

# S+P (Σύννεφο και Πρίαπος)

An American Epic Poem

Nicholas Syrianus Katsafanas

Cloud was sitting at Seventh Heaven  
drinking a Fernet on the rocks  
engaging in light conversation  
with a cocksucker he'd never even met  
about a Queen's Blood play-in game  
that he'd—this particular cocksucker—  
requested to be put on the TV at the bar.  
Well, actually Cloud corrected,  
for the record,  
that he'd actually been reading  
a few pages of Timaeus  
prior to all this,  
making a few disparate notes,  
finding himself puzzled at  
the sensory information  
that continued to be relayed into his brain.  
Cloud basically alleged he was flummoxed  
about the sensory information that became,  
in some way, relayed  
to what he guessed was his brain?—

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## Part I: The Madness of a Cloud

Canto I  
“The Nice Man with his Wife’s Last Name’s  
Form of Annihilation”  
1859:2546 .730

Cloud was sitting at Seventh Heaven  
drinking a Fernet on the rocks  
engaging in light conversation  
with a cocksucker he’d never even met  
about a Queen’s Blood play-in game  
that he’d—this particular cocksucker—  
requested to be put on the TV at the bar.  
Well, actually Cloud corrected,  
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that he’d actually been reading  
a few pages of Timaeus  
prior to all this,  
making a few disparate notes,  
finding himself puzzled at  
the sensory information  
that continued to be relayed into his brain.  
Cloud basically alleged he was flummoxed  
about the sensory information that became,  
in some way, relayed  
to what he guessed was his brain?—  
how any of that was corroborated,  
but more so Cloud contemplated  
the static nature of said images—  
that’s what he was specifically contemplating  
when a guy with a round-ass face  
leaned onto the bar,  
seeking to close his tab,  
obviously excited to tell the bartender  
that he may need to show her his ID,  
just because he took his wife’s last name

and hadn't had a chance to change  
his license yet?  
The patron with the round-ass face  
noted how nice the bartender was (Tifa!),  
but what was her name again?  
He could definitely display his ID  
if she really needed,  
just because, again,  
his last name was different now—  
taking his wife's name and all!  
Of course, Cloud noted,  
that it was clear that no one gave a fuck  
about the printed name on a credit card in that bar,  
and Tifa, for her part,  
didn't exactly seem like she was ramping up  
to suck this dude off  
just because he was a radical feminist.  
For Cloud's part he was still, you know,  
attempting to get behind the blunt sensations  
being smuggled relentlessly  
into his so-called conscious existence.  
Everything was an image to some extent,  
right Aerith?  
Touch itself was a fucking sensory image.  
It was a quaint Spring evening  
where Cloud felt more or less  
destined to philosophize,  
having started drinking wine  
in preparation for a Friday night dinner,  
only to have Tifa bail last minute,  
because she needed to pick up a bar shift—  
leaving him completely free  
to continue this wine drinking  
in a ritualistic way  
that would be conducive

to philosophical ideas.  
Yes, Cloud continued to Aerith,  
it was basically only via drinking alone,  
but in a ritualistic fashion,  
that he'd achieved any sort  
of philosophical inquiry.  
You couldn't just sit at a desk  
and "become philosophical",  
at least not for Cloud!  
Maybe some people could!  
But, no, not Cloud.  
He'd imagine that there were probably  
a litany of possible ways  
of becoming philosophical—  
like, for instance,  
for the round-faced albino chap,  
perhaps telling Tifa  
that he'd taken his wife's last name,  
maybe that could be seen  
as possibly ritualistic in a way,  
a gateway to some sort of  
becoming philosophical.  
This was "actually science",  
Cloud told her he thought at the bar,  
successfully avoiding making any eye contact  
with the round-faced man.  
Was it necessarily strange at all  
that once the Greeks went extinct  
philosophy went more or less  
completely and utterly downhill  
and never looked back in the least,  
that the last group to really reach  
much of any philosophical success  
made a sincere effort to conjoin  
getting fucked up with



contemplating intelligible phenomena?—  
that these Greeks attempted  
to marry inebriation and rigorous dialectic?  
That all thought since—  
to paraphrase North Whitehead—  
had been a minor footnote to Plato or whatever?  
The thing was, according to Cloud,  
you just couldn't willy nilly  
"delve into metaphysics"  
completely sober!  
But that wasn't to say a person  
should necessarily become some  
degenerate alcoholic either,  
because a degenerate drunk  
would in no way make a great meta-physicist either—  
that was basically impossible, because,  
like Cloud said,  
the solo mode of inebriation  
should be done ritualistically,  
in spurts, at certain times.  
You couldn't just be like  
hitting the bottle  
as soon as you woke from a slumber!—  
after said inebriation sessions  
you'd require sobriety  
to parse through whatever it was  
that came to you  
via said contemplation, no?  
In fact, the actual science  
was nothing beyond this parsing through  
of inebriation sessions  
of rigorous contemplation!  
That was it—  
what laid behind logic and metaphysics,  
in Cloud's mind at least!

But inebriation could be anything really—  
Cloud could enter a state of inebriation  
in a car alone on a Tuesday AM,  
without consuming a damn thing.  
Aerith more or less agreed,  
adding that on the one hand  
a philosophical mind  
should be able to analyze,  
interpret, extrapolate,  
all of that scientific stuff—but,  
on the other,  
if you fail to place yourself  
in a position to receive anything to analyze,  
interpret, or extrapolate  
then you were basically screwed!  
Cloud more or less agreed  
but added that—sans this type of  
“inspiration,” so to speak—  
they’d be stuck sitting  
at a table just noodling  
around nonsensically,  
vacillating back and forth  
between two types of nothingness,  
and then just probably knocking off  
someone else’s work by accident.  
But none of this was new!  
It wasn’t like Cloud was breaking news  
in any way.  
At this point Aerith asked—you know,  
was this albino douche bag,  
he was an element of this analysis?  
No, not really—according to Cloud—  
maybe the guy was trying a tad too hard?—  
to present himself  
as a specific archetype

to the general public,  
as a guy who decided  
to spit in the face  
of his own chromosome count,  
which was something Cloud  
"personally endorsed!"  
Granted Cloud probably  
wouldn't do it by taking his wife's last name,  
because Cloud personally  
was obviously more prone  
to a type of isolated  
and overly dramatic  
self-annihilation  
than a subservient  
and disingenuously muted  
feminist annihilation,  
but he wasn't ipso facto  
opposed to either!  
Aerith agreed  
one hundred percent!  
But Cloud still would go  
a little further,  
noting that in the intelligible sphere,  
as someone like,  
say, Proclus would note,  
that so-called forms  
were somehow able  
to participate in one another  
without mixing,  
whereas within the sensible realm  
they participated in things  
and subsequently got dirty.  
But Cloud thought that it was worth  
going one step further—  
since they were discussing

annihilation and stuff anyway,  
that the perceived mixing  
between forms that took place  
in the sensible arena  
was itself just a projection  
of mixture but not actual mixture.  
The intelligible sphere,  
being purely emanated,  
participated within itself  
without mixing itself,  
while in the sensible sphere  
it didn't seem like that was possible,  
that by participating  
within sensible things  
they became essentially mixed  
with them,  
assuming they were categorically sensible.  
Essentially nature was tainted,  
which of course  
Cloud and Aerith knew all too well!  
Way too well!  
Hence their shared acquiescence  
toward occasional annihilation!  
But even this sensible filth,  
so to speak,  
Cloud thought,  
this perceived mixing up  
in the participation of sensible things,  
wasn't it also a projection?—  
an emanation,  
just as the participation  
of the intelligible sphere  
was also an emanation  
of the primary unity of all things?  
Which, yeah, brought Cloud back

to that albino round-faced fuck  
at the bar,  
taking his wife's last name—  
because ultimately  
the albino's vantage point  
wasn't remarkably divergent  
from Cloud's or Aerith's,  
Cloud thought.

This albino was promoting  
a certain type of annihilation  
of their cultural-sensible realm,  
thinking that the patriarchal lineage  
of their society was basically  
something objectionable,  
something essentially tainted,  
that should be annihilated  
in the service of something more pure.

Okay, well, Cloud thought  
that made a modicum of sense!  
Maybe taking his wife's last name  
was in a sense a greater form  
of purity than locking a woman  
in a kitchen and expecting  
a blowjob every other evening,  
Cloud thought.

