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If things are this bad three episodes in, I hate to think of what this thing is going to look like by the time it's online. Perhaps ten episodes deep, the readerless word salad. Welcome back to Data Squid, the readerless ezine.

The dull, apathetic weight of depression. The misery which barely registers owing to a culmination of mental numbness. The decision to spend the entire day in bed, watching cartoons, rather than face your reality. The fact you'll be dead soon and when all is said and done you'll have nothing to show for it.

Remember in the last episode, inspired by pilleater, I wrote a poem for that pornstar. This is gonna be worse.

Crippling loneliness and failure.

That's the mood of this episode.

•This Week•

I am still offline, it is therefore easier for me to invent news rather than comment on real world affairs which I know next to nothing about right now.

•A thirty year old Oregon man loses power to his battle station •

Richard Hogg, a former employee at a potato chip factory recently lost his electricity supply, shutting down his three monitor 'battle station' set up. Whilst this would, under any other circumstances, be entirely unremarkable, Hogg also happened to be home alone. Hogg agreed to an interview with Data Squid.

DS: Tell us about your background, how did you get to where you are right now?

RH: As you know I worked for a couple of weeks at the potato chip place. I like chilli, and they kept complaining I was using too much chilli. I told them it tastes better my way, but they didn't agree. They said one pinch of chilli, I said four.

My parents were not very supportive and threatened to make me move out, despite the fact it wasn't my fault I lost my job.

DS: Do you see yourself as a NEET?

RH: Not really, NEET sounds negative. I don't toil away doing work that I hate. I've prioritised my own wellbeing and happiness. I'm not isolated, I'm constantly connected to people through the Internet. Unlike the average wage slave, I can dedicate my time exclusively to things I am passionate about. I consider people like myself to be part of a kind of social aristocracy. We're too smart for the daily grind. If we worked we would be squandering our true talents.

DS: So what was happening moments before the power cut? Can you set the scene for us?

RH: Ok, the monitor on the left was running an episode of the three part, uncensored, yuri schoolgirl anime 'shoujo sect'. The one in the middle was busily showing progress being made on the encryption of a full 1tb external hard drive. The monitor on the right was torrenting a pack of fan made Strawberry Panic manga and processing a pizza order.

DS: Was it evening, or had you not long woke up?

RH: I'd been awake for around thirty minutes. I usually make my first pizza order at around 11.30am, and it arrives by lunch. I stretch my legs and collect it from downstairs, use the toilet and return to my station. I do not like this routine being thrown off.

DS: what went through your mind when you lost power to to your station?

RH: It's not normally a big deal, Mom would just turn it straight back on. But I was alone at the time and my phone battery was low. I'd been looking at some Sono Hanabira (a kiss for the petals) fan art the night before and forgot to put it back on charge. I don't normally go downstairs before 1pm.

I called mom at 10% battery and explained the situation. She told me which switch to use to turn it back on but explained I wanted her to do it for me. She told me she couldn't because she was at work but then I told her I didn't feel well so she said she'd come home to turn the electricity back on. Crisis averted.

My biggest worry was that my Mom would be charged twice for the pizza order because of the power loss, and that stopping my hard drive encryption half way through would cause me to lose data. As it turns out the external HDD was intact, and my 5gb of irreplaceable, original Akari Akaza fan art made it through unscathed. It has since been backed up online.

DS: Do you have any yuri recommendations for our readers?

RH: My recommendation? Create content. I think quality non canonical content wards off stagnation in the scene. We support the animators and artists, that's a given. But we should support each other. I'm currently reading an independently written light novel, actually. It draws heavy influence from the implied eroticism of early yuri like Maria Sama Ga Miteru.

The yuri genre is expansive and offers an array of themes anybody can tap into. Just think, when you bring two girls together and have them share an umbrella or hold hands, you're keeping the magic of yuri alive. I think if it's carefully thought out, some 'shipping' between different series is acceptable.

If you can't illustrate you can always write content. The important thing is ensuring the yuri scene is thriving and the big content creators have an incentive to keep producing.

•Stoned teenagers cross paths with pagan group celebrating Samhain•

To the three stoned teens, heading out into the woods on Halloween night, hearing the chanting of runes and the seeing flicker of a fire was, in their words;

'Like totally out there, we'd just watched the Blair Witch before we headed out, so this was pretty freaky.'

