing for some fluidity in the Minutes timestream, it's got to be like 3 AM by now. But it doesn't appear to be in the cards. As you approach the entrance of the dorm, you see Erica Fagin leading a group of prospies into the Green Room. Terror dawns on you as you realize she plans on subjecting them to slashfics. Just then, you see Josh Knox leading another group of prospies out of the dorm, carrying a sign that reads "Southside Late-Night Field Trip." Quickly, which prospies are you going to save?

*To attempt to save the sanity of Erica's prospies, go to **H**. To attempt to save the lives of Josh's prospies, go to **I**.*

F: He says "Cliff racers are eating all of Ralen's crops. I fucking hate cliff racers. Anyway, you can take the silt strider up there. Why walk when you can ride?"

What are you still doing here? Stop reading the minutes and go play Morrowind.

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **F** in the message body.*

G: You drop into a crouch, thinking this will probably better enable you to pick his pocket, and immediately doubt your instincts, as he keeps staring at you, probably wondering what the hell you're doing. But it's too late to change your mind now. You sidestep around him slowly, until he's no longer looking at you, and open his backpack, wherein you see thirty-five cents, a pack of chewing gum, and *Saryoni's Sermons*. He doesn't seem to have noticed you, so you decide you might as well take it all, at which point he spins around, shouting "Die, enwah!", and punches you in the face. You go down for the count.

*Man, you suck. You should work on not getting fatigued as easily. But for now, you might as well go back to **START**.*

H: You arrive in the Green Room just as McQueen from *Cars* asks Autobot to check whether his engine is well-lubricated, and shout "Stop!"

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **H** in the message body.*

I: You run after the prospies, and hurriedly convince them to follow you instead of Josh. Josh sees you, and his eyes narrow. Now it's you he's after. Run!

*This is where your adventure ends, for now. Reply to this email with **H** in the message body.*

Epochs: At World's End

Hiya everybody. I bet you thought I wasn't gonna do this. Well, I have. So, allow me to present epochs, which are like minutes except for being less precisely defined and much longer in duration.

"Epochs: At World's End" has much in common with its namesake, the third installment in the popular "Pirates of the Caribbean" franchise. In particular, both "Pirates" and "Epochs"

- A) are way too fucking long.
- B) fail to be internally self-consistent, let alone consistent with their prequels.
- C) are often inexplicably epic.

I'll let you see for yourself how unfortunately well these comparisons hold.

START: On the eve of the last House Meeting before the long summer, when all the companions of the House Table were assembled in the Green Room, when the RH announcements were made and cookies were brought in great heaps on silver from the kitchen, King Jorgthur surveyed the chamber and saw that all seats had been danced for, save for the great seat known as the Social Loveseat, which, in recent times had disappeared from the Kingdom of Hitchcock, to a distant land they knew not of.

And when King Jorgthur saw this, he moaned and beat his breast, for he knew that the Year of the Go-Find-It would soon be past, and he dared not leave the quest unheeded until the next year, lest love cease entirely, as had been written in prophecy. Yet he was loathe to send his finest knights on quest for the seat, for he knew that many of them would not return. And when the people asked him why he grieved so, he explained it to them, and the greater part of the populace moaned and grieved mournfully.

Then an unknown knight was the first to swear on the power of the loveseat that he would quest in search of it for a year and a day, or until it was returned. The knight had his helmet pulled quite far over his eyes so that all those who sought to recognize him found it quite impossible. They all wondered who he might be. Meanwhile, many others were making the same oath: Sir Joshua of Knoxley and Sir Nathain, son of Bartle, were the next to do so. And all the worthy knights of King Jorgthur's company did the same, and all the unworthy knights were summarily ponded

At this point you entered the story, a bit miffed at having been relegated to the fourth paragraph despite being the nominal protagonist. You swore to quest in search of the loveseat, but you realized you wouldn't know where to start. Why not tag along with somebody who knows what he's doing?

*To accompany Joshua of Knoxley, go to **A**. To accompany Sir Nathain, go to **B**. To accompany the unknown knight, go to **C**.*

A: You fall in behind Joshua of Knoxley, and head off towards Crerar. "You can usually find just about anything in dumpsters," he explains. "Last year we found a pair of pianos. Maybe this year it'll be the Social Loveseat." But after a few fruitless hours of digging through West Campus dumpsters, all you have found is about thirty tons of rotting cardboard, which you save, knowing it's sure to be useful for next year's scav, and ten pounds of plastic explosives, which Joshua grabs before you get a chance. Fear grips you as you remember the old adage: "if you say in the first chapter that Josh Knox has found ten pounds of plastic explosives, in the second or third chapter they absolutely must be detonated."

