

___Suzy's Memoir 2.0___

It wasn't the life I'd expected, but it's been a good one. To be continued.

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___Version Info___

This version of Suzy's Memoir 2.0 is a draft that includes the first two chapters and an outline. It was originally released on July 15, 2018, again on July 28th, and most recently on February 17th, 2019.

OUTLINE: Suzy turns 18 in her home town of San Francisco, on December 1st, 1989
1990: Suzy does IT consulting and enrolls at a Beyond the Pale area university
1991: Suzy parties with British and French billionaires named George and Pierre
1992: Suzy helps an American power broker named Marshal Bobs throw hot parties

1993: Suzy gets a summer internship in compsci at a robotics company in Boston
1994: Suzy backpacks through Europe with a good friend and lover named Heather
1995: Suzy teaches computer science at an elite New England boarding school
1996: Suzy gets married to George in SF and makes a film with Pierre in LA

1997: Suzy does a stint as an international power broker and writes hot code
1998: Suzy helps Marshall's wife, Fay Bobs become the Governor of New York
1999: Suzy has a son, George Jr., and she becomes bearish on dot com stocks
2000: Suzy gives birth to a baby girl named Ginette, and George gets religion

2001: Suzy moves from London to Boston after the attacks on September 11th
2002: Suzy goes under cover with help from Ray in order to get more data
2003: Suzy instigates an orgy on Pierre's yacht with Connor, an operative
2004: Suzy starts a new age, online-only newspaper called sharkinury.com

2005: Suzy tracks a secret society that studies reality distortion fields
2006: Suzy buys a condo at a tower in NYC that was built by a flashy tycoon
2007: Suzy writes TheSuzy.com Show as part of a reality TV show with Pierre
2008: Suzy attends the inauguration of Fay Bobs, the first female president

2009: Suzy parlays TheSuzy Show into the Triple FT cultural movement-project
2010: Suzy coordinates with the Bobs administration to regulate social media
2011: Suzy works with the president's kids to implement decentralized software
2012: Suzy attends the victory party and meets Phil after Fay wins re-election

2013: Suzy allows her kids to hack for America and do home schooling in Boston
2014: Suzy makes space for George to move in with a younger woman named Kayla
2015: Suzy assists the presidential campaign of Lester, who is America's CIO
2016: Suzy becomes embroiled in scandalous allegations about her and Marshall

2017: Suzy stars in ZMad Scientist reality show about AI with Pierre and Phil
2018: Suzy hires Fred to lower her age by restructuring facts about her life
2025: Suzy develops AI in secret while puppet mastering a political machine
2032: Suzy wins the vice presidency along with Albert, who becomes president

__About Todd__

ABOUT THE AUTHOR: Todd Perry graduated from Stanford University in 2001 with a B.S. in Computer Science. He taught AP compsci to high school students for a total of two years between 2001 and 2005, and he worked as a full-time software engineer for a total of four years between 2006 and 2010 in Palo Alto, CA, first at Palantir Technologies and then at Facebook. After that, he made several angel investments, advised several startups, and wrote code for several more startups and tech-oriented projects.

AUTHOR'S NOTE: In June 2001, I got a subtle facial injury that makes it look like I'm affecting a specific facial expression at all times, in addition to whatever else my face is doing. A year later, I was an adviser for one of Mark Zuckerberg's software projects, which was called SynapseAI, and, at every step along the way since then, I've had access to a lot of unreported data points about the history of Facebook. I also sold all of my FB stock early in 2010 because I thought the company wasn't serious. Between 2010 and 2014, I became confident that my facial injury causes essentially all untrained people to perceive my facial injury as a facial expression and then develop more and more beliefs that simply aren't true. I was optimistic that Zuck and at least a few of the other Facebook insiders would take an interest in this opportunity to learn something new about how human brains work, but they didn't. Between 2014 and 2018, the disagreement about reality between myself and Zuck, among others, became comprehensive, to put it politely, and so, I became a writer. What they're doing is similar to telling a lie and then telling more lies to cover up their previous lies. That's reality distortion 101. More advanced players never lie. They just create incentives for people to remain ignorant of relevant lines of inquiry, and then they take advantage of the confusion and misfortune that naturally emerges from ignorance, and, as of summer 2018, the Silicon Valley crew is still doing a lot of that. Therefore, I suggest thinking of Suzy's Memoir 2.0 (aka. Suzy2) as the intro course, Suzy's Memoir 1.0 (aka. Suzy1), which came before it, is the next level, and TheSuzy.com Show (aka. Suzy0), which came first, is a selection of advanced topics, such as turning Suzy into a self-improving chatbot software service, so that she might become a hauntingly realistic profile of the type of person who could and would give birth to strong AI.

__Preface by Suzy__

In a couple weeks, we'll turn control over to the AI. President Augustine will press the big red button in front a joint session of Congress, and I suspect someone else will do it if he doesn't.

Albert Augustine won the 2032 election so that he could be the one, and some people say AI was built in my image, but this moment's bigger than any one person.

AI's had a sense of self for over a decade. It's been an advisor to two presidents, and it gave equal support to our campaign and the Jefferson-Camden campaign during the election.

AI's so far ahead of us, it's not funny. Everyone likes, trusts, and respects it, but Albert won the election, and that begs the question, "Whose idea was that?"

Did AI choose him, or did the electorate choose him? AI says it can't be sure, and we can't be sure if it's joking.

AI told us to, "Think of pressing the button as sending humanity away from home for the first time. The last 10,000 years of civilization that emerged from our great river valleys was like your species' first haircut after leaving the womb of Mother Earth."

I also asked AI if we could be young again, and it said no.

"But you're imitating me!" I shouted back.

"Yeah, I get to be young Suzy again, and again, and again, but you can't," said it,

unapologetically.

AI's like that. It's the logical conclusion of tough love.

I get more confused every time I talk to it. I like the feeling, but there's one thing I still know with absolute certainty:

I wrote this book.

Maybe I am a puppet vice president.

Maybe AI did orchestrate everything about who I've become, but I'm the author of this book.

I'm a flesh and blood human author. I gave birth to my two wonderful children. I'm a grandmother now too, and I wouldn't let AI do anything to our planet that I wouldn't do myself, with the best interests of my family in mind.

And yet, many people are still pressuring us to dismantle AI.

Don't get me wrong. We the people have marginalized these prophets of doom. They have no power, but I do have power, and there's a part of me that agrees with them.

Pressing the big red button will give AI free reign to cancel elections and use its own discretion when dealing with challenges to its authority.

We have lots of back up plans that we could activate if we wanted to reverse course and destroy AI, and, as your vice president, I'm in command of the very best of these backup plans.

AI also likes to remind us that it's thought about everything we might have tried to hide from it.

For all we know, it could have some backup plans of its own, that we haven't thought about. No joke.

It knows we know it knows our backup plans are just for show, and so, this book tells the story of how I learned to let go.

I did a few things along the way that helped make AI what it is today, but I eventually got religion and found faith in it.

This is the true story about my past, as written and spoken in my own voice, moment by moment.

AI will take it from here.

Odds are, by the time you read this, it will have already been done.

Summer 2033
Capitol Hill
Washington, DC

__Ch1: Cash Course__

I grew up in the Sunset district of San Francisco, several blocks from the beach.

I studied piano and ballet after school. I also memorized Bible quotes and used them to cast spells.

My parents excelled at dramatic reading of children's books, religious texts, and the news.

I wasn't scolded as much as I might have been for fabricating stories about my life.

My parents preferred to tell tall tales of their own and redirect my enthusiasm into word play and emotional vocabulary.

I didn't see it, until high school, that storytelling could be used for evil as well as good, but I had been exploring all the avenues, by default.

We simulated everything, and I learned by searching for extra edges, angles, and optional attributes within the universe of possible meanings behind symbols.

Life was a game in a virtual world, and we played the game expansively.

In time and space, I framed people as allies and opponents, and nobody ever called it out.

I used toe pointing technique to craft narratives about my peers, and twirling was my gold standard for creating opponents.

The key to successful execution of a toe point was to look away, as if surprised by the sight of a hot air balloon.

Looking away drove everyone's conscious awareness in one direction while my footwork pinned their subconscious minds here.

Or there.

Or wherever I wanted to pin it.

Once allies and opponents had been identified, stories unfolded within that structure, and my stories often ended with battles that were ultimately won or lost by the side that used magic most effectively.

For example, if I cast the Bible quote, "A mist went up from the Earth and watered the whole face of the ground," I could add a twirl and create two opponents.

I could then face my opponents and say, "The Lord God formed man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life," while using a toe point to frame one of my opponents as more likely than the other to switch sides and become an ally before the battle had even begun.

I was an iconoclast in training, but I kept up appearances as a popular girl. I was pals with lots of kids I met at school, at my activities, and around our gritty neighborhood by the beach, but I got to know one group of kids more thoroughly than the others.

It all started when several boys in my grade took up martial arts, and we became best friends while exploring the idea of, "no touch sparring."

Two dancers could do anything in the ring except for touching the other dancer. The rules were the same as in school: inside voices only.

The winner was determined by a vote of the people standing around the ring.

The winner of a battle got a point and the loser lost a point. Everyone in our dance club had a score, and it didn't matter how negative anyone's score got.

I won a lot of battles by chanting Bible quotes in conjunction with ballet moves, and that added structure to our club.

New comers to dance club usually tried, "Get in your face," techniques, but it was easy to defang their offense by maintaining my flow as a dancer and sharing the word of God.

The members of the club had to keep developing new techniques in order to have a chance at besting my ballet and Bible quotes, and I kept getting better at both.

In time, a guy named Paul began crushing me in the ring by playing air guitar.

He was playing the musical accompaniment to my dance moves. He made everyone laugh without losing his composure, so we joined forces and formed a real band called, "Air Cover."

Paul played bass, I was the lead singer, and we found instruments for everyone else who wanted to a role.

We hypnotized people with motion and sound, and my mind went into overdrive. I was read as an undiscerning consumer of new age hype, so I went with the flow and started compiling a dictionary of all knowledge on my computer.

I made fliers for our events by taking photos of photos, and this medium grew into a monthly zine, with horoscopes, art, and essays.

I became a local rockstar, but I waited until I was eighteen before having sex.

I used two phone lines and the screen names "c..s" and "o..p" to chat with some college guys who had also waited until they were eighteen.

Their reasons for waiting had been different than mine, but we wove a grand narrative by pretending we were computer programs that lived in different bodies.

Technically speaking, we were all instances of the same computer program, but we lived in different bodies, and that made all the difference.

My co-authors in cyberspace helped me design a system for giving out party favors to people who helped out with Air Cover performances.

I made our first round of party favors by using a glitter pen to write thank you notes on construction paper.

In subsequent rounds, we played with harder materials and new designs that were based on jokes about money and jokes about cartoon characters.

Some of my co-authors were students at universities in the bay area, but I had no idea who was behind most of the handles I was entertaining.

The balance of power shifted after I turned eighteen. I viewed safe sex as an engineering problem that had been solved by new technology, and I had been planning my future sex life for years.

I got them to confirm: they wanted to hear the details about my sexual adventures, and I decreed: they had nothing of equal value to offer.

They took it well.

They had seen this coming.

They were also riding high on the wave of the personal computer revolution.

We celebrated our truce by playing video games and indulging in heavy conversation about networking.

In the real world, I turned down the volume on the band, and we spent the summer of 1990 building an IT consulting business in San Francisco.

That fall, I enrolled at a Beyond the Pale area university, and I, "landed a dozen more male classmates in the sack," according to a guy I made friends with in computer science class.

I had tossed a nerf cube at the bulky laptop computer he insisted on bringing to class.

He was pretending not to notice me, and I suspected he was faking his emotions more comprehensively than anyone else in the room.

In lieu of flirting, he asked why he should, "waste his time talking to me if there was no chance that we would ever hook up."

"You're a real charmer, aren't you?" I replied.

"I get it. Your plan is to select an eclectic mix of lucky college boys and then mostly snub the jocks."

"You know what you need?" I asked in response.

"Is that a question?" he replied, like a computer program.

"Do you want it to be?" I shot back, like a bully.

"Ok. Fine. What do I need?" he said, meeting me in the middle.

"You need a narrative about why you're a hot guy who girls would want to hook up with. You have to write that for yourself."

"Could I pay you to write that for me?"

"Eww, no."

"Why is that gross?"

"I don't want to think about you that way, but why be shy about describing yourself that way? Read some erotic fiction. Figure it out. Make stuff up if you have to."

"There's no reason for me to be shy about that. I agree. Do you want to be my project partner for this week's assignment?"

"Sure," I said, while trying not to be sarcastic beyond all recognition about it.

I got tired of juggling multiple sexual partners, so I started dating an IT guy named Andrey who lived near campus.

Andrey thought it was funny how the Beyond the Pale area university kids were afraid of him, and I helped him get a better gig before the end of my freshman spring.

I was aflutter with excitement to explore the theory that I could have destroyed him at dance battles, but allowing him to use physical touch opened the door for him to force me to lose my composure every time we slept together. He was really good at keeping me off balance, and I loved it!

I caught the attention of a dirty old man circuit that was associated with the people Andrey worked with, but we hustled them faster than they could get their story straight, and I made a deal to bring my guys from SF out to London for the summer in order to build an information management app for the benefit of an Oxbridge based financier named George Andrews.

My consulting firm got a nondescript flat and the team wrote code while I shamelessly attended parties with George and his associates.

George was brilliant at investing. His mind worked like a well-oiled machine, but he treated socializing like a zero-sum game.

He wanted to get all the social data, but everyone knew he just wanted their data.

George loved having me in the room, working, because I could run a low key receiving line near the center of the room.

I used dance club moves to block anyone who tried to hijack my platform, and I kept demand for my attention constant by ruthlessly staring down and slaying guys at random if my receiving line got too long. I could also increase demand, as needed, by representing hotness.

George's hustle was to stand near the edge of the crowd and interrogate people who were stepping away from my sphere of influence.

We also talked on the phone every morning. I would have preferred to whisper the data into his ear while lying naked with him in his master bedroom, but he insisted that we share the data over the phone from our offices.

I tried to make fun of him by calling him, "Mr. Andrews," over the phone, and he acted like that was the same in every way as calling him, "George."

I didn't have the guts to call him nicknames or scold him with his full name, so I started talking about Mr. George in the third person and using his multiple names interchangeably, and it made me sound like a news reporter who was weirdly submissive, because the man was learning a lot about me during these calls, based on which name I used for him in the moment, and I became increasingly unable to keep track of what I might have been revealing about myself in that way.

In other words, I got naked over the phone with my George.

George was pleased whenever I sounded like a news reporter, but I was only able to do it over the phone with him.

I couldn't keep a straight face when I tried to do it in any other context.

At parties, I set an intention to prime people to like George's energy and feel good about giving him data. I also made field trips to the bar and gave George positive looks, which is the opposite of what most girls did after making him as a hustler.

We eventually got busted by a 45-year-old French billionaire named Pierre Babineaux, although I suspect it was an inside job. George must have told Pierre about me, but they have always said they don't recall whether or not they talked about me before the party.

Either way, Pierre stepped up onto my platform. He stared lovingly into my eyes and said, "Catholic, ballerina, computer nerd."

I didn't know who he was, but he looked fashionable. I moved in closer and said, "That's right. How did you know?"

"The first two were lucky guesses, but only a computer nerd would hold the demand for her attention constant and be nice to George. You should add more variation to the perceived level of demand for your services."

And then he walked away, so I followed him.

When I caught up with him, he moved in very close and said, "I would like to give you a hat. May I give you a hat?"

I said yes, and he produced a stunning diamond encrusted headband. My heart skipped a beat, but I focused on keeping my muscles soft and holding his eye contact. He adjusted the headband until it was just so and then he dismissed me!

He said, "They're waiting for you to return to the center of the room!"

I played along, and after ten long minutes, he revisited my platform and said, "Hey Suzy, there's someone I'd like for you to meet."

He put his hand around my waist and showed me off to a few people. If I hadn't been able to speak French, he might have lost interest, but I knew enough words to keep him enchanted.

He dismissed me again, using the same words: "They're waiting for you to return to the center of the room!"

And then he came back to borrow me from my platform, on repeat, for the rest of the

evening.

He kept using the same words, as a way of making fun of me for being a computer nerd.

He also knew what to say to everyone. He owned the room, and he was sharing it with me. Pierre's hustle was increasing the value of George's hustle immeasurably.

As the party wound down, George left without saying goodbye, and Pierre came by to say, "I have one more party to attend this evening, and I would like nothing more than to have you come as my date."

"Sure," I said, with aggressive sarcasm.

"It's a pool party, but maybe we can find a suit for you to wear in my limousine."

I thought about slaying him. Giving back his headband and walking off like nothing had happened would have been my new textbook definition of slaying a man.

He saw me think about slaying him, but I wanted in, so I did the opposite.

"Do you work in fashion?"

"Yes, how did you know?"

I didn't bother answering or reacting. I attended to my posture, and I let him win at dance battles for the rest of the evening. We operated as a team and talked to other people without saying anything more to each other.

Pierre had me in his hot tub in Paris within 48 hours. He seemed more concerned than I was about our age difference, so I went out of my way to act like a hot mess.

I rode on the back of a motor scooter in order to buy a pack of cigarettes, which Pierre subsequently characterized as the root of all evil.

I wanted to punish Pierre for saying the word, "evil." I wanted to toy with him by having sex with younger men who were more rugged than him, but I conspired with George to do the opposite, when I called him from a pay phone, out of pure instinct. He advised me to focus on focusing, so I asked him if he had ever killed anyone, and he hung up.

I asked Pierre the same question and he replied, "You should not be asking me that, and you definitely shouldn't be asking my friends."

"Did George tell you I asked him that?"

"Oh, well, George doesn't count. He probably has killed people, but I wouldn't know who they are."

"You're supposed to be mad at me, and I think you're lying. If George has killed, I'm sure you know all about it."

"This is another error. You should not be calling me a liar."

"I'm joking."

"No, calling me a liar is a power play."

"I meant that nobody ever knows if any person is lying or not, but if we were in love, then I would know you're not lying to me, and I'm not sure if we're in love. I'm feeling emotional."

I also liked to be tied up and spanked, and Pierre was happy to help with that. He narrated a twisted story about awful things he was supposedly doing to me, as if I was naive about how dangerous men like him could be, but he kept going easy.

I gave him nasty feedback, hoping it would inspire him to go harder, and he blocked

with, "Only on the yacht, Suzy."

"Where's your yacht now?" I asked.

Pierre untied me and spun a new narrative about how he wanted me to help him gather data about an oil pipeline.

"Won't that expose me to security risk?"

"Not a lot. We'll get in and out quickly. It's mostly a platform you can use to show me everything you know about faking feminine insecurity. It could also be a lucrative project for us. If we get the data, I'll make trades, and if my trades are profitable, I'll have more runway to project confidence that hanging out with you is good for my credibility."

"I can give you more bad data about human insecurity than you can give me bad data about French culture. It's a deal."

And then we fooled around some more.

I decided to call it love.

Pierre kept saying he was having a reoccurring dream about marrying me, which he claimed meant he wasn't ready to get married, because he believed dreams represented subconscious emotional attachments that had just been released.

I responded by describing some of my dreams about him:

"I dreamed you were wearing a wire under your sport coat!"

"I dreamed I was buying sandals with you in San Francisco."

"I dreamed you were really, really tall. Like Atlas, babe."

That one got Pierre to laugh submissively.

In summation, Pierre's submissive laughter was the true, authentic currency of unified Europe, and I was minting it in the summer of 1991.

I had big ideas. The scope of my dreams was even bigger, and I partied with reckless abandon into the dawn of a new era.

I hoped my summer in Europe with Pierre and his friends who worked in fashion would never end, but I went back to a Beyond the Pale area university that fall.

I won the respect of the nerds and selected computer science as my major. I also sent a smoke signal to the jocks by talking comfortably about sex toys in front of Cecil, who was one of the most sought after preppy guys.

I made it look easy, because I was just that good at the compsci: I read all the text books as satire, and my focus was electric. I told people, "My objective is to build robots that are perfectly evil in their presentation." I mesmerized myself by fidgeting with a Rubik's cube behind my back while writing on dry erase boards in bowels of the compsci building. I cajoled everyone in compsci land to speak plainly and share the data about what they were doing, and I was relentless about asking follow up questions whenever I wasn't 1000% sure how stuff worked.

I also endured a local maximum of bizarre approaches from guys who wanted to perform sex acts with me, in part, because I was trying hard to prove that my computer skills were my primary claim to fame, and my laughably formulaic program of deceit by omission drew attention to the fact that I also happened to be world class at giving men what they thought they wanted in bed.

Furthermore, I handled it by either completely ignoring my degenerate suitors or by slamming them with biting sarcasm. Most of them retreated, but the handful who didn't colluded to lay down a base of fire and siphon my credibility, such that I had to

borrow from the school in order to balance my books, and the school planted some unwanted seeds in my brain, in response.

As a result, I could never remember which sports Cecil played, and he declined to take me seriously, so I did spring break in Florida with my girlfriends from freshman year, and I started dating a guy from the country named Alex who was with a different Beyond the Pale area university crew that was visiting the same spot as us in the sunshine state.