The teens were spotted, or more importantly smelt out by one of the pagans. The scent of cannabis caught his attention. The man who requested we use only his online handle heathenkrieg commented;

'I'm the only smoker in the group. But I figured if I offered those kids some mead they might smoke me up. They seemed a little weary at first, but we were soon chilling around the fire eating burgers and talking about McKenna's stoned ape theory.'

DS also spoke with nineteen year old stoner 'Brad' about the chance meeting.

'They taught us about the Celtic history of Halloween and told us the importance of ancestry. We actually joined in the chanting, and carved a rune into a tree. They said we could go to the gym with them anytime, I've never been to the gym so that could be cool.'

The Mjolnir Alliance combine pagan ritual and combat sports, they state on instagram;

'MA is not a group for deadbeats or dropouts. Our brother Heathenkrieg uses psychedelics to a constructive and ceremonial end, however he is mostly alone in this practice. Do not think that just getting high and listening to Tool is enough to initiate you into our ranks. Our order of blood and steel is uncompromising in this matter.'

•Poetry Corner•

•愛のMasterpiece•

Yuki the blonde haired yandere schoolgirl,
With feigned indifference and a cool shrug,
Accepted senpai's offering of cake.
But failed to contain an elated kyaaa,
Upon her senpai's confession of love.

•Memetics•

"I just can't control it, I'm a coomer."

The Coomer. His lich like gaze, vacant, lost in introverted fantasy. The pink folds of skin under his bloodshot eyes, his physical appearance altered by years of seemingly non stop pornography consumption. Brain rewired by his obsessive pursuit of voyeuristic pleasure, detached and unimpressed by the offers of everyday life.

Indeed, what is a sunny walk in the park when you can watch a nineteen year old goth girl in California being urinated on and fisted by a bunch of fat dudes in an airbnb apartment. Curtains drawn, dopamine depleting until all that remains a numb, enveloping disconnect. The Coomer flinches irritably as his phone rings, almost anxious about this interruption.

He picks it up, reluctant to answer it, as though something shameful will be evident in his voice.

A sort of Gollum, hunched over his keyboard, bitterly resentful that he has to waste any of his time on the outside world at all. He looks at the time, ten more minutes, two more clips, then he'll go for a piss.

The Coomer meme evokes all of these images and worse. It is one of the defining memes of a generation raised on unlimited broadband speed access to pornography. This bald mutoid gazes at us warningly, and reminds us of just how deep the depths of his addiction go.

We see him looking at the camera in that one, now iconic photo, under the BLACKED banner. He looks like he has been caught in the act, glancing up from his phone. Probably checking the filming history of one of the girls he was queuing up to meet. A clammy handshake, Dorito breath and trembling, nervous praise.

'You...you looked really good in your latest scene. I bought it off your onlyfans just last night, heheh.'

He has a photo taken with her, the classic hover hand. He cannot bring himself to touch her. The prospect of her recoiling in disgust is just too painful. Her perfume and flowery voice are triggering him, he'll watch her later and remember those little details as he begins a binge with one of her videos.

He has succumbed entirely to his addiction. Transformed beyond any will to repair. His eyes are sunken and beady, making contact with them has a medusa type effect, you feel the Coomers darkness upon meeting his dreadful gaze.

Always looking like he has just been caught out, guilty and ashamed, eagerly awaiting his slink back into the shadows of his comfy addiction. Away from the prying light of day. Dealing with people is time spent not fogging his brain, safe behind black out curtains, alone and uninterrupted.

People are stress, anxiety, complication. People are time spent not cooming. He deals with them when he has to, but takes little pleasure in doing so. He leaves social gatherings earlier to get a little extra time on his computer. He binges until 4am and then wakes up four hours later, continuing where he left off. Perhaps sharpening his senses a little with a coffee.

He has to do things in three hours, he'll make every second count until he must finally go outside. Bitterly annoyed that he needs to stop at all.

All of this isolation and negativity is contained within the Coomers image. A kind of grim avatar, a magick sigil which reminds the viewer of the importance of staying true to ones will, of enjoying sensory things but not becoming weak before them.

The Coomer is unchanging. He has entered an irreversible state and attained archetype status. He now represents something greater, something far worse than himself. His image permanently burnt into the memories of those who see him, forever the defining and physical embodiment of internet pornography addiction.

•Spooky Stuff.

•The Art of the Cursed Image•

The concept of the cursed image is simultaneously new and old. We know of haunted paintings, but they were 'cursed' owing to their negative impact on the world around them. Cursed images are cursed owing to the nature of their imagery alone.

