

Random Posts Collaboration

Welcome to the Google Doc to collaborate on reconstructing the Random Posts narrative. Edit, comment, delete, reorganize and debate! Let the discussions begin!

Hey new friends! Any thoughts on how we are going to start ordering the story once we have all the pieces? Do we want to chat about it in here (using the handy Add Comment feature)? In a facebook group? An email chain?

-Tali Marcus (3/6 9:50pm)

If we use the add-comment feature, can we build comments on one another? Maybe we find a way to have a group discussion here to figure out a story line? We should also keep track of whether we have all of the posts up here; according to Etan's email, we should be expecting 42!

-Jonathan S. (3/13 7:54am PDT)

Overview (not sure about order), this line is helpful "I am the only one with this particular permutation of events: Guy Fieri stakehouse, sphinx of giza, emergentcy room admission". However, in the story I think the narrator appears in Giza after the hospital:

- Narrator goes to Guy Fieri steakhouse in Mission
- Narrator swallows a steak or (Facebook?) post?
- Narrator goes to hospital and sees doctor. When he exists, he discovers he's in Giza? (But may be a memory?)
- Narrator see Pyramids of Giza, it turns to night, and lights illuminate them
- Narrator sees a bright light
- Narrator sees a natural remedy woman who feeds him some mixture that he vomits. The post talks to him, criticizing him

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Uncategorized

[From Gideon:] **Sorry it took so long to get this uploaded!**

“The doctor rolled her eyes. “Ugh, more causal fallacies that have everyone swooning. Fame at the most infinitesimal odds turns everyone into fools trying to replicate an impossible formula. The only thing you should take from that message is the depth of depravity of the post’s tricks. The algorithm’s bias points to the one successful example and disregards the failures as burned out vehicles charred to a crisp trying to escape a nuclear fallout.”

The nuclear reference got me thinking, “Maybe the secret reveals itself through its subatomic particles, letters. All post is nothing but letters. Letters of the alphabet or letters stamped. It doesn’t matter. The problem though, is do those letters have significance by themselves? The letters seem meaningless as indicated by their postage applied in arbitrary quanta. Forever one stamp, if happy regards to a friend from a faraway land. Forever one stamp, if mother reconciling with son after years of estrangement. Forever two stamps, if ex-lover’s belongs sealed in box with tears from the last fight. Forever seven stamps, rock from underneath bunk in the shape of a rock from the first summer at sleepaway camp. Forever thirty stamps if a set of nesting dolls in a set of nesting boxes.”

[From Gabi:]

“I think you might have secretly realised your insignificance in gestating new

ideas, and given you're told from childhood that you're special and you matter as a person, embracing your own impotence is hard to stomach."

"That's hard for me to believe since you would not exist if not for me."

"Ah, now we're getting somewhere." The post smirked, "We're both impotent without the other. I would never exist if not conjured by you. And you believe you would fade from existence if you didn't create posts. I'm a selfish little bastard, so I won't try to convince you otherwise, but I don't particularly understand your fixation with me."

"I am impotent. I'm locked in my body and I only resolve impotence when I express myself. I only am through my actions. You happen to be one of those, waiting to be released."

[from Andrea:]

My pace increased as I approach the bulb, I was so close I could feel the heat on my face. Right as I was about to touch the bulb it flickered. A quick, almost imperceptible change in the luminosity, only really noticeable in a minute change in temperature. I paused, awash in the infinite and unrelenting lumens, none of my features in shadow, unsure of how to interpret the flicker. I stood there expectantly and looked for more blips, but couldn't see any more anomalies.

The lights shone brighter and blotted out the sun.

[from Raquel]

Oof. The post speared me right above my left kidney. I guess *the* post reacted to the possessive.

"Well, post, if you wanted agency, whatcha doing inside of me? You forced me to swallow you. I didn't want to, but I couldn't have you in the open. You popped into being and I suppressed you. Pushed you away. You kept on coming back. When I put my shoes on in the morning to when I showered in the evening. You left me no choice but to repress you. Your tenacity impressed me, I spoke to my friends and they gawked at my distress. Aghast, they couldn't understand how a post could be causing me so much harm. 'It's a small post. Let it out. It'll feel good.' Their suggestions made time expand and compress, leaving me gasping and then gulping for air. I diagnosed myself with depression, but not the sad kind. The kind where my body felt like a couch that has been sat on in one spot but no others too many times. You made me feel like a simple object, the oppressed sole. More a shoe bottom, less a spirit. You the complex subject, verbing on the object with a thesaurus-worth of words, complemented with adverbs. I, just to exist, needed supplemental adjectives. For you an addition to

the verb. For me an abject pejorative. You would think in those dark moments you might appear. But using the agency, I posses and you desire, I did not let you express.”