Just as Proclus and Socrates  
sensed that the intelligible sphere  
participated with itself  
yet not in a way  
where it mixed with itself,  
that this was distinct  
from our further descended,  
sensible sphere  
where things participated with  
one another but got mixed up

in the process—well,  
maybe this albino man  
was noting that the patriarchy  
was a participatory mixing  
that left unseemly cum stains—  
"for lack of a better phrase!"—  
on human experience.  
Patriarchy, in the albino man's mind,  
should be annihilated  
because of this sensible mixing up,  
this putrid tainting  
of what would be better off pure.  
And taking your nice wife's name  
was a proper mode  
of annihilation in response.  
Aerith remarked that she knew  
Cloud would inevitably bring  
the discourse back to this poor chap  
closing his tab,  
but, just to be clear,  
what Cloud was saying was that  
this mixing that occurred  
in the sensible realm was itself  
just a separate projection—  
just a lesser mode of projecting!  
So while the material world  
may have disgusted them,  
perhaps moving the two toward  
some sort of all-encompassing  
conceptual annihilation,  
and as much as the patriarchy  
might have seemed putrid  
to the albino husband at the bar  
who looked to annihilate himself  
by taking his nice wife's last name,

it could be wise to consider  
that these disgusting aggregates  
were themselves simply derivative projections,  
that they weren't actual mixtures,  
that they were just derivative emanations  
as opposed to tattoos  
of what they thought they despised.  
Aerith was aware—  
she wasn't distressed about it,  
but she knew this poor albino guy  
would in time  
take the brunt of it from Cloud.  
Cloud questioned whether he didn't deserve it?  
Plus like they'd already implied—  
they must to proceed  
from the immanent  
to the transcendent, no?

Canto II  
"Tifa's Dream"  
η/ω 2174:3037  
.716

Cloud found it a tad befuddling,  
just because  
Tifa said she'd had an odd dream  
about him the previous night,  
and he'd replied bluntly  
that he "didn't usually have dreams  
about people he knew",  
somehow completely purging the fact  
from his mind that,  
just that night,  
he'd had a vivid dream  
involving one of his first girlfriends  
and her current  
(to the best of Cloud's knowledge) spouse.  
How could that have possibly  
slipped his memory,  
given the vivacity of the dream itself?  
Barrett didn't have a clue either, really.  
His ex and her husband  
were living with Cloud  
and his fictional wife  
in a modest condo  
they'd been leasing  
in Upper Midgar,  
yet he told Tifa he "never dreamt"  
about people he knew,  
yet perhaps the most befuddling aspect  
of it was that when he'd said that  
to her he actually believed it!  
Cloud's ex-girlfriend



and his fictional wife  
had become somewhat friendly  
in the dream, in the condo,  
and the whole ordeal—in Cloud's dream—  
struck him as totally fine initially.  
His fictional wife was obscured,  
a pure mirage,  
while his ex was an image  
of how he'd known her in the past,  
not how she was now  
(not that he knew how she was now!),  
but eventually Cloud began to come  
to the realization that this was his  
ex-romantic interest  
, and that his current wife  
and ex-girlfriend becoming friends  
was an absolutely  
"cataclysmic development"  
for him socially,  
that it was probably  
the worst thing that could possibly  
happen to his marriage.  
He wondered what the husband  
of his ex was thinking—  
Cloud was wondering  
how it was exactly  
that he got roped into this whole thing  
as he was exiting  
this apartment into  
an Upper Midgar that, of course,  
wasn't exactly Upper Midgar at all!—  
yet only hours later when  
Tifa told Cloud she'd had a dream  
with him in it that night  
he claimed to never dream

about people he knew.  
Odd! Barrett noted that he just did, though,  
right? That his statement to Tifa  
was false, no?  
Um, yeah, that's exactly  
what Cloud just said!  
Cloud reiterated that it was  
"literally that night"  
that he'd had the dream,  
further emphasizing the absurdity  
of his statement to Tifa.  
Maybe, Cloud thought,  
it was closer to a coincidence  
than an acute misremembering  
or forgetting? Was that possible?  
Memory was elliptical sometimes.  
But in any case,  
he told Barrett he'd had another  
dream recently—if Barrett was  
by any chance interested  
in listening to more  
"bullshit about his dream states?"—  
where Cloud had discovered a glowing,  
fluorescent insect  
in one of the drawers  
on a screened-in patio  
that didn't exist in so-called "real life",  
and Cloud tossed the fucking thing  
outside onto the grass,  
kind of disgusted by it to be honest,  
only to discover  
that same insect  
just a few moments later—  
but now appearing in a humanoid form,  
standing outside the screened-in patio,

hoping to be let in.  
Now, in the dream  
there was a little get-together  
on this patio,  
so Cloud was a little wary  
of letting this being—  
who was female, to be clear—  
into the party, but curiously  
everyone else at the pow-wow  
seemed totally incapable  
of perceiving her, even after  
Cloud allowed her in?  
Yes, Cloud allowed her in  
and the form of communication  
between himself and the entity  
was simply a series of  
"vague feelings",  
perhaps, he thought,  
this was some kind of reminder  
that you couldn't just, you know,  
create things—  
that refreshing syntheses  
are the best we could do?  
With that said,  
they started copulating on the patio.  
Barrett wanted to clarify  
that it was the butterfly woman  
that Cloud was fucking?  
Or whatever she was?  
Well, Cloud noted, only  
when she became a human being,  
of some sort,  
that that was when  
the copulation occurred, obviously!  
But, with that said,

it was actually (kind of?)  
intriguing to Barrett, to be honest?  
But, more importantly,  
Cloud really wanted to know  
how Seventh Heaven  
was last night,  
because Barrett stopped by there, didn't he?  
How was it? Well. Let's see.  
Barrett definitely  
felt the purity of the booze expand  
within his chest upon his first sip,  
and while the bartender  
(obviously not Tifa,  
but he didn't catch her name)  
was slightly more affable  
than when he went there with Cloud,  
but she didn't actually ask  
what fruit he wanted in the drink.  
Sitting alone at Seventh Heaven  
Barrett took note of himself  
tossing the single orange slice  
onto his thin, now immediately moist  
napkin and manually extracting  
the single seed  
that had been expelled  
from the orange into the liquor  
from the glass,  
and in doing so,  
he noted  
that all that he'd accounted for at the bar—  
the affability, the fruit, the seed—  
that extracting those ideas  
out of the air was basically the same  
as the "coordinate-tracking"  
reported by remote viewers.

He glanced back at the bar  
and took brief note of the bartender  
chugging a shot of booze  
with a customer  
and was violently  
smacked in the face  
with an acute memory  
of ripping similar shots  
with a specific bartender  
from his past,  
which was basically  
just another set of coordinates,  
but these particular coordinates  
returned to him,  
he didn't pluck them  
out of the air.  
He didn't pluck these ripping shots  
with a bartender coordinates  
from a rapid rush of information—  
no, said coordinates returned to him  
as he sat in solitude  
at the bar totally involuntarily,  
violently smacking Barret  
in the fucking face  
and somewhat rudely  
collapsing time itself in the process,  
right as Barrett sat at that tiny table  
alone, innocently sipping his drink  
in Seventh Heaven.  
Barrett then went on to tell Cloud how,  
before the bar,  
he'd seen a bunch of people  
with Mako poisoning  
that he hadn't seen in months,  
and Cloud noted

that's how they knew Spring  
was approaching, right?!  
Yet, on that note,  
it was kind of funny because Cloud  
was actually thinking to himself  
the other day—  
what was the  
"exact definition of sobriety"  
anyway—like how could they actually  
"distinguish sobriety from intoxication?"  
Barrett perked up a bit.  
Cloud made it clear that, no,  
he wasn't necessarily  
like talking about smoking crack,  
or exposing yourself  
to high intensity mako shards  
for decades on end,  
but maybe just drinking white wine  
or something?  
Because Cloud was crossing  
the Washington Street bridge  
contemplating a particular vision  
of indivisible Oneness  
the other night,  
as Barrett knew too well  
that Cloud was apt to do  
from time to time,  
and believe it or not  
he was actually discovering  
a decent amount of enjoyment  
in the material world at the time!—  
drinking a mini water bottle  
filled with Mezcal,  
but also attempting to gauge  
whether he'd have the time to grab

just one more beer before  
Tifa was supposed to be at his apartment.  
Cloud was contemplating  
the nature of an indivisible Oneness,  
but he was also comforted  
by the material realm  
while coldly calculating  
his odds of being able  
to chug another beer  
while still making it back  
to his apartment before  
Tifa was supposed to arrive.  
And as Cloud was contemplating  
this nature of an indivisible Oneness,  
crossing a Washington Street bridge,  
drinking Mezcal from a mini water bottle  
Cloud remarked to Barrett  
how he'd started to question  
this very definition of sobriety.  
But it was here Barrett began to question—  
well—what did Cloud actually mean by that?  
Well, what Cloud was trying to get at,  
Barrett, was that sobriety itself  
was supposed to be a baseline of sorts, no?  
Of course it was!  
Yet how could  
they measure this baseline  
exactly?—was there a  
measurement at all?—  
was sobriety to be defined  
by a lack of passion,  
or a vague sense of the “even-keeled”?  
But the problem was,  
in Cloud's mind at least,  
that there was no universal

emotional baseline  
with which to define sobriety.  
Some people—he meant,  
even Cloud himself  
could be totally unhinged  
emotionally on occasion  
while quote-unquote  
“completely sober”!  
Furthermore, even if they—  
Barrett and Cloud—could define  
some baseline emotional status  
as axiomatic,  
then they would still have to combat  
philosophically with external substances  
that weren’t considered  
intoxicants  
that would obviously shift  
this emotional baseline.  
What did Cloud mean?  
Well, like, a lack of food  
could alter mood.  
The same could be said  
of caffeine!  
Consuming dirt  
would probably shift someone’s  
emotional state.  
Historically, according to Cloud,  
people ate fucking plants  
with small doses of  
psychedelics embedded within them  
and probably thought  
very little about  
“intoxication” proper!”  
People used to fucking sanitize water  
with alcohol!