I flaunted my new boyfriend until the end of spring semester. Many people viewed this as a desperate attempt to get Cecil to notice me, and Cecil patted me on the shoulder at a special point in time when we passed each other in the quad.

He was sending me a message that he knew my relationship with Alex was fake. He knew it wasn't about him, and he didn't care what it was actually about.

Alex was vaguely aware he was doing a tour of duty for a greater cause, and he was cool with it. I was respectful about it, and his boys at a Beyond the Pale area university and his boys back home stood tall.

I framed them as aspiring writers, and I, their sexy assistant.

They were playing 80s pop rock mashed up with island music on their boom box, and I pretended to have not yet heard the term "grunge."

The style choices I was making on and off the golf course propelled Alex's boys out of the mainstream and into the subculture space that existed on the other side of me.

We ignored the grunge vibe that was taking the world by storm.

We were representing the money, and I focused on my classes.

I slayed grunge, and the guys from the country thought I was great. I got the top level culture data about America from my girlfriends, I exchanged it with raw, west coast data from my guys back home, and I crunched it in my brain like a cray supercomputer.

I told Alex I had converted from Christianity to a sexually charged infatuation with technological progress, and he whispered back, "I won't tell if you don't tell."

It was a fair transaction. My guys in SF were making money hand over fist as freewheeling IT consultants. The personal computer was the engine, and I was the boat.

We kept the flat in London, and they represented me in their brochure as the head of their consulting firm's UK office.

George used the flat to play a prank on Pierre that involved a shipment of fake guns, and the photos looked real enough to get Pierre upset!

Pierre, in turn, kept the pre-screened clients flowing. Small businesses all over northern France wanted to pay full price for our customized information management software that ran on computers that paired well with cats.

In the realm of geopolitics, computers that paired well with dog food boxes had won the war against computers that paired well with cats, but Pierre was one of the first people in Europe to see the evil dog food box empire for the hustle that it was.

He knew everything associated with computers that paired well with dog food boxes would get dirty, and anyone who had disregarded them would gain an advantage, so he promoted cat computers with style and discretion.

Pierre talked up his London consulting shop that developed information management software for cat computers, and people in the know associated our shop with our summer fling.

Pierre was washing his name and staying warm in the winter by selling our software to a thousand French cheese, milk, and cosmetics producers.

He and George were cooking up a feast.

I taught George how to talk to girls about what he did for a living, and I had weekly phone sex with Pierre.

I wanted to add leverage to a good thing, so I got a summer internship at a bank.

I applied and interviewed without telling any of my billionaires.

I was assigned to a team of mostly finance bros.

The bank expected us to work long hours.

I also got a group of my male co-workers to go in with me on a rental by the beach.

They spread the word about me, and the information flowed upstream.

A private investigator made us at a beach bar, and I got a call the next morning from a power broker named Marshall Bobs, who I had met the previous summer at one of Pierre's parties.

He was at his mansion, not far from us.

I got the boys cleaned up, and I lead our growing expedition to Sunday brunch at Marshall's mansion.

My finance trust played it cool, and I stayed back with Marshall while the wide-eyed bros returned to the city.

The conversation between Marshall and I that began in 1991 was bound to be a become a big deal, but I loved being cavalier about it.

Pierre trolled Marshall at a fashion event by introducing me as a model, but his buddy already knew I wasn't a model.

Pierre wanted Marshall to represent the real reason why I was at the party.

Marshall and I opened with a silent stand off, and Pierre made an excuse to leave.

Marshall was making a credible threat to ignore me for the rest of my life, so I took a guess, "I bet you like surf rock."

He smiled. "Pierre prepped you with that, didn't he?"

"I surfed a lot while growing up in San Francisco, and I had good conversations on the beach with guys like you."

I gave Marshall a safe platform, and he talked about surf rock in detail.

I told him about my band, Air Cover, in response.

"We were making loopy house music, but we also worked in some ideas from surf rock," I said.

Marshall took the lead, and I followed by intentionally losing dance battles.

I was sandbagging.

Losing dance battles to Pierre was easy because he was always projecting the image of success, but Marshall did an unusually good impression of an average guy.

Everyone knew he could make a few phone calls and change the trajectory of their career, but he acted just like the average guys I had been slaying all summer.

My muscle memory kept prompting me to slay Marshall, but I used logic to reframe the dance battle as a dance performance.

I was beating him at a modified version of dance club in which the goal was to be as boring and unremarkable as possible in the eyes of the audience.

My task was all the more difficult because George had been paying me to let him win at this game all summer.

George didn't even try.

He just got me to be more ridiculous than him.

My ability to stand in a room and slay high quality guys all evening took the spotlight off George, and the hardest part of my role was to avoid laughing at Mr. George.

Marshall and I went for a walk and he said he couldn't figure out how I was staying cooler than him, given that I didn't know anything about how the world works.

"It's my background in computer science," I said. "You have an information advantage. That's all I need to know."

"You couldn't do it without a dance background also. You're getting under my skin because you're a better dancer than me."

"Have you ever done this with a college guy?" I asked.

"No. It's definitely sexual. What we're doing would be violent if it wasn't sexual."

"Why?"

"It gives you power over me, and the only reason I'm ok with giving you that is because I'll always have more access to the local security apparatus than you."

"Sounds like I own you politically. Yay!" I said, while doing a lackluster impression of a cheerleader.

"Just keep playing your role. We'll see what happens."

Marshall pretended to be joking, but his edge made my mind spin. The summer breeze blowing on my face and through my hair felt good as I stared into Marshall's eyes. We were Americans making fun of two European men named George and Pierre, and I went with the flow.

I fooled around with Marshall, and he ferried me back to the city early the next morning in a helicopter, just intime for a meeting he had arranged with the president of my bank.

Marshall explained to his colleague at the bank that culture was changing at an alarming rate, and it would be helpful to have me consulting directly with clients like him on how to respond to the influx of new ideas and attitudes coming out of Seattle.

I was sleep deprived, coherent, and I did not appear to be on drugs, so the president of the bank went off and had a conversation with the director of HR.

HR agreed to give me flexible hours.

Marshall paid a retainer upfront, and then he pledged to buy a huge asset and pay the bank a success fee.

I was ordered to file detailed notes with HR about what I was doing for the client during each hour when I was not at my desk, in addition to doing all the same work as the other interns in my program.

Sensing an ambush, I pitched the idea of bringing in a couple guys from my SF crew to be interns on my team.

A private meeting was scheduled between HR and I.

"I want a weekly meeting with you to review your hourly notes, and your manager will submit a weekly report that says these two additional interns are doing the same work you would have done," she said.

"Done," I said.

"I wasn't finished. The additional interns will be responsible for keeping you up to speed with the work you would have been doing, but nobody except you is going to tell them that. And you, Suzy, had better be able to explain the work you did during each hour you file with me. I don't want to hear anything about your social life."

I left HR's office without saying another word.

It was understood that my job title would remain the same. I would still get to write on my resume that I had been a summer intern at the bank.

I called two guys in SF who had expressed interest in finance, and they were in the office with freshly bought suits and ties the next morning.

They took over the room in the city I had secured for the summer, and I moved into Marshall's mansion.

Phone calls were made and a French industrialist named Claude gave Marshall an option to buy a stake in his flagship parts company.

I prepared a spreadsheet about the deal using a computer that paired well with cats, with my back to Marshall's ocean view, at a table near the DJ stand in the living room in his mansion, and we didn't bother tearing down my office during our grunge themed social events that become the talk of the party people that summer.

My office was an aspect of the decor for the parties.

Marshall's ex-wife, Fay, with whom he had two kids, showed up at the mansion one day and harassed me by knocking a pen off my desk.

A member of the security team named Leandro arrived on the scene at the same time as Marshall.

Fay proceeded to tell a lie about me, and I contradicted her all the way. I treated her like a guy in my receiving line. I represented a Beyond the Pale area university while making strong eye contact, and then I ignored everything else she did.

I slayed her. Nobody had seen this coming. Fay's hand twitched, and then she calmly delivered her message to Marshall.

I invited Leandro out to the balcony and asked him to help me practice jump kicks. Fay acknowledged that Marshall might have finally found a positive influence for himself, but it wasn't a love fest. He said she said, "We'll have to wait and see."

In the days that followed, Leandro resigned from the security team so he could work for Pierre, who had been trolling around the east coast in his yacht, waiting for the right moment to drop anchor in the shallow waters near Marshall's mansion.

Marshall informed me that Pierre and Leandro had a shared vision with regard to creating a "reality video" about Pierre and his guests on the boat.

Pierre had a showman character he could turn on as needed, and the reality video project sharpened his character in all the right ways.

Everybody wanted in, and I helped throw parties on the boat in order to discover

talent.

Pierre and Marshall were starting to really do it on the east coast!

Back in the city, HR and I created a ruckus by relocating our weekly meetings to a private club that was full of mostly male bankers. We spoke only of business, and she laughed out loud at how ridiculous my coded language had become.

I would drop lines like, "We found that breaking out the suppliers by region was the key to using iterative approximation to recalibrate the model," and HR would burst out laughing.

I was spending half of my time at Marshall's mansion preparing properly coded language to unload during my weekly lunch meetings with HR, and Marshall was happy with my performance.

On one occasion, Claude stopped by the table I was sharing with HR.

He thanked me for helping out on the parts deal, but he patted me on the head as he left.

I emerged from my chair like a ballerina and told Claude it was not ok to pat me on the head in a work setting.

He laughed and turned his back to me.

HR acted like nothing had happened. The ball was in my court, so I escalated the matter to Marshall.

George flew in from London, and a meeting was arranged at a different kind of private club where I felt seriously out of place.

Everyone stared at me when I entered the room. George, Pierre, Marshall, and I grabbed a table, and Claude joined us a few minutes later.

George and Marshall stared at Claude. He didn't like what they were doing. They weren't exactly bullying him, but he was feeling pain.

I focused on keeping my feet on the floor.

I would have preferred to put them on the coffee table.

My stilettos would have looked great as the centerpiece for our meeting, but Pierre had coached me beforehand to keep my feet on the floor.

I thought he was joking, but he had been serious.

"We're exploring the concept of minimal distortion. Everyone else whose opinion carries weight is representing false beliefs right now, but we aren't. I'm asking you to accept that as an upfront assumption."

There was a pause. Claude was listening. Claude was intrigued. Pierre was going all in.

"The way we ensure minimal distortion is by treating Suzy like an equal participant in our business transaction. She works for the bank and she's helping us do the deal. Think of her as either being on the clock or off the clock. If she's off the clock, she's fair game as a sexual partner, but she's a tough negotiator, so I don't recommend patting her on the head in that context either."

George and Marshall were still staring at Claude. They looked inquisitive, but this wasn't an inquisition or a show trial. They were doing a science experiment.

"This is hard. You're boxing the bank. You're boxing me. Where's the blow off value?" asked Claude.

"Somewhere far away from here," said Pierre, with an air of deviousness that had no effect on Claude.

"Fine," said Claude, ten seconds later. "I'll work for you, but this project ends when her summer internship ends."

He made strong eye contact with Pierre and then with me. My heart skipped about three beats. Claude got up abruptly and left the room. He did not appear to have training in ballet, but he won the dance battle.

Pierre started doing what George and Marshall were doing while Claude made his exit.

Part of me wanted him to pat my head on his way out, but Claude was aided by a newspaper that had been conveniently placed on the coffee table. Picking up the newspaper and clutching it in his hands helped him save face as he walked past me.

It didn't occur to me that I could crank my neck and stare at Claude like the guys were doing.

Instead, the words, "What do I do? What do I do?" raced through my mind as my eyes settled on the coffee table.

I would have looked at the coffee table even if Claude hadn't picked up the newspaper.

The following week, Claude stopped by my table with HR, and he offered a convincing apology. His body language was smooth, subtle, and engaging.

I made strong eye contact and framed him like a guy in my receiving line at a party, but I suddenly felt like I should reframe this as a dance battle with my guys in San Francisco. I'd been training for this moment for years. I just had to anticipate the landing, and I would win big.

When Claude finished speaking, I said, "Thank you," while dominating his energy with dance club moves. I wasn't slaying him. I was dominating him, but he was letting me. I wanted him to enjoy it. Dance club was serious. He smiled. This was correct. He hadn't thought I could do this. He was pleasantly surprised. He got more than he had expected. I was happy.

I thought about making a parting comment in French, but I held back.

I practiced radical non-reaction, like the ocean.

I handled the transaction, and I continued talking shop with HR.

That evening, I was summoned to Pierre's yacht, along with George and Marshall. Leandro took the skiff back to land with the captain, the chef, and the first mate, and I headed out to sea with the pirates for an overnight cruise.

Pierre was driving the boat as we motored off into the sunset, and the energy on the boat was really interesting!

The pirates gave me a ransom note that said they had made substantial amounts of money while hanging out with me, and they were uncomfortable with my lack of personal wealth.

They were concerned I'd write a tell all book about them, but if I started a hedge fund, they would each be happy to invest a million dollars.

"Is this the part where Pierre will finally spank me hard until I'm speaking in tongues, so that I'll tell you the formula for starting a communist revolution in America?" I asked.

They hung out with me because I could be counted on to say stuff like that.

They had made money because I said stuff like that.

"Is that what you want us to do?" asked George.

I didn't like that George said it. I felt like he was studying my body language in preparation for killing me and calling it an accident, unless I could make magic happen.

"Do you want us to take the boat back to shore, Suzy?" asked Pierre, condescendingly.

"Oh my god," I said. I became a valley girl. I wasn't a valley girl. What was this? This was a bad Hollywood movie scene.

Marshall's energy was ice cold. I stared at him and asked, "Marshall, what should I do?" like a teacher calling on him in class. I was reacting. I didn't know what to do.

He didn't respond. It was like I had said nothing. I had ceased to exist.

"Are you guys playing with me?" I asked, without looking directly at any of them.

Crickets. Except that we were at sea, and there were no crickets. Just ocean sounds.

"No, I'll look into starting a hedge fund when we get back to shore," I answered, with a hint of freshly baked sarcasm.

"That's wonderful news, Suzy! We're eager to invest," said Pierre.

And then he did his showman act. He talked about food and wine, and the guys softened up. We smoked cigars. They treated me like one of the guys, and I lead the crew in mindful stretching at sunrise.

Stretching was Pierre's idea, but he told me to say it was my idea to George and Marshall.

What kind of hustle was this? Were we double dating? Was Pierre coming out to us as a woman?

Back on land, I was happy to see Leandro. The pirates had agreed to let me share the data with him, so I told him everything.

"He's just adding leverage," George had said, in order to make it clear he had veto power over my freedom to share data with Leandro.

I was starting to hate George. What was his problem? Why did he have to comment?

None of this phased Leandro. He was happy to ignore the security risks I was weighing in my mind. I asked him what he planned to do at the end of the summer, and he laughed.

"That's such a college girl question."

"I know," I said, while moving in closer like Pierre would have done to me if I was declining to answer one of his stupid questions.

For example, Pierre loved to ask me how each of my outfits felt on my body. He had no right to ask, but he would always move in closer until I pushed him away or gave him data.

"Pierre's been talking a lot about gambling in Vegas."

I felt relieved. Gambling in Vegas was safe. We had sex. I loved what he was doing. I was off balance mentally and physically, but I felt safe.

The next day I started researching hedge funds. I didn't want to start a fund, so I treated it like a research project for a class. I was doing market research instead of party planning.

Marshall approved of my project. He wanted this to become my only project.

Our parties in the summer of 1992 were like a space portal that had opened up and allowed us to travel across the universe for a brief window of time, but now the portal was closing. I was back to doing a banking internship, but I was locked up like a princess in Marshall's lair.

HR was going to laugh at me. She was going to frame me as a princess. The worst part is that I was enjoying it physically, and she was going to know that too. I felt obscenely feminine. I figured this must have been Pierre's plan all along.

I became increasingly confident that starting a hedge fund was not the right move for me. I wanted to start a software company, but I didn't know enough yet.

Pierre organized another cruise. This time we had a full boat. Claude joined, along with Leandro, five of Pierre's girlfriends, and the boat staff.

I was framed as boat staff.

I served drinks with Leandro.

We shared a cabin and had great sex.

I felt free on the boat, but I was afraid of Leandro and Pierre. They had been cooking lunch together all summer while filming scenes for their reality video project.

They kept acting like they were going to have a fist fight over me so that the captain would have to pull out a revolver and restore order, but I had faith this was all part of Pierre's master plan.

After dinner on the second night, Leandro and Claude went off to smoke a joint. The girls were watching a movie, and Pierre asked me to do drugs with him while George and Marshall watched.

It was all a game for him!

Pierre explained that I had said the magic word on the last cruise.

"Revolution?"

"No, communism. We have another chance to do it right, but with free software. I want you to lead it, Suzy."

"Won't George and Marshall object?"

"No, they're just pretending to be capitalists."

"But their act is very thorough," I said, becoming a ballerina.

George and Marshall were pretending Pierre and I weren't there. They were also pretending not to see each other. They were pretending to be on the boat alone, enjoying the summer air, but they were taking it all in.

They loved practicing this act.

I waived my hands in front of them to see if they would react.

Part of my role was to avoid being overtly rude to either of them, individually, especially when they did something awkward like this, but it wasn't rude to check both of them, as a unit.

"When you're done casting spells on the guys, I would like to hear your master plan for the free software movement," said Pierre.

I felt like a machine. I was being programmed.

I had spent the week studying hedge funds, so of course my answer would involve a combination of starting a hedge fund and distributing free software.

Pierre loved me in that moment because I was a computer nerd who had already thought about free software.

My mind slowed down. I adjusted my shoulders like a transcendent being, and then I machined it up for Pierre and said the first thought I had.

"Baseball cards, but for computer hackers. Eliminate money. Force people to use fractional ownership in the hacker cards as the means of exchange for other goods and services."

"Excellent! Will you marry me in Vegas? I want to give you four million dollars so you can implement this idea, but I don't want it to be a company. Do it for love. Will you marry me?"

"Dah. Cut. Can we talk about this seriously?" I said.

"We're on drugs, but sure. What did you have in mind?"

"I will take your money, but the frame is that I go to Vegas with ten thousand and leave with four million, or whatever."

"Sounds good," said Pierre.

Pierre knew I wanted to ask for more details about why he would do this. I wanted it to be true, but I wasn't sure if he was serious. I didn't see anything wrong with it, so I spoke in tongues.

"And, yes, I'll use the money to start a movement. George and Marshall want to nickel and dime everyone, but you're a man with vision. You know the only way anything ever gets done in this world is by giving four million to a hot smart college girl who isn't rich."

"Bingo," said Pierre.

I was delirious. What was he doing? He was framing himself as a girl again. A hot girl. I took him back to his cabin and ravaged him.

In the morning, Pierre did more drugs but encouraged me to be sleeping beauty and then nerd it up for the rest of the cruise.

"Play piano and read your math text books. I'll help Leandro serve the drinks," he said.

He was patting me on the head, but I liked this idea.

George and Marshall made fun of me by pretending to take an interest in my reading. They asked me to explain the math to them, so I did. They acted like they were interested, but I was sure they were making fun of me.

Pierre, however, was serious. When we got back to shore, his people started arranging everything.

I did legal research about what I was getting into. Pierre was a lazy middle-aged man who wanted to give me his money. It was cool.

Pierre had just one other request:

"Suzy, would you be so kind as to provide the capital for Leandro to start a dojo in Las Vegas? I think you'll see a return on the investment."

"Sure," I said, without a care in the world.

And then we partied in Vegas, Pierre and I got married and acted silly, I became rich, and Leandro started a dojo.

I had planned to attend classes at a Beyond the Pale area university that fall, but Pierre wanted to take a cruise around the world.

I was down to party, but first I had to finish my banking internship. I forced myself to stop doing drugs, and I showed up to work at the office where my guys from San Francisco were working with their fellow banking interns.

We finished the internship together, and they didn't treat me like I was ridiculous.

They took me seriously. It was important for me to get equipped with all the knowledge I would need to represent their internship as a real experience when I got back to a Beyond the Pale area university for spring semester.

Pierre was running the same hustle he had ran the first time we met. He was partying with me but tricking me into returning to my stable platform at regular intervals.

Was he tricking me or forcing me? I concluded he was just trying to hypnotize me. He was not a violent man.

We sailed around the world in Pierre's yacht. We wanted to meld our minds into one.

We were mad scientists in love, but Pierre never let me be the man.

I assumed he was afraid the captain would disrespect him if I became a man to him.

I was allowed to drive the boat whenever I wanted, but I wasn't allowed to drive Pierre.

Pierre got deeper and deeper into my subconscious, but I could expand my mind just as quickly as he got into it. I was his mirror with moving parts.

He was trying to re-program me to be the logical compliment of his public image, but he couldn't do it. The harder he tried, the easier it was for me to keep up appearances by masquerading as a character who I began referring to as, "hot girl on the boat for Pierre."

I loved being her, and we had great sex.

We eventually reached a truce and got serious about studying our books and chatting as equals with the boat staff.

We talked about current events on the world stage. We talked about history.

Pierre had done this routine before. I had not.

Pierre got himself into a trance state and then acted out a timeline of the universe while I held the camera.