Thankfully, right around this point, Joshua suggests you take a break and head to Bart-Mart. As you enter, a beam of light illuminates the shelves at the far side of the store, granting you a vision of the Social Loveseat! Sir Joshua sees it too, but the others show no sign of having noticed; apparently, this was a vision not intended for all mortal eyes. It being Bart-Mart, the

Social Loveseat is marked up by 3000%, way outside your price range. Sir Joshua seems just about ready to try and steal it. Will you join him?

*To go along with Joshua of Knoxley's plan to steal the Social Loveseat, go to **D**. If you get cold feet, and decided to strike out on your own to warm them up, go to **G**.*

B: Sir Nathain has a wistful look in his eye as you head off together in search of the Social Loveseat. "The quest for the Social Loveseat is very personal for me," he explains. "The loveseat soothed me when I needed comfort. Its strong arms supported me when I was weak. I *loved* that loveseat. Like a brother, that is. No homo." You wander onwards in silence, in awe of your companion's profound appreciation for the power of the Social Loveseat. Suddenly, John Bobka is standing in your path!

"Sir Nathain!" Bobka exclaims. "Long have I waited here for you to pass this way. You pushed me at House Meeting! Don't think I forget these things!"

Nathain's eyes narrow. "I say that I did not. It's my word against yours. There's only one way to settle this."

"Let's do it."

Fear grips you as you realize that Nathain has challenged Bobka to a dialogue. Somebody could get seriously hurt!

*To stay and turn the dialogue into a trialogue, go to **E**. To leave Nathain and Bobka and continue on the quest for the Loveseat, go to **G**.*

C: You set off after the unknown knight, intrigued that he dared to be the first to undertake the quest of the Social Loveseat. "Listen, kid," he says, when he notices you following him. "Whaddaya know about loveseats? Whaddaya know about being social?"

"Well, to be honest, I was just following you," you admit. "I thought you knew where you were going."

"Me? No, I haven't been back in these parts in ages. But now, I have some scores to settle. And I've never followed sports."

You're slightly confused. "You mean musical scores, then? Are you a composer?"

"No. I'm not talking about compositions."

"Oh, I see, you think you should have gotten more points on a test and you—"

"No."

"Well, then it has to be sports. I don't see what else it could be."

The unknown knight turns on you in a rage. "It's an expression!" he says. "Why can't you just let me use a goddamn expression? Don't you people understand anything?" He stops shouting abruptly and recollects himself. "Listen, let's just get this thing over with. I may have a lead: the guy knows everything, but it could take quite some time to get any information from him. If you're feeling impatient, we could just hit the streets, or whatever passes for streets in this godforsaken pseudo-medieval wasteland."

To pay a visit to your companion's omniscient but unreliable information, go to F. To go out onto the streets, go to I.

D: Unfortunately for you, the social loveseat, being a loveseat, weighs like 75 pounds, and you are spectacularly and unsurprisingly unsuccessful in your attempt to steal it. Which is to say that as soon as you set foot outside with the loveseat in tow, you are put in a headlock by a pair of burly cops and escorted off to jail.

Forty-some sleepless hours later, an anonymous Aramark stooge shows up outside your cell. "You do realize why you're here, right?" he says. "In attempting to steal from Bart Mart, you're in violation of the Ten Commandments of Aramark. As punishment for your crime, we have mandated that Bart Mart close at 3:00 PM from now on. Also, you will be subjected to a recitation of the Ten Commandments of Aramark, the third worst set of ten commandments in the known universe."

I: THOU SHALT NOT FAIL TO SUBMIT COMMENT CARDS WHATSOEVER THY COMPLAINT. WE SHALT NOT FAIL TO SUMMARILY IGNORE THEM.

II: THOU SHALT ATTEND ALL BARTLETT COMMITTEE MEETINGS, UNLIKE THAT GUY MAX FALKOWITZ WHO DIDN'T ATTEND THIS ONE MEETING THIS ONE TIME AT THE END OF HIS FINAL YEAR. FOR THIS OFFENCE, HE DESERVETH TEN SECONDS OF GRIPING: NO MORE, AND NO LESS.