Smoking tobacco altered mood.  
Basically, Barrett,  
"anything we ingest  
alters our latent state  
of existence and therefore  
changes us in some form  
or another, which in most all cases  
probably filters into our mood."  
Cloud noted,  
for him personally,  
a shift in his diet could do wonders  
for his intellectual disposition—  
so then what was sobriety?  
It seemed impossible to even think  
about sobriety as a thing at all!  
Well, Barrett hadn't exactly  
considered it like that  
and wasn't sure if he would.  
But Cloud thought that maybe  
they'd taken a false baseline  
of sobriety conceptually, no?  
After all, what technically  
was an external substance?  
Could they dig even further  
and consider the definition  
of an external substance?  
A conversation could certainly  
alter a person's temperament  
exponentially as well!—  
but did that technically  
count as an exogenous substance?  
Did words not carry weight?  
A vociferous thought  
or even a fleeting memory—  
especially in Cloud's case!—

could often toss a person completely  
off-kilter, yet they still  
for some incomprehensible reason  
clung to an idea  
of an objective sobriety,  
and then they subsequently  
targeted select substances  
as intoxicating,  
while deeming so-called  
"other" substances—  
which also altered temperaments—  
as totally fine! Well,  
this was what Cloud was thinking at least,  
as he walked over the Washington Street  
bridge—that if people didn't  
view consuming fresh vegetables  
as something fundamentally  
mind altering,  
then it was possible,  
in Cloud's mind,  
that they just experienced  
the world in vastly different ways,  
and Barrett for his part  
found this to be  
intriguing yet unconvincing,  
but Cloud insisted  
that there simply  
was no true and extended stability  
of our mental states—  
even if they were hypothetically  
deprived of external tinkering,  
because even thought itself  
was fundamentally external  
to some extent, was it not?  
And people on average

were constantly accosted  
by specific thoughts,  
were they not?  
Thought almost never ceased  
accosting these people,  
which were all people?  
And even if they confined themselves  
to commonly agreed upon  
material substances,  
then there was still no consistent way  
to calculate the degree  
of alteration to a mental state  
across people of different walks  
of life, period.  
Barrett might not experience  
the same mental shift  
after the consumption  
of a fresh stick of celery  
that Cloud would,  
even if the celery itself  
remained entirely static.  
Walking across the  
Washington Street bridge,  
Cloud drank from a tiny water bottle  
filled with Mezcal  
and didn't feel intoxicated  
in any way, shape, or form—  
any more than had he been  
drinking a cup of coffee,  
or eating a delicious snack,  
or receiving a specific thought.  
In his mind at the time  
there was no true division  
between intoxication and sobriety,  
and this was Cloud's final conclusion—

regardless of whether or not  
Barrett agreed—as he  
somewhat anxiously sent  
Tifa a text message  
letting her know he was  
"taking a walk", just in case  
she arrived at his apartment  
before he finished  
slugging down one last beer  
at the bar that he was walking to.

Canto III  
"Dinner & Drinks"  
1403:1994 .704

"Well, no," were the two words  
Cloud began with as he explained  
that his point was that  
there was a significant distinction  
between the two,  
meaning dinner and drinks!—  
that if you make it out like  
it's "just drinks"  
and then last minute  
it becomes dinner?—  
then yeah Cloud's gonna be  
a little fucking pissed off!  
Especially if he didn't know  
the fucking people, you know Aerith?  
How did that make  
any sense?  
He found it a bit absurd,  
frankly. Sure,  
he'd go tie one or two on  
with a total stranger, that was fine,  
but to sit down and actually  
engage in a dinner?—  
that was an entirely distinct level  
of socializing,  
and it was one that, frankly,  
Cloud didn't particularly care for.  
And he wasn't ashamed to admit it!—  
that, frankly, he felt this Philistine notion  
of just "going out to dinner"  
with any and every acquaintance,  
that if you didn't acquiesce to that

standard then you would be deemed, what?—  
anti-social?

Well color Cloud anti-social then!

But Aerith noted that while, sure,  
to be fair, it was a different level  
of socialization,

if he truly didn't know the people,  
but, you know,

if it was her personally?

Supposing it was Aerith,  
then she'd hope that it wouldn't be  
that big of a deal to Cloud?

To just go out to dinner?

Was she kidding him?!

Oh, of course not, Aerith! With her?

You fucking kidding?

Cloud was always down  
to grab a nosh with someone like her,  
no, it was just that the  
hypothetical notion  
of eating supper

with a complete stranger

("a more or less complete stranger")—  
what were they discussing?

Cloud and the hypothetical stranger?

Did he have to come prepared  
with a portfolio of talking points?—

Cloud couldn't imagine that  
they'd be super intrigued  
with anything he had to say,  
or that they'd end up  
on the precipice of any revelation  
that he'd conclude to be  
particularly enlightening either.

Cloud was simply

going by empirical evidence really.  
That was all. He wasn't, like,  
trying to be a dick or anything!  
Just that, empirically speaking,  
it seemed unlikely  
they'd have a lot to converse about,  
Cloud and this hypothetical stranger.  
But Aerith added that,  
to be fair, wasn't Cloud  
the one who was always railing  
against so-called sensory data?  
Yet, in this case,  
he was all bent out of shape  
about this impromptu dinner  
because, in his own words,  
because of empirical data?  
Of past experience,  
which was sensory data?  
Memories, right?  
Which, wouldn't Cloud agree,  
was some of the most  
unreliable data available no?  
Of course he did! Aerith,  
even fucking quantum physics  
was still fundamentally  
sense-forward, in the sense  
that they were beginning with  
sense perception—  
this was what contemporary  
so-called science  
had achieved of course!  
Placing sense perception  
as an apex predator  
until finally, with the discovery  
of quantum physics,

it'd reduced the observable world  
to a degree that even linear  
sense-perception no longer  
made any fucking sense  
in the upper worlds!  
That was what they'd done,  
and quite smugly at times too!—  
but wasn't that what Cloud was doing  
with this impending dinner?  
Aerith queried him on this point.  
Well, Cloud supposed that,  
thinking about it again, yeah,  
he was kind of acting like a  
quantum physicist a bit, wasn't he?  
Well, Aerith was just saying—  
to the extent that his argument was  
fundamentally empirical,  
but it was kind of intuitive  
in a sense too, his argument,  
in Cloud's opinion.  
He agreed with Aerith  
to the extent that, yes,  
he was basing his disgust  
partially on empirical evidence,  
but he'd also allege  
that he felt an intuitive disgust  
with these types of social gatherings  
as well, and then he,  
to her point, to be blunt,  
did tend to dip into the world  
of empiricism to validate  
said intuitive disgust.  
Although, technically,  
they should probably be  
a little cautious to even employ



the word empiricism here,  
because he didn't think empiricism  
necessarily needed to be  
restricted to sense-perception  
necessarily, you know?  
Aerith supposed there, yes,  
was probably an empiricism  
of the intelligible realm as well?  
Honestly, to Cloud—  
it was certainly possible  
that he maybe wasn't even  
in the best mind state to even  
assess it one way or another.  
Aerith took advantage of this  
capitulation to say  
she'd recently had a dream  
about Cloud—  
would he mind hearing her out?—  
where he was emailing her a  
question about  
whether a specific action  
was defined as  
'insider trading', while she was  
processing some non-descript  
'orders' for something  
in a bath tub,  
which consisted of,  
for some reason,  
washing large chocolate cookies  
down the drain,  
watching them  
as they slowly disintegrated  
under the hot water, then,  
after that, realizing that  
the cookies related to

Cloud's question  
about insider trading,  
she contemplated  
if she should have flushed them  
all down the drain  
before answering the question?  
Did she do wrong by Cloud  
by washing these cookies  
preemptively down the drain?  
If Cloud truly wanted  
the "order processed", so to speak.  
In a sense Aerith  
felt an affinity for the cookies,  
didn't she, Cloud inferred.  
Cloud postulated that she felt like  
they were actual beings  
as she crumbled them  
down the unforgiving drain  
with the scorching hot water?  
In retrospect, Aerith admitted  
that that may have been the case.  
Cloud noted that there  
was a certain "level of gnosis"  
achieved through  
contemplating your dreams—  
yet was there any to be gleaned  
from participating  
in double date dinners?  
Aerith admitted she'd been clinging  
onto the fact of the cookies  
being washed down the drain,  
and she knew Cloud  
had a particular talent  
when it came to interpreting dreams.  
Well then let's see here,