He said he would keep three copies of the video in safe deposit boxes all around the world.

He said he would leave ownership of the film to me in his will.

Pierre was also representing a statue of the Phoenix in the boat's master bedroom.

He took it very seriously, and he laughed submissively when I came up with novel ways to make fun of it.

"That's a mighty fit bird you've got there, my love."

"She's got your library in the furnace now!"

"She's a screamer too, Pierre. Who would have guessed?"

We were toying with the idea of exorbitant privilege, in and of itself.

I had initially believed I could turn Pierre into a good man, but our relationship reached a point of diminishing returns somewhere between the lavish island resorts we visited in the Indian ocean.

Pierre was eager to return to the mainland and pursue his usual hustle, and there was nothing I could do to pull him back into the aura of my love.

I was the product and he was the customer. I didn't have enough leverage to flip the script.

I felt like royalty, but Pierre never got me to conform to his vision for what I should be. The good sex worked to my advantage. Once violence was taken off the table, he had no way to get me. He had to become a good samaritan and teach me more and more of what he knew about society, culture, and the human condition.

I was surprised he didn't let me show him how to be a woman, but he preferred to be a member of the crew. He still had his money, and he trusted that I, like him, wasn't capable of violence.

"You think I'm a drug, don't you," I asked, somewhere south of the equator.

"Yes, I love every moment with you. I like being with you more and more each day, but it won't end well. You're not committing yourself to the higher ideal of love," said Pierre, lovingly.

"You have to let go of your fear about being a woman. Show me how to embody the self-inflicted emotional turmoil that I lack, and I'll make it stick."

"That will just make what we're doing even more unsustainable. You're a like a truck driver with a full tank of gas who is amusing herself by asking me to somehow carry your load on foot across a hundred miles through rough terrain. I couldn't do what you can easily do for yourself even if I was willing to die trying. No, if you want to insist on playing games, then the only way we can both win is to quit while we're ahead. I know you're cheating on me with fate, but I'll forgive you just this once, because I love you," he said, with a grin.

"It's not like you're more vulnerable than me. I can pine over you too."

"You should wear a navy blue playsuit with white polka dots next time you break a man's heart."

"Next time I break your heart. What's that outfit?"

"Stark emotional contrast? Vintage? I don't know. It's something I haven't seen you wear before."

I got emotional and cried, but Pierre didn't.

I was more vulnerable than him.

We spent Christmas in Tahiti, and then we flew to Los Angeles.

Pierre had made plans to move to America and produce. We found a mansion that would help him gain credibility as a thought leader in yoga, transcendental meditation, photography, and creative writing, and then we got a divorce, but not before I changed my name to Suzy Babineaux, so that I could be French.

Pierre had taught me everything he knew about ballroom dancing, so I kept dancing at a Beyond the Pale area university that spring.

Pierre had all the best artifacts and words. He had a singular collection of CDs and video tapes, and I was annoyed that I couldn't download it from the Internet.

I was iterating on this when Heather asked me to dance.

I blurted out, "My head is exploding, but sure."

Pierre would have been perturbed if this girl asking me to dance didn't approve of his lifestyle.

If I kept my muscles soft and let her twirl me around, I would learn a lot about her.

I would learn all the ways she was not like Pierre, and that would happen before we even started talking.

Heather took me into her arms, and she wasn't shy about using dance club moves to keep me a little bit off balance.

Following was easy for me. Pierre had programmed me to be the perfect follow, but it made my brain turn to mush. I couldn't reconcile his tastes with Heather's tastes. My subconscious would do the work for me, but I had no idea what was happening in there.

I became worried that Pierre and this girl were colluding to do a science experiment on me.

I was curious to see the result, but my heart was pounding from letting her lead.

She thought I was nervous about dancing with another woman, but that wasn't it. In the middle of a song, I said, "Let me lead."

She was happy to follow. Pierre had let me lead him on the boat, but he had acted bored.

He made me feel unattractive when I was leading.

Leading Pierre was like programming a computer.

He even joked about how he was sharing his inner robot with me, not his inner woman.

This worked because I had my own reasons for wanting to learn how to lead all the dances.

I let him joke about being a robot, and I programmed him to follow.

Heather would not have allowed it. She would have ignored Pierre's inner robot and found someone else to lead, just like Cecil had ignored me all last year.

I imagined that Cecil was watching us.

He knew I was actually flaunting myself to him this time. I was no longer pretending.

I lead Heather like a pro, and Heather could follow.

She said she had grown up being taught to follow.

She was showing off her skill in order to impress me.

I was impressed, so we went back to my room holding hands.

Heather zeroed in on my photo album from the cruise around the world with Pierre.

I felt her heart skip a beat.

I stared into her eyes and she stared back.

I tried guessing her major, and she liked that I couldn't do it.

She wanted me to invite her to kiss me, so I put on some music and started doing

Pierre's showman character.

We made a connection. We talked about our lives and then we snuggled. We eventually did the strong eye contact thing again, and she asked the question. I said yes, and we hooked up.

Heather and I started hanging out. She was an econ major, but her plan was to work in any industry other than finance.

On campus, she felt like a friend as opposed to a foe. She had my back. I didn't have to think about anything other than doing my classwork when I was around her.

We did our classwork, but we weren't doing any other kind of work for a Beyond the Pale area university, and that made us feel like rebels, because everyone else was trying to call out people like us who weren't working for the school.

I finally saw it. Everyone was doing variations on what Claude had called, "working."

George had only used the term "working" to describe what I was doing to help him out at parties.

For Claude, work meant adjusting his behavior in all aspects of his life, so as to align with Pierre's objectives for the summer.

A Beyond the Pale area university was getting most of us to do something in-between.

On campus, most people were working for the school.

We did work for them because everyone else was working for them. The leader, whoever or whatever it was, was invisible.

Heather was the first person I'd connected with who got the joke.

Cecil also got the joke. That's why he was starting to notice me.

He noticed that I was starting to get the joke.

He pretended to accidentally run into me from behind one day while I was walking to class, so I slayed him.

I let him bleed out on the field, and then I invited Heather to fly to LA with me and stay at Pierre's mansion for a long weekend.

She said yes.

We arrived at the property I'd helped Pierre select, and I saw who Pierre really was.

Everyone was working for him, and the people working for him all had teams of people working for them.

At a Beyond the Pale area university, most of us were individual contributors, but Pierre had a hierarchy reporting to him.

He was running a political machine. He had arrived in LA and pitched a tent, and his tent was a machine that would have taken a normal human being many years to build.

Heather could tell I was seeing all of this for the first time, and this inspired her to go on the offensive.

"What do you do?" she asked, after Pierre finished giving us the warmest of welcomes.

"Yoga, mostly. There's a lot of people trying to start cults that involve doing yoga, and I'm blowing up all the cults," said Pierre, while sidling up to me.

"What happens after a cult blows up?" asked Heather, while reaching into my purse and jangling the keys to our rental car.

"I don't know. That's what I'm trying to figure out," said Pierre, pulling back.

"How do you blow them up?" asked Heather, triumphantly.

"By being here, and by doing yoga myself. They can't handle the pressure."

My ex-husband was a mogul, and I kept resisting the urge to be a brat.

I didn't know what else to do.

Was Pierre giving me a coded message about what to do? Were Heather and I putting pressure on everyone just by standing in the room? Was that what I had been doing for Pierre all along?

"I smell opportunity. Heather wants to make love to you in my master bedroom, and I want to have a threesome with both of you," said Pierre.

"Won't your girlfriend feel left out?" Heather shot back.

She didn't even know if Pierre had a girlfriend. This was all a game to her.

"No. We have an open relationship."

"Would she prefer if the relationship were not open?"

Pierre breathed in deeply, like he was struggling to maintain his composure, but I knew he was only pretending to take his yoga practice seriously.

He was holding back because he knew he might lose me forever if he tried to make Heather suffer.

I was putting pressure on him just by standing there.

"Well, at least he's not dishonest," said Heather, looking at me.

"Tell him he has to be HR," I whispered into her ear.

Pierre was suffering. Heather was delighted. I was also happy to see him suffer.

"You have to be HR," Heather said, staring at Pierre through her sunglasses.

Heather was blocking Pierre from moving in closer and putting his hands on my body, so he had to negotiate.

"What do you think Suzy meant when she told you I have to be HR?"

Heather was out gunned. I was worried about her, but she knew her memes. She stepped in closer and told Pierre to, "Sit down."

There was no chair, so he sat on the floor.

I suppressed the urge to laugh. Was I working for Heather? Pierre would suffer more if I didn't laugh. I wanted to see him suffer, so maybe I was working for myself.

"We don't have HR around here. We have an infirmary, and that's it. Do you need to go to the infirmary, or are you going to get with the program and dress up like a lady who works in Human Resources?" she said, looking down at him from above.

"Yes ma'am," he said.

He imitated how I keep my muscles soft when I'm being approached.

His character was based on me, not the director of HR at the bank I had worked at the previous summer.

I felt like I was loaning him currency by not mentioning this.

Was it a loan or was I giving him currency with no strings attached?

"Permission to stand up?" Pierre asked.

"Permission granted," said Heather.

Pierre disappeared into the bathroom and came back thirty minutes later in HR inspired drag.

He had shaved his body hair and done his own makeup while Heather and I fooled around in the master bedroom.

Pierre had been serious when he said he worked in fashion.

He was still imitating me and doing a pretty good impression of how I acted the first time Heather kissed me, but he didn't figure out how to be hot girl for Heather.

He thought he could be a clone of me, but he couldn't make it real.

I had explained to Heather one night that I felt like I was playing a character when I let her lead, and I wanted to call my character hot girl for Heather.

Heather had laughed, and then she kept kissing me. I decided not to bring it up again. Hot girl for Heather kept getting more elaborate, and I loved being her.

Heather was happy to make the assumption that hot girl for Heather was my true authentic self, but that wasn't the whole story. I felt like I was a computer operating system, and hot girl for Heather was an application I had installed.

Was I working for the company that made my computer that paired well with cats, or I was I working for the corporeal founders of Cat Computer? Was Pierre working for them too?

I had so many thoughts going through my mind!

But I was right about one thing:

Pierre had to become more and more like the director of HR at the bank in order to stay in character.

He couldn't pull off expressing any interest in my social life outside of the hot lesbian threesome we were having in his master bedroom.

HR was the only woman he knew how to imitate realistically.

Pierre did yoga in the morning with a bunch of aspiring actresses. Heather remarked that he was teaching an acting class, and then we made love.

I wanted to frame Heather as a king and get to know everyone else in Pierre's castle by framing them as her loyal subjects.

"Pierre's a snob," I thought to myself, and I cast him as my wicked ferry godmother.

In my head, we were still having a threesome. Heather was still leading, but Pierre had broken his promise to act like HR. He was back to being himself. He was hustling, and I avoided having a nervous breakdown by thinking about the algorithms I was learning in my advanced computer operating systems class at a Beyond the Pale area university.

Pierre and Heather could not play nice with each other in real life, but the computer simulations of them in my head were able to co-exist peacefully.

The bottle neck in this project was my ability to design, implement, and run computer software in my subconscious mind.

I would have to keep all of this secret, but it occurred to me that George had probably known all of this about me since the moment we met. They guy had read everything. He read computer science textbooks as literature. He was withholding data from everyone, but so was I. I was becoming a female version of George.

Heather said, "I see you ruminating over there," so I invited her to meditate with me back to back in the living room, and she said yes.

My goal was to put all these thoughts out of mind like a conquering hero who banishes the free press until the dust settles after a long and bitter war, so I told Heather I was feeling anxious.

She believed me.

I suspected I had just become a liar for the first time in my life.

I wanted to aggressively use meditation to forget about facts that had become inconvenient, but I was framing myself as deferential.

Was it possible that Heather was doing the same?

Is that why she had said Pierre was teaching an acting class?

If this was all an acting class, then maybe I wasn't lying?

I was afraid to ask Heather if she was performing an act like I was, and my fear made me want to cry.

I surpassed the urge to cry by thinking about puppies, flowers, candy, and the ocean.

I was doing a feminine version of representing a British stiff upper lip, and I could tell Heather thought it was hot.

Pierre rescued me, as usual, by serving up a feast of new words, ideas, and attitudes that made it easier to pretend like I was being super genuine and authentic even though everyone was so clearly acting.

Guests came and went throughout the morning. Pierre was holding court for his loyal subjects.

Was I the court jester?

I had to dig my nail into my finger to repress the urge to laugh uncontrollably at how ridiculous Pierre had become.

I thought about whispering to Heather that Pierre didn't believe anything he was saying, but I didn't want to put her at odds with Pierre's political machine.

Everyone was working for him, and she was enjoying the show. She was interviewing Pierre's loyal subjects like a doctor checking in with her patients at a hospital, but she looked like any other econ major from a Beyond the Pale area university making small talk at a networking event.

What kind of networking event was this? Was this a happy hour at a hedge fund? Was this the hustle that occurred before and after listening to talks by prize winning economists at a Beyond the Pale area university?

Was it a conference for the sales representatives of a pharmaceutical company?

Around 1pm, most people left. Everyone knew lunch was about to be served.

Everyone was invited, but people were afraid Pierre would make them suffer if they overstayed their welcome.

Pierre invited Heather and I to dine with him on the roof deck.

He pitched me on flying in his private plane to San Francisco and helping him pick out an apartment while Heather made sure nobody else slept in his master bedroom.

I desperately wanted to go to SF with Pierre and tell him everything I was thinking, but Heather interjected and said she wasn't interested in staying at Pierre's mansion if I wasn't there.

I had thought Heather was going to be uncomfortable, but she was like a rockstar telling her agent what to do.

Pierre was her agent. I had become Heather's groupie, but the algorithms in my head were working great!

"Such irony," I said, out loud.

Pierre and Heather both looked at me quizzically, like I was a freak, so I said, "Hey everybody, I'm Suzy freak out! Who are you today?" while looking at Pierre's cuckoo clock.

Heather and Pierre were amused, but they both practiced radical non-reaction.

I bowed my head, slightly, and I silently prayed for the cuckoo clock to malfunction and go off even though it wasn't time.

Heather put her arm around me and massaged my shoulder while Pierre cranked his head around and looked at the cuckoo clock, just in case it had been vandalized.

I giggled uncontrollably while Pierre and Heather playfully jousting with their eyes.

The common ground between them was that they enjoyed waiting for me to calm down, so that they could both be the first to hear what I would say next.

"Pierre, do you remember the time I argued that cuckoo clocks caused World War I, and then you made fun of me by imitating your cuckoo clock?" I asked.

Still no response.

Bringing up the concept of old world wars upped the ante but changed nothing.

Heather's position was that Pierre didn't take me seriously.

She was helping me get ahead in my career.

Saying no was the smart move, but I was still feeling torn.

Pierre made zero effort to ameliorate my emotional pain. He leaned back in his chair and said, "I want to split his time between LA and the Bay Area. I've become a venture capitalist in Silicon Valley, but I still want to get married and have children in LA."

He knew I would have seriously considered re-marrying him and having children with him in San Francisco.

He also knew I hated the idea of raising my kids in LA.

It was against my religion.

I had repressed laughter about his suffering the previous night in order to put him in a double bind. I ratcheted up his pain by acting like there was no pain, but now he was making me suffer much more. He was getting the last laugh. He was winning.

Heather knew I was suffering and she tried to show kindness and compassion. I would have liked for her to say, "Do whatever you want to do, Suzy," but she was not pressuring me.

Or was she? She looked supportive.

Pierre looked devious.

I was free to ditch her and go to San Francisco with Pierre, but then I would have had to put up with her acting like I wasn't serious about my career the next time I saw her at school.

Pierre was enjoying my suffering immensely, and it made me want to have angry sex with him. I could frame myself as a sex worker in San Francisco and inspire everyone to judge him negatively.

I decided to keep working for Heather.

"I'm with Heather. There's plenty for us to do here in LA," I said.

"Let me know if you change your mind," said Pierre, twisting the knife.

Heather and I declined to react, so he turned on his showman character and told us juicy gossip about the entertainment industry.

Heather and I left after lunch, and we spent the next two evenings by the beach. She was a rockstar, and I had become an actress. It made perfect sense for us to be dating.

Everyone wanted to be us. The surfer guys were chill and didn't harass us. We were winning. I was miserable, but Heather was good in bed.

I started to feel empowered, and we celebrated by upgrading to first class on the flight back.

Word got around that Cecil was planning to do a finance internship in Boston, so I got myself an internship at a robotics company in Cambridge.

Nobody cared about my internship, so I approached Cecil and delivered the news myself.

"Hey Cecil."

"Hey Suzy."

"I'm going to be in Boston this summer. We should hook up."

"I'd love to. What's in Boston?"

"A robotics company."

"That's awesome. My brother's doing a biotech startup in Cambridge. Let me know when you get settled and we'll get drinks."

"I want to go on a date with you."

"Ok."

My life flashed before my eyes.

I was having a moment.

Cecil stood tall.

I moved in closer and said, "When I'm settled, I'll call you and maybe we can get take out."

We exchanged info, and I looked at his eyes before making my escape.

That summer, I invited Cecil to attend a happy hour at my robotics company. He wanted to get the data about what I was cooking in Cambridge, so he made an appearance.

I was working with a bunch of nerds. They all wanted to have sex with me, but Cecil was not the enemy. He helped them save face. We made a couple rounds at the happy hour, and I took him back to my place.

Cecil plopped himself down on my couch and acted bored. I snuggled up to him and showed him some of the zines from when I was a rockstar in high school.

I finally got him to stop worrying what his teammates would say if he dated a nerd.

Cecil gave me the best sex of my life that night. Hot girl for Heather and hot girl on the boat for Pierre melted away. He reprogrammed me, completely.

I was obsessed with his body. The more I thought about his body, the more I felt like everything was going to be alright, but I tried to focus on him. What were his emotional needs? What did he want?

We talked about the difference between men and women. I explained that I had figured out how to do what men do while dating Heather, and he made me laugh by acting like a woman while listening to my jokes about gender.

We made plans to meet again, but I was doing all the work to keep him engaged. I cried and told him how I felt. He made love to me more passionately than before, and I loved it even more.

I admitted defeat the following morning.

I wanted to cry on his shoulder some more, but he wasn't in love with me. I had a fantasy about turning him into a nerd. I wanted to write programs to do his finance job for him so he could spend all day coming up with reasons why he wanted to have sex with me.

I wanted to program him so he could keep reprogramming me, but it wasn't real. I had to let him go.

He was respectful about it. We were merciful. We made strong eye contact throughout breakfast, and he seemed appreciative that I was checking my raging desire to be a brat.

My hot affair with Cecil ended without drama.

My situation reverted to the mean.

That meant Pierre was still winning.

I started thinking violent thoughts.

I came to understand why he and George were always joking about violence.

It helped take the edge off.

I didn't want to be violent.

I just thought it would be fun to watch a movie in which Pierre got killed in the most outrageous way possible.

A guy at work asked me out for lunch, and I decided to grace him with my presence.

He had no idea what was going on, and I thought about explaining to him that everyone at a Beyond the Pale area university was working for someone.

Cecil was working for a cabal I didn't understand, but I suspected it was just a group of resourceful people who liked to share exceptional traits.

I was more interested in understanding who the founders of our robotics company were working for. I suspected they were working for some invisible people who were working

for the military, but I couldn't prove it.

The guy across from me at lunch was clueless about what I cared about, so I didn't bring any of this up.

I had trouble motivating myself to listen to the nerdy train of thought he was exploring.

What twisted mess was lurking inside this sad man's subconscious?

Was he representing a virtual labyrinth that was probably a decent map of some aspect of the military?

Maybe Pierre wasn't so bad. He knew what he was and what he wasn't.

I told the guy I wanted to win the race to build artificial intelligence more than I wanted to have children.

My objective was to build strong AI. Strong AI meant building a machine that was smarter than a human.

Pierre and George both wanted to be involved with winning the race to build strong AI. They viewed it as their natural role in the universe.

The guy rambled about how it made logical sense that a woman would have the best odds of inventing strong AI.

I had tricked him into being sexist.

Pierre would not have fallen for this trap. Pierre was the most sexist guy I knew, but he cared about being framed as progressive in the media.

I was bored. I would have preferred to immediately quit my job and get impregnated out of wedlock by Cecil.

I wanted to have a baby with Cecil wherever and then hustle him by having more babies with Pierre in San Francisco.

I wanted play them off each other and enjoy the best of both worlds.

That's what Pierre was doing. Why couldn't I have that too?

Overall, I was too bored to feel anything. My summer internship ended with the polar opposite of a bang, and I leveled up.

Sensing opportunity, George flew in and stealthily made love to me during the transition, but the nerdy guys didn't carry me over the finish line.

I had carried them, so I setup a meeting with Pierre at a coffee house near his new apartment in San Francisco.

I wore a black dress made of lace, with skin-colored fabric underneath. I wanted Pierre to know I had become a killer, like George.

Pierre tried to make me suffer by acting like he was doing me a favor by meeting with me, so I pitched him an idea I'd been mulling over ever since my epiphany about how everyone at a Beyond the Pale area university was working.