III: THOU SHALT NOT STEAL FROM BART MART. IF THOU STEALEST, WE SHALL REACT WITH SUCH DISPROPORTIONATE MEASURES AS TO PERMANENTLY BESMIRCH THY REPUTATION IN THE EYES OF ALL MANKIND.

IV: THOU SHOULDST REALLY CONSIDER BUYING THE STUFF THAT WE PUT OUT ON SALE ON THAT ONE SHELF BECAUSE NOBODY ELSE WANTED IT. WHAT BETTER WAY TO KEEP YOURSELF HAPPY THROUGHOUT A BUSY WEEKNIGHT THAN WITH A BOTTLE OF SPARKLING CIDER (JUST \$6.99!) OR A VALENTINE'S DAY-THEMED TEDDY BEAR (\$14.99)?

V: THOU SHALT NOT PLACE FOOD FROM THE KOSHER STATION UPON REGULAR PLATES, NO, NOR KOSHER FOOD UPON REGULAR PLATES NEITHER, LEST, BY A STRANGE TWIST OF REVERSED CAUSALITY, YE ANGER THE GOD OF THE HEBREW PEOPLE, WHOM I FEAR, FOR HE WRITES MUCH BETTER COMMANDMENTS THAN I DO.

VI: THOU SHALT NOT COPULATE ON THE UPPER LEVEL OF BARTLETT. PLEASE, FOR THE LOVE OF ME. UNLESS, OF COURSE, YOUR PARTNER IN THIS ACT IS A PROSPIE.

VII: RESPECT LEROY, WHO IS THE SHIT. OBEY THIS COMMANDMENT EVEN IF YOU DISOBEY ALL THE OTHER ONES.

VII: GAZE IN AWE UPON THE MOUNTAIN DEW SURPLUS WE HAVE ACCUMULATED IN BART MART. THEN DRINK SOME MOUNTAIN DEW. WE DON'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH ALL THIS FUCKING MOUNTAIN DEW.

IX: LOOK, WHEN WE PUT PINEAPPLE LEAVES IN SOME DUBIOUS-LOOKING GRAYISH PUDDING, WE EXPECT YOU GUYS TO EAT IT. WHY WOULD WE MAKE A DESERT THAT'S INEDIBLE? THAT DOESN'T EVEN MAKE SENSE..

X: THOU SHALT NOT TAKE ANYTHING OUT OF THE DINING HALLS EXCEPT ONE COOKIE OR ONE ICE CREAM CONE. SHOULDST THOU TAKE BOTH A COOKIE AND AN ICE CREAM CONE, THOU SHALT RECEIVE THIRTY LASHES. SHOULDST THOU TAKE TWO COOKIES, THOU SHALT BE EXECUTED BY FIRING SQUAD. IF THOU WOULDST TAKE ANYTHING ELSE, REDUCE IT TO MUSH AND PUT IT IN A CONE SO THAT IT MIGHT PASS FOR ICE CREAM, AND YOU WILL BE SAFE FROM HARM. GOOD LUCK EATING IT AFTERWARDS, THOUGH.

By the time he finally finishes with all those goddamn commandments and you are released from prison, another seven hours have passed, and you're starting to panic about all the time you've wasted. Taking a cue from Hillel Wayne's Speed Lectures, you could try to live your life really fast to make up for the lost time. Or you could try *really* hard to split yourself in two, so that each copy of you can search for the loveseat, and hopefully cut the time it takes you to find it in half. You could also do something more mundane, but, given your choices, why on earth would you want to do that?

To try out the exciting new art of speed living, go to J. To attempt to bifurcate yourself, go to K.

E: You flex your rhetorical muscles and prepare for the imminent trialogue. Nathain bows his head stoically, while Bobka rips open his shirt and howls like a wildcat. And then the trialogue begins:

NATHAIN: Good Bobka, why is it that you have come here in search of me?

BOBKA: Good Sir Nathain, you know very well that I have come because you pushed me during house meeting.

YOU: Truly, unless we hear an argument from Nathain to contest this, we must conclude that he did push Bobka as he himself has claimed.

NATHAIN: But hear me out. What is the opposite or negative of joy?

BOBKA: Why, grief, necessarily.

NATHAIN: That of a horse trader?

BOBKA: It could not be other than an anti-horse-trader.