Cloud contemplated,  
the dissolution of a sweet food  
in an apparatus usually used  
to clean yourself?  
But with a transactional,  
abutting capitalist  
undertone. And Aerith was doing it,  
perhaps unintentionally,  
for someone else (Cloud),  
without their knowledge,  
and not only  
without their knowledge  
but while ignoring their inquiry—  
actually, Cloud guessed  
it was his inquiry technically,  
about whether it was legal,  
as apparently  
this was somehow potentially  
'insider trading'?  
So she was repurposing  
an apparatus  
for cleansing the body  
to destroy large, life-like  
pieces of unhealthy food  
for Cloud, without his consent,  
Cloud meanwhile wondering  
if destroying this junk food  
in a bath tub  
was actually illegal?  
Of course in any dream  
they also should consider  
whether what was represented  
was a representation  
of another representation,  
meaning maybe not

an analogy at all?  
But if they proceeded  
as if what was represented  
in Aerith's dream appeared  
as it was intended to appear,  
then that would be a decent start.  
So, in a sense,  
Aerith thought,  
that she was cleaning  
particular attributes of Cloud  
without his permission,  
while Cloud was thinking—  
perhaps suspecting—  
that cleansing himself  
in this way may have actually  
been a type of insider trading,  
it could have been  
a very serious crime.  
Cloud noted that—Aerith,  
cleaning yourself was  
"basically a crime  
against the state these days".  
No surprise there!  
Although Cloud liked  
a nice cookie every now and then,  
he didn't necessarily  
find anything  
that bad about  
eating a few cookies on occasion,  
but Cloud also found it  
intriguing that Aerith personally  
identified with the cookies  
as they broke apart  
and tumbled down the drain,  
that she saw a certain goodness,

a specific being within them,  
and subsequently felt  
a sadness at the fact  
they had to be washed  
down the drain of this bath tub.  
Even what's fundamentally  
bad for you  
isn't necessarily bad,  
Aerith noted.  
But yes, it was sad to see  
them fall apart  
in a bath tub faucet, huh?  
"Even the running shoes  
you need to toss into the trash  
are eternal," Cloud said.

Canto IV  
"Institutional Norms"  
1332:1960 .680

Cloud was for sure fine  
with whatever Tifa wanted  
to say to him  
("I always want you to speak  
your mind!"), but he just wasn't  
going to back off  
his well-developed  
(in his mind) idea  
that the institution itself  
(as a concept)  
was basically restrictive,  
that they shouldn't  
necessarily care  
what's there in the container  
("Category theory!"),  
but also that  
"eros was a gateway".  
Tifa just wasn't certain  
that engaging in that  
in the bar, after hours—  
she didn't know, was that  
actually appropriate, Cloud?  
Even if she wanted to do it!  
In the bar?! Of course,  
Cloud totally understood,  
but, again—just to reiterate—  
"eros was a gateway".  
It didn't have to be about,  
you know, purely that.  
What?—was Tifa now gonna allow  
herself to be tyrannically restrained

by the institutional norms of Shinra, et al?  
Was that now how  
she was gonna live her life?—  
by the contemptuous rules of Shinra?  
She could "pop that pussy wide open"  
whenever she wanted to!—  
if she really wanted to,  
even if it was just super quickly!  
(What exactly was  
the temperature in the room?)  
There wasn't anything inherently  
out of bounds about  
any of that, assuming  
the correct context, because—  
well, no, Cloud wasn't saying  
he was in support of  
indiscriminate promiscuity—  
no, not at all! It needed to be  
rigorous—perhaps "even ritualistic",  
and he wasn't even suggesting  
Tifa should ipso facto  
just quote-unquote  
pop that pussy open  
to spite the moral norms of Shinra—  
it was actually the opposite!  
No, Cloud was simply asserting  
she "shouldn't not make" beautiful love  
in Seventh Heaven simply because  
of some societal Shinra code—  
she shouldn't allow herself, Tifa,  
to be regulated by  
an institutional entity  
whose primary purpose  
was the employment  
of the universal restriction.

To Cloud it wasn't in any way, shape,  
or form Shinra's place  
to enforce  
any universal restrictions  
whatsoever. Fuck Shinra specifically  
and fuck the institution  
in a more generic sense.  
Ugh, shut up Cloud!  
He was kidding, wasn't he?  
Oh yeah!—Cloud admitted it  
was certainly possible  
he was exaggerating certain elements  
of his argument intentionally,  
in terms of the whole—  
well, "you know"—no,  
he wasn't suggesting  
Tifa should "pop that pussy"  
in the bar!  
No, that was absurd!  
Unless she wanted to!  
Because if she wanted to Tifa  
should know that Cloud took no  
offense, like, at all!  
They both laughed at themselves,  
but didn't he, Cloud,  
in the abstract  
kind of have a point?  
No, just listen for a second,  
Cloud said, please Tifa—  
he knew she felt an anxiety,  
from time to time,  
and according to Cloud  
it was actually entirely possible  
that it was the anxiety  
of the younger Socrates.



Namely, it was this anxiety  
that Tifa, she felt like  
she might have fallen  
into a pit of "bottomless nonsense"—  
this idea that there could be  
an "actual conceptual idea"  
behind all phenomena  
that had ever occurred,  
that every action she took  
had some "capital-I" Idea  
behind or above it,  
that every single sensory perception,  
every single moment  
of their lives emerged  
from some conceptual Idea  
behind it, that ideas themselves  
became sub-atomic particles  
which become multiplied  
into an infinite ("seeming!") nonsense.  
It was an extreme vertigo  
to experience that  
without a doubt!—  
and Cloud was all too familiar  
with that type of madness himself!  
In fact, his entire experience in the ether,  
so to speak,  
was fundamentally in agreement  
with this anxiety of young Socrates.  
But what Cloud would say in response,  
to Tifa, to himself, to Socrates—  
what Cloud would say in reply  
is exactly what Parmenides said  
to this young Socrates himself,  
that this anxiety was an anxiety  
of youth ("Cloud,

we're basically the exact same age . . ."),  
one that would be extinguished  
when she'd  
"learned not to despise  
any of these things".  
In short, Tifa shouldn't allow  
Shinra mores—or, frankly,  
institutional mores from anywhere else  
for that matter!—  
to interfere with her own processes,  
that was all Cloud  
was saying really.  
If Tifa wanted to do that at  
Seventh Heaven, then, sure,  
that was fine!  
Well, Tifa appreciated the kind words,  
even if it was  
an awkward subject for Cloud  
of all people to be broaching,  
given the fact that  
it was kind of blatantly obvious  
that it was Cloud  
that Tifa would probably do that  
with in the bar.  
Why would they  
kid one another about that!  
But for Cloud's part—no,  
he didn't care one way or the other—  
he just thought that  
when someone spent  
a decent chunk of time in the ether  
that it changed their perspective  
on that kind of shit—  
what conclusion, after all,  
should they draw

from the "contemplation  
of sensible objects"?  
If she wanted to bend over  
in her own bar,  
it wasn't philosophically  
out of bounds to him  
in the least. Like he said,  
to some extent  
"eros was a gateway"—  
they shouldn't view it simply  
organically or purely sensibly  
even if it was to some extent  
existent inextricably  
within those realms,  
at least from their perspectives  
in their bodies or whatever.  
A gateway to what though,  
Tifa wondered.  
To a different type of knowledge  
Cloud confirmed.  
Wasn't he against sensual empiricism,  
Tifa queried—but Cloud quickly  
countered that it was  
by amplifying  
the sensory experience,  
by speeding it up  
that the sensory experience itself  
was transcended—  
that was the whole gateway part.  
Again, Cloud wasn't  
arguing for any of this indiscriminately!—  
he was instead making the case  
that these amplifications  
couldn't be completely cut off!—  
that if "other bitter and bilious humors

wander about in the body  
and find no exit or escape,  
but are pent up within and mingle  
their own vapors with the motions  
of the soul,  
and are blended with them,  
they produce  
all sorts of diseases".

That just like particles of matter  
could be sped up to create  
anti-gravitational waves,  
the sensory organs could be  
similarly sped up in order  
to transcend themselves,  
basically. Cloud made  
a decent point,  
but had he heard back  
from Biggs and Wedge—  
were they going to make it  
to the little thing Tifa  
was hosting that Sunday?  
She just needed to, you know,  
get a definite head count  
so she could know  
how much food she'd need.  
Cloud hadn't heard back,  
and frankly he was finding it  
a little ridiculous at that point—  
because at the very least,  
to Cloud,  
they could at least RSVP  
one way or the other.  
Sure, of course,  
eros was a gateway—  
there couldn't be

a totally universal restriction  
oppressing every single member  
of a society,  
but at the same time  
if a person couldn't RSVP  
to an event  
they basically should start  
eating mud out of troughs with pigs,  
in Cloud's view at least!  
People who refused to RSVP  
to events in a timely manner  
really had no place in polite society!—  
or, for that matter,  
in any society!  
That was Cloud's perspective  
at least! And Tifa agreed!  
Frankly, she was getting a little frustrated  
with the whole process.  
She was, in her mind,  
doing a nice thing—  
throwing an Avalanche quote-unquote  
Sunday Funday, but she just needed to know  
a head count ASAP.  
It was already Wednesday night!  
Cloud noted that they'd  
sent out the invitations,  
like, two weeks back,  
and they hadn't even heard back  
from half of the potential attendees,  
which actually moved Cloud  
to think that maybe Tifa  
should just cancel  
the whole damn thing!  
But, no, Tifa was right—  
it was too late to cancel,

because then "she'd look like the asshole".  
Cloud thought that  
maybe that was preferable!  
Maybe that's what needed to happen!  
There needed to be  
some rules to this shit, right?