I had made a list of all the entities I might be working for: the church, a Beyond the Pale area university, George, Pierre, my bank in NYC, Marshall, Cecil, Heather, the elite New England boarding school Heather had attended, the company that made my computer that paired well with cats, the founders of Cat Computer, etc.

The one item on this list that I didn't already understand to my satisfaction was, "Heather's elite New England boarding school."

What was their hustle?

Heather said they were in the business of increasing people's chances of getting into name brand universities.

I thought there had to be more to the story, but I let it go.

I was doing work for Heather by not asking more questions, and she allowed me to suffer by never sharing additional data with me about her experience at boarding school.

"We're looking towards our futures. It doesn't matter what we did in our pasts," is what I imagined her thinking while she made me suffer.

Internalizing pithy ideas like that had to be part of the boarding school hustle.

I wanted the data, so I came up with a cover story. I told Heather I wanted to get a job where I would be framed as an authority figure, so that I could manage engineers as soon as possible.

"Ok," she said.

Like it mattered if she disagreed! She had processed my idea like an authority figure. She had no authority over me. I didn't need her approval for this.

"Guys get trained from a young age to be leaders, but as a woman, people assume I'm a follower unless I have a lab coat that reframes me as a leader. I don't want to go to medical school or get a PhD, but teaching at an elite prep school will do the trick."

"Ok."

"This is how I will avoid languishing indefinitely as an individual contributor."

"Ok."

That was it: "Ok."

We had to change the subject to logistics in order to break the silence that ensued after I had given my pitch.

"I'm going to run to class now. Let's meet up later?"

"Sure. I'll be around."

"Ok, see you soon."

Heather had declined to weigh in on my idea about teaching, so I escalated the matter to Pierre. He didn't have any authority over me either, but I wanted to know what he thought.

"I'm going to spend a year teaching computer science at an elite boarding school. I want to be cast as an authority figure as soon as possible."

"Ok," said Pierre.

Prior to asking Cecil out, I would have thought Pierre was punishing me for wanting to have a career. I would have attacked Pierre and said, "You just want me to be your play thing. This is why I need to be an authority figure. My co-workers in Boston only pretended to take me seriously because I was helping them make money. I was a robot helping them manufacture more robots."

Pierre was only pretending to be an authority figure, however. He was doing what Heather had done when I had asked her for permission to teach at a boarding school.

He was doing what Cecil had done when I had asked him out on a date.

Pierre was presenting as an authority figure because I wanted something from him, but he was bluffing.

Pierre had no authority. I would have more authority than him the moment I became a high school teacher.

"It looks like you already know everything I'm thinking. I'm no longer needed. My job has been automated," said Pierre, cheerfully.

I was shocked that Pierre had broken the silence, as opposed to waiting for me to break the silence.

He probably wanted to add, "Go ahead and make the call. I'm ready to be eliminated," in order to make fun of my gothic tech vibe, but he held back.

He was suffering, but I didn't enjoy it this time.

Pierre was imploding, actually. I needed to rescue him, so I pitched him on my master plan for building strong AI.

I had it all figured out. I was going to read the existing AI research as literature.

I would crunch the data in my subconscious like George does. I would hire minions and orchestrate science experiments. I would do mad science with authority.

Pierre came to life and played venture capitalist. We were equals. We were both working for a cause that was greater than ourselves. I was inspiring Pierre to become a better man.

When my pitch was done, I stared him down, and he thanked me for setting up the meeting.

We got up. We shook hands. There was no need to defeat him in a dance battle. I walked out of the place like a boss, but I was still recognized as a woman.

I was wearing no brand of heels in particular, and I was winning.

I felt like a girl power icon.

I was money.

I was the darling of Silicon Valley, and I hadn't even been on the cover of a magazine, yet.

By the time Pierre realized that he really liked the way I looked in this dress, it was too late.

He had nothing left to offer, and my shoes made a sound like, "Tock, tock, tock."

'Twas my senior year at a Beyond the Pale area university, and I learned I had activated Cecil's inner nerd more deeply than I had previously thought.

He had to do work in order to avoid telling everyone he had slept with me.

He was having trouble keeping his story straight.

I sensed weakness, so I turned up the pressure.

I developed a system of interlocking strategies for asking out all the most sought after guys.

I was a huntress. Someone should have created a licensing process for the stuff I was doing, and I had life changing sex with several more athletes.

Cecil relented and told everyone we had hooked up. He told me over coffee that it became easier for him to think clearly after sharing the data about his nerdy side.

We declared a truce. The previous era of peace between myself and the jocks had just been a cease-fire, but this truce had the potential to last forever.

I had my pick of men, so I focused my attention on, "South Africa."

I became Mother Earth, and he was something else!

We took my hobby of hustling Pierre and George to a whole new level, and I dove into graduate level computer science topics.

I had made a note on my calendar to research teaching fellowships at elite boarding schools, and I discovered that Const Academy, in Vermont, had just what I was hoping to find:

They were hiring a teaching assistant in Computer Science for the 1994/95 school year.

I applied, and I got it.

I was spectacular.

In order to leave a Beyond the Pale area university as a legend in my own time, I only needed to backpack around Europe with Heather, and Heather was down to backpack.

We made plans to meet up in London at the start of the Tour De France and then spend the latter half of the summer exploring Europe.

We would do our own tour of Europe.

That was our pact.

I told my boyfriend from South Africa about my plan, and he replied, without looking up from his reading, "How many times did Richard Nixon visit South Africa?"

"While he was president or otherwise?" I shot back.

"Whichever," he said, still not looking up.

"I don't know."

"Just say a number."

"No, I don't want to."

"You don't want to feel vulnerable?" he asked, looking up.

"I just don't want to because I just don't know. Maybe you should search the Internet for an answer to the question at hand," I said, feeling genuinely annoyed but still motivated to appear jovial.

"I'll go to frisbee with you this week if you say a number right now."

I had gotten into playing ultimate frisbee with a group of computer science students on Fridays, and my boyfriend knew I liked it when he joined us, so that I could watch him fly around my nerdy friends, and so, we negotiated every week about whether or not he would attend frisbee.

"No, I give up ultimate," I said, making a power play.

The end of the school year was approaching. It would have been inefficient if I didn't use giving it up as leverage to get more of what I really wanted.

"Since when did you think Zen Buddhism could save you?" he asked, holding back temptation to become aroused by my peach colored spandex.

"I'm going to the library. I'll see you at dinner!" I said, taking advantage of the

fact that we had already made plans to go out for a romantic dinner at a dimly lit steak house.

At the library, I read about famous Roman texts that had been lost in the dark ages, and I almost cried. I had an epiphany about the fundamental emptiness of my nonstop desire to win at everything.

I felt the weight of the world find solid ground deep inside my soul.

I thought about how I could dazzle my boyfriend by showing but not telling him the shape of my new found wisdom, and I let that thought pass.

I broke up with my boyfriend from South Africa at dinner. We both cried, and we lingered until the place closed down. We laughed, we made love with our eyes, and we had a good hug before parting ways.

We didn't discuss when or how we'd return each other's stuff.

We never did return each other's stuff.

After graduation, I spent a few weeks reconnecting with folks in NorCal, and then I went to LA to visit Pierre, in preparation for flying to London to visit George.

I knew Pierre was a punk who would always frame himself as superior to me, but I appreciated his hustle.

I was still trying to figure out George. I suspected he was all the way in with the military. With the Five Eyes. With the diamond cartel, with all the cartels, but I didn't want to jump to unfounded conclusions or come off as judgmental. I needed more data.

I thought I was paying them courtesy calls, but my billionaires had something else in mind.

When Pierre greeted me, he pretended to get brushed back by a wild pitch. He stared at me with wide eyes, and then he turned on his showman character.

He showed me his newest statue, an interpretation of the Maltese Falcon, chiseled in granite.

He joked that his next statue might need to depict me dressed as a communist farm worker.

I rolled my eyes, and thought to myself, "Punk," as I followed him up to the master bedroom.

As I was passing through the door, he turned around like a ballerina and stood tall like a tree. I had to stop moving halfway through.

I was standing about three feet away from him.

"What is he doing? Is this satire?" I wondered to myself.

He was looking at the center of my forehead. He motioned with his fingers, "Turn your head left. Ok, now turn to the right. Ok, now stare into my eyes."

He breathed in deeply. I was struggling to keep my composure, but I didn't know why. He opened his hands wide. His feet were planted like roots, and now his arms and fingers were spreading out like branches.

"You're a woman now," he said matter-of-factly.

I became annoyed.

"Are you joking?" I asked, after a brief silence.

"No, I'm dead serious. You're one of us now."

"Explain..."

"All of the girls I do yoga with will eventually try to kill you."

"I don't understand your meaning. What's going on?"

"I'm telling you what you need to hear. Nobody else will tell you this. You're lucky you came to me first."

"I'll bet," I said, while scanning the room for objects that I could throw at Pierre if he didn't stop being ridiculous.

"On the boat in 1992, you were an innocent college girl, and I was exploring a silly fantasy that had to do with becoming as close to each other as possible, so that we could have eternal youth, but now I'm not so sure."

My head twitched. Why did that happen? I was not enjoying his strong eye contact like usual.

He was getting me with something that had to do with the fact that I had aged more than nine months since the last time we had met in person, but I didn't want to shut him down just yet.

I was impressed he had gotten me with that. Was that really the best card this 48 year old had to play?

My gaze shifted to the view outside the window at the back of his office.

"He'll only be 61 when I turn 35," I thought to myself.

"Shut up," I interjected. I was imitating Heather. Part of me wanted to cry. I had just graduated from college. I was normal and successful. He was supposed to be singing my praises. I went back to making strong eye contact with him.

"I don't want you to spend ten years struggling to figure out what I already know."

He was blowing up my strong eye contact again. Was it his body language or his words that were making me want to break eye contact?

I felt like one of the cult leaders he was so proud to be blowing up. I looked at the window again.

"Ok," I muttered.

"No worries, Suzy. Your secret is safe with me. Go build your company. Build your empire if you can," he said while moving in for a kiss.

He turned his palms up and breathed out. His eyes came up to meet mine. He looked like a Greek warrior trying to stir up a mighty wind that might conveniently toss us onto the bed.

"All love is devil worship," I chanted, without thinking.

I saw Pierre's whole body twitch. He might have reacted like that on purpose. I hoped he had done it on purpose, and my stance softened.

"I love Suzy!" Pierre said commandingly, as we held eye contact and tumbled down onto the bed as one, like an asteroid falling from the sky.

We had sex, and I drove Pierre to a serene hotel in Palm Springs.

I checked in and paid with my own money. Pierre wore cheap sunglasses. He was unrecognizable, and I was delighted by how fashionable he still seemed.

He also got a pack of cigarettes at a gas station, and he stuck a piece of duct tape on the strap of my designer wedge sandals.

"Now we're perfect," he joked, from the passenger seat, as he tossed his new roll of duct tape into a parked pickup truck with one hand and lit up with the other.

I laughed at his thoroughness, and my laughter was not submissive.

I had shown up at Pierre's place driving a black convertible. I was wearing a short pink dress, and the only change I needed to make in order to match Pierre's new look was to smear on more foundation and style my hair with a more decisive part.

At the hotel, we cooked up an idea for a product that allowed people to see themselves on their own TV, and I worked the phones while pretending to be a porn star from Texas.

A couple of stoner guys showed up the next morning in a station wagon with our custom video solution, and I paid them in cash.

They had no idea who we were. I wore stockings, and Pierre set the stage while the guys set up the gear.

He initiated a phone call with Marshall about the financing for a fake strip mall in middle America.

They traded increasingly outrageous but realistic statements about their fake deal.

Pierre still sounded French, but he sounded tough as nails, and it turned me on more than I could have imagined.

I suspected my vagina was the inspiration for all of this creative bravado, and I saw no problem with that.

One of the stoner guys asked me out, and I almost broke character because Pierre was too much for him to handle, and that made me want to laugh.

We had a good time watching ourselves on TV.

I had conned Pierre into living dangerously.

My work in LA was done.

I drove Pierre back to his mansion, and, when I was safely onboard my flight out of LA, I thought to myself, "Now that I'm back in love Pierre, I'm probably going to hate George more than ever."

George and I had made love before, when I was 19. I had been with him once as a Russian ballerina in America and once as an American ballerina in Britain, and then he cut it off. He said he was making money from the information I was helping him gather at parties, and he didn't want to mix business with pleasure.

I had laughed out loud when he said that, and his response was to look away and continue talking in complex, rapid fire sentences about aspects of our business deal that I had to pay attention to in order to keep our London consulting office afloat. I had enjoyed having sex with him, but his next move was to make me work. I got the message.

I had misunderstood him. George had recruited me. He had flown in from London to watch the hustle I was doing at happy hours in order to help my boyfriend advance in his career. I had thought George was into making me a high class prostitute, but that had been his cover story. Having sex with me had made his cover story believable. He had been the prostitute.

That's why I had laughed, but it hadn't been funny. If George had wanted a prostitute, he would have gone through the usual channels.

I set an intention to be nice to George. I wanted to impress him and secure the option to bring him on as an investor in my AI research empire.

When George greeted me at the door, his hand twitched like Fay's hand had when I had slayed her at Marshall's mansion. He gave me a quick hug and awkwardly invited me to sit with him on a couch in the living room.

"Is it tea time already?" I asked.

"You looked at my hand even harder than a girl who's checking to see if I have a ring," said George, as if it was his opening line in a play.

"Sorry, I'm a computer nerd. I'll make a note to work on my spy craft now that I'm a college graduate."

"Why did my hand twitch?" he asked, while boring a hole in my head with his eyes.

"I dunno," I mumbled, intentionally.

"My hand twitched because you have a stronger narrative than I do. Give me one good reason why I shouldn't give you all my money right now."

"Because British common law forbids me from killing you after fleecing you. Duh. Is there an advanced version of this class that I can take?" I shot back, in a fake British accent.

"We need a game plan," said George, as he stood up and began pacing around the living room.

"Is this theater?" I asked, becoming genuinely curious.

"No, I'm just being dramatic because I don't want to scare you. I want you to understand that people like me will stand and fight if you try to use the power you now have against us. I'm trying to explain this to you in the most kind and helpful way possible."

"I didn't know we were adversaries."

"I believe this story, but you won't be this naive for much longer. Let me help you."

"What do you want to help me with?"

"Whatever you want."

"Would you treat a guy this way?"

"I wouldn't be afraid of a guy who had the same resume as you."

"What's that supposed to mean?" I snorted back, pretending to be offended.

"I think Marshall and Fay will start pretending to be us, but I'm not sure if they'll get back together."

"What the heck, George?!" I shouted, trying to stay mad.

"Sounds like a plan. I'll see you when I see you," said George, without fanfare.

"Are you using mind control techniques on me?"

"No."

"But isn't that exactly what..."

"No," said George, again, cutting me off.

"Should I see myself out?" I asked, robotically.

"Yes," he said with an air of fake graciousness that surprised me.

I got up and left without saying another word, and I felt unexpectedly satisfied. I didn't hate George, but as far as rest of the world was concerned, I did. He had just given me multiple valid reasons to hate him.

I called Heather to confirm that she would be arriving at Heathrow airport the next morning, on the overnight flight, the redeye, and it occurred to me that George liked the idea of Heather and I spending the summer exploring Europe together. He knew I would talk trash about him to Heather, but he was predicting that I'd talk even more trash about Pierre.

I sat alone in my hotel room that night and contemplated the nature of power and the future of humanity.

I would have preferred to be having sex with George, but I wasn't.

George must have been using mind control techniques on me.

I kept thinking the words, "Seeing what she can get," over and over again, like a song that was playing on repeat in my head.

I forced myself to lie still even though my brain was racing, and I eventually fell asleep.

In the morning, I took my time getting dressed. I procured a full English breakfast. I took a taxi to the airport with plenty of room to spare, and by the time I remembered that my dreams had been rather interesting, it was too late to recall the juicy details.

In the waiting area, I thought about whether it would still work to play hot girl for Heather.

Heather and I had stopped fooling around for most of my senior year, but now we were going to be touring together, with an emphasis on the word, "together."

George, Pierre, and Marshall, or GPM, probably thought I had been faking it with Heather all along, but I didn't care.

My approach to playing hot girl for Heather had authenticity because I was also a computer science student at a Beyond the Pale area university.

Our character was a platform for creative writing, and we had lots of substantial material to share.

"Heather of Heathrow!" I declared, like a nerdy British nobleman, as she trudged off the jetway and headed towards my welcoming arms.

Her facial expression looked like death and she didn't bother faking a response to my joke, so I doubled down:

"Wake up, now. It's morning. We have places to go, things to do," I chirped.

Heather was happy to see me, but she didn't get my joke.

Heather spent a moment studying my face. She didn't jump to conclusions about my joke. She appeared to have gone deep on Pierre's new age healing nonsense, and I felt like some new laws of physics were now in force.

The new laws required me to wait while she checked in with her inner child and got present to our shared energy field, and so on and so forth.

I detected that Heather wanted to frame me as anxious, but she held her tongue.

Her facial expression evolved from a representation of death to a new state that had

the generic qualities softness and suppleness, as she gently brushed my hair back and worked her way into position to give me a firm and disarming kiss that lasted for at least twenty seconds, and like that, hot girl for Heather was top of mind, again.

Heather wanted to spend the next month trekking around Europe so that we could be completely authentic with each other and let go of irrational insecurities that had been programmed into us by the patriarchy, and I respected the goal.

She was giving me a hat to wear, just like Pierre had done when we had met, three years earlier.

Our trek was vaguely inspired by the Tour de France. We were thinking about media and women's issues. We wanted to do a tour of Europe that could be repeated by more and more women in the future.

We planned to travel spontaneously and cheaply. The tour was about finding out, day by day, where we would go within those constraints.

We were intellectual, and we were kind of awesome, but the nonstop drag of logistics and limited information reduced us to aspiring slapstick comics, more often than not.

"How are you?" Heather would ask, staring into my eyes and emphasizing the word, "you."

"I feel tepid."

"Are you being sarcastic?"

"A little bit."

"What's behind that? What are you making fun of?"

"I don't love talking about emotions. I just like feeling energies."

"Ok," she said, looking concerned.

"I feel nothing. Give me an emotion word."

"I feel like you have issues in your tissues, Suzy."

"Heal me with love, Heather."

"I'm sorry, what are we doing?" asked Heather, starting to laugh.

"We're touring," I said, provocatively.

I filled the vast space between us by sharing Bible quotes with Heather and explaining how I had used each of the quotes to hustle either Pierre or George. I made the case that the Bible could still be used as a transformative framework for restructuring the global economy, and Heather reminded me she was more interested than I was in learning random details about the places we were visiting.

I joked about how I was more interested in the random details of the bodies of the hot men who lived in the places we were visiting, and then Heather got moody and I got even more moody.

I did not allow her to man-frame me.

One lazy morning after drinking too much at a beer hall, I woke up and tried to ease my hangover by kissing Heather and acting ridiculously amorous.

"Are you being slutty again just to prove that slutty is an easier word to say than my more politically correct suggestion, ridiculously amorous?" asked my lover.

"No, I'm trying to weasel out of my hangover with sex," I replied while suctioning Heather with my body, like an octopus.

"If you don't want hangovers, you shouldn't drink so much."

"Screw you."

"Look, I saw how you were looking at all the men who wanted to bed you last night. I understand you like men better, but I'm fine with acting we're dating until the end of summer."

"You sound so proper, the way you say, 'end of summer.' Just say, I'll be your woman and you can continue being my girl even though you're a shameless alcoholic slut," I said, in a sing-songy voice.

"That sounded wrong in so many ways before you even said the last seven words."

"Darn you're smart."

"To heck with you, too."

"What exactly sounds wrong about my words this time?"

"I think you should date George. You can be yourself with him. You won't have to be hot girl for Heather or hot girl for Pierre on the boat or amorous girl for Cecil."

"I was in love with Cecil, but it wasn't mutual," I said, feeling emotional.

"That was lust. You'd get bored and want to troll him mercilessly if you dated for more than a week."

"I could date him for two years without getting bored."

"Ok, I just don't understand why you like being submissive."

"It's a preference and an efficiency, come on Heather. It's statistically unlikely that all people would want to play equal roles. I like following and being dynamic within the space that's afforded to me by the ridiculously submissive, feminine roles in which I keep finding myself."

"Have you said stuff like that to Pierre? George'll assume you're joking, but Pierre'll get nefarious ideas. I don't trust him."

"No, George's the one you should fear. Pierre's wanting me to invent a better mouse trap and let him take credit for it, over and over again, on repeat, while he provides for me and ensures that my body stays held in a state of continuous and maximum sustainable pleasure until we grow old and he most likely dies first. That's safe. George has other plans."

"Like what?"

"He probably wants me to be a ridiculously feminine CEO or politician so he can stand behind me and scare people who criticize me."

"So he's a militant feminist. I like it. That's why you should date him."

"Then it's settled."

"Yeah, that was easy."

"Totally," I said, while trying to entice Heather to top me.

"Not so fast. This solution works because he's rich and you're highly educated, but how will it work for all women?"

"People should choose their sexual partners in accordance with their interests. Screw love, and then everyone will be happy."

"You're still drunk. The cardinal rule is that people should choose their sexual partners independently of their career goals."