YOU: Your entailment is ambiguous. An anti-(horse trader), or an (anti-horse) trader?

BOBKA: On the authority of the ancients, I maintain it is the latter.

NATHAIN: Can one be at once full of joy and full of grief?

BOBKA: No.

YOU: Necessarily not.

NATHAIN: Can one be simultaneously a horse-trader and anti-horse trader?

BOBKA: No, for the horses and anti-horses would necessarily negate each other in a burst of energy.

NATHAIN: Then we have seen that something cannot be at once both a thing and its opposite or negative.

YOU: So we have.

NATHAIN: What is the opposite or negative of a push?

BOBKA: Truly, it would have to be a pull.

NATHAIN: And was it not true that when I pushed you, I was also pulling an all-nighter.

BOBKA: It is, for I waited in your room the entire night in order to challenge you to a dialogue, but you never returned from the library.

NATHAIN: But you have agreed that it is not possible for something to be at once pushing and pulling.

YOU: What about a push-me-pull-you?

NATHAIN: That doesn't actually exist.

YOU: Sorry. It's just I don't feel like I've contributed enough to the trialogue.

NATHAIN: So what say you, Bobka? Do you concede the point?

BOBKA: SECTION II!

NATHAIN: I cannot answer that, and therefore must concede the point myself.

Just as Bobka raises his hands in triumph, he is nearly knocked off his feet by a continuous stream of water originating from somewhere more than a foot away outside your field of view. You and Nathain rush towards him, but it's too late; he's in critical condition. "Nathain," he manages, "Avenge...me...urh..." Then he dies. Nathain turns to you.

"Bobka was a worthy opponent, and deserves to be avenged. But we swore to quest in search of the social loveseat. What should we do?"

*To set aside your quest and try to avenge the death of Bobka, go to **L**. To continue searching for the loveseat, go to **I**. Alternatively, since this is a really tough decision, you could try splitting yourself in two so as to be able to do both. If you decide to go with this utterly unphysical solution to your problems, go to **K**.*

F: You climb the weathered staircase carved into the side of the Section IV tower, struggling through fierce headwinds like a writer through unnecessary and ponderous similes. Your mysterious companion is unfazed by the harsh weather. At the top of the stairs, he produces a packet of cigarettes from somewhere and somehow manages to jam several into the only slits in his helmet, which were directly over the eyes. With a dramatic flourish, he lights the cigarettes, and calls out into the night:

"Open up, Lanham! I got a burning desire to see you right about now, and you don't want to see me get hot-headed."

For a moment there is silence, and then the door opens, and Bryce Lanham's head pokes through. "Only one man can pun that badly," he says in disbelief. "Ben?"

"That's Brubaker, private eye errant, bub," says your companion, grabbing Bryce by the collar. "But all that is irrelevant right now. Right now I'm looking for a certain social loveseat, and if I don't find it, I'll be left with an anti-social hate-stand. Now I'm not quite sure what that is, but I don't think — ow ow ow my eyes fuck fuckity fuck!" He pulls off his helmet, hurls it aside, and regains his composure. "Whadaya know?"

“Oh, that,” says Bryce sheepishly. “I had videotaped evidence of it being stolen, but I deleted it because I figured a lot of people would come around asking for it, and I didn’t want to deal with that.”

“You *what?!?*” says Brubaker. “I feel my love dropping to dangerously low levels, Lanham.”

“Wait!” says Bryce desperately. “I might have made a copy of the video. It would be on one of these machines right here.” He pushes the door ajar to reveal an enormous pile of computers, stretching as far as the eye can see in every direction.

“Dear god,” you mutter to yourself. “There must be thousands...”

“Tens of thousands!” Bryce declares triumphantly.

*This is going to take a while. If You decide to leave your companion with Bryce and head out on your own, go to **G**. If you really must stick it out, go to **M**.*

G: You arrive at a thoroughly nondescript crossroads. You’re not quite sure where you are, but you know where you came from, and you can see another road pretty much straight ahead, which probably corresponds to wherever you’re supposed to be going. There are also a number of other roads fanning out behind you at various angles, and you figure that these are all roads that you might have come from to end up at the place where you did if you hadn’t come from the direction that you did, in fact, come from. Seeing the history of your life decisions thus metaphorically laid out in front of you is pretty sobering, but the mood is ruined by the realization that the author of the minutes apparently couldn’t be bothered to come up with an actual story to link paragraphs **A**, **B**, **F**, and **I**.