Canto V  
"The Memory of Capitalism"  
1768:2478 .714

Cloud asked Barrett point blank  
right in Seventh Heaven:  
What "was capitalism" really?—  
because that's what he was  
actually philosophically opposed  
to vis-a-vis Shinra, no?  
The mass production of mako  
energy—was that not fundamentally  
just free market capitalism at its finest?—  
and therefore wasn't capitalism  
just fundamentally  
a singularity of sorts,  
just a complete evisceration  
of memory,  
to the extent that  
memory is the context  
in which we construct ourselves,  
our societies?  
Cloud asserted that capitalism  
didn't give a fuck about that at all!—  
simply because  
capitalism couldn't,  
because if capitalism didn't  
ruthlessly pursue maximum profits,  
then someone else would.  
Cloud eventually asked Barrett  
if capitalism actually  
consisted of memory at all?  
But Barrett didn't fucking know.  
The fuck did he even care—  
he was attempting to make

an active difference in things.  
No, it didn't at all, did it?  
Capitalism was the singular focus sans  
memory par excellence—  
it sought an increase  
at whatever the cost,  
regardless of the context—  
driven by the hypothetical other,  
the hypothetical other  
moving capitalism to completely ignore  
memory holistically,  
the only context in which capitalism  
would even remotely consider memory  
was in its future forecasts,  
but even those types of reports  
were fundamentally myopic in character,  
weren't they?  
Plus "past performance  
isn't indicative of future results!"—  
and even a five year forecast  
would basically just cover  
the attention span of a beta fish  
in the grand scheme of things.  
No, Cloud said,  
capitalism clearly operated  
sans memory, as a singularity—  
and therefore was fundamentally  
an agent of destabilization  
from a political standpoint—  
he was agreeing with Barrett!  
Barrett wasn't seeking agreement  
when Cloud then asked  
if there wasn't also something abutting  
divine to that type of singularity—  
to Cloud it was almost like



the radiation poisoning of pure mako  
itself and shit, no?  
Capitalism as a singularity contained  
a divine element,  
in its radical rejection of memory  
capitalism was certainly divine-adjacent.  
It was like capitalism as an unfettered  
seeking of increase  
of expansion  
was in itself something  
worthy of praise in the abstract,  
but for an actual sensible society  
the "employment of unrepentant capitalism"  
was the most "destabilizing and self-destructive"  
political philosophy  
you could ever subscribe to!  
Capitalism was magnificent in the abstract,  
but if you actually subscribed  
to the theory in practice  
then you would almost definitely,  
in due time,  
totally destroy yourself  
and everything around you!  
Ultimately, Barrett reiterated that he didn't really  
have a ton of time to discuss  
these types of details—  
philosophical discussions wouldn't,  
after all, fundamentally alter  
the rapid environmental destruction  
that was ongoing at the hands of Shinra!  
Cloud didn't disagree,  
yet, at the same time,  
weren't the two of them  
at Seventh Heaven drinking fucking beers?  
How many draft beers

had they drank at that point?  
They weren't gonna slow down Shinra's  
degradation of the planet  
via consuming draft beers either!  
Shit, bro. It was like—  
Cloud actually woke up that morning  
thinking about memory—  
not capitalism,  
but memory at least—  
about how he could be himself  
across multiple platforms and shit,  
but how, with that in mind,  
memory perhaps  
wasn't "attached  
to Being itself either".  
Cloud was always concurrently  
multiple iterations of himself,  
and he to some extent  
partook in Being  
across those iterations,  
but at the same time—  
the thought occurred to Cloud  
that memory wasn't necessarily  
attached to Being  
at all times either?  
Being and memory—  
what was their exact relationship?  
That the soul could fundamentally  
be eternal,  
but if its being  
was disassociated from memory  
as we understood it  
then obviously  
it would kind of be difficult to verify!—  
as we tend to confirm experiences

via memory and shit.  
Barrett gulped down his eighth pint of Midgar Light,  
but that didn't deter Cloud  
from prodding further at the point—  
namely, that fundamentally  
capitalism contained no memory,  
and Being itself  
perhaps only partially partook  
in memory?  
Was capitalism a form of being? No,  
it couldn't be!—not unless  
they took a static vantage point  
on an infinite urge  
to increase and expand,  
which, to some extent,  
wasn't that the drive of the infinite,  
which was fundamentally  
the transcendent,  
which was—no Being couldn't be  
transcendent, not totally, right?  
Cloud didn't think so.  
Barrett had had enough  
of this fucking shit!—  
and he slammed his mug of Midgar Light  
on the counter and moseyed  
out the bar  
(he'd heard about  
"some new Queen's Blood thing"  
that was being introduced  
to Sector Seven  
that he wanted to try anyway).  
Tifa took the opportunity  
to ask Cloud if he'd had  
any encounters with—you know?—  
those ruthless apparitions

that seemed to be haunting him  
intermittently since returning to Midgar?  
Well, Cloud was after all  
a "remade man"—  
in more ways than one, but no? Why?  
Who else around the slums  
had seen them recently?  
It was weird to Cloud,  
a little curious,  
he noted to Tifa,  
mostly because it seemed like  
sometimes (a) he'd see them,  
yet sometimes (b) no,  
he wouldn't necessarily see them  
but intuit them, but then other times—  
like the other day—(c) the apparitions  
would be everywhere for everyone to see,  
and he'd whip out  
his fucking Buster Sword  
with Tifa by his side.  
Tifa asked him to extrapolate  
on the triad of a-b-c, if he could.  
She clearly wanted to assist Cloud  
in reaching the bottom of all of this,  
so to speak.  
Well, to Cloud, it was almost like  
the Eleatics were correct all along—  
that this type of phenomena—  
where sometimes (a) he'd see them  
and she wouldn't,  
sometimes (b) he wouldn't even see them  
but he'd feel them,  
and then other times (c) they'd appear  
to the public at large,  
well, phenomena like that

basically undermined the entire idea  
of empiricism via sense perception, no?  
If sense perception  
was something that they could reliably employ  
as a first principle to gather data  
and then arrive at conclusions  
regarding the nature  
of the corporeal world—  
then shit like  
what Cloud just described  
couldn't be possible, right?  
Cloud asked how could it possibly?!  
There had to be a separate first principle  
they'd need to reference.  
Also, he'd "switch to Fernet"  
if that was okay with Tifa?  
But the problem with this notion—  
both he and Tifa agreed  
(Tifa reluctantly agreed)—  
was that (a) there was no evidence  
that he saw them when others didn't,  
and (b) there was no evidence  
even to himself that he felt them  
when he didn't see them.  
Cloud could see them  
and he'd be sure  
that he saw them  
even if Tifa didn't—  
he'd have an empirical data point  
that he just couldn't prove!—  
but when Cloud simply felt himself  
to be in communion with something formless  
and incorporeal,  
then even he couldn't be sure,  
from an empirical standpoint,

what it was he experienced,  
because his experience lacked a form entirely—  
he didn't have a sense-based  
empirical data point  
to even prove to himself  
that he experienced anything!  
Tifa poured the Fernet  
and said something about  
wanting to believe Cloud.  
At that point Cloud said,  
hearkening back to the point  
that previously caused Barret  
to stomp out of the bar,  
what was memory anyway?—  
if not this type of communion  
with a formless and incorporeal  
experience like these ruthless  
apparitions?  
After all, he remembered  
a boatload of shit that didn't  
necessarily have images attached!  
A lot of his memories  
were in fact formless feelings,  
but then—like some of Cloud's other  
encounters—did indeed  
contain images,  
but they featured images  
that only appeared to Cloud,  
just like Tifa's image-memories  
only appeared to her!  
So Cloud was of the "acute opinion"  
that memories themselves  
were to some extent  
like these ruthless apparitions  
he'd been experiencing?—

yet Tifa quickly corrected him,  
aptnly pointing out  
that Cloud's memories,  
to the best of her knowledge,  
had never swarmed around Seventh Heaven  
and attacked innocent civilians?  
He had to grant that as true!—  
"but you know what I mean, Tifa".  
She did. Cloud's memories were  
similar to those ruthless apparitions  
in terms of (a) and (b),  
but not in terms of (c).  
Cloud continued on to say,  
sipping a fresh Fernet,  
that the point more or less  
remained, that while sure  
memories were distinct,  
these apparitions—  
these unidentified flying apparitions,  
they fundamentally undermined  
the utility of our sense-perception,  
which was something,  
to Cloud's original point,  
that the Eleatics really emphasized.  
Tifa acknowledged  
Cloud's point about memory—  
she didn't necessarily disagree with it  
just because memories,  
to the best of their knowledge,  
never physically manifested themselves  
in corporeal forms,  
that it struck Tifa as basically true  
that memory was a similar type  
of experience,  
something that they interacted with

sometimes via an image  
that wasn't sensible to anyone else,  
and sometimes via a vague feeling  
that they couldn't even corroborate  
themselves!—  
even memory to some extent  
completely undermined the idea  
that our sensory faculties  
were reliable instruments to use  
to come to accurate conclusions  
about what we perceive to be  
the corporeal world.