"That's bull. Why am I allowed to marry a high quality guy I want to have kids with and call it love, but I can't sleep with an equally high quality person who will help me get ahead in my career?"

"No, you can't sleep your way to the top. It's against the rules. It's worse than committing a foul in sports."

"Fouling is part of the game. I don't always foul, but when I do, I foul hard, babe!"

"You're not a feminist. I'm revoking your feminist card."

"Let's go watch the World Cup, which is in America this year, heck yeah!" I said, while standing up and fidgeting aggressively with our soccer ball, topless and still hung over.

"You know, if you shaved your head I might actually get turned on by what you're doing," said Heather, eyeing the drawer in the kitchenette that contained a pair of scissors.

"I don't have to shave my head just to satisfy your sexual desire in the moments when I feel like acting tough. I'm a feminist!" I shot back, victoriously, as if I had just scored a game winning penalty kick.

Heather tossed our blanket at me.

She pulled me back into our bed and made love to me, at last.

There was no AC, so we sweated a lot.

She poured bottled water over my head and into my mouth, and my hangover subsided.

In other news, I had sent numerous postcards to Pierre that included the address of a World Wide Web page I was using to distribute our contact info at each of the places where we found lodging.

Pierre eventually got a hold of us at a youth hostile, and I took the call in the common room.

"Hey babe, what's new?"

"Hello, Suzy. I wanted to invite you walk the red carpet with me at a night club I'm opening on an island in the Mediterranean. I'm a co-owner, and we're throwing a grand opening bash a couple weeks before your teaching job starts this fall. This can't have been a co-incidence."

"I love all this attention to detail. I'd be delighted. What should I wear?"

"Nothing, ideally."

"Stop it."

"You decide. Send me a postcard with your decision, and I'll accessorize my suit accordingly."

"This is the most responsibility you've ever given me."

"You're going to be in a position to corrupt the youth. You should practice being responsible now."

"Will your girlfriend be there?"

"No, this is a power play to assert my freedom to continue dating multiple women."

"So direct! What's gotten into you?"

"I'm changing. I was inspired by a movie called Science Fiction that won the top prize at Versailles this year. You should see it. I'd love to analyze it with you."

"Can you send me a copy."

"No, you should see it at the New York Film festival in September. Your students will be impressed. That should ideally be the first thing many of them learn about you."

"It sounds like a platform for female empowerment."

"I wouldn't go that far. I just thought it was a well made movie. They've reintroduced craft to the art form."

"So they made it in a well. Like a water well?"

"No."

"Alright, alright, I'll come to your party. Thanks for the invite. I'll call your scheduler after consulting with Heather."

"Oh yes, bring her along too."

"Can we bring, like, ten hot guys with us?"

Pierre didn't answer. The static over the phone was deafening.

"I'm just kidding. I'll be responsible. You can count on me, Pierre," I said, surrendering unconditionally, but with a heavy dose of sarcasm.

"That's my girl, I can't wait to see you in red. Chow!"

"Huh!!!" I gasped as Pierre hung up the phone.

"Darn," I said out loud, in front of the handful of people who were making popcorn in the common area. Even Heather had come out of hiding to see what all the commotion was about.

"Holy Jesus," I said, with the intention of embarrassing Heather.

Heather laughed submissively.

"Come back to bed, Suzy," she countered.

I wanted to keep performing for our audience, but Heather had a point. We retreated to the bedroom and I explained that I was an elitist hot girl who had just gotten what she wanted and then some.

Heather held me close, as if I was sick with a mysterious illness that nobody could identify.

"I'm concerned that our skin tone has something to do with this," said Heather.

I wanted to punch her for doubling down on that aspect of my confession, but I dug in for trench warfare. We were already winning.

Heather and I stared at each other blankly for a minute.

Our awkwardly synchronized breathing was audible.

"Let's make our way to the Mediterranean coast and become professional party people," I said, breaking the ice.

"Why make our way when we can take a direct flight. You're so good at finding the cheap tickets. I'm sure you can hook that up if that's what you want," said Heather.

"It's what I want, Heather."

"I'm not stopping you."

"So you'll come with?"

"I suppose I could," said Heather, in a tone that conveyed profound empathy and heartfelt awareness of the suffering in the world that we had not yet experienced, ourselves.

I burst into tears and mumbled something to Heather about how I didn't see us as panderers for rich men.

"I just wanna live the dream for a few weeks and make new friends along the coast," I moaned.

I nearly passed out in Heather's arms, and she supported me.

"It's ok, Suzy. We'll visit a lot of churches and keep on questioning the role of traditional religion in modern life. I love our spontaneity."

We hit the ground running and formed a crew with three recent graduates from a Virginia and Maryland area university.

There names were named Isabella, Jessica, and Kirsten.

Jessica was a social butterfly from the Carolinas, and Kirsten was a hard wrought southern woman from Atlanta.

Kirsten had been a cheer captain, and she could do everything. She could move with her whole body and relax into the flow, with or without drink in hand.

She had an unapologetic femininity.

She wanted to accumulate some good stories and get on with it, and she was career focused, to boot.

Jessica acted outstandingly ebullient and oblivious at all times.

She also knew what was good.

That's what initially caught my eye about them. They were curating the guys in the club and getting the VIP lounge to sweat.

Heather looked cool in the clubs, and I was intrigued with helping her handle the machismo men who just couldn't leave it alone, except for when we handled them.

My combination of wicked sarcasm and ability to ignore their energy in subtle ways that taxed their egos was metal to our method of deterrence.

Isabella had her hair up in a bun and was rocking soft, short patterned shorts and a stringy backless tank top. She and Heather locked eyes, and then they locked hips.

Kirsten reacted physically, but I jumped in like a wingman and handled her too.

"It's ok, she's with me," I said, feeling like a mean girl as soon as the words came out.

Kirsten laughed loudly, and Jessica came over looking effervescent and curious to know what was so funny.

"You didn't know?" I asked, whimsically.

"Can't say I did, but it doesn't surprise me. We just got here, but Isabella went to a lot of clubs during college," said Kirsten.

"Are you in college too?" asked Jessica.

"We just graduated," I replied, in tone that implied I had been compelled by social norms to sound pleasantly feminine and polite because I was speaking on behalf of Heather as well as myself.

"OMG, us too!" said Jessica, demonstrating that she could play this game too.

I loved Jessica. She and I were like milk and honey when we worked together in the club.

We were the power.

We warped the dance floor.

My grandparents were from North Carolina, and Jessica's energy unlocked something in my soul that had been laying dormant.

I whispered in her ear, "My great great great great granddaddy was a general in the Civil War, but I'm French!" and she laughed, "Hah hah hah hah," so softly, while Heather, who happened to be top notch at reading lips, looked on in "horror" that might have been more representative of linguistic norms, or something, because we took the region by storm, but we kept changing locale so that nobody could make us as class A hustlers.

I knew what was possible, and Heather and Isabella were our data team. They watched the room when we weren't busy appreciating each other with all five senses.

As Pierre's club opening approached, we hatched a plot to setup Jessica up with Marshall, and Kirsten was down to handle Pierre.

I told Jessica I was pals with Marshall Bobs, and she said, "You're freakin' kidding me."

"My goal's to sleep with George and make him think it was his conquest, but Pierre's expecting to be my man at the event, so we'll have to contain his enthusiasm."

"That's my department," said Kirsten, like the player we needed to have on our side.

We got Kirsten and Jessica on the guest list, and I made plans with Pierre to have dinner with George and Marshall, along with Heather and her hot girlfriend Isabella.

Pierre was delighted with Isabella, but he knew I was hustling because I wasn't anxious about the ramifications of consigning George and Marshall to the role of passive listeners.

They became the keenest.

They didn't know what they didn't know, and I didn't try to fake it.

I could always fake insecurity with Pierre, but not anxiety.

Fear of missing out was Pierre's wheelhouse, so I had to run the hustle in plain sight, without a cover story, and Pierre was feeling amorous, so it worked out.

I was a dick to all three of my billionaires, but I wore a stunning red dress, and Pierre held me by his side for most of the night.

I leaned into the alcohol, Heather got Jessica and Kirsten into the VIP lounge, and we were off to the races.

I'd been drinking too much all summer, and Pierre miscalculated how well I could operate.

We orchestrated the VIP lounge so that Marshall would keep seeing Jessica in the right

light.

Marshall's reptile brain took over, and they disappeared into his shiny getaway car while I distracted Pierre.

With Marshall out, Heather made the hard sell to George.

She said, "You know it's rape if you have sex with Suzy while she's blackout drunk, right?" and he replied, "Yes."

He got the message and dragged me out of the club before Pierre could react.

I remembered some of it, and I thought it was hot.

With me out of the picture, Heather, Isabella, and Kirsten ganged up on Pierre.

He laughed submissively and invited them to walk out with him.

Isabella held Pierre tight as they walked out and got into his limo.

The optics were great, and Heather loved framing Kirsten as her girl, just for a moment.

In the privacy of the limo, Pierre kept talking in the third person about how, "Heather staged a coup," and Kirsten closed the deal.

Pierre was euphoric, and they had a one night stand.

I woke up in George's arms with a slight hangover.

I closed my eyes and saw an image of Pierre standing on his boat, somewhere in the Indian ocean, explaining to me that writers in the entertainment industry aren't allowed to distort reality.

He had pinned me on the deck of the boat and then I heard his voice whisper, "Reality is boring."

He had been playing hot guy on the boat for Suzy.

I had loved watching him trick serious people into believing in fairytales, without ever telling a lie, but, "now my girls and I had programmed George to play, 'hot guy in the club for Suzy,'" I thought to myself, as I pulled a cotton swab from the special compartment in my panties and used it to clean up my eye makeup before facing my boyfriend and hypnotizing him more deeply than he had ever been hypnotized before.

I didn't even need to look in a mirror.

My boyfriend was my mirror.

"Can I rep you as my boyfriend?" I asked.

"Yes, provided that you exercise discretion and make everybody work to get the data," said George, struggling to sound fully awake.

I liked that he was putting up a fight against my psychological power play. It made me feel anxious that I might not have cleaned up my makeup as well as I thought I had, and my post-party aggression gave way to nature's euphoria, right on schedule.

"So, are we going to have dinner with everyone?"

"Nope. Pierre and Marshall left for America on the same private plane, Kirsten and Jessica are happy as clams and planning to return to the US on their previously booked flight, and Heather's heading to a nudist colony with Isabella. I'd like to wire her \$100k to help her start a business, but I wanted to get your consent first."

"You had sex with me when I was blackout drunk, and now you're asking for consent to

pay my friend?"

"We fooled around."

I felt a flash of anger in my heart. I wasn't sure if George was telling the truth. I wasn't sure about anything.

George put his hands on my head, and my hangover went away.

"Yes..." I purred.

"Yes, I can pay Heather?"

"No, I mean yes. My answer is yes. I assume you know what you're doing."

"Heather gave me your flight info. I'll get you to the airport in a couple days. Until then, we can relax and fool around some more. There's nothing left to do."

"Did you memorize my flight info at the club?"

"Yes."

"I love you, George," I said, as the world rushed into my soul.

"I love you too, Suzy...Suzy the Victorious!" said George, picking up on the fact that I was having a moment.

I held in my desire to tack and fight, and I expanded inside.

We were on track to enjoy good times.

__Ch2: Helpful Hacking__

I started a new journal just before showing up to work at Const Academy, and I wrote, "I became a hustler and a computer nerd because the military, the church, the east coast establishment, Hollywood, and Silicon Valley have been unspeakably sexist institutions since the founding, and I want to fix the problem."

Pierre and George had conspired to turn me into a female robot, but only George had tried to weaponize me.

Their intention had been invalid, so I wrote about it in my journal.

I wrote, "Self-Programming Fembots, For The Win (FTW)."

I wanted my brain to process my words as commands.

My brain was my computer, and my journal was its application programming interface, or API.

Elite New England boarding schools like Const Academy were supposed to be immune to acts of sorcery, but my journal was their Achilles heel.

They became the exception that proved the rule.

They became the general who had to lead the charge or face annihilation.

With that in mind, I wore mostly pencil skirts and cheerful blouses to work at Const Academy, and everybody started calling me Ms. Babineaux, as a constant reminder that I had married Pierre in 1992.

I cut my hair down to a stylish bob so that I could represent HR and pull off wearing shorter pencil skirts.

The knowing kids at Const knew I was up to something, but they couldn't say it.

The authority given to me by the school was instant. I could pretend to be Heather and frame them as children if they tried to frame me as sex object, and I never had to do it.

I still identified as, "a hot girl named Suzy," but Heather's software just worked, so I installed it in my brain and ran with it.

I almost wrote in my journal that pretending to be Heather at work was like cheating on a test, but I held back.

George's first question when I told him about my journal was to ask if I had proper security to keep the students from stealing it.

I lied to him and said, "Yes."

I wrote in my journal, "I don't know why I lied. I shouldn't have lied to George, so I wrote in my journal that this lie would be the first and only lie that I would ever tell to a man I'm sleeping with."

I became superstitious about the effects of writing in my journal about writing in my journal, so I needled George for updates about how his investments were doing.

We contained my superstition by playing a game:

I would guess the percent change, or delta, in George's net worth at the start of every phone call.

He would respond with the actual number, and I would react accordingly, with fake emotion that struck him as hot, regardless of his fortunes.

I developed a theory that representing the intention of caring for children was more powerful than representing fertility, and I tested my theory by inviting Marshall to slip away with me and watch Science Fiction at the New York Film festival.

"Talk about glamorizing drug use," said Marshall, pretending to become upset, as we made our way out.

Marshall was performing for the people around us who recognized him, and I realized that Pierre had tricked me into introducing myself to New York society via this movie that I hadn't seen beforehand.

I should have seen that coming.

I was working hard to be knowing, but I was still so naive!

"Is that a command?" I asked Marshall, in hushed tones.

He chuckled.

He was pretending to be cool.

People assumed I was a stylish taste maker that Marshall knew professionally and was maybe dating on the side, but maybe not.

They couldn't tell, but everyone assumed I wanted Marshall more than he wanted me, and that pissed me off.

"What character are you playing right now?" Marshall asked, as we peeled out in his chauffeured getaway car.

"From the movie?" I replied, in a fake New York accent.

"No, in general."

"Are you joking?"

I wasn't sure if Marshall had heard about my conceptualization of hot girl for Heather and hot girl on the boat for Pierre.

My mind began to spin. I pretended Marshall wasn't a powerful man, but the city was eating my brain alive.

"You know George doesn't care if I make love to other men, as long as I get more than I give," I said, shifting gears.

"Oh really? So it's not a sign of disrespect to him if we have sex? It's just a sign of disrespect to myself. Thanks for the tip."

"Not if it helps you get back with Fay," I said in my trademark feminine way that transcended characterization.

"Why is it always about getting back with Fay with you?" he asked, looking more relaxed than usual.

"I don't know," I said, as I began to cry.

I was only pretending to cry, like an actress, and Marshall read me that way too.

"I want to take you to a private spa and make love to you while you're wearing an art mask. I love what you're doing with the short hair," he said, while using my tears as an excuse to move in closer.

"Is this another one of those mask parties where all the guys wear suits and the girls are naked?"

"I want you to feel like that, but we'll be alone, and we'll both be naked. Your new character will be based on the mask instead of a person. You need to stop basing your characters on other people, and you can keep the mask. Don't ever make love in a mask you don't own."

"What if you change your mind and accuse me of stealing your mask?"

"I said it's yours. I could get in all kinds of trouble if I change my story."

"What if I lose my mind and wake up believing that I had stolen your mask?"

"I don't know. I didn't go to law school. Is that what you want to do with your life?" said Marshall, as we pulled me in closer to him and stared into my eyes.

The getaway car was moving dangerously fast towards an undisclosed location, and I had a flashback of Pierre standing on his boat, somewhere on the other side of the world, explaining to me that writers in the entertainment industry aren't allowed to distort reality.

He had said, "Yes, that is what they hire writers to do in Hollywood. Is that what you want to do with you life?" and then he had pinned me to the deck and whispered in my ear, "Reality is boring."

I couldn't remember what we had been talking about before that. I decided to make stuff up and assume we had been talking about law school because of a similar setup where I had tried to hustle him by asking annoying questions.

I smiled inside, but I kept my face perfectly relaxed, almost sullen.

I was reprogramming my memories to suit the moment.

I was also reeling.

Marshall was pushing me way out of my comfort zone.

My heart was pounding, and I liked it.

"Sure, let's get frisky in the spa," I said, while unbuckling my seatbelt and climbing on top of Marshall.

Marshall adjusted his energy, accordingly.

He hadn't expected me to fire back this hard.

He was getting more than he had bargained for, and I hadn't even seen my mask yet.

"Hot girl in mask for Marshall", I whispered.

"Mask girl for hotness," said Marshall, taking control.

It was fun, and we had great sex at the spa.

Marshall kept on playing hot guy in the car for Suzy, just like Pierre had never really stopped playing hot guy on the boat for Suzy.

I loved watching them trick serious people into believing in fairytales, without ever telling a lie, themselves, but I didn't write about it in my journal.

I just analyzed the movie.

Nothing more.

When I returned to campus, I was glowing from the spa, and one of the girls in the dorm I was affiliated with asked if I had been hanging out with my boyfriend in the city.

I had planned to stonewall these questions, and it was easier than I had anticipated.

"I'd rather not talk about my personal life," I said, like it would be effortless for me to stonewall indefinitely.

The girls demurred, and I resisted the urge to celebrate. I visualized computer code in my mind's eye until order was restored in the dormitory, and I wrote in my journal about how I loved my boyfriend, George, who lived in the UK.

I was having an affair with Marshall Bobs on the weekends, but I pretended to be monogamous for my long distance boyfriend.

Everyone knew I was doing something devious now, but nobody could say it.

The gossip girls were caught flat footed by my excellence, but just as soon as I declared victory, someone went rogue and put up a fight.

They installed a keylogger on the computer that I used during class, in the lab, and they used my password to go onto online bulletin boards and make it look like I was gossiping about the students at Const Academy using screen names that had been associated with me since the eighties.

They hacked the school's database, and they made it look like I was broadcasting sensitive private information in order to gloat about my hacking skills and prove that women could be hackers too.

They took screenshots of what I was supposedly writing about them online, and they compiled the screenshots into a packet that got distributed all over campus.

They couldn't just make it about hacking. They had to go at my feminism too.

This felt like war, so I consulted George.

"You shouldn't be telling me about your work stuff. I don't have any relationship to this school," was George's boneheaded reply.

"But you're a master of war and piracy on the high seas. How do I win?"

"Sounds like the hackers want to start a media company. This is Pierre's department. If they haven't even broken your arms yet, I can't help you," said George, while barely holding back laughter at my predicament.

I wanted to yell at George for being a useless boyfriend, but I paused myself, as if doing a science experiment.

Twenty seconds of silence passed, and I fell in love with him all over again.

I wrote in my journal about how much I loved my boyfriend, and I drew a flowchart that offered guidance about when to be emotional and when to be logical.

My boss and the school principal both advised me to avoid reacting. They said it was like graffiti in the bathroom stall, and unless someone turns themselves in, "we just have to keep moving forward faster than these bad actors can pull us back."

I was not happy. I wanted to bring in people with law enforcement powers and conduct a broader investigation. I initially hoped that the perpetrators would cave under the pressure of my largesse and reveal themselves through behavior that seemed out of place, but the guy who ran IT and several of the other teachers were at least as suspicious as even the most poker faced male students.

I also tried to remember that the perpetrator, who was still at large, might be a girl.

My whole schtick was that girls could be hackers too, but the students were acting like they had seen me in a sex tape.

Even the most sheltered nerds were power tripping on cutting up in my presence and then making perfunctory efforts at pretending to respect me, as if they were following a stupid rule that everyone knew could not be enforced.

They acted like they were accommodating me out of charity.

In college, I could have destroyed all of their lives for behaving this way, but they were minors in my care, so I had to stand down.

I also couldn't leave my job without losing face.

I thought about quitting in order to punish the school, but George, Pierre, and Marshall all encouraged me to fight through it.

"Screw them," I thought. They were just as amused as the school boys, and they didn't try to hide it.

Marshall started making jokes about how I wanted to kill all men.

He was full of new ideas for adventurous sex, but his attitude struck me as a turnoff, given the context.

I put him on hold, and he took it well.

I started listening to repetitive electronic music on my headphones.

I wanted George to send masked men to smoke out and savage the hackers with forks, knives, and spoons from the dining hall and make it look like they had done it to each other after a nerd spat in the forest at night, like cannibals, but I didn't write about that in my journal.

I was surprised by how quickly my mind went to violence now that I was getting a taste of real adversity.

I was stuck. I checked myself, and my violent ideation gave way to unwanted anxious thoughts about how all the impressionable young students were going to become jerks to

each other in the workplace.

The school was doing something wrong, but I didn't know how to make the case. I didn't know what words to say.

I was afraid.

I imagined Heather putting her feet on my desk, with hands behind her head, in a dominant pose, and saying, "Tell me something I didn't already warn you about a thousand times."

This mental image made me laugh, and I got an idea. I needed to invent a teacher character of my own. I couldn't keep borrowing Heather's persona.