*To continue down the road ahead, go to **I**. Alternatively, you could try to walk back along one of the roads that you could have used to get here. If you do so, choose either **A**, **B**, or **F**, and read it backwards. What do you do when you get back to the beginning of the paragraph, you ask? Don’t ask me. You need to get better at making decisions for yourself.*

H: Wait, how could you be reading this? I thought I sealed off all entrances to this part of the minutes! It was for your own protection!

*Go to **N**.*

I: You recognize this street: It’s Ellis Avenue, but how much it has changed. The crowd is so thick you can barely see the pavement, but from the few glimpses you get, it’s apparent that different parts of the curb have been meticulously painted in a dizzying array of different colors. And the number of people! It’s over nine thousand! No sooner have you finished taking in your surroundings than you are rudely jostled by a police officer with a clipboard.

“Sir, you’re standing in the light magenta zone, which means I’m going to have to ask you to move unless you’re the parent of a handicapped student in the geophysical sciences, which it doesn’t look like you are.”

“Come again?”

He gestures at the sidewalk, and you see that the roughly twenty-five square inches in which you have planted your feet are indeed painted light magenta. “This square is reserved for the parents of handicapped students in the geophysical sciences.”

“And how many of those are there?” you ask.

“Two,” says the policeman. “I just hope they don’t show up, or we’ll have to execute plan 4C, which means tearing down this section of wall to make space for them, then tearing down the rest of the wall because we might as well, and lastly demolishing whatever remains of the building once it caves in as a result of us having removed one of its walls.”

“But...this is crazy!” you protest, at which he grows very angry.

“Just get out of my zone,” he says, and shoves you out into the street, just as an enormous procession of robed graduates is passing. You are carried along by the human current, the components of which are evidently so excited at having finished college that they will stop marching very slowly for no man.

*To very literally go with the flow and see where you end up, go to **P**. Alternatively, since the crowd is moving so slowly, you could try to speed things up by literally living in fast-forward. If so, go to **J**.*

J: Congratulations, you’re now speed living.

-The practical effect of speed living is that everything is recounted in bullet-point form like at the end of the first-quarter minutes.

-Your life is moving so fast that you get sidetracked and end up listening to an abbreviated account of the history of the At Large presentation.

-I’m Austin

-Whales!

-I’m trying to–

-Ejjjjiiiiichhh!

-Levi is short.

-I’m not here right now.

-Levi is short.

-I’m Levi, and I’m short.

-Levi has a number of deficiencies, most of which involve being short.

-I’m short.

-I’m not here right now.

-I’m Graham, and I’m tall.

-I’m not here right now.

-I'm not here right now.
-I'm not here right now.
-Look, it's like, a fucking watermelon or something.
-I'm not here right now.
-I'm not here right now.
-I'm Hillel.
-I'm not here right now.
-Credit where credit is due: Hillel Wayne.
-This bullet point thing is pretty cool, isn't it?

*-You could try to use your new speed living skills to try to get actual practical information by going to **O**.*

*-Or you can just quit while you're ahead by going back to **G**.*

K: You try *really* hard, and eventually succeed in bifurcating yourself. Congratulations! You're now two people. Like at the end of the Prestige, except one of you doesn't just straight up shoot the other, because that would make this paragraph pretty useless. Oh yeah, spoilers by the way. Sorry.

*Go to **G**, then pick another place at random in the minutes (roll a d20, and match each number to the corresponding paragraph, excluding **G**, **K**, **W**, and **START**. If you actually do this, I'll be very impressed). Then start reading both sections of the minutes simultaneously. You may need to get two friends to read them aloud into either ear. Now you have an extra life!*

L: You kneel down in front of Bobka's body with Nathain, preparing yourself for a mystery that could take weeks to solve. Fortunately for you, even the killer agrees that the minutes have gone on long enough already, and has therefore very thoughtfully made things simpler for you by leaving a calling card.

"Looks like she left a calling card," Nathain says, and tosses you a playing card with "You were sports" written on it in very neat sharpie. In a flash of insight you realize that Elizabeth Lee must have killed Bobka to have the glory of IM Sports Representation all to herself. She conspired with Lee Harvey Oswald, Desmond Miles, and Richard Kuklinski to run around shooting each other with water guns as a front, so nobody would realize that one of the water guns was deadly...*inexplicably* deadly. You alert the FBI, and all of them are summarily brought to justice, though that doesn't succeed in making this paragraph any less half-assed or nonsensical.