[from Raquel]

[from Eden]

“Ha, you think you have agency?! Agency begins and ends with an agent of change, you exist merely as a petri dish for my change to gestate and mature. Your body, thoughts, and mind are controlled by the technologies you produce. You exist and create as a sex organ of technology. We inseminate those thoughts. Einstein’s theory of relativity has a flaming hot tryst with the Bhagavad Gita in Robert Oppenheimer’s head to produce the atomic bomb. Heisenberg’s uncertainty and the destruction of the Spanish civil war fuck to produce Picasso’s cubism and Guernica. The people involved were actors not agents. They merely assumed roles in the unfolding of history and were casualties alongside the endless road of causality.

[from Eden]

From Kate:

Either through a random pulse or programmed sentence, it didn’t matter, the lights realized I was transfixed and increase their brightness. I took a step forward, the lights drawing me in, like a fly to an incandescent bulb. The fly mesmerized by the light not because of its brightness but because of a profound desire to break the bulb and return to darkness. When it crashes into the bulb a craziness overtakes the fly and it believes for a second that it can actually destroy the light. Or if enough flies fling themselves at the light, through specious reasoning, they can dim the bulb through splotches of their own martyred flesh.

[From BeQui]

My stomach grumbled, and the post began banging inside. The pain in my side repeated, not in a regular pattern, but modulating with meaning. How to interpret it though? Was it a sinusoidal wave with a frequency of note, pitching information to me? Digital zeros and ones, ascii letters and numerals painted with bouts of pain and reprieve? Or maybe I over complicated this, and if I listened closely I would hear the archaic dots and dashes of morse code conveying the smallest packets able to wrap the salient information the post wanted me to hear. Whatever it was, or became, the meaning began to arrive bit by bit.

[From Aly Ketover]

The global perspective faded almost instantly. The local was my only accessible world. My self-serving relief and guilt settled in simultaneously. I was cured the instant the post webbed its way across the world, but others now susceptible to the dangerous post that gestated inside me. Now the only cure I can fathom is to dust off the Kabbalists, try to gather my former bits and collectively repair this broken vessel. Even if this fails at least there's a poetry to try and reconstitute the post, a individual act, with the collaborative work of a community.

I didn't notice it immediately, but even my focus on trying to understand the communal disease had quickly contracted to only contain myself. How can "I" help? What does this mean about "my" involvement? Is there even a way to remove the self from the community? Or how when trying to work communally can the self both be present and invisible without elevating oneself to a demagogue or reducing oneself to a blind drone. Maybe the self always has to be present, and community is about other selves. I can't distance the my from self, but that self doesn't have to be mine.

[End Aly]

Guy Fieri Steakhouse

[/* From Aryeh Z begin */]

I'm not really into posting on social media, but when I heard that the new Guy Fieri steakhouse opened in the trendiest part of the Mission, I knew I had to go. How could I not photograph my food and write a snarky comment about the only thing that's well done in this restaurant is my steak? With my impressive 301 Instagram followers this would be my big break. I would be one mediocre entrecôte steak away from morphing into Pete Wells.

I reserved a table in the morning and later that night arrived at the restaurant. As I was being seated I couldn't help but share the thoughts swirling around in my head with the host. There's no room for humility in personal brand. I told him my review would make ample use of superlatives. He shrugged. Why else would they exist in the English language if not to buoy my subscriber count? He clicked.

[/* end Aryeh Z. */]

[From Dara S]

I walked briskly out of the restaurant, the sphinx's myriad posts poked and prodded my insides. Each step, a punch in the gut that revealed to me a new part of my gastrointestinal structure. Until then a liver was a delicious dish, an appendix was a frequently unread postscript in a book and a diaphragm was a contraceptive. Now these words receded from my vocabulary and became painful parts of my anatomy.

So many people have existential crises at the Guy Fieri restaurant there was an emergency room that popped up next door. All the roads leading to the restaurant formed a neural network that pass through the temple of Guy Fieri's food to output a binary choice of transcendence or food poisoning, the results definitive and mutually exclusive. I guess I was an unfortunate or fortunate soul who got food poisoning. It depended on my perspective. The (mis)fortune transmuted the mutually exclusive binary into a spectrum of choice of how to react.

Hospital

[From Ben:]

I paused, doubled over in a flurry of pain, and murmured, “That’s it? No second look? I would think I’d have to at least describe my symptoms?”

The holes in the screen muffled his voice, but an irate, “no admission necessary for admission. What do you think we are, a church?!” was curtly intoned.