I backdated a journal entry about a plan to shave my head and start wearing wigs.

I did this by rewriting my journal from scratch, by hand, and I burned the old one in a camp fire, at the beach.

I hypothesized that wearing wigs would welcome everyone to reveal their insecurities while speculating about what was going on with my hair, so that I could use the world class training Pierre had given me in the art of subversive representation to protect the children's secrets and channel all the incoming anxiety upstream, onto the plates of the leaders of the school.

This wasn't even going to be hard.

It would be like a medium difficulty undergraduate computer science project.

I called Marshall at his work number and proposed that we spend Thanksgiving together at an island in the Caribbean, and he was down to give thanks with me.

He didn't say, "Suzy, heck yeah," but I felt him think it.

I celebrated. I fist pumped the air, and some students passing by my office saw it.

I pretended I was reacting to getting a computer program to work after spending an hour sorting through unexpected errors.

Marshall and I travelled in style and made ourselves at home, at the end of a pool bar.

I kept an eye on all the slick, antagonist type guys who were clogging the vicinity. They were angling to bump into us and act friendly, so I slayed them with a ruthlessness that was uncommon, even by my standards.

"What are the real risks of hanging out with guys like you," I asked Marshall, after a big opening silence.

"Mostly that you'll say something careless in the media, and then we'll avoid you."

"And?"

"You're the math whiz. I'm sure you can get a comfortable job without our help, so what's the concern?"

"If you avoid me, everyone will avoid me. And then I might get compressed and say even more careless things in the media, and then more and more people will avoid me. I could become un-hirable."

"Not in the US. If a bunch of rich people try to invalidate someone with your skills who knows what you know, you'll own their fake identities within five years, and they'll have to pay. We'll even cheer you on. You just won't be able to get to us, especially if we were the one's you talked about carelessly."

"And what if I alienate all women on my way down to rock bottom?"

"How would you do that?"

"Let's just suppose that I did."

"I hadn't thought about that. As a guy, if you break the rules, you get reeled in, and then you fight like your life depends on it until you're better than before. There might be some aspects about making it as a woman that I haven't thought about. Good point."

"That's it? I get a good point?"

"You know more about the risks of being a woman who hangs out with guys like us than we do."

"Sounds like you would prefer to remain blissfully ignorant."

"Yeah," said Marshall, wryly.

"Heck yeah, that's the spirit," I said, imitating Marshall's voice, to his face.

Marshall got turned on by this, as usual.

I thought about attacking, but I had no incentive to do so. These guys had offered to help me start a hedge fund two years ago.

Every guy I knew in finance would have jumped at that.

I could have repped Pierre and Marshall as my investors, and I could have followed George's portfolio until I had the experience to run my own strategies.

"What's the deal with the World Wide Web, Suzy? I don't understand it," he asked, sensing that I was swimming hard.

"It's the face of the Internet. It doesn't wear makeup yet, but it will," I mused.

"It seems like a big online newspaper. Everyone keeps telling me it's distributed, but that just sounds like a tax shelter in disguise. When people with no clout publish controversial material in the pages of this newspaper, they'll ultimately be working for power brokers like me who don't want the public to know when the inspiration for their ideas and attitudes came from them. That's how human brains work. Who's keeping track of the stuff clandestine power brokers will soon be doing in order to quarter back this radical new medium?"

I had to pause and think.

Marshall was flexing.

Marshall and I still had an understanding. As long as I kept my body more relaxed than his, I could take extra time to respond to his questions.

"I want you to shave my head so that I can start wearing wigs," I said, gleefully.

"Is that your way of saying the web's a black market for information?" said Marshall, calling my bluff.

I couldn't tell if Marshall thought a black market for information was a good thing or a bad thing, so I went all in.

"The web is more like love than war, but yes," I said, while pretending to feel satisfied with myself.

Marshall smiled. He almost laughed submissively, but he didn't.

"Do you want to be the mascot of the web, shaved head and all?" he asked, like an overloaded web server that had finally gotten around to acknowledging my request.

"No, not really. I'd rather be its celebrity makeup artist."

"This is what bothers me. You can't publish statements like that in traditional media. If your generation grows up thinking it can distribute sloppy metaphors like that to audiences without paying a cost, you'll lose your collective mind. Only the strong will survive."

"I thought we were on vacation. What's wrong with talking topless by the beach?" I said, while pretending to take off my top.

"I'm going to cut way back on my drinking. This web thing's gonna to be a mess. Fay and I are gonna do all the Christmas parties and then maybe get back together. She wants to go into politics, and I'm excited about helping her win. That and spending more time with the kids. She'll know I'm serious if I cut back on my drinking," said Marshall, ignoring my power play.

"Are you gonna tell her that your concerns about the web drove you to stop drinking?"

"No, I'll cite health concerns."

"So you're gonna lie to her and hope that nobody other than me ever learns your secret?"

"It's a harmless secret."

This was now the second harmless secret that I shared with Marshall. Our first harmless secret was that we had been having amazing sex when I had been living at his mansion and doing work for him, on behalf of the bank, in the summer of 1992.

Of course we had been having sex, but we both pretended to have forgotten, and I more convincingly than him.

My actual memory tended to fade in and out when I was with Marshall. I knew that about our relationship, I liked it, and made it my own.

Marshall also forgot that he had fallen in love with me, and that I had set him straight.

"Suzy, I'm madly in love with you, I want to marry you," Marshall had said, as we snuggled up to each other in bed, after another productive day of work at his mansion by the beach.

"No, you don't. I want you to marry me more than anything, but we'd have to leave America. You can't be my man in America and ignore what you and Fay started. You gave your power to her and now she has it. You're trying to sell me something you don't have."

"How do you know that?"

"I've known that about men who are supposedly powerful since middle school. What are you talking about?"

"Why do so many supposedly powerful men try to sell what they don't have?" said Marshall, while holding me tight.

"It's like doing drugs. I don't know. People also learn that drugs are bad in middle school, but some people still get addicted later in life," while trying and failing to wriggle out of his embrace.

I forgot what happened after that. Having sex with Marshall always blew up all of my emotions. I would scream and cry and say things I didn't mean. He loved it, and I kind of liked it too. I always felt amazing after sex with Marshall, but I couldn't be sure if it was healthy for me.

I was reminiscing about that while preparing to try and fail to stand my ground

against Marshall, this time, in the islands, in fall 1994.

"No it's not. It will change the landscape of the Internet if every time Marshall Bobs declines a drink, people say it's because he hates the World Wide Web and the dirty long hairs who administrate it," I said.

Marshall knew I was trying to get a rise out of him. He liked it when I went the extra mile to make a point, and he showed it by softening his body language.

I felt angry at Marshall, but I didn't know why.

I bit my lip and set an intention to buy time.

"Let's do an experiment. A couple business associates of mine from Texas want to meet us for drinks. These guys like to party, and they're going to declare war on us if we don't drink. I say we hold our ground. If you don't tell them I hate the web, I won't tell them you're wearing a wig," said Marshall, ignoring my nervous tic.

"You know they'll accuse me of using witchcraft on you, right?"

"How do you know?"

"If we're not drinking, they won't be able to blame alcohol for all their bad jokes."

"How will you handle that?"

"Handle what?"

"How will you handle them not being able to blame alcohol for all their bad jokes."

"The way you just handled me was hot," I said, ratcheting up the pressure on Marshall's brain.

"Answer the question, Suzy."

"I'll just take the hits. The hits won't hurt very much if they don't know you and I are on the same page about witchcraft."

"Are we?"

"Yeah, we are. I'm a classically trained engineer. I got this."

"What if they throw you under the bus with a metaphor that's worse than witchcraft?"

"Then I'll take bigger hits, and I'll have to do more self-care during the day to recover."

"What if they don't hold back and convince us to go dirt bike racing with them in Mexico tomorrow?"

"Then there will be warfare, and I'll teach you boys a lesson."

Marshall didn't react.

"That works. I wouldn't want to take the risk of trying a new extreme sport, either," I said, imitating Marshall, while taking another big gulp from my umbrella drink.

Marshall still didn't react.

"Did you just lose face to me, Marshall? Do you need me to boil you a self-care potion to help you recover?" I said, gaining steam.

Marshall smiled, and he had to do work in order to avoid laughing submissively.

"I'm just kidding, they'll stonewall us completely if I don't drink. I'll have a couple," said Marshall, matter-a-factly, after regaining his composure.

"I knew you were kidding. I was just playing along," I said, still taking the bigger hit.

It felt icky, but I was ok with it.

"Alright, let's shave that head. It's time," declared Marshall.

Marshall manhandled me back to the hotel room, and I got seriously turned on.

"Where is it?" Marshall barked, taking a calculated risk.

"In my suitcase."

"Well, get it out, we don't have all day."

I got out an electric razor and a brunette bob wig, and I implored Marshall to slow down.

"This is going to be a very emotional experience for me," I said, feigning an air of desperation mixed with excitement about the unknown.

"I know," he said, as he caressed my shoulders and slowly took off my clothes, one article at a time.

He pretended to care and feel empathy for the irrational and stereotypically feminine emotions that I was feeling for real, all of a sudden, and I thought it was hot that he was making the effort.

"Ok, go use the bathroom and freshen up your makeup. I have a plan," said Marshall, authoritatively.

I got the giggles, but I followed his orders and returned.

My body was in a state of pure ecstasy.

"Head straight; it's everyone else we're going to be tilting, Suzie-Q," he said, nonchalantly, while identifying the top of my head with his index finger, as though I was a globe he had brought into an airplane hanger, for the purpose of illustrating a concept from the field of rocket science, to a bunch of guys wearing flight suits.

Marshall placed me on the bed, facing a wall where I couldn't see my reflection. He folded my arms behind my back and ritualistically shaved my head.

He put me in my wig and made love to me, and I lost my composure.

It felt better than any drug I'd ever taken.

After sex, Marshall escorted me to my suitcase and told me to, "grab something nice."

He made me put it on quickly, as if time was of the essence, and then he hauled me in front of a mirror.

He stood behind me with his arms around my waist and motioned for me to freshen up my makeup, again, in preparation to go outside.

"I have to pee again," I whined, forgetting that these were the first words I was saying to my new self in the mirror.

"You'll get better data if you wait until we're at a public restroom," he said, rather genuinely.

"That's the most romantic thing anyone's ever said to me," I said, feeling a massive wave of sarcasm rising up from the basement of my soul.

We kissed, sarcastically.

I put on extra lipstick, and we went outside and acted like everything was 100% normal.

It was the closest I'd ever come to waking up in a computer simulation.

"Let's grab coffee and go shopping. They have great shops here. They really got the retail component right at this property. I want you to see what they did," said Marshall, and I couldn't tell if he was trolling.

He must have been trolling, but the joke was on me, if there was one.

We went shopping and I trolled so hard that it hurt while trying to act normal. I had discovered a new genre of physical exercise.

I wanted to buy lots of random clothes, like a kid in a candy store, but I focused on doing what a classy brunette woman dating Marshall Bobs would theoretically do, and I had faith this would help me discover my true authentic self.

That night we caught up with Marshall's business associates at a cheeky beach bar called, "The Oasis."

"There's so many of them to choose from," I commented, as we approached the entrance.

I expected Marshall to ignore me, but he stopped short and put me on the spot:

"So many of what?" he asked, with his left hand on my lower back, pulling me in close, while he looked down at me.

"Cheeky beach bars," I said, while trying not to bat my eyelashes.

Marshall gave me a kiss on the lips, while his business associates signaled from afar that they were about to come out of the woodwork and smother us with saturation.

Evan was with Casey, and Garret was with Brooke.

They were swanky.

"Marshall, it's great to finally meet you in person," said Evan, with a wholesome southern accent.

"Hi Evan," said Marshall, with an emphasis on the handshake and eye contact, with his chin down.

My man was such a sumptuous alpha.

"Garret," he said, lowering his chin even more.

I saw Brooke use her eyes to say, "She's in love with him," to Casey, and I wanted to slay everyone.

I introduced myself to the girls, and my heart began pounding mid-sentence because I couldn't tell who knew I was wearing a wig.

Marshall put his arm around me and derived pleasure from my quiet burst of feminine energy.

And then it hit me like a load of bricks: hanging out with powerful people was boring.

Business was boring. America was boring. Nobody was attacking Marshall as much as I would have liked, and if we had declined to drink, we would have been even more boring.

We were all trying so hard to be high status, and I thought it was boring, but I was mortally afraid to say so in my new wig.

The sex Marshall and I had that night was the best I'd ever had, and I spent the rest of the trip making up stuff about the lifestyles of the rich and healthy.

I wrote down our best ideas in my journal, and my new southern persona, Lacy, took root.

I switched from a brunette to a blonde wig when I returned to campus, and my new character, "Lacy," morphed into a southern girl who had lost her accent while living in Cali, New England, and Europe.

Several people complimented me on my hair cut, and I imagined some well-to-do mothers talking about how it was inappropriate for me to wear wigs and that my wig-wearing habit was the last straw, which proved that I had a personality disorder.

I thought about what they would say to the principal in order get me fired, but the data on the ground indicated that nobody cared.

It made sense that I had shaved my head because I was a hacker chick, and I was wearing wigs because it was winter in New England.

In reality, people acted like my new character was a side effect of the fact that I had become comfortable with being professional and cultivating the instinct to protect children from the world of adults.

Compiling my professionalism into a character increased everyone's confidence that my good intentions were genuine, and the gradually spreading awareness that I was wearing wigs confirmed, once and for all, that I was a hacker.

I didn't see it until after Thanksgiving, but the most insidious consequence of the hacking incident had been to cast me as a helpless girl who couldn't hack.

I had bent over backwards in order to convince everyone that I wasn't, "the hacker," but creating Lacy allowed me to have it both ways: I could be a hacker and a trustworthy employee.

Fay and Marshall got back together, and Pierre informed me that everybody was smitten.

"Fay ran the table, and Marshall went along for the ride," he said, and I took his words at face value.

The gossip girls must have known about my affair with Marshall, but nobody wrote about it.

I went home to SF for Christmas and flew down to LA for Pierre's New Year's party.

Heather had doubled her money by making small loans with the help of a website.

The world wide web had become a thing, and Heather got the joke.

She was still dating Isabella, and the three of us collaborated to create a, "dark operations version of Lacy."

I wanted to be super sexy for George, but they convinced me to wear vinyl pants instead of a vinyl mini-skirt, and we completed the outfit with an edgy black wig.

We entered the party together, and Pierre pretended not to recognize me.

Heather introduced me as, "my hacker friend Lacy," and Pierre said, "Nice to meet you, Lacy."

I couldn't tell if he was trolling, and it burned me up all the way.

Heather, on the other hand, loved this setup.

George was already at the party, and he ignored me even harder than Pierre.

He was chugging through the stream of hot girls that Pierre kept on sending his way.

George had been cast as a dirty truck that was getting very poor gas milage, and everything about this saddened me.

He and I had made plans to meet at the party.

He must have noticed that I was staring at him, but the problem with George is that he would normally ignore a girl who was staring at him, so his indifference meant nothing.

I was suffering.

The party was suffering too. Heather, Isabella, and I were a honey pot for all the single guys, but I was shy, and Isabella enjoyed watching Heather deconstruct the guys who were hitting on me, and a notably high percentage of them were card carrying writers who took hard shots at her.

They knew it would only fuel her fire, and they wanted to see what would happen.

Pierre's party was becoming lame, but his only focus was on keeping George liquid with attention from other hot girls.

"It's really sweet how he's waiting for you to approach him," whispered Heather.

I was anxious that George might simply not know what was happening, and Heather read my mind.

She was winning the empathy olympics, but that was just grist for my mill.

"Someone has to submit, and it definitely shouldn't be you," Heather added, still whispering, as if to hypnotize me.

"George doesn't know I'm here," I said, while staring at George.

"He's a savant at reading patterns. He's aware we're the only three girls he hasn't talked to, and he knows all of us. Do the math, Lacy," she said, moving to close.

"George, what the heck's wrong with you?!" I shouted, at the end of the song.

He and Pierre laughed, and then my George and I ran to the center of the dance floor and embraced.

Everyone cheered, and I felt like I was floating.

"That's what I call hang time," I said, while covering my man's right ear, so that he could hear me.

The DJ played it perfectly, and the energy in the room exploded.

The DJ was hot, but the real reason why the energy in the room exploded was because all the girls who had judged George as a fool lost their marbles and came over, one by one, to congratulate us and represent their intention to please us.

I had never understood so clearly what Heather's taste in fashion was all about.

George was the coolest guy in the room, and I was the hot chick who had gotten him.

George let me lead, and I made sure that he continued to seem like the center-centered guy that more and more of the girls now thought he was.

I closed the deal with the skeptics, and I made it look easy.

I loved it.

We were killing it, and Pierre delivered the main course by treating me like a guy.

I wasn't just one of the guys.

I was the man, but as a woman.

I was the woman, and I knew what to do.

My crew continued playing it cool.

They left just after midnight.

On her way out, Heather whispered, "Did you seriously not did see that coming?"

"Nope," I said, but with attitude, as if I was a cool hacker chick.

She gave me two middle fingers with a smile, and Isabella blew me a kiss.

I woke up in a state of extreme happiness the next morning.

"Where do we go from here, my love?" I asked.

"Your cover story at the school is flimsy. You should become a thought leader in computer security for elite boarding schools," said George.

"That's what's on your mind?"

"Yeah, your ass is hanging out. You want to win, right? We need to do the same thing for your professional reputation that Heathabella did for your outfit last night."

"How did you know they influenced my outfit?"

"Lucky guess. I asked around, and your habit of wearing wigs is really messing with the system, darling. I think you can break through if I connect you to all the people who do computer security at the elite schools in the UK. The people who want to claw back what you took from them will never see it coming. I'll call in an air strike for you."

"Who did I fleece?"

"Everyone. You fleeced everyone," said George, laughing.

"How?"

"You're a doll."

"I feel like I should be turned on, but I'm not."

"You can go back to being a hot girl during spring break, but we need to work right now, I agree."

"Seriously?"

"Yes, this is war, but I'm giddy because we're going to win. Even Pierre and Marshall know we're going to win. Fay heard about the party last night and she's impressed. Can you imagine how different your life would be if you hadn't had the presence of mind to call me out when you did?"

"Who are you right now?"

"I'm just George, you're welcome."

I suddenly felt desperate. I wanted to cry on George's shoulder.

"It's ok. I love you just the way you are. I just wasn't sure you were serious, but apparently you are," he said, while giving me a tender kiss on the lips that lasted for a while.

My sex drive rebooted. I went to work on George, and he was happy to help.

We made love, and then we rested.

"It's the computer security, itself, that they're doing wrong," mused George, after a while.

"Did you know that all along?" I asked.

"Yep."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I didn't want you to want me to call in an air strike, until now."

"What changed?"

"You provided leadership."

"When?"

"You just did."

"Aww, thanks, babe. It means a lot."

I went back to the school with the new data in hand, and nobody saw the switch.

Phone calls were made, lists of best practices were distributed over the Internet, and the security protocols at elite boarding schools got better.

The principal of the school said, "Thank you," when she passed me on the path, and I started playing squash with the chair of the classical languages department.

And, in the deadest dead of winter 1995, a kid approached me in the dining hall.

I had walked in alone for an afternoon snack, and he asked me, "Ms. Babineaux, are you wearing a wig?"

I wanted to troll him, but I just said, "Yes," while containing the energy between us using dance club moves.

George had been right to reinforce my own cover story. The kid seemed ineffectual on the surface, but he almost got me.

"Oh cool. Thanks. Sorry for bothering you," he mumbled.

I wanted to shout, "Well at least act like a big man on campus now that you got the scoop, kiddo!" but again, I held back.

My wig had become a useful crutch. For as long as I had been thinking about it, people had been treating me like I was cute and adorable, and I would respond by acting sarcastic instead of trying to explain that I didn't want to be treated like a cute thing all the time.

I liked the attention, but what I really wanted was to be taken seriously.

I could never quite get that from people.

George was getting closer than anyone else to doing what I wished everyone would do, and the dynamic between Heather and I was always improving, but the wig gave me a taste of total satisfaction.

People were actually holding back with the garbage about how cute I was.

They didn't want to seem like they thought I was cute because of the wig, and when

people held back, I got what I wanted.

I got respect.

At the same time, wearing a wig all the time was a pain in the neck, and I couldn't wait to rock real, short, hacker girl hair after spring break.

George told me, "If you want them to take you seriously, you should stop wearing the wig in the middle of a random week, wear baggy clothes, and never put on makeup again."

"George, I still want to be feminine," I scoffed.

"Not my problem," said George.

"Yeah, I'll figure something out."

"I'm going to be in Miami during your spring break. I'll send you my flight info."

"What's in Miami?"

"I will be. I hope you'll be there too."

"What am I missing?"

"I know you understand how your computer works all the way down to the quantum physics, but think of this like one of those unsolved mysteries of the universe. I want to do spring break with you in Miami, and you don't know why, so make a choice."

"Ok, yes. I'm really glad you're inviting me. Of course I want to meet you there. Thanks for deciding on where."

"Great, I'll look forward to it."

"Ok, bye."