*You can now take initiative and continue the search for the loveseat. To do so, go to **P**. Alternatively, you could follow Nathain and wait to see what he does. In that case, you should go to **Q**.*

M: You watch as Bryce begins to sift through his millennia of accumulated data. “Do you have any, um, way of organizing this stuff?” you ask foolishly. “And why do you have so many computers in the first place?”

“Because it’s my job,” Bryce says. “I was elected to record all of Hitchcock’s history by the first Hitchcock government 10,000 years ago. That requires a lot of hard drives.”

“Wait, you were *elected* to record history and this is what you do? You just keep a big pile of computers and arbitrarily delete data? Where is your civic duty?”

Bryce grins cheekily. “Let me tell you something about civic duty. It doesn’t actually exist. For instance, Mandy Stafford’s entire job as HARC representative consisted of going to meetings once a week, but in an entire year as an elected official, she never went to a single meeting. Our vice presidents have rarely deigned to show up House Meetings. Don’t even get me started on the community service opportunities they’re theoretically supposed to promote. The PSAC rep refuses to cease to exist despite her existence being very explicitly denied throughout our fine Constitution. Hundreds of freegans, who depend on regular Thursday nourishment to survive until the RA study break on Sunday night, have died because the apathy of the section reps. Then, of course, there’s the whole affair of the Social Loveseat. And I’m not even going to *mention* At Large.”

He doesn’t need to. Being confronted so explicitly with what a sham house government really is causes you to go nigh apoplectic, and you begin to undergo severe internal hemorrhaging.

YOU DIE OF TRAUMA. *Theoretically you’re not supposed to have any extra lives or anything like that, since it’s the finale. But really, you can just start reading again. It’s not like there’s anything I can do about it.*

N: Don’t you understand? There’s no way out!

Go to H.

O: You want practical information? Seriously? Fine, you asked for it.

-You guys, if we’re actually going to sell the seven different shirts we planned on selling this year, we’re going to have to get started soon. We’ve already talked to Snell about committing 33% of the final cost of each shirt except for the one that will be sold only to residents of Hitchcock and students in the Geophysical Sciences, but they want us to give them an estimate of our revenue before we finalize it, so if each of you who’s planning on buying a shirt could just raise your hand. I promise this won’t take too long.

-We have exactly \$175.52 in House Funds.

-Some musical group on campus will be performing music somewhere on campus. Like tomorrow or something. Maybe the next day. Even if the one I’m thinking of isn’t tomorrow, *something* is happening tomorrow. Just go to Fulton at 7:00 or whatever.

-IHC is starting a very serious investigation into the dearth of students’ rights on campus which you should probably care about but aren’t going to so what’s the use of me even announcing it.

-Okay, okay I get it. Asking for practical information was a bad idea. Can we please stop now?

-Everybody say hi to so-and-so's guest, who's here for the weekend! You'll never see her again! Pretend to be really stoked!

-So we talked to Snell, and based on the preliminary estimates of our sales, they want to cut back to 25% of the initial investment. And I know we just voted on this last time, but can we get a motion to get further house funds to make up the difference.

-Do we have a second?

-Ben, seriously, this isn't funny. Let me out. Let me go get back to the regular part of the minutes.

-Second.

-Third! (*Half-hearted laughter*)

-YOU-HC!

-But guys, seriously, we need to vote on this.

-I know we said last house meeting was going to be the last one of the year, but the thing is, Spiegel wasn't at that meeting because he went to see Space Jam, which is a totally irresponsible way for a treasurer to behave, so I feel like we need to have a special house meeting to impeach him in the middle of July. I'm setting this for a couple of weeks in the future so everybody has time to get plane tickets. It would be great if we could get a quorum, because you wouldn't want twenty-two of your classmates to fly to Chicago for nothing, now would you? RSVP soon please.

-LET ME OUT!!! AHHH!!!!

-T-shirts BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH BLAH.