Canto VI  
"Yellow Flower Gossip"  
1247:1707 .731

Cloud knew that of course  
Aerith was suffering from this gnawing inkling  
that, you know,  
Cloud may have gone and given away the flower,  
or perhaps that was a tad too strong a phrase—  
maybe "passed along was a better way  
to put it", that's what Cloud postulated  
at least, but in any case  
he knew that Aerith knew  
that he forwarded the flower, right?  
But how did she come  
to possess that knowledge exactly?—  
could it have possibly been  
via the under city whisper network?  
Or did Aerith come to realize  
Cloud gave the shit away  
via some sort of divine intuition?  
Basically, Cloud was attempting to ascertain  
the source origin of Aerith's knowledge—  
was it opinion or intuition—  
whereas Aerith was chiefly concerned  
with the "implications of the knowledge itself".  
She actually made it quite clear  
that she wasn't sure if Cloud's prevarications  
were really the point she was attempting to make  
when she brought the whole flower  
re-gifting up to Cloud—  
that the issue at hand wasn't,  
perhaps, "how she obtained this particular knowledge",  
but instead "whether or not  
Cloud gave the flower away",

which to be fair she wasn't,  
like, offended by—  
Aerith was just a little curious?  
Who'd Cloud "forward it to" anyway?  
Tifa, right? Of course it was Tifa,  
which was totally fine!  
They were actually friends!  
But Cloud, if possible,  
wanted to stay on this prior point—  
this epistemological point—because  
he thought there was a pretty important distinction  
to be found there,  
between knowing something via opinion—  
because, for instance,  
some Sector Six dipshit  
was yapping his fucking gums in the slums—  
or, by contrast,  
becoming familiar  
in a more pure fashion.  
There was pure knowledge of things,  
and then there was bullshit  
you heard third hand from douchebags  
in the Sector Six Slums.  
Cloud felt like Aerith  
probably knew via the former method—  
could she confirm though?  
Instead Aerith chose to posit  
the radical notion that maybe  
it could have been both?  
Sure, Cloud thought that was possible  
(he guessed . . .),  
but he didn't think so—  
it was possible yet not probable—  
in fact, Cloud felt like he knew that Aerith knew,  
no, not via some whisper network,

no, not by opinion at all,  
but instead by direct intuition,  
and it just so happened that it was  
by his own intuitive capabilities  
that Cloud knew that Aerith knew  
that he gave that very fucking flower away  
via her own intuition,  
not by any lurid rumor monger  
frolicking shamelessly in the slums.  
Were there any rumor mongers  
frolicking shamelessly in the slums  
though? Spreading disinformation  
about Cloud giving away flowers  
to a plethora of women in Midgar!  
No, that wasn't the way  
Aerith had accessed her knowledge—  
not at all. Anyway,  
Aerith thought maybe  
Cloud should consider thinking twice  
before giving away flowers again.  
That was all. Not that she  
was particularly perturbed.  
Not in the least actually!  
But maybe Cloud could just,  
hypothetically,  
if a girl like her were  
to "give him a beautiful yellow flower"  
in the middle of Midgar,  
maybe he should hold onto the thing!  
Or at the very least  
don't go and give it  
to some other fucking chick!  
Was it really that difficult  
to just continually keep a single flower  
on your person?

Not that it was Aerith's business anyway,  
because clearly if Cloud wanted to gift the flower to  
Tifa—  
sure that was fine,  
it was totally his option  
if that's how he wanted  
to go about it, but didn't Cloud think  
it was just a little rude?  
No, instead he thought  
that there was a notable distinction  
between the two types of knowledge,  
but if Aerith did so happen to hear  
it in the street,  
then would she be willing to tell Cloud  
who was flapping their lips?  
Was anyone out in the slums  
specifically looking to rat his spiky ass out?  
In any case, regardless of all that,  
Cloud totally understood  
where Aerith was coming from,  
and he guessed he just wasn't  
really thinking at the time,  
when he re-gifted the flower—  
Tifa took note of the flower,  
and he didn't want to go into  
"the whole flower girl anecdote",  
so he figured it might be kind of nice to,  
you know, pass along the love?  
Aerith repeated the phrase  
"pass along the love" in a way  
that, quite amazingly,  
wasn't completely filled to the brim  
with consternation and contempt.  
To Cloud there was something ineffably true  
about contemplating the female form,

in its blunt physical iteration—  
there was no lurid opinion  
present within it,  
although Cloud didn't  
explicitly express this idea  
to Aerith at the time,  
given her reticence  
to engage in the opinion  
versus intuition  
dichotomy he started the conversation with,  
yet he was still obviously contemplating  
her form as this back and forth  
occurred. Her typical philosophical disposition  
when it came to love triangles  
was waning just slightly—  
this little flower incident  
seemed to "almost rile her up" emotionally,  
although it was clear to Cloud  
when she repeated the phrase  
"pass along the love"  
that she wasn't entirely riled up.  
Not yet at least.  
Aerith finally confirmed for Cloud that, yes,  
it was via pure intuition  
she'd surmised her flower  
no longer resided  
on his person, and, sure,  
she agreed that there was a certain  
distinction between the two types of knowledge.  
Cloud then asked Aerith  
what she thought was the cause  
of each type—well,  
obviously opinion consisted of  
literal whisper networks,  
she said, from what people saw

and heard and all that.  
This allowed Cloud  
to note that wasn't everything  
Shinra was working on—  
especially Hojo—  
was that not basically another whisper network,  
that Hojo,  
despite being a so-called scientist,  
was simply working off of what he  
and his associates heard and saw?  
Aerith was tempted to say  
Hojo's operation  
was a more systematic version  
of that, yes, but instead abruptly cut  
herself off, because  
when she considered it further  
she concluded the under city whisper networks  
were actually quite complex themselves!  
So instead she accused Cloud  
of changing the subject,  
then she noted that, actually,  
she wanted to shift topics,  
but not to the so-called whisper networks  
of Hojo versus the well-known  
whisper networks  
of the Sector Six Slums, no! No,  
Cloud understood.  
Even he didn't even really want to  
talk about Hojo!  
Maybe he was obfuscating.  
Cloud apologized,  
but Aerith said it wasn't necessary,  
there was no sorry needed really—  
they probably shouldn't beat a dead horse,  
so to speak. But, ugh,

what a horrendous turn of phrase.  
No, Cloud agreed—  
it was a terrible saying,  
a scumbag saying, really—  
Hojo probably would do it though,  
beat a dead horse?—  
and then fucking, like,  
inject it with mako or some shit,  
make it a mutant steed! Gross! Fucking loser!

Canto VII  
"New Co-Op Cashier  
False Doppelganger Arguments"  
1227:1739 .706

Cloud just at that moment  
had begun to recapitulate,  
this time to the two of them—  
Aerith and Tifa—  
how it wasn't actually the case  
that he'd seen the being,  
no, there wasn't in fact  
an actual physical being  
in that sense of the phrase—  
it wasn't like the men in the black  
cloaks they'd be following in Rebirth  
(were either of them  
familiar with that plotline yet?).  
He'd just began to explain this  
to the both of them,  
and Cloud didn't feel any different  
about it necessarily—  
the fact that he was telling  
the both of them—Tifa was behind the bar  
and Aerith just happened to be there.  
It was fine. Were they familiar  
with Rebirth yet? Probably not, right?  
But no, in this case Cloud had been  
fucking, you know, just sitting  
on this carpet in Wutai at the time—  
he sat on the carpet cross-legged,  
and then he suddenly intuited  
a "purely divine being" emanating  
in the triangle head encapsulated  
in the perfectly square design



that repeated endlessly  
throughout the entire carpet.  
This triangle head was what  
Cloud could only describe  
as a "laughing Allah",  
that's how it struck him—  
there wasn't really a question about it  
in Cloud's mind, and it was actually beautiful.  
Yes, a "laughing Allah"  
was the only way he could describe the divine being,  
which certainly "communicated with him"  
as he sat cross-legged in Wutai  
in a somewhat mystical manner,  
albeit not quite verbally,  
but the being certainly  
communicated in a way  
that caused Cloud to smile.  
Cloud—smile?! The two women  
found that totally hilarious!  
Tifa nearly fucked up  
the beer she was pouring  
she was so surprised to hear  
Cloud of all people  
talking about himself "smiling",  
but neither Tifa nor Aerith  
found this anecdote of Cloud's  
to be disingenuous in any way—  
in fact they both fully supported  
Cloud's confessions and more often  
than not even found them  
legitimately intriguing  
(but there were, of course,  
some exceptions!),  
albeit they generally  
found the anecdotes intriguing

in a one-on-one setting,  
as opposed to this FFM arrangement.  
But that was clearly fine!  
It just so happened Aerith  
was around and she popped in the bar.  
No big deal at all!  
Yet, while contemplating whether or not  
another Moscow Mule  
was advisable or not,  
Cloud expressed quite vigorously  
that he wanted to relay  
a subsequent anecdote  
that he viewed apropos  
of the carpet encounter,  
if that was okay? Of course!  
Well, specifically  
it was that when  
he popped into his local co-op  
grocery store that morning,  
for just a few minor items,  
a couple hand fruits really,  
and the new cashier asked him—  
right as he shifted his headphones  
up off of his ears  
to start the formalized sales transaction—  
if his "brother or something"  
went there sometimes?—  
to the grocery store?  
Did Cloud "have a brother" by any chance?  
Because she, the new cashier,  
felt like she'd seen him before?  
Well,  
Cloud said to the cashier,  
thinking about it for a second,  
he found it quite possible