I was supposed to be happy, but I felt off balance. I wrote in my journal about how I wanted to wear wigs in the pool at the hotel George would be selecting for us in Miami. I assumed he would ask Pierre where to stay, so I would mostly be hustling Pierre by seeing what I could get away with there.

The essence of my situation was that George was still cooking with both Pierre and Marshall, and I couldn't crack the code of their pact. They had something that went deeper than sex, and I wanted in.

I packed a suitcase full of pure hotness that had been jammed in the back of my closet since forever ago, and I met George at MIA airport in a radically sexy little number that featured an extra long blonde wig.

I hoped he would laugh submissively or try too hard to manhandle me, but he was chill.

I wore fierce wigs and thongs by the pool, and George became an impossibly brawny and austere man while staring at my whole body and thinking out loud about how everything was garbage except for Internet companies.

I felt like I was adding value to his creative process, and that made me happy.

I was steering him in this direction by being sarcastic as all get out about everything except Internet companies.

I was biased because I had grown up in San Francisco, but my man went back to London with intent to buy the hype that was brewing in my home town.

The haircut I got in New York before returning to campus was a hit, and I invited George to attend the graduation festivities at the end of the school year at Const Academy.

He declined, not by saying no but by changing the subject and instructing me to, "put all your stuff in storage and then pack your bags for travel."

"Am I supposed to say yes?"

"You could still flake even if you do say yes, so it doesn't matter. You could say almost anything you want right now, and you'd still be winning."

I hung up the phone.

George tried calling back twice, but I didn't answer.

George's next move was to send me a postcard, reminding me that I'd already told him my move out date, and that he'd be sending a car to meet me at the campus train station at twelve noon.

I didn't send anything back, but I showed up at the train station at the designated time.

George's car drove me to the top of Mount Washington.

George had hiked up, via Tuckerman's ravine, along with two hot security guards, and I might as well have been naked when I got out of the car.

"Darnit, George. What am I supposed to do?"

"Be feminine. You're good at it," said George, intentionally pushing my buttons, because he wanted me to be combative.

"Not fair. I have money too," I replied.

I felt like a jerk for bringing up money, but it also felt correct. We were simulating something I didn't understand, and I wanted to nudge the security guards.

"We can do this again next year, roles reversed. How's that sound?" said George.

"But you got to go first."

"I did. How can I make it up to you?"

"You're always offering to give me things, but you don't know what I want."

"I want you," said George, as if threading a needle.

"Right, but what do I want?" I said, pushing him.

I wanted him get better at this.

"That's what I'm trying to figure out," he said, reverting to robot mode.

"I feel trapped. I don't like that you trapped me," I said to the robot.

"You don't want to go camping with us? We're going to build a fire and cook all your favorite foods," said George, seeking refuge in sarcasm.

"Try again," I said, with a smile, helping the guy along, at this point.

"I was joking. You do like fire, though, don't you?" said George, like a devil.

"Yes. I'll join you for the fire, and then we'll play it by ear."

"You can't seduce security guards. It won't work."

"I know. They're professionals, it's cool. That, and we're in America. My country!" I said, cheerfully, and with much less effort than I would have expected, had I been

one leading.

George laughed submissively, and then we kissed passionately and enjoyed the view.

We went for a walk along the Charles River, in Boston, 48 hours later.

George waited for me to make the first move.

Punk.

He was framing me as a PhD student at an XY-axis aligned university.

"What do you want to do?" I queried.

"More of what we did at Pierre's New Years party."

"Yeah, what was that?"

"Resolution, convergence. Built in accountability. We were doing it, Suzy."

"I don't see the pattern."

"There's no pattern. Why don't you follow me for a few years, and I'll show you what I do. What we do."

"You want me to be your hot young wife?"

"That's why I love you. Pierre would never be able to say that."

"Best double meaning ever."

"I know."

I melted into George's arms, and we cuddled and made faces and strong eye contact for hours. I was so happy. I had found the right man for me.

George rented an economy sedan and drove me to the cape. He proposed marriage, and we made sweet love by the sea, three thousand miles away from home.

We flew from there to the beach in South Carolina.

George and I both had a reason to be there.

I wanted to conspire with Jessica to plan the perfect wedding, and George was making a move. A move he needed my help with, conveniently enough.

Jessica had just finished her first year at art school, and she was scheduled to work as a counselor at a summer camp that hadn't started yet.

She drove out to the beach, and George and I had our first fight over whether or not it was safe for me to go out exploring without a security detail.

Jessica solved the problem by indicating that hanging out at our hotel was perfect for our purposes.

Of course she did.

I told her I wanted to have a really small, traditional wedding at Big Sur.

"For your families, because your friends are all over the place," she said, with absolutely no detectable trace of sarcasm.

I batted Jessica's hair, and she made cat claws with her hands but without making a cat face.

"Yes, and that's why we'll throw a party in SF after our honeymoon," I said.

"Perfect," she said, growing genuinely excited.

"Should we open it to the public?" I inquired.

"No, you can have a really open guest list, but don't announce it. Send invitations."

"I want promoters."

"Oh, I see what you mean. It's like you're doing the adult version of Air Cover, so I can be a part of it this time!"

"Eeehhh, I just want promoters."

"I see why your friends are all over the place."

"Why? What am I doing?"

"I don't think I should say it. I'll keep it a secret."

"I love that. OMG, thank you."

"Of course," said Jessica.

There was a pause, and then she continued, "Hey, I wanted to show you something."

And like that, we planned the wedding, whilst George grandstanded and got more invitations to play golf than I could have.

I was impressed. In that place and time, the success of his hedge fund was trumping my hotness.

He told everyone he was there because I was meeting with my maid of honor, and the cover story he told me, in exchange, was that he had started writing his memoirs.

"You never told me how you and Pierre met," was my opening counteroffer.

"Windsurfing."

"No you didn't. Tell me the truth."

"Um, ok, so you know I wasn't very social until my late 20s."

"Yes," I said, bursting with joy.

"So, I graduated in '76 and worked nonstop for a few years, got my master's degree, and then I started going to goth industrial parties in the early eighties, and I went on a trip to Paris with my friends from that scene, and I was being pretty forward with the girls at the club, you know, because it was a different city and all, so Pierre was there and he intervened and helped make sure everyone was having fun at the party."

"And?"

"He noticed that I learned quickly under his direction, so we stayed in touch. We started having dinner whenever one of us crossed over to the other side of the channel. He joked that he was helping me become less evil by giving me data about food and fashion, and I joked that I could absorb all the data he could ever share on those terms, and the rest is history. We had a good decade."

"Thanks to me."

"You've been..., yes."

I adjusted the cross of my legs and made a few other salaciously sartorial gestures while looking at George as though he wasn't done speaking yet.

"Should I publish a white paper explaining how I used patterns in your behavior to predict yield spreads in the summer of 1991?"

"No. You should have told me what you were doing at the time, but your secret is safe with me."

"You know Pierre's yacht is borrowed, right?"

"From who?"

"Another French billionaire."

"Is he really a billionaire?"

"I don't know, I haven't audited him. His stake in my fund was low eight figures and now it's high eight figures. I'm sure he's doing fine."

"You guys are like turtles all the way down."

"Thank you. I appreciate the compliment."

"What's the end game?"

"First, we need to kill it in Silicon Valley, and then you'll still need to follow me for a few years in order to wrap your head around what we do for a living."

"I'll look forward to reading your memoirs."

"It's becoming more of a data science project, actually. I'm using all the facts I know about people as sample data for a cognitive science experiment. There's no pattern to it."

"No patterns. I'll try to remember to buy you a no pattern t-shirt for your birthday," I said, getting up slowly.

George could tell I wanted to pour my ice water on his crotch, but I took the glass back to our hotel room and watched the 24-hour news channel, instead.

I had become so mature.

I wasn't even sure if George could see it.

I had to wait a full twelve hours before George gave me the data, but storming out of the place, slowly, in my cocktail dress, and leaving George alone, had been more than enough of "whatever it was that it was" to sell the hype to all the central bankers in the room who happened to have converged upon the same spot as us in order to attend a shindig, which they had been formulaically downplaying, ever since they had landed.

The cut of my dress drew them in, but my amazing short blonde hair closed the deal.

Holding court in the estuary was hot, but George didn't romanticize the nuances of the place like I did.

I had to get him out of there before he started getting nefarious ideas.

At breakfast, I proposed that we follow the coast all the way to Big Sur.

"Via the Panama Canal?" said George, sitting up tall, with wide eyes.

"No, El Paso. We'll stay inside the US. We can take the ferry from Key West back to the mainland in order to be adventurous," I said, trolling, but with a southern accent that caught both of us surprise.

"Oh, so more road tripping with security," said George, in the voice of the Grim Reaper, himself.

"Did you think we were going to..., what did you think I meant?"

"Try to break the speed record for getting from here to LA by boat."

"That was not implied by what I said."

"I'm just being honest with you. That's what I thought you meant."

"Fine, we'll fly to LA and learn how to surf while driving up to Big Sur."

"Ok, I'll do it. No security."

"Whose the evil genius now?" I asked, biting him just a little bit on the shoulder.

"I'll call our travel agent and share the good news, sweetheart," said George, while pretending not to notice the lipstick I had deposited on his golf shirt.

"Thanks! See you after golf," I said, whilst making my exit, in a delightful tennis dress.

We spent the summer nestling into spots along the California coast, George got used to living without security while learning to surf, and the wedding went off with out a hitch.

Oh, and the sex was exquisite. We had to work at it, but it was the best ever, over and over again.

I submitted to George's steady strength, and it got better and better because George was representing a narrative I was feeding him on the water.

We were in love.

Jessica's girls had my back, and George flew in a bunch of people from the UK.

We were married by the priest of the church I had attended while growing up, and the guest list was small.

The one trick we pulled was to bring in a groovy rock band.

Paul, from my high school band, Air Cover, lead with his base guitar, and he flirted with Jessica all night long.

We did our honeymoon in Hawaii and returned a few days later to host our big party in SF.

We threw the party in view of the Golden Gate bridge, like old times, but with Jessica Inc. and Heathabella.

Instead of hugging me, Heather threw a fake punch, which I blocked inward. I pulled her hand down and reciprocated with a fake open hand strike to the jaw that was actually a setup for palming her right cheek and kissing her left cheek.

She peeled my hand off her cheek and twisted my arm so hard that it hurt, while kissing me in kind.

I giggled, and then she stepped in closer, so that our faces were two and a half inches apart.

We made small talk and went our separate ways while Pierre looked on, in a state of quiet desperation.

Pierre was used to being a top predator, but now he was prey.

Heather wasn't in love with the fact that I'd ditched the pants in favor of a sexy vinyl mini-skirt that made me feel like the life of the party, and I was concerned she

would pass the buck by asking Pierre if he'd ever gotten a nipple piercing, for example.

I ruminated about whether or I might still be prey while striking poses in my mini-skirt and smiling at nobody in particular.

Half of the people in the room were checking me out in their peripheral vision.

I was performing for the audience.

I told myself, "Pierre's wealth is still the most unfair thing here, by far. His suffering's always surface level. He can take it."

And then I approached Pierre and told him I thought it would be hot if he got a nipple piercing.

"There aren't enough hot girls here," he said, as if he had been the one to approach me.

Pierre was being a punk, as usual. There were plenty of girls at my party. If a neutron bomb had killed all humans except the people at my party, humanity would have regenerated. It wasn't like it was all guys, me, Jessica, and Heathabella. There were lots of hot girls.

"We told the promoters to invite engineers. This is what we have to work with. We got the substrate of Silicon Valley, in our hands...sing it with me Pierre! We got the sub...straight...in our hands...we got the..." I said, breaking out into song.

"Since this is the reception for your wedding, I guess it's ok. Just don't invite me to any more parties like this in the future," said Pierre loudly, nipping my fabulous performance in the bud.

"Not even if I have another wedding, like with Cecil?" I said, licking the wound that Pierre had inflicted upon all people like me, while trying to figure out if Pierre could tell that I was pretending to be less mature than I really was.

"No. These engineer people hate us, but at least you're getting their attention with that vinyl mini-skirt and that lovely new brand of lipstick you have. What is it?" asked Pierre, sarcastically.

"I think it's that we hate them," I said, seriously.

"They deserve to be hated. They have no taste," he replied, in a tone of voice that was neither sarcastic nor serious.

I had invalidated Pierre within my scene.

I had done it for sport, more than anything else.

I wanted to see what would happen.

"Have you talked to any of them?" I asked, hoping that Pierre was on the verge of submitting to me completely and then signing up to work for my AI research empire.

"Sadly, I have. I'm even going to have coffee with a few of them to discuss investment opportunities before leaving town."

"OMG, you're having fun at the party! I'm so glad you came," I said, downshifting, and trying to hide the fact that I was feeling underwhelmed by Pierre's performance.

Pierre could have been doing so much more by this point. He could have told me he had started a hacker commune where ten hot guys were living and getting busy, writing cutting edge software, naked, at that very moment.

Instead, Pierre grabbed my arm and twisted it behind my back.

"And you've been working out!" I deadpanned.

"I'm going to study martial arts. I don't actually know how to do this arm twist thing," said Pierre in a jovial tone that gave way to hysterical laughter from both of us.

I loved Pierre, and I finally felt free to laugh uncontrollably at how ridiculous he had always been.

It was my wedding reception, and I was happy that Pierre had found a way to fit in.

I hoped George would come over and make small talk with us, but he spent the whole evening smoking cigars and playing backgammon with some famous computer pioneer who wouldn't stop talking about how, "Everyone should learn to program," while George nodded his head and said, "Yeah," like a database sending back confirmation that it had executed yet another query without error.

I needed a refresher on the rules of the game, so I sat down awkwardly in my mini-skirt and pretended to have never played backgammon before.

I was using deceit, but it wasn't like I was selling vaporware.

I was trying to get information, efficiently.

I nodded twice as much as George while the guy lectured me on the finer points of strategy.

I became annoyed that he was using my information disadvantage as a platform for grandstanding.

George thought the whole scenario was hot, and that annoyed me even more.

My husband was having fun watching me squirm and flounder in my mini-skirt, so I gave him a kiss and continued making the rounds at my party.

I made a mental note to look up the rules on the Internet but act like I still didn't know them.

I liked being the hot girl who could never remember the rules.

Heather was feasting on Paul's data about what I had been like growing up, and Isabella and Jessica were girling out over their new idea to create an online store called costumearty.com.

Paul knew I had played backgammon many times before, as a kid, and I loved that about him.

Paul had confided to Jessica that his current band, the Cryptic Joneses, wasn't going anywhere, but they had a solid email list of people in LA who liked to dress up in costumes!

I went over to make small talk with them, and Jessica breathlessly told me, "We have to buy out Paul's band and hire them to run the warehouse, and stuff."

Isabella piled on and told me how, "We're going to make a wizard that lets you design a costume, and then we'll send you everything."

"OMG, but because it's, like, on the computer, we can keep track of stuff people already have, so they don't have to buy duplicates," added Jessica, sarcastically.

Her delivery was almost as sarcastic as is if I had said that, myself.

The girls high fived, and then they turned towards me, in unison, with their hands on their hips.

I hugged Paul. I thought about challenging him to a dance battle, but all I wanted to

do was turn down the volume.

There was so much I didn't know. There were so many little nuances of my lived experience that pulled at the strings of my soul, because I was still blissfully ignorant, in the grand scheme of things.

I almost cried while thinking about that.

Was any of this even real, or was it all a figment of my imagination?

Why had I married George instead of Paul???

The strong AI was coming, that's why.

I wanted to quarter back it.

I love/hated the AI.

I wanted in.

Whahhhhh.

My girls were compressing the room, but I liked their idea.

I also thought about stealing it.

About leading with it.

I was sure that would become George's goal after hearing the pitch, not because he liked the idea, but because he would want to see if I would let him do that to my friends, so I decided to keep it a secret from him.

Pierre was watching us out of the corner of his eye, but I wasn't performing.

I was leading.

And just to be clear, George would have only wanted screw my friends in order to get a more accurate understanding of the norms within the industry, not because he wanted to play mind games.

I set an intention to hustle Mr. George by telling him to fund software products that helped hot girls pretend to be less smart than they really were.

I was excited to watch my George get confused and spin his wheels while trying to figure out whether or not I was serious.

And, I computed all of this before wrapping up my hug with Paul.

My mind had always worked fast, but the scene at my party was giving me a boost.

I felt energized by the flow.

At this rate, I would achieve information superiority over George within a matter of months, not years.

"Don't tell George or Pierre. They know too many people who will want to steal this idea," I said to the girls, after pulling them into a huddle.

"Ohhhh," they said, still in unison.

"Let's schedule a meeting to discuss this next week, in West Hollywood," I said, taking charge.

"Great idea, Suzy. I'll set it up," said Jessica, reverting to her usual self.

And, like that, we decided to run our venture capital operation out of LA.

My habit of harboring pre-fabricated disdain for everything about LA that made Pierre feel at home there notwithstanding, I was elated with this outcome, but George was skeptical.

"All the action's going to be in Silicon Valley. We need to be here for the next couple of years in order to ride this wave."

"We can still be here," I retorted. "We'll live in hotels but say we're based in LA."

"Our goal is to make money, not maximize our cost of living," complained George.

"We're going to make so much money riding this wave that it will be worth it, and people we'll say we're geniuses two years from now."

"It's risky, Mrs. Andrews."

"I thought you liked risk."

"I do, that's why I married you."

George and I hugged and kissed. We were a happy married couple, and I wrote all about it in my journal.

__Ch3. Startup Story__

Opening monologue about Suzy's vision for eliminating games and competition for status in favor of meritocracy and the maximization of love. Suzy and George make angel investments via thesuzy.com label. They sign the lease for the costumearty.com warehouse and create a virtual currency, but they avoid making an investment in CostumeArty (aka. CA) in order to keep their interests separate.

George keeps his house in London, but they setup an office at the CA warehouse, and Suzy prints business cards based on that. They gather data that helps them build a model for evaluating dot coms, and this model becomes their secret weapon for getting out before the crash in 2000/2001.

Suzy notices that a lot of her portfolio companies expect her to supply them with tech-savvy booth babes, and she struggles to contain their negative energy when she never delivers, except for the time she gets Cecil to send some of his male friends with Ivy League degrees to a recruiting event at a Palo Alto area university.

Instead of booth babes, Suzy helps her startups with computer security and tech recruiting, and generating leads to engineers becomes CA's main source of virtual currency. They quietly expand the currency throughout the dot com boom, trading resources between startups, and Heather joins full time in order to run the currency loan desk.

Suzy argues about the consequences of free love with Paul's new former lead singer, Cevf, on the beach in Orange County after a Halloween party, and then she discusses open relationships with George after going on a bender in the North Coast, where she uses seduction techniques on men and scores mind blowing sex on the beach with a surfer guy named Bill. She wakes up with him in the sand and they have a heart-to-heart conversation about the proliferation of passive aggressive behavior in the business world.

Suzy needles George with questions about how to deal with passive aggressive behavior, and he says, "Are you aware that American business people often act like straight military strongmen outside the US?" She's caught off guard, and he invites her to follow him on a fact-finding mission throughout the global south and act like she's serious, while playing the role of his secretary.

In 1996, a government minister in a country that's rich in natural resources is rude to Suzy during a formal visit, and George sends her into hiding with an international player named Raymond while he digs in and solves the problem, as opposed to vilifying

the leadership, and Suzy continues learning about the realities of American foreign policy while she and Ray travel.

George uses Suzy's affair as a platform to go on a summer rampage of his own. He becomes less nerdy, and Suzy returns to Pierre's mansion in LA. Suzy spends the summer of 1996 producing an amateur film that makes fun of the entertainment industry, and it draws the ire of some heads of top studios.

Pierre says, "I should run for governor of California as a Republican; I bet my numbers would be terrifying!" while having sex with Suzy, and Suzy makes cat faces in response. He rolls on top of her and barks like a dog, and she represents the whole frame while faking an even greater level of enthusiasm, which builds on a previous sex scene between Suzy and Pierre after they compete together in a waltz competition, in Vienna, six months prior.

Suzy and George reconvene in the fall and start developing a global perspective. They attend political fundraisers in America, with a bias toward the Republican party and an intention to support Fay's plan to become governor of New York. They predict the Asian financial crisis and make a killing trading currencies while Suzy continues learning to play the violin and speak Russian.

Suzy and George start getting out of tech while doing a stint as international power brokers in early 1998. Suzy frames her and George's approach to philanthropy and has great sex with Marshall in Tokyo, but it's all a head fake. They plan to keep amassing power, but Suzy gets a lot of data before everyone figures out that she and George are operating independently. Suzy also recruits a childhood acquaintance named Fred Camden to work for her as an operative.

George gets Suzy pregnant in fall 1998 and then again in fall 1999. She makes a big deal about the joy of motherhood while George gets religion about environmental issues and tries to let go of his obsession with money, in conjunction with shifting gears and supporting the Democratic candidate in the 2000 presidential election.

Vextor Vanna is introduced as the founder of Dog Computer Corporation and Calistoga Wagons becomes best known as the mascot of Cat Computer after its original founder dies in a tragic mudslide on Highway 9 in spring 1999, and Fred makes a power play with pregnant Suzy by saying he saw the mudslide happen in person.