They cannot be rigidly defined, one simply knows when they see one. For example, a group of middle aged men queuing in a stark room, for a slice of melon. Visible in the corner is a pile of hay. There is something fundamentally off about this image. One looks at it and thinks, 'this image is cursed'.

The image described exists. Sometimes context clears things up and potentially removes the images cursed status. In the case of the melon men, this is not the case. One 4chan user suggested these men were attending a gathering of horse lovers, creeps who feel some kind of sexual or romantic bond with these animals. In the case, context left the image doubly cursed.

If one were curating cursed images they may have a criteria but the nature of the imagery they select would be without limitation. For instance, the image either transcends explanation or is in no way rehearsed, posed or deliberate.

Acting strips an image entirely of authentic, cursed status. An image becomes cursed when a moment is captured and naturally takes on the ability to instil unease in those who view it in the future.

•Stories•

•Tapeworm Part 2•

The China Hope cargo vessel was open to recruiting former prisoners. Men who had once dealt drugs, raped, murdered or fallen foul of the communist state could find work and company on that metal behemoth. The work was heavy and hours long, but upon considering their prison life, the men of China Hope rarely felt the need to complain.

Vince Wong and Robert Hung ran a crooked gambling operation prior to becoming chefs on board. Their anglicised names adopted for interactions with their international clientele. They were tough, unethical men who approached making money as a matter which transcended notions of good and bad. There was only make money or go hungry. They were wholeheartedly unrepentant men, who considered their time on China Hope to be a mere stop gap, a stepping stone to resuming their former criminal enterprise.

When first approached by Volodymyr the men could not believe their luck. The short, bald, hard faced Russian had noticed the men after winning a few thousand in a cock fighting tournament, flashing money and impressing these unusual looking chefs. They'd all been in the same sketchy basement bar, at just the time he had needed such contacts. The way they carried themselves, an aura they possessed, Volodymyr recognised them as fellow travellers, members of a criminal fraternity.

It was easy work. Take the parcel, arrive in Japan, hand it over to Mister Yamashita at a smokey izakaya near the dockyard. Don't open it, don't show anybody, don't ask questions. Hand it over to Yamashita San, a man who despite his Japanese name, was entirely Korean. He owned a handful of successful Pachinko parlours but was discreet about his wealth. Those parlours served as a source of income which could be used to bribe politicians, not to mention their money laundering potential.

Arnold Chance, a proud Father who wouldn't harm a fly, had unwittingly entered this shadowy underworld. Sitting outside a Starbucks one morning, his son engaged in some murder mystery manga. Dad was sipping an iced matcha latte, when a message arrived on the throwaway phone he had been ordered to purchase upon completing his order.

The pick up spot. This was it.

'Son, looks like your tapeworm has arrived.' Dad finished his latte and smiled and Piers jumped up out of his seat ready to go. A beautiful day, a proud Father and that good kid barely able to contain his excitement.

The journey took an hour, one train connection and a short walk through an alleyway behind some Korean massage parlours. The man was supposed to be waiting outside the Lucky Joy hostess bar.

There he was, business suit and briefcase. He looked across at the father and son duo, a grim, unsmiling visage. Arnold approached with that beaming smile, Son close behind.

'Hey buddy! You must be an associate of Volody-'

Before he could finish his sentence and reach out for a handshake armed policed charged out of the back doors of the surrounding brothels and bars, his suited contact producing a police badge. They screamed orders in Japanese and broken English.

'D-dad! What's happening! Where's my tapeworm! Hey dad! Why do they have guns!?' Poor little Piers eyes began to water as his Dad was ordered to the ground, handcuffed and told to lay still at gunpoint. Piers sobbed as two Japanese policemen began to guide him away from his Father. The two escorted into separate vehicles.

Arnold pleaded with his captors that he couldn't let his Son down, that they'd made a terrible mistake.

'I'm a good guy! A family man! This is our perfect holiday and I cannot afford for it to be ruined like this!'

His protests fell on deaf ears, and it was not until he reached the station, completed a strip search and was seated in an interrogation room that a translator became available. At this point he was at the end of his tether and ready to have strong words with these entirely misled policemen who still seemed to believe they had a criminal in their hands.

'Now look buddy, I've been polite up until now. And I have a great respect for law enforcement, but you are making a big mistake.'

The suited westerner sat opposite nodded calmly and merely pushed a photograph across the table. It featured a bearded Asian man dressed in robes, sat in a state of meditation.

'Now what is this? Do you think I know this man?'

The Westerner nodded, yes he did. And then he began.