“Floor 5 ward 8. Elevator on the left, stairs on the right.”

[From Sam R]

I headed left, but definitely walked around some stares from people stuck in emergency room purgatory on the way to the elevator. Their eyes imploring, who was I to magically jump the priority queue of the hospital? Wasn’t everyone supposed to be baptised in the moulded \$10 ikea knockoff chairs? Why was there even a queue if it could be circumnavigated? I was puzzled since I thought the decision was not in the data structure but the algorithm. I shot back silently with a quick glance, maybe you’re stuck in limbo since you’re asking the wrong questions?

[from Elissa]

The doctor asked incredulously at my predicament. “How can you accidentally swallow a streak?”

“More killing vampires than dead cows. Though, from googling, I think this sort of thing’s rare.”

“Like a post?”

I nodded. That’s a first rate word. I swallowed a post.

“Ok. Any past medical history with posts?”

[from Elissa]

“It’s strange in your case that you swallowed the post. I’ve never seen this before, I thought it was only possible for the post to be erected internally. There, it’s the result of a hormonal imbalance between testosterone and imipolex g. The only definitive thing I can tell you right now is to be careful about feeding the post.”

“Thanks doc. I know I should be careful eating. The post is in my stomach. Every step I take reminds me that I might rupture a gaping hole and spill my stomach acid throughout my entire body dissolving me from the inside out. Wait, maybe that’s not the worst thing to happen. At least I’ll be out of my misery. My post will probably live on, but shrug.”

[from Ron S]

During the conversation the post grew inside me. It’s weight stuck me to the examination table. I couldn’t unglue myself. The sweat stain under my ass creeping out across the wax paper in a series of concentric circles.

The doctor exclaimed, “I should have realized this sooner, but now it’s abundantly clear. This isn’t a regular post, but you must be infected with a postal load. The virus of an internet post transmuted into the real world. The incessant refreshing, calculating how many likes in the first hour to keep it up, and monitoring its vitals for success. The viral genes finally broadcast through information as postal memes. We need to cut it at the root and not leave anything to rot.”

[from Seffi]

A look of purpose washed over the doctor’s face. She reached for an industrial drill. Both the post and I cringed.

Forcing myself not to worry, I finished my thought. Outloud, but more to myself than anyone around me.

“Once I’m zooming into the micro, why not also zoom to the macro? At the moment of conception and reception the information exists totally in one place, but during infection the virus comes in packets. Traces that can be reconstituted

or dropped. With subtle enough mutations, ghosts can slip in. Ideas appearing and disappearing out of the ether with no clear creator. The sender and receiver desperately trying to correct for mistakes, the great irony given that their own creation was a series of fortuitous mutations birthed by the ether.”

[from Seffi]

[From Katherine]

I don’t know if a worried look crossed my face, but before I could say anything the doctor chimed in, “Calling the post an action is a vast overstatement. You’re getting suckered into its thinking. It can only GET and POST to you, the host. It fades into the noise almost immediately after it’s created. The only reason it sticks around for so long is that you don’t let it out. See, people believe in the fallacy that by releasing it they’ll make an impact. Really it has more of an impact inside of you. It forces you to grapple with your demons. When you let it out there’s a moment of relief. It comes to be. Then it disappears and you think you’ve said it all, but it comes back the next day. If it had an impact why do you think it would keep on coming?”

[From Jake:]

Loudly over the noise, the doctor elucidated, “Ideally, the post tries to become nothing more than what it is: its own role. It follows orders. It’s nothing more than an insignificant cog. It wakes up in the morning, goes to the bodega and gets a cup of burnt coffee in a “We Are Happy To Serve You” paper cup. The burntness disgusts, but the kitchy Greek font calms. The cup sits on its desk as its manager steps into the cubicle later that morning, describes a project reducible to moving sand across a road with a pair of tweezers, and explains the sand’s crucial role in their success. At least, as the manager leaves to assign the same job to another post, the kitchy letters smile up at everyone in the cubicle. The post cannot have grandiose aims or presuppositions of greatness.

“The post exists as one of thousands and millions of posts. Both everything is a post and nothing is a post. Posts only become relevant in aggregate. Trends and strains of posts arise as posts are constantly recycled and composted. One fades from existence just as another constitutes its features as a frankensteinian blend of past posts.”

[From Arielle:]

After the moment of contemplation I snapped out of my thoughts, thanked the doctor and exited the examination room. I retraced my steps through the hospital as the traces were all that was left of my previous journey. At each junction I tried to internalize the nostalgia so it wouldn't slip away: the antique elevator, the plastic chairs, the confessional attendant. With each passing step it became harder for me to determine what was memory and what was reality. I was incapable of constructing new memories and bound to a quickly disappearing past. The objects fading because in this post-post world their symbols had become unmoored from their representations.