YOU DIE OF BOREDOM. *This is the only part of the story with a moral. The moral is that if I just wrote minutes that described what happened in house meetings, you'd all be dead by now. In case that wasn't obvious.*

P: The crowd carries you south on Ellis, and finally manage to break away by hitching a ride on a large orange bin full of suitcases being towed by an exhausted student. She takes you as far as the Midway, where you are dumped unceremoniously to the ground when she begins to load up the cab waiting in the Burnt Umber Zone. On the midway ahead, you see Joshua of Knoxley and Sir Nathain staring intently at South Campus. As you look on, the mysterious newcomer from **START** approaches, the one whose identity you may or may not know depending on which path you took to get here. If you don't know already, you are at this point graced with a totally undeserved flash of insight, and realize that he is none other than Brubaker the private eye, hero of the first quarter minutes. Now you know.

"Bartley," Brubaker growls as he draws close. "Or Nathain, or Bartholomew Nath, or King of Bartlett, or whatever your name is. "I've been swimming against the current of the timestream for over two quarters now to find you. I went to pre-Christian Iceland, to an alternate-present Mecca ruled by robots, where I was like a fish out of water. You kept getting away from me. At every turn, I would hear that I just missed you. "Better luck next time," they would say. "Go fish." That all ends right now. You're not getting off the hook this time."

Nathain's eyes narrowed. "That's a slippery metaphor you're playing with, Brubaker. I wouldn't want you to get in over your head. What exactly are you implying?"

“I’m implying nothing. You caused the implosion of the space-time continuum ten thousand years in the future. Wait, no, I mean, ten thousand years in the past. You told me so yourself! I’m here to settle the score.”

“I still don’t understand what you mean,” you protest, and are ignored by everybody.

“Isn’t that your fault, though?” Nathain says. “The reincarnation of you from ten thousand years in the whatever fucking direction we’re going now wrote the only know account of my supposed atrocities. How do we know he, that is, you, didn’t cause them?”

“Preposterous! How could I cause an event by documenting it? The effect clearly precedes the supposed cause!”

“Ah, but if we allow for blatantly unqualified time travel, and we opened that can of worms already by the middle of first quarter, then we have to abandon any traditional notion of causality!”

An awkward silence falls over both disputants. Brubaker scratches his head.

“*What* was it exactly that you were trying to do?” he asks. “Or weren’t trying to do, or whatever?”

“Fuck if I know,” Nathain says. “I never understood the first-quarter minutes.”

“Hrm. Neither did I, to tell the truth. Y’know what, forget about it. Let’s just be cool and find this fucking futon or whatever it is.”

Joshua of Knoxley clears his throat. “We’ve pinned down the location of the loveseat. It’s in South Campus, somewhere in Chautauqua House. Apparently, they stole it one night after midnight soccer. But we need to get in. Therefore, I propose, uh, explosives, the solution to every problem.”

You see that he already has one of the walls of south campus rigged with about two hundred pounds of plastic explosives. But you’re thinking, there’s gotta be an easier way to do this. Then you notice a distant ground floor window that appears to have been left ajar. Forbidden, but...tempting. Or there’s, y’know, the front door.

*To try to climb through the window, go to **R**. To follow Josh Knox and try to get in via explosion, go to **S**. To try to make it past the front desk, go to **T**.*

Q: You just sit there, infatuated with Nathain Bartley, waiting for him to tell you what you’re going to do. In fact you’re so busy staring at Nathain’s guns that you accidentally shoot yourself in the face.

YOU DIE. *Of being shot. Duh.*

R: You approach the window and look left and right furtively. No mortal eyes watch you, but you feel the glare of the ancient gods ORCSA and OUSH bearing down on you as you put one foot, then the other, through the window, and pull it shut behind you. This has to be bad karma.

You're somewhere in the middle of a long, curved corridor. To head left, go to U. To head right, go to V.

S: Kabloosh! The westernmost wall of south campus explodes in a burst of flames, and when the smoke clears, there's plenty of holes through which you could enter. No, not like that. You're your mind out of the gutter.

"No, you can leave it there; that's what I was thinking too," says Joshua. "Go ahead. I'm going to stay behind to cause some more explosions."

You enter the building to find yourself somewhere in the middle of a long, curved corridor. To head left, go to V. To head right, go to W.

T: You approach the South Campus front desk, where you are scrutinized by a weary guard.

"Can I see some kind of ID?" he says.

"Uh, oh, uh...I don't have it on me," you stammer. "I'm going to a party...this guy...Chad? And, y'know, the bros? They're having a party?"

"What's your name?" he asks.