'We've been following you bastards for over a year now. The Happy Sun Foundation have some pretty weird connections, but you're something else. I'd pass you by on the street and think, 'there goes a good guy,' but here you are, smuggling weapons for a North Korean death cult.'

'Look, there has been a very serious mistake. My wife and son will be worried. Now, I'm not a man to raise my voice, but you need to tell me what's happening!'

'The biowar forum was fitted with a little JavaScript exploit a year ago. We had our suspicions you bastards were planning something, we just couldn't make the Japanese connection. We had to sit by and watch, waiting. Your delivery man was compromised from the beginning. He didn't hesitate to hand you over. No honour. Terrorist bastards. Several kidnappings, suspicious documents, bribery. We were just waiting for your first venture into terrorism.'

'Terrorist! I hate terrorism as much as the next good, honest working man. And I don't know anything about these Happy Sun characters.'

'Well enlighten me. Why were you on the way to collect 200,000 parasite eggs from a Happy Sun affiliate?'

Arnold scratched his head. He recalled some of Volodomys strange, cryptic enquiries. He asked if Arnold enjoyed watching the sun rise. Why, sure, Arnold thought. He responded that the Sun was just dandy. Perhaps they thought Arnold was involved in this whole peculiar Happy Sun affair.

'Gee whiz, 200,000 tapeworms. I only wanted one little tapeworm. No wonder it cost me so much. But I guessed it was worth it if it made my boy happy.'

The detective sipped coffee from a paper cup and shook his head in disbelief.

'If you don't start cooperating things are going to get very bad, very fast. I know you radical weirdos talk about the art of detachment and emotional indifference, I've read your sick propaganda. Let me tell you something, it's not going to fly in this room. I will break you, Arnold Chance. You will pay for those abducted kids and you will hang along with your leader. I'm gonna leave you to stew on that, see if you start making sense after an hour or two of contemplation.'

Arnold was sweating, disoriented and downright afraid. He'd been told his rented holiday apartment had been ransacked, they were searching everything he had. Rummaging through his wife's intimates, likely knocking things over in their frenzied search. He had to think of something.

Now, as we know Arnold was a man who was used to racking his brain and making things just right. He did so every year to organise the perfect family holiday. This was no exception. He had to keep a clear head and fix this, for the sake of his poor Wife and little Piers. But what could he tell the police? This detective was out for his blood.

So he furrowed his brow and thought and thought. Thinking back to that day at the parasite museum. Little Piers awestruck gaze. The couple...there was the couple. He had witnesses. And a conversation that took place upon leaving. A member of a staff, a greying, kindly looking man had said goodbye at the door.

Arnold commented;

'Great museum you've got here. My boy loved the tapeworm, he said he wants one just like it.'

The museum man looked puzzled, whilst trying to maintain a polite smile. Surely he'd be able to clear things up. He would remember.

The detective returned and informed Arnold his Happy Sun buddies were blocking roads in Roppongi and making a nuisance of themselves outside the police station. They were seated in busy roads, meditating.

The PseudoBuddhist cult was originally set up as a North Korean data harvesting scheme. The leader ended up letting his messiah role go to his head and began to believe in the cults propaganda. From there he began to order kidnappings and small scale terrorist attacks from an undisclosed location, suspected to be in the Russian countryside.

His followers believed the end of the current age was near and would be hastened by eccentric, sometimes destructive activity. Activity like infecting masses of civilians with tapeworm.

Arnold scratched his hair as the detective returned. This time the detective introduced himself by name.

'I'm John Grayson. I don't trust you. We inhabit different worlds. But the fact is I have the upper hand. And you'd stand to gain by cooperating. So let's just be honest with one another.'

Arnold began;

'Ever been to the Meguro parasite museum, Detective Grayson?'

The detective lit a cigarette and took a drag.

'No, but I'm listening.'

Arnold now proceeding to make his case.

'You see, my boy, he's a good kid. But he's not like other kids. And well, one day we ended up visiting the Meguro parasitological museum. My boy was just so impressed with a big tapeworm they had there he wanted one for himself.'

'You're saying your kid wanted this hideous parasite the same way another kid might want a puppy, a truck or a video game?'

'Yes. And there's a man at the museum who will tell you just how it happened. Now, I couldn't bring myself to turn my boy down, so I ended up ordering him one online. I told them I was in Japan and I guess they thought I was with those Happy Sun oddballs. Rest assured Detective, I am not.'

The detective nodded, his expression softened somewhat.