that this alleged  
doppelganger was actually  
fucking just him!—Cloud himself!—  
that the cashier was  
in that particular instance  
confusing Cloud "for his actual self",  
that this cashier  
"only believed she'd seen"  
someone who looked "just like Cloud" before  
because she'd, in fact,  
seen Cloud before.  
He walked away just momentarily,  
he told Tifa and Aerith,  
just to toss his basket back  
into the stack of baskets  
behind the automatic  
doors. Yeah, he'd take one more  
Mule, please Tifa?  
The new cashier was chuckling  
when Cloud arrived back  
at the checkout counter  
ready to pay for his shit—  
she was in the process of entering  
the item number for his red quinoa,  
chuckling alone—  
"it could've been you" she repeated,  
chuckling, but then,  
Cloud relayed  
to Tifa and Aerith,  
she actually came around to Cloud's particular  
hypothesis.  
The new cashier,  
after thinking about it,  
came to agree with Cloud,  
that she actually probably had seen him

in the grocery store before,  
and that she'd just now erroneously  
figured he had a brother,  
when in fact this hypothetical brother  
was "actually just Cloud himself".  
Tifa considered,  
after she'd ingested the full anecdote  
and served Cloud  
his refreshed Moscow Mule,  
that it was somewhat likely  
that the cashier wanted to  
quote-unquote suck his cock,  
and Cloud didn't necessarily  
disagree with the notion!—  
he certainly considered it  
possible, that this cashier  
may have been amenable  
to something like that,  
but that wasn't quite the point!  
There was a type of wisdom  
latent in the exchange,  
wasn't there?—  
regardless of whether or not  
the cashier wanted to  
"perform fellatio" on Cloud?  
Aerith, by contrast,  
took a more philosophical angle  
to her analysis  
of the encounter,  
because she agreed with Cloud  
that the cashier exhibited  
a certain spiritual insight,  
even if it was inadvertent.  
Aerith, for her part,  
didn't put much of any stock

into the cashier's intentions,  
whether or not they were sordid,  
benign, or simply indifferent.  
Upon acknowledging this  
Tifa noted that she recognized  
Aerith's point of view as valid,  
that it was probably  
the "right way to take it in",  
even if she, Tifa,  
wasn't personally at the point  
of participating in quite that level  
of objectivity  
(if they could, in fact, call it that).  
Cloud noted that,  
at the end of the day,  
he couldn't help it if  
a "certain person felt an urge"  
to suck his cock—that whether or not  
someone wanted to suck anyone's cock  
is something ultimately unknowable,  
that he couldn't simply  
toss potential spiritual encounters  
to the wayside purely because  
of a purported sordid subtext  
or intention. Both women  
agreed with this,  
yet perhaps Aerith  
just a tad more than Tifa?—  
not to say Tifa was somehow  
beside herself with jealousy  
in any material way—no,  
this distinction between Tifa and Aerith  
was probably rooted more so  
in Aerith's basically absurd ability  
to remain philosophically

undeterred about other women  
while steeped in an obvious love triangle.  
Did she even like Cloud, really?  
Because it was really quite evident  
that Cloud, Tifa, and Aerith  
were "collectively entwined  
in a sort of love triangle",  
but Aerith, for her part,  
maintained quite the unique ability  
to remain essentially  
philosophical about it all—  
she didn't seem to allow feelings of jealousy  
to overcome her in the least  
when Cloud relayed anecdotes  
about cashiers that,  
if the three were being honest,  
clearly wanted to whip  
the guy's cock out and suck on it  
for an extended interval of time.  
Did she even really like Cloud?  
His individual feelings on the situation  
were a little ambiguous,  
even when he was all alone—  
Cloud was of course incapable  
of assessing his own feelings  
for somewhat obvious reasons.

Part II: Koreatown Bok Choy  
(Subtitled: "Chapter 6: What is the point of numbers?")

(1) Abstract  
(unmetered)

In 387 BC, around the age of 40, the renowned Hellenist philosopher Plato (428-348 BC) founded his Academy in the then flourishing city of Athens, only a dozen or so years following the execution of his mentor Socrates, whose purported last words were, "Crito, please remember we owe a cock to Asclepius." By contrast, around 390 AD, on nearly equal opposite sides of the so-called Christ event, the Neoplatonic philosopher Plutarch of Athens (350-430 AD) would re-establish the Platonic Academy in Athens, at age 40, where the last of the great Late Antique philosophers—Syrianus and Proclus and Damascius—would work in the shadow of Constantinople. The last of the Academies were shut down by the Imperial decree of Justinian in 529 AD. Yet the birth of Parmenides, one of the great mentors of Socrates (and, via osmosis, of Plato), is believed to have taken place somewhere between 540 and 520 BC, on the equal opposite side of the so-called Christ event as Justinian's decree.



Canto 1.1  
(.769)

Araqi told Jo Yu-ri,  
as they sat in the small hallway wide  
Udon Lab on West Thirty Second,  
right next to the Martinique,  
how he had no recollection  
of re-reading Rings of Saturn whatsoever—  
in fact the only reason  
Araqi even realized  
he'd started re-reading Rings of Saturn  
at all was a sole blue pen underline strike  
under the word Rumelia,  
right on top of page ninety nine  
that, now re-reading it yet again,  
Araqi knew all too well  
he would have never made  
when he initially read Rings of Saturn,  
because at that time  
Araqi barely knew what Rumelia referenced,  
but upon a second reading,  
assuming said second reading  
took place when Araqi believed it did,  
he was totally balls deep in Rumelia lore.  
For all of these reasons  
Araqi believed  
he'd only began his  
second reading of Rings of Saturn  
when he picked up the book again  
just the other afternoon,  
but in actuality,  
according to this particular blue underline  
on the ninety-ninth page of the novel,  
it seemed like he'd actually,

in fact,  
recently started a third reading, not a second,  
but wasn't it a bit befuddling,  
a tad disconcerting perhaps that a person  
could have absolutely no recollection of reading  
a whole fucking hundred pages  
of a novel less than five years prior,  
Araqi thought, a sentiment he expressed to Jo Yu-ri,  
and she agreed that it did seem egregious,  
but also perplexing and maybe even,  
not to be hyperbolic, but a bit ominous?  
But all this,  
the entirety of the pair's specific stream of dialogue  
was abruptly interrupted  
when Jo Yu-ri noted Araqi's  
visibly concatenating frustration  
as they were suddenly, violently  
upstreamed at the bar  
by some greasy fuck in a cobalt blue  
soccer jersey—  
the fact of the matter was  
the two friends only popped in the spot  
to begin with to take a quick listen  
to a particular "xylophone jazz trio"  
Araqi and Jo Yu-Ri heard playing  
from the foyer as they walked past  
on West Thirty Second,  
Araqi being intrigued by a trio  
led by xylophone,  
but once in line at the bar  
they both slowly realized  
how loquacious  
this bartender was with each customer,  
Araqi's frustration concatenating  
with each second he continued to wait for a beer,

and now, this customer in a cobalt blue soccer jersey,  
popped up out of seemingly thin air  
to upstream them, this customer,  
who, for his part,  
had apparently been repeatedly  
scorned in his quest to get a second  
beer himself,  
by none other than this loquacious bartender,  
who kept continuing on about  
checking the pipes in the basement,  
and now this customer  
in the cobalt blue soccer shirt  
audaciously cut them both in line  
to ruthlessly expedite his  
subsequent beverage.  
Araqi was abutting an audible complaint  
but remained unwilling to abandon  
his just-discovered excitement  
for this "xylophone jazz"  
as Jo Yu-ri noted that there was a  
Vietnamese food truck outside,  
right on the corner of Sixth and Thirty Second,  
that she could go get a few egg rolls  
if they wanted?  
Araqi wasn't really in the mood,  
but this didn't deter Jo Yu-Ri  
from ambling outside to see  
"what was up with their dumplings",  
right as the bartender finally attended to  
Araqi's pending request  
for an overpriced quote-unquote  
Italian style beer,  
which didn't taste like Peroni at all,  
and by the time the two got to a seat  
the jazz trio finished its first set

and began its break,  
lighting cigarettes and walking back to the bar  
for their respective,  
Araqi assumed,  
free refills.

Canto 1.12  
(.775)

Of course it was the case  
that Araqi, despite his agitation  
at the fact he and Jo Yu-Ri  
entered this establishment  
with the explicit intent of listening  
to this "xylophone jazz trio",  
only to get stifled  
by a prevaricating bartender,  
by a mysterious shit stain  
wearing a cobalt blue soccer shirt,  
to the extent that by the time  
they were seated with an overpriced beer  
and a handful of subpar Vietnamese egg rolls,  
the fucking trio itself  
stopped pounding xylophones  
and ceased playing jazz.  
But Araqi had other more pressing  
and dire topics of discussion,  
despite the sudden silence  
in the corridor wide restaurant,  
specifically about Jo Yu-Ri's  
new so-called employee,  
Πρίαπος,  
because the fucking guy  
had been talking his ear off about Soju  
for like the whole last week.  
Jo Yu-Ri  
nodded at the comment  
without even an inkling of a hint  
of shock in her gaze.  
She wasn't caught off guard at all,  
as Araqi continued to recapitulate

the guy's monologues,  
about how this country,  
if this nation had any chance at all  
whatsoever, then it needed to immediately  
adopt Soju as its national drink,  
that there was no other option  
but to adopt all iterations of Soju,  
of Korean Rice Wine  
as the proper Bud Light replacement,  
to co-opt this Korean wine  
and rebrand it as essentially fucking American,  
Araqi said.