The ground changed from linoleum tiling to shifting sand as I stepped outside the hospital. My stay in the emergency room resolving to a different output than San Francisco. After adjusting to the new brightness, I saw the monumental pyramids of Giza in the distance with tiny tourist milling around their base. I was standing in a large rectangular excavation site with scaffolding suspended alone in the air as if there used to be a structure present. To try and understand what happened I looked around the site to find signs. I discovered the hieroglyphs ❌🐙❌ scrawled on all the scaffolds with the message hastily translated into English: "Sphinx of Giza Missing."

[:from Arielle]

[From Cathy:]

I had been fixated staring and clutching at my post that I failed to notice the unique character of the doctor's examination room. Along one wall sat a massive oak paneled cabinet, with nearly a hundred drawers. Each with a gold knob in the shape of an ionic column and each drawer's contents visible through a glass panel front. Most seemed to contain vials but I could have sworn I saw a swarm of ladybugs in one. Orthogonal to the delicate cabinet hung a series of power tools, circular saws, industrial drills, lathes and machinery. I was sitting on what I thought was a standard hospital issue examination table but was actually a table saw with its motionless blade peaking up from beneath the wax protective paper.

[:from Cathy]

Giza

[From Ceasar, <https://posts.etanzapinsky.com/2ff1ec7b351fe94068fa33f60fc1982f>]

I made my way across the expanse and start milling around with the people. The drag to join and stay apart pulled at me equally strongly. On the one side I needed to jump into the trenches to feel the shells exploding and the whiz of the bullets so that my commentary had relevance. Standing on the sideline could only get me so far. My quiet thoughts would be worthless if there was no one to share them with. On the other side maybe I needed more time alone before I could join the fray to internalize my opinions since it's near impossible to gain a universal perspective when I would spend most of my effort dodging bullets.

I navigated through the camera snaps and cornered a tourist who was about to click on the camera app on her phone.

I preached, "Do you not see your actions are involuntary with your desires manipulated externally? You only realized you needed to see the pyramids this way when told by the lights."
[End Ceasar]

[from Tali]

She nodded along, her finger oscillating with the nods, poised a micrometer above the capacitive screen. One a-little-too-aggressive headshake away from her finger launching the app and snapping her away from my point of view. When I finished she blinked her eyes as if waking from a trance and placed her phone back in her pocket.

"The bright lights washed over me." She said stiltedly and then with more conviction, "I was happier with my photos of the pyramids from the day. I don't even know why I wanted this new photograph. I guess simply because it was here."

[from Tali]

[from Talia:]

The sun disappeared beyond the horizon and a wall of darkness started enveloping the desert landscape, the rays of darkness progressing as the inverse to the light of the rising sun. A totalizing darkness completely enveloped the desert and even I couldn't see the magnificent edifices anymore. It didn't matter if the structures were present in the world, they were not in mine so they didn't matter.

Suddenly, row after row of bright lights blinked on as if some actor explicitly wanted to break my ruminations. The artificial illumination from the base of pyramid creating an even more austere and imposing structure, highlighting new and novel facets in the buildings facade. I wasn't the only one to notice this new perspective, the tourists quickly took out their phones and the glint of flashing cameras pierced the spaced between us. The posts materialized in their hands and elevated their phones to new heights.

[:from Talia]

[From Molly:]

The geotagged photographs seemed fixated on the structure the light illuminated but I couldn't stop looking at the lights themselves. The pyramids a previous generation's wonder, the lights ours. I was entranced by their gleam and how for so many people they managed to fade into the background. The alternating current feeding the bulbs, sinusoidally arguing electricity is nothing more than a platform. It's up to the consumer to control it. The wave willfully ignoring the scope of possibilities is only as broad as the medium allows. The options might fall in a spectrum, but ideas outside of the valid range cannot be represented.

[From Jonathan S.]

We turned to those around us and tried to shed our enlightenment with them. Our reach was limited by those in our immediate surroundings and those willing to listen. For every one person we managed to convince with our subtle nuanced approach, many more got lost in the brilliance of the dazzling lights.

One child we'd convinced turn to her father, "the fake sheen the lights gives to the pyramid is much easier to explain than the true grit of reality." He was too busy composing a photograph to listen.

[end Jonathan S.]

[From HILARY]

As the night wore on, both of our sides' positions become calcified, and it became harder to explain the nuance and empathize with the others. Families divided. Friends unfriended.