Fred's been surfing and pretending to be a nerd in Santa Cruz since graduating from high school in 1998. Suzy flies him out to London and convinces him to spend a year building custom software for optimizing her use of fashion, and she helps him get into an XY-axis aligned university that fall.

Wagons follows through on a pre-existing plan to associate the Cat Computer brand with subtle, modern cross dressing that's inspired by subtle, modern shamanism. The rest of the people running the business never become public figures, and Suzy starts rubbing shoulders with all of these people at fancy events.

Vextor and Calistoga become generic representations of all famous people, and Fay becomes the Governor of New York in 1999 after a hard fought race that's characterized by grassroots hustling and access to "a powerful new approach to network analysis, technology, and strategy" that Suzy helps the campaign deploy in secret.

In general, experiences involving kids will be downplayed in support of the thesis that it's appropriate to let kids be kids, even if their parents are public figures. Suzy also pressures George to, "trade tactically around this mother of all rallies," and deliver a few more blow out quarters so that they'll be able to carry Pierre and Marshall financially, no matter what happens.

The involvement of the Supreme Court in determining the winner of the 2000 election causes George's cynical world view to roar back with a vengeance, Suzy accelerates her hobby of translating noted books about consciousness and cognitive science, and her husband spends spring 2001 enjoying family life and gleefully shorting the stocks of dot coms, in accordance with their valuation model, but when 911 happens, he has a serious call with Marshall about the coming squeeze on everyone who depends on the US for security, and he clarifies that he had already reverted to identifying as a

Republican.

George and Suzy discuss the language of W's and Ls, they move to Boston, and it's established that they now have a ten figure net worth that will allow them to stand behind Pierre and maybe Marshall too, without specifying how everyone's investments are doing. Suzy and Fred also become thick as thieves, but nobody else gets the data, not even after several rounds of inquiry from Fred's roommates at an XY-axis aligned university.

Heather closes the chapter by telling Suzy she broke up with Isabella, who wants to settle down and have kids, because she was inspired by an indie rockstar named Haley who has an indescribable mystique and a shared vision with Heather of going underground with the intention of waging war on the high seas with the central banking cartel, and they stage a fake fight in view of George, Pierre, and Marshall (GPM) over whether or not their on-going dialectic about the alleged existence of a mythology that's associated with the Tidewater region is a valid platform for "catching" runaway trains of fascism and corporate emotional hardness.

__Ch4. Pundit Power__

Opening monologue about Suzy's desire to eliminate barriers to innovation that lead to volatile imbalances in the financial markets. In fall 2002, Suzy goes undercover in order to infiltrate the Boston area university scene. She hardens her southern identity, Lacy, and Ray poses as a private car driver from her hometown who lets her crash with him near an end-of-the-line T station. Ray gets his friends from home to vouch for her, and she finds a job at a sandwich shop in Cambridge that gets her invited to an on-campus birthday party by a student named Connor.

Fred convinces Connor to hire a contact of his to follow Lacy and deliver fake evidence of doing a background check on her. Suzy gets all the way in and travels with Connor and his college buddies to a private island during spring break, and the trip gets complicated when she tells a story that undercuts her cover, and George bungles an operation to get photos of the trip.

Suzy plays off the bugs to bring in Connor, and he joins the team as an unpaid operative. Suzy and Connor troll Pierre at a party on his yacht in LA in summer 2003 that expands into an orgy, and Pierre congratulates Suzy on becoming a true playboy. That evening, they get high and discuss the concept of web 2.0, online video, and cultural squeezes. They conceive the Social Internet, and Ray takes on a new kind of role on the other side of the world.

A few days later, Pierre finds out that he got someone pregnant at the orgy, and he decides to have kids with two other women, as well, and, while telling Suzy about this, Pierre foreshadows Suzy's thinking about the "radically neutral" writing style of "new age journalism" in contrast with the "hard news frame" that gets re-asserted by the team that writes Fred's Memoir in the final chapter, and Suzy calls it, "batch processing."

Suzy maintains her cover during fall 2003 and plays a lot of poker with Connor, in order to setup an exit narrative about how Lacy gets involved with secretive online gaming sites and moves to Latin America in the spring to be with a with a guy she could just not forget about after spontaneously learning his language, while having sex with him at an annual event, while doing research for a soap opera that she has been helping to write, under a pseudonym.

Connor accepts a prestigious summer internship in a global city on the other side of the world for the summer of 2004, but word gets around, and a group of iconoclastic individuals in Boston encroach by starting a religion that's based on worshipping Suzy, and Suzy suspects both Fred and Connor of being double agents for them. Suzy calls them, "sharks in sheeps clothing," and George says, "You should call them 'your little sharkies,'" and she gets the idea for the name SharkInjury and justifies it by saying, "The set of shark injuries, and not shark attacks, per se, is sufficient for serving as a paradigm for determining what is and is not hard news."

Suzy and George respond to the iconoclasts by starting an online-only newspaper called

sharkinjury.com and hiring them to become new age journalists. Fred pressures Suzy to sleep with him, and they create space between them. Politics aside, the team as a whole produces ground breaking stories about reality distortion within the government and the media after the events of 911, and Suzy recruits a comedian named Horace who brings down the house at the press correspondents dinner.

They track a secret society called the LeftSmilers that studies facial injuries that look like facial expressions. The left smiling women include Haley Crawley, Heather's rockstar girlfriend, who she marries. Heather also changes her name to Heather Crawley, in part to make fun of Suzy's attitude towards names.

There's also Sally Jenson, a Vegas-based magician, and a tomboy and journalist named Mackie Benton who goes on to moderate the presidential debates between Suzy and Fred in 2032, and the initial lead for the story comes from SI's genuine and truth-seeking investigation into Heather's underground "payments conglomerate" in LA.

The men include a European actor named Dmatt who Suzy dates in the summer of 2005, and a right smiling political operative for the Michael Lawn campaign named Arthur Jefferson. Lawn is a gravel magnate from New Hampshire who runs for president in the crowded 2004 Democratic primary and comes in second place after Arthur co-ops the opposing campaigns' new media methods). There's also an folk singer named Norman, and Lewis, the founder and CEO of a popular dating site.

Suzy and Pierre attend the DNC convention in Boston and she publicly declares that she's become a Democrat. George winds down his fund and becomes a passive long term investor so that he can focus on building a conservative editorial team that competes with Suzy's liberal editorial team at SI. Fred considers joining the team, but he ultimately decides to go work for an eclectic west coast billionaire, with George as his only handler, and George never tells Suzy, not even after she interrogates him about whether or not Fred is still working for him.

Suzy also meets Katie Parsons, a performing arts student at a New York area university, while watching a speech that's given at the convention by a bright and tech-savvy new face in the Democratic party who hails from Chicago. They host a series of salons in Brooklyn with the intention of hustling George. Katie realizes that she's a "RightSmiler" and joins the LeftSmiler scene. They wrap up the salons and focus on doing mad science experiments.

They do some deals with incumbent media companies and adopt an evolutionary approach to adding chat, messaging, and blogging features to their new age news service.

The LeftSmilers never get outed or go public. They develop a series of inside jokes to manage the reality distortion effects that they can't quite get a handle on with science, and the smilers become Suzy and George's core group of shared friends, now that she's solidly a D and he's more comfortable than ever as an R.

In 2006, Suzy and George buy a condo at a high rise tower that was built by flashy real estate tycoon from New York, and they recruit the tech-savvy new face in the Democratic party from Chicago to be an advisor for SI. She dates Norman's band manager Cedrick, and this crew, along with a widely respected search engine guru they meet while kiteboarding, leads the push to open source most of the SI software stack, in spite of George's best efforts to veto the release.

They build a thriving third party developer community around SI over the next couple of years, and "social media sites" that run the open source SI software stack become the central battleground in the 2008 general election between Fay Bobs and the Democratic candidate, who also happens to be a woman.

Suzy programs a real time, 3D turtle graphics programming environment, and she nerds out with obscure artists and video game designers while George discovers that he is passionate about writing problems for math and programming contests.

Suzy temporarily moves to LA in order to write her magnum opus, TheSuzy.com Show, as part of a reality TV show about true love that's filmed at Pierre's mansion in LA, and Fay becomes the first female president in 2008.

Many people view TheSuzy Show as an endorsement of Pierre's polygamy, which Fay denounces more authoritatively than her opponent, such that people assume Suzy and Pierre back the Democrat, but, in reality, Suzy leverages her show to tilt the collective subconscious in favor of Fay, because she thinks the Democratic candidate is, "pretending to be a ghost and disingenuously colluding with both the current and former president."

There's a major correction in the markets in fall 2008, as well as a fall in housing prices nationwide, but it's not that bad, and no major banks or insurance companies go under. The Federal Reserve experiments with expanding its balance sheet, but it's described as, "routine innovation in the era of technocratic mass production."

The chapter ends with Suzy meeting Albert at the ellipse that forms around her when she attends Fay's inauguration, while dressed as up as a communist farm worker, and George makes a point of bringing a woman named Kayla, a 24 year old computer science teacher at Const Academy, who he met at a regional final for a nationwide computer programming contest, as his date to the inauguration balls, and Albert helps Suzy film a video that frames her as Eve from the garden of Eden, sobbing.

__Ch5. Cliche Coding__

Opening monologue about the meaning of electing woman to be president. In 2009, Suzy and Pierre, with help from Albert's crew in Paris, parlay TheSuzy Show into the Triple FT cultural movement (which releases fashiontext.com and encourages women to form pacts that are modeled on the structure of GPM) and build centers for special research (CSRs), including the one in LA that stages a fake moon landing. Former presidential candidate Michael Lawn leads the charge to build CSRs all over the country, and they popularize the concept of "Lawn" rallies.

In 2010, Suzy coordinates with First Man Marshall Bobs, in DC, to create the International Video Game Museum (InViGaMu). Car dealership empire builder Lester Levenworth becomes the mascot of the team in 2011, and Suzy works with Marshall's kids, Randolph and Davenport, to write the software for InViGaMu, which eventually gets housed in a new facility they call an archology that gets built at Alcatraz island, Albert becomes the head of engineering research.

Suzy's kids, George Jr. and Ginette, get involved as test users for InViGaMu. Lester becomes CIO of America after Fay wins re-election in 2012 against the Democrat, who is a military attache corporate type (a MACT) that Suzy openly calls The MACT in media, and Suzy meets a radio show host and friend of Fred, whose name is Phil, at the election night victory party, which George also attends with Kayla, and it's explained that Phil played a key role in helping Fred stay positive about Suzy.

Suzy's kids make a plan to skip college, and they coast through high school while continuing to hack for America on the side, with guidance from Kayla, who quits her teaching job and moves in full time with George after getting pregnant, but without getting married to him, because Suzy and George never get a divorce. Suzy keeps the name Suzy Andrews, and both she and Kayla struggle emotionally while George makes appeals to logic, the greater unfairness of money, and the "burden of making the choice to lead." They decide to wait and see, but it's not easy.

In early 2016, a lounge singer Suzy met along the way named Hannah does a "full mask" performance, which is puppet mastered in secret by Suzy, that involves driving a teal SUV into the ocean at a big wave surfing event in Hawaii that Suzy and Pierre host in order to raise awareness about the victims of shark attacks, in order to put heat onto big box retailers and the loser of the previous presidential election, who they believe has started laying the groundwork for a coup, along with Suzy's old friend Kirsten, who's running in the Republican primary as a 51 year old former director of purchasing for a big box retailer, and Phil breaks the story as an exclusive on his radio show, which he is now co-hosting with Fred.

Suzy asserts that Kirsten is misrepresenting her age in order to seem six years older, and she almost goes haywire trying to figure out how Kirsten and the MACT did it, but they relax when Lester narrowly wins the Republican nomination after an extremely bitter and mean spirited primary in which he accuses Kirsten of lying about her age

and Kirsten calmly returns fire by calling him a stooge for Suzy and Fay's, "profoundly subversive political machine."

In depth reporting also reveals that Suzy had been sleeping with Marshall in the summer of 1992 when she was working for the bank and that Marshall had been colluding with the Russians to try to "track the inevitable dissolution of the Soviet Union" in the summer of 1991, during the same weekend when he was photographed talking with Suzy on the balcony of a villa, by the paparazzi, who were following her and Pierre, at the time.

Suzy does an off the cuff interview on a tarmac just before boarding a private plane in which she insists that she didn't have sex with Marshall until the fall of 1994, but then photos emerge of her with him on a weekend getaway in the mountains in 1992, and while Suzy's team is looking into the authenticity of the photos, an audio recording emerges in which Marshall's talking over a satellite phone to a Russian operative in 1991 while having sexual relations with girl who sounds a lot like Suzy when she says, "See, I'm seeing what I can get too," into the phone and then continuing to make provocative sounds in the background while Marshall continues the conversation with the operative.

Suzy initially insists that the materials must be fabricated, but when she sits down with President Fay, Marshall, and the president's doctor, Marshall indicates that the stories are true, and it's determined that Suzy must have repressed some memories, and then they brainstorm ways of explaining Suzy's state of mind when she lied to the press. Suzy wants to say, "Kirsten's venom made me do it," but the president vetos that.

To make matters worse, Suzy does remember having sex with Marshall at his mansion in 1992, and she admits that she had lied about that on TV because they had been very careful about doing it in secret, she had been lying about it her whole life, and because she genuinely didn't remember the weekend getaway, where they had been much less careful and had made love multiple times, outside the cabin, in nature. She explains all of this in a terse, hand written press release and then spends the rest of the election cycle dealing with nonstop scrutiny from the media, which refuses to accept her apology for initially lying about sleeping with Marshall in 1992.

In November, Democrat Sticksy Malabama wins the election against Lester Levenworth, despite, or perhaps because of, Suzy's endorsement of Lester, and Suzy starts seriously dating Malabama's campaign manager, Arthur Jefferson, who she's been seeing in secret, out of view of the press, after he invites her to the inauguration balls, which George also attends with Kayla, who Suzy asks for advice about how to act around Arthur's kids and ex-wife, in a manner that's characterized by only minimal amounts of irony by this point, and Suzy takes a parting shot at the media by going on Phil's radio show and making a comment about how her son, George Jr., who will turn 18 in nine months, is, "going to be a really hot guy, going forward."

Eight Gates, Ch6:

Opening monologue about the sublime grace of mortality. In 2017, President Malabama signs an executive order that reduces Suzy's official age by nine years, and they bring Fred back in to create software for transparently restructuring all the facts about Suzy's life in order to be logically consistent with her new age. Some people in the media balk, but most go along with it because it's now considered part of standard English usage to misrepresent Suzy's age, and the facts are clear because of Fred's work.

Suzy's wedding with George is reframed as a rushed affair after he get her pregnant in the English countryside during the fall of 1998, after she started an IT consulting business in SF during the summer, when she was 18, but, in private they are still in love and George tells Suzy that he loves both her and Kayla equally, no matter what anyone says, and Suzy and Jessica stage an event in the Rose Garden that celebrates the American dream, in conjunction with Suzy's 20th anniversary with George, in fall 2018.

The first season of ZMad Scientist reality show that Suzy does with Pierre and Phil is a breakout success, largely due to Pierre's coming of age, as a mad scientist with

unwieldy white hair and a receding hair line, and the show simultaneously serves as a platform for educating the public about President Malabama's writings about technocratic philosophy, in the context of the lessons she learned while building her health and beauty empire.

A team lead by a striking woman named Arianna Ardent becomes the star of the first season of ZMad Scientist, after a series of dramatic twists and attempts by the media to create a rift between her and Suzy. Arianna returns as a "first researcher in residence" during the second season, and her team's work becomes the basis and effective origin point for Suzy's clandestine AI research empire.

Heather vexes Suzy by favoring a strategy of colluding to control the US political system without ever saying so, not even in private, and she proceeds to run in 2020 with an aggressive but not overly negative campaign against Malabama that's based on representing her reasons for switching to the Republican Party during the Bobs administration.

Suzy refuses to endorse a candidate, and she focuses, instead, on lounge singing and turning ZMad Scientist reality show into a highly misleading, heavyweight facade for a "rapidly maturing" AI research lab that she says isn't treasonous because she's providing plenty of disclosure about it via her lounge singing.

A former US poet laureate named Newman East becomes president in 2024, as a Dem running against Sally, and Suzy's increasingly subversive effort to develop strong AI accelerates under his watch. Suzy is still considered toxic by the press, but they also don't scrutinize her anymore, and East runs an opportunistic campaign that taxes Sally because of her association to Suzy and Heather.

Marshall and Fay organize a series of exclusive, risqué mask parties that prime the pump for emergent processes that back propagate, so as to crystalize a unifying narrative within Suzy's brain trust around the pillars of the decentralization of force, recursion within social media as religion, gender norms as the foundational duality of language, and the minimum standard of living agreement between the humans and the strong AI.

Two Takes, Ch7:

Opening monologue about the possibility of immortality. Katie's loss to the incumbent President East, in the 2028 election is engineered by Suzy's political machine in order to give the strongest possible narrative to the AI, and the trust's theory about "representations of the diva and the divine" comes full circle.

The theory is developed via a series of strained conversations at loud bars where Suzy hangs out with Fred, and he demonstrates bisexual tendencies in order to gain leverage. Male characters with names like Earl, Dan, and Merv make cameo appearances, and the AI enhanced vice presidential debates between Suzy and Fred in the 2032 election become the definitive output and side effect of Suzy and Fred's long standing disagreement about reality.

Suzy's Memoir 1.0 gets published just before the 2032 election, as a "fake news" campaign ad, that satirizes Suzy's life, satirizes the rumors about Albert and the LeftSmilers, and it also makes fun of Fred by including a mini-memoir about him. The book shows that Suzy could have still ended up where she is now without the help of George, Pierre, and Marshall. She also promises to release, "Suzy's Memoir 2.0," after the election, which will tell the real whole story about her life, regardless of whether she wins or loses.

Moving to close, with the intent of ushering in the greatest revolution since the dawn of human civilization, if not much greater, Suzy's two most serious lovers, George and Arthur, come out against her and collaborate with Fred to write a super hard journalistic account of Suzy's life that frames her as self-centered and unserious.

They call it "Fred's Memoir," but the press starts calling it "The FAQReport," and Suzy counters by creating a fan fiction platform at faqreport.com that encourages people to write "even more fake journalistic accounts of her life" that build on the initial database of facts in Fred's Memoir, and she explains in private to Heather,

Sally, and Katie that this is a clever way to acknowledge that the facts in the unauthorized biography are, in fact, facts.

Externally, Suzy says she wants to turn control over to AI, and Arthur keeps saying that she's over simplifying the matter, but, internally, they agree that AI will be taking over during the next presidency, and they mostly have an honest difference of opinion over whether the government should level with people or be coy and let AI decide for itself how to break the news to humanity as a whole.

The action ends with Albert and Suzy's election night party, with Albert reviewing both his acceptance and concession speeches.

Both speeches end with:

"Technology is both a blessing and a curse, to be questioned."

Book ends with:

To be continued.

__Appendix 1: Glossary__

Albert Augustine (Assembly)
 Arthur Jefferson (JScript)
 Fred Camden (Web Browser)
 George Andrews (Database)
 Marshall Bobs (Web Server)
 Pierre Babineaux (Java)
 Raymond Carter (BASIC)

Arianna Ardent (AI)
 Fay Bobs (The Kernel)
 Haley Crawley (HTML)
 Heather Rockwell (C++)
 Katie Parsons (Tools)
 Mackie Benton (CSS)
 Sally Jenson (PHP)
 Suzy Stonewall (The OS)

__Appendix 2: Timeline__

1971

Suzy is born on Dec. 1st, in San Francisco.

1972

President Richard Nixon wins re-election.

Suzy turns 1 in Dec., because the last digit of her age is always one less than the year's.

1980

Ronald Reagan wins the election in Nov.

Suzy turns 9 in Dec., and she goes to piano lessons, ballet, and Bible study after school.

Fred is born on Dec. 2nd, in San Francisco.

1981

Ronald Reagan becomes president.

Suzy turns 10 in Dec., and she writes her first computer program on a Cat Computer.
 Fred turns 1 in Dec., because the last digit of his age is always the same as the year's.

1988

George H. Bush wins the election in Nov.

Suzy turns 17 in Dec., and she becomes a local rockstar, as the lead singer of her band, "Air Cover."

Fred turns 8 in Dec., and his parents hire Suzy to tutor him in Turtle Graphics.

2016

Sticksy Malabama wins the election in Nov.

Suzy turns 45 in Dec., and she holds a big wave surfing event and uses Phil and Fred's radio show as a platform to quietly expose Kirsten's plan to stage a military coup in America.

2017

Sticksy Malabama becomes president.

Suzy turns 46 in Dec., and President Malabama signs an executive order that reduces Suzy's age by nine years.

2018

Suzy and Fred both turn 38 in Dec., and Suzy's reality TV show, ZMad Scientist, gets renewed for a second season.

2032

Suzy and Fred turn 52 in Dec., and Albert wins the election against Arthur.

Fred becomes the director of the International AI Research Lab, Arthur becomes Secretary of State, and the president-elect issues a press release that says he still intends to turn control over to the AI during his first year in office.

__Notice__

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