That the Joe Rogans of the internet sphere  
had prescribed the Donald Trumps  
of the physical world  
as the panacea this country needed,  
via reactionary channels  
posted on a platform  
that ironically enough  
started as a CIA front,  
yet the reality was the true corrective  
could never be found in a Donald Trump.  
No, only in Korean rice wine,  
according to Πρίαπος,  
people needed to start drinking it in bars  
and restaurants in place of carbonated light beers!  
Araqi and Jo Yu-Ri both noted  
that they respected the passion of Πρίαπος,  
and that he was essentially correct  
in his assessment  
that nothing was more American  
than stealing the domestic culture of others  
and rebranding it as our own,  
and Soju was in fact, after all,  
an optimal bar drink,

as it was specifically designed  
to provide more of a buzz than beer,  
but not quite the ill-advised lift  
of the average eighty proof  
grain alcohol.  
Yet, according to Araqi,  
Πρίατος was dubious that the country  
could actually adopt Soju,  
primarily because of people,  
he said, like the median second cousin,  
people who would be reticent to drink  
something quote-unquote Korean  
on the regular,  
people who clung to beliefs  
that people like Ted Cruz  
actually had decent ideas  
about the world,  
that any person who found Ted Cruz  
to be philosophically intriguing  
would obviously be a little reticent  
about imbibing Soju,  
when it was obviously the case that,  
in fact,  
Ted Cruz was probably one of the top ten  
most despicable people on the planet?  
Πρίατος noted Cruz's prevarications  
when asked questions  
like 'Does AICAP ever interact with Israel,'  
saying how it once again demonstrated  
the innately despicable baseline  
of his personality.  
But people like the median second cousins  
of America would actually prefer to discuss  
Ted Cruz with a modicum of nicety  
than just imbibe Korean rice wine

as their default drink of choice,  
which was clearly why this country  
was on the precipice of an  
irreversible decline,  
if not in the midst of it already!  
This country was clearly fucking finished,  
Πρίατος said,  
and it was solely because of this intersection  
of Ted Cruz, Soju,  
and the conceptual second cousin of course,  
Araqi repeated,  
slowly almost believing  
what Πρίατος had repeated  
into his poor eardrums  
day after day that week.  
It was clear to Πρίατος at least  
that the second cousin was a topic  
they must actually legislate against.  
No, not just pontificate about,  
because these second cousins—  
they wouldn't just rescind of their own accord,  
second cousins were instead indicative  
of a structural rot. Πρίατος thought  
that he Jo Yu-Ri and Araqi  
should all move to communicate  
with their New York state  
representatives to see  
if they could begin drafting a bill  
opposing the concept of the second cousin  
in this country.  
Was that doable, did they think?  
Araqi took a bite of an egg roll  
that was somehow still scorching hot  
five minutes after Jo Yu-Ri  
put the plastic plate



down on the table.

The fact it felt a hundred fucking degrees  
out in Midtown  
probably didn't help.

Canto 1.13  
(.753)

Jo Yu-Ri, wiping her petite fingers  
on a thrice folded napkin,  
smearing select remnants  
of truck cooked egg roll grease  
onto the pure white paper,  
shook her head side to side  
and showed Araqi  
the page of the book she'd just opened up,  
Ashbery's  
Self-Portrait in a Convex Mirror,  
and muttered look at all this scribbling!—  
in reference to the inane notes  
the previous owner  
of the paperback had strewn  
all over the first page in pencil.  
Araqi asked her what condition  
she'd bought the book in exactly?  
Was she aware of that level  
of scribbling prior to buying it?  
No, she replied,  
but to be fair nearly every other page of the book  
was entirely clean,  
until of course this final poem,  
the self-titled entry of the collection.  
Obviously some nitwit  
who probably had to write, like,  
a term paper about it,  
Araqi suggested,  
some kind of dissertation,  
and Jo Yu-Ri agreed,  
head bowed in defeat.  
Araqi alleged it remained readable even if,

sure, the incessant pencil scribbles  
were a little distracting,  
certainly off-putting,  
he could totally relate to that!  
The fact of the matter  
was it was increasingly difficult  
to pay discounted prices  
for used books these days,  
without some incessant and/or inane  
scribbling dominating the margins  
of select pages,  
without delays  
in shipping or unexpectedly bent covers  
or subpar paperback bindings,  
although Jo Yu-Ri did note  
of all the fine poems the collection consisted of  
she found the title poem to be the least essential—  
so if one particular poem had to be ruined  
by said scribbling she was at least  
glad it was that one.  
Books, Araqi asserted,  
were actually becoming slowly  
impossible to acquire,  
as production volumes dropped due to  
the increasing illiteracy all around them.  
It was basically a case of when  
before a functional embargo  
would take hold  
in terms of acquiring decent books  
at affordable prices.  
They were rapidly reverting back  
to the Middle Ages or something,  
with rare libraries gated away  
from aficionados jizzing themselves  
over simple access to printed paper.

Jo Yu-Ri thought the emergence  
of the PDF black market  
ran counter to Araqi's hyperbolic claims  
but of course she preferred to peruse  
physical copies as well  
so she felt  
the overall pull of his lament,  
but Jo Yu-Ri then abruptly continued on to note  
in a more vigorous fashion  
her agreement with Araqi  
regarding Πρίαπος—  
did he know that just the other day,  
while watering her bok choy plants  
with his massive phallus,  
he told a story about  
rendezvousing with an exotic dancer?  
Πρίαπος said he'd met the stripper  
just a couple weeks previous  
and that she'd asked to meet with him,  
which he said to Jo Yu-Ri  
he assumed meant she intended to bilk him  
out of some cash at her club  
in Astoria, but apparently—  
to her surprise—  
Πρίαπος wasn't above that,  
so he actually showed up to the club,  
Jo Yu-Ri told Araqi,  
but then, the dancer,  
half in the bag according to Πρίαπος,  
told him she actually meant to meet  
outside the club, so as her shift ended  
he took the dancer down the street  
to some hookah spot,  
smoked shisha then,  
according to Πρίαπος, quote-unquote

"railed her in her SUV on a side street  
after she moved her kid's carseat  
to the side". Jo Yu-Ri  
was a slightly flabbergasted  
at the anecdote,  
which Πρίαπος continued,  
noting how the chick had some issues  
with "suicidal ideation",  
but to Jo Yu-Ri,  
she relayed to Araqi,  
it was a little concerning, no?  
Just because she'd hired the guy  
because his phallus was supposed to be  
beneficial for plant growth,  
and while clearly that was ideal  
for bok choy cultivation  
in Midtown Manhattan,  
she wasn't so certain  
she'd get the maximum value  
of his phallus  
if he was—plowing sluts in SUVs  
on side streets  
next to shisha  
establishments,  
Araqi finished?

Canto 1.14  
(.744)

No, Araqi noted,  
it was certainly uncouth  
that Πρίαπος was, you know,  
potentially having sex with strippers  
outside shisha spots  
in Queens, but still,  
with that said,  
he had come to question Jo Yu-Ri's  
arithmetic just slightly,  
mostly because  
while he understood  
the phallus of Πρίαπος  
was being employed for bok choy  
cultivation and engaging  
in illicit activities,  
and that that particular addition  
seemed to portend poor outcomes.  
But three plus four,  
Araqi said, didn't equal seven—  
not exactly.  
Because truly it equaled  
seven plus the Form seven,  
because sans the Form seven  
it would be basically impossible  
for them to even conceive of seven,  
but, Araqi noted,  
Form seven by its very nature  
didn't engage in the same  
unitary mixing  
that the mathematical seven did.  
What Araqi was saying,  
he reiterated to Jo Yu-Ri,

was that it was possible Πρίαπος,  
being a divine being (of sorts!),  
was probably not tethered  
to the same rubrics of arithmetic  
as others?—  
that Πρίαπος was very possibly  
closer to the Form seven  
than the mathematical seven,  
in which case, while sure,  
his sojourns  
with certain Astoria strippers  
was in poor taste,  
it might not actually have  
a palpable effect  
on Jo Yu-Ri's  
bok choy?

Canto 1.15  
(.794)

Jo Yu-Ri flashed back  
briefly to a bulbous penis  
that was sprayed in graffiti  
onto the foundation of a home  
on Bridgham  
that she passed  
while walking to a Family Dollar  
the other day.  
It was like ever since  
she employed this  
Πρίατος she'd been surrounded  
on all sides by unrepentant penis,  
which probably,  
she reflected,  
served her right for going into business  
with a Hellenic entity  
(especially a so-called deity).  
At the same time  
growing fresh bok choy in Midtown  
gave her a competitive advantage  
no one else had in Koreatown,  
so was it all possibly worth