'I've called up my colleagues, and well, your son is a good kid. That much checks out. They say he's just the best. Excellent manners, probably ready to take his n5 Japanese language proficiency test after just four weeks of learning. He's something else. But the tapeworm deal, I'm not sure about that.'

Then the detective leaned in.

'We'll follow up your witness in the museum and see if we can't fix this mess. It'd be awfully embarrassing if after all of this, you were not in fact planning to engage in chemical warfare in order to usher in a golden age. But the fact is, the government is looking for votes, and they know hanging a few Happy Sun crazies is probably going to do wonders for their support base.

Right now they're being hosed off the roads. Tensions are escalating. They're demanding your release. They're calling you a brother of their 'enlightened order'. It doesn't look good for you, Mr Chance.'

Arnold rolled his eyes.

'I'm confident the Meguro Parasitological Museum will be able to clear this whole mess up. They'll remember how much my boy loved that tapeworm. And you said it yourself, he's a swell kid. Would you, as his Father, turn down a kid like that if he had his heart set on that tapeworm.'

Towards the end Arnold leaned in, lowering his voice. It was as though the balance of power was shifting back in Arnold's favour. The detective was beginning to understand Arnold's predicament, but was also concerned he was being manipulated by an international agent of North Korea. He'd make a few calls and head down to the parasite museum himself.

Meanwhile Arnold was permitted a phone call, first he'd need to clear things up with his wife.

She answered and had clearly been crying before answering the phone.

'I told you this tapeworm business...it was no good. They're dangerous. They're bad news. Oh god Arnold, why? Why is this happening?'

Arnold laughed a little.

'Don't worry sweetie, the detective is on his way to the museum. They'll remember just how everything happened. You'll not believe it, they seem to think I'm a North Korean spy, preparing a biochemical weapon attack on behalf of some kooks called 'Happy Sun'. This mess will be cleared up, and we'll get back to our perfect holiday. You just worry about brewing some of that mountain coffee when I get home.'

'Oh please come home soon Arnold. There's people outside waving pictures of the sun and throwing flowers around. The police are everywhere. It's giving me the creeps.'

Arnold waited calmly for detective Grayson to return. He sipped some coffee from a vending machine, missing the superior taste of his wife's mountain coffee.

He knew Piers would be just fine. He would understand however terribly wrong things seemed, his dad was fixing it. A bump in the road of an otherwise perfect holiday.

The detective returned a transformed man. He greeted Arnold with a handshake.

'Good news Mr Chance, the museum remembered you. They said you were a strange man, they discussed afterwards whether it was convention in the West for parasites to be kept as pets. I assured them it was not. Tensions are high right now. I would advise you leave the country quietly and put this misunderstanding behind you.'

Arnold laughed heartily.

'Sir, I still have a perfect holiday to finish and I plan to finish it.'

The detective hung his jacket over his chair.

'One more thing. I managed to keep those tapeworms aside. And well, we've had the lab keep you an egg. After all of this craziness it'd be a shame if your boy didn't get his worm in the end.'

The Chance family were reunited and were hounded by the press and threatened from time to time. But their perfect holiday carried on all the same. The man who fed his son a tapeworm became an international sensation, and the Happy Sun foundation were banned and driven from Japan following the Chance family scandal.

Volodomyr was tracked down after his online marketplace was compromised and faced spending the rest of his life in prison.

Little Piers, still a good kid, was weaker and sicklier than before. In fact, when he passed by the Gentryman house to wave, they'd comment; 'There goes the Chance boy, he's looking peaky isn't he.'

And Arnold remained a proud Father and Husband, busying himself with next years perfect holiday.

•Weird Web•

I tried an experiment in synchronicity once on 4chan. A few people got involved, we created sigils and uploaded them looking for parallels in the images we had created. Then we began to keep simultaneous journals.

Over the course of a few days the experiment started to get interesting. The first thing was dreams started to show signs of synchronicity. The moon was a recurring theme, one individual stated they had experienced a nightmare in which a 'moon man' was pursuing him. Some sinister figure who he understood to be somehow associated with the moon in these dreams.

Whilst reading these posts, I realised I was listening to Clair De Lune by Debussy.

We created a new moon sigil and made the moon a focus of meditation over days to follow.

I remember getting creeped out and unfortunately left the experiment early. Today, I think I'd have a different attitude and would have pursued it further. I regret not seeing what could have happened given enough time.

With several participants keeping journals and creating images, common threads can be identified. As though the mental connection and psychic efforts eventually manifest as synchronicity, real world parallels.

I'm unsure of how this can be utilised to a constructive end, but it's a fascinating phenomena.

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