"Uh...Marco Brolo," you lie, sure that your plan has failed and you will be swiftly hauled away by University Police.

"Well, your name's on the list, so I guess you can go in," he says, looking up from his clipboard. "And tell that Chad whatever-his-name-is that he needs to come down and sign his guests in. This isn't the first time he's done this."

You breathe a huge sigh of relief as you make it through the doors. You're in. Which way to go now?

You're somewhere in the middle of a long, curved corridor. To head left, go to W. To head right, go to U.

U: You don't get very far down the corridor before you are decapitated without warning by one of South Campus's fiendish swinging blade traps!

*You understand, of course. It's Choose Your Own Adventure. There had to be a swinging blade trap. **YOU DIE.***

V: As you head down the hall, you suddenly fall through a well-disguised pit trap and down a long chute. A very long chute. Or a very long snake, if you were raised on the British version. But what does that even mean?

*Whatever it is, it's so long that it carries you all the way back to **START**. In other words, a big ol' fuck you from me to you. You're welcome.*

W: The sound of raucous South Campus partying grows ever louder as you race down the hallway. The loveseat is close. You can feel it. After twelve pages, it's about fucking time. Finally, you reach the source of the noise, and there, in a room reeking with the stench of piss and beer pong, a couple of brahs are chilling on what could only be the Social Loveseat itself. Nathain, Joshua, and Brubaker are close behind you. And as you take in the scene in front of you, a handful of dudes in wifebeaters holding bud lights lounging around on top of the treasured artifact you sought for so long, the only word that comes to mind is *Why?*

“It's because you kept beating us in soccer,” a bro you take to be Chad admits. “And DelGirno couldn't deliver the victory they promised either. It's like, you guys are getting all up in our shit, dude. You're better at sports, you're better at naming your frats. We couldn't let you have all the love too. It wouldn't be fair.”

“It would be *bro*-ken, brah,” chimes in another bro, whom you decide to call Brad.

“So if you want the loveseat, you're gonna have to fight us for it,” says Chad.

“Dude, it's class struggle, like they talk about in Brosc,” says a third Bro. “We can be the broletariat.”

And then the inevitable rumble begins. Joshua of Knoxley quickly takes several of the bros out of commission by offering them free hits of Nitrous. Nathain and Brubaker use their respective mystical ninja fighting moves and general private eye badassery to take out a couple more. Chad turns to Brad (whose name turns out to actually have been Brad after all) in desperation, and asks why Marco Brolo hasn't showed up yet, “because he totally said he would come with a couple of brahs and just chill.” Suffice it to say, the battle is quickly and conclusively decided in favor of the protagonists. Not to be confused with the brotagonists, who lose.

The room is silent for a moment after the vanquished bros excuse themselves to find somewhere a bit more low-key to chill. Everybody is eyeing the loveseat. Finally Nathain speaks up.

“This is it, then. We return the social loveseat to Beta Rho Omicron, where it will cause the brotherly love that is already between us to swell to greater proportions. Love will be stronger than ever!”

“Not so fast,” says Brubaker. “I'm still a private eye, y'know. And just as the minutes started with a dame waltzing into my office, they've gotta end with a dame waltzing into my office, or at least with a flashback to dame waltzing into my office. Y'know, in medias res. Or whatever. Full circle. Anyway, this particular dame was Erica Fagin, and she commissioned me to find the

social loveseat and return it to Section V, so that it can be put to use to generate more *Cars/Transformers* slashfics, instead of just sitting around at the top of Section I with a bunch of dudes. No homo.”

“Ah, yes,” says Josh. “I’d like to propose that we use the powers of the, uh, social loveseat to surprise the incoming first years with unspeakably, uh, horrible acts.”

All three of them turn to look at you.

“For some reason, we all seem to leave all of our important choices up to this guy, although I don’t know what on earth he’s done to deserve it,” Nathain observes.

“What do you think should happen?” Brubaker asks you metatextually. “I can afford to go all self-referential on you guys,” he adds. “Give me a break. It’s the last fucking line of dialog.”

Now you get to decide where the social loveseat goes. Your decision will have absolutely no impact on anything, within or outside the minutes. And thus ends the epic nonsensical saga that started eight months and eighty-some pages ago, very fittingly, with a reaffirmation of the complete inability of the minutes to actually affect anything at all. Thanks for allowing me this venue to waste a little bit of your time and a problematically large amount of my own.

THE END.