We got lost in our discussions and could not see beyond the horizon of the darkness, but like every day eventually the sun began to rise. As expected in the early dawn hours, the artificial lights stayed on, but as the day progressed the lights remained on. It was as if the sun wasn't bright enough to illuminate the pyramids to the light-owner's liking. The hidden maestro's actions telling us that it didn't believe the sun illuminated the pyramids properly. It saw the power of controlling the light's focus and couldn't relinquish it back to nature.

[End HILARY]

Natural Remedy

[From Jonathan:]

I never thought about it that way, and I hesitantly asked, “It’s a form of masturbation?”

Exactly. The post is autoerotic. Being useless in the world, it stimulates your exact erogenous zones and you come back day after day. You and it both are junkies searching for the next hit.”

The doctor rose from her chair, walked to the cabinet and calculatingly opened up a series of drawers. She extracted an anise tincture, a dried shrub, and a bag of plastic beads. The light brightened almost imperceptibly, and the pieces began to self-assemble as if without my knowing how or why.

[/from Jonathan]

[:from Alex]

She grabbed a mortar and pestle and combined the ingredients. Amidst the mixing she spoke, each sentence punctuated with a stir of the concoction. “We can talk about the theory all day, but I think it’s self-evident that you’re trying to actually remedy yourself and would like to extract the dowel. I caution against it becoming another needless public post since the most you can wish for is benevolent algorithms to choose your post and send it to willing readers because you’ve previously entertained your friends. Algorithm is just another word for divine salvation. You pray to the algorithm asking for salvation, never sure if your prayers worked or it was a random act. It might work this one time and then you’ll calcify it into a ritual. I’ve seen many patients who through folk remedies found relief, but now are stuck in ineffective psychosomatic loops for effects with lost causes. They fall asleep on their right side, meticulously clean the sink after each spit of toothpaste, play hopscotch every time they leave their apartment, and climb the stair two at a time.”

[from alex]

[meir]

She poured the goopy mixture in a gold, tit shaped, coupe glass and garnished it with a sprig of her own spit. She handed me the cup and motioned for me to drink.

“Hmm. I thought my situation was unique, I am the only one with this particular permutation of events: Guy Fieri steakhouse, sphinx of giza, emergency room admission. I thought my salvation would arrive without a simple prescription, a codified form of deus ex machina.”

I took a sip and my face contorted in disgust. The plastic mixed with the anise in the tincture and curdled as it touched my tongue. The liquid entering my mouth transmuted into a solid and it was a herculean effort to swallow any of it. The concoction a whole new state of matter. If I tried to drink it became a solid and if I tried to eat it became a liquid.

[From Ethan:]

“I vomited. The cocktail projected out of me in a tidal wave of bile and phlegm. No posts to be found except a giant emoji  synthesized from the plastic beads. The post gesturing at our ineffective attempt at a cure with the middle finger.

The post taunted, “what were you expecting, the sphinx? You secretly know I’ll always be significant. Who cases vomit if not the agent in your stomach? In every organization, one post is the president. If I’m stifled from the beginning it’s impossible for a quick, statement to change your fortune. Kanye 2020 only exists as a post. Do you not want to be the next Kardashians?”

[From: Talia]

I stopped drinkeating and continued, “By over exaggerating the infinite differences between my experience and others, I lose the ability to apply other people’s lessons. Perhaps my fixation on the pre blinds me to the post. The pre-post world is only useful insofar as it created the present which allows for the post. The after has all the meaning when it still contains the possibility to

exists as a post-whatever-happens. Once the post manifests as a status and resolves, it only maintains it's status as post-a-particular-event in the linear retelling of the story structure. It can never reclaim its plurality of existence and is a nonexistent shadow.”

The doctor recognized my struggle and swiftly tilted the bottom of the glass so that I couldn't think about the ensuing deluge of the artisanal cement-like drink. A gag and a burp later the coupe was empty and I was able to speak.

[From:Jed]

“I've confined myself to the futile postal world and am trying to outpost everyone. Falsely believing that I can find something novel and exist alone at the frontier. If anyone approaches, scream and yell and beat them back to civilization. If somehow I'd manage this, quickly as the tide of people rises, the outpost transmutes to the tradepost, a meeting ground at the center of civilization, subsumed by the culture to which it ran counter. A tent post supporting the new age, even though it tried so hard to stay different. It seems inevitable that the out becomes the trade and then the tent. A perpetual march indicating the simultaneous success and failure of the movement.”

A loud rumble grumbled from my stomach. The sound on a frequency beyond comprehension, perhaps harmonic to the right instrumentation but nothing but dissonance to my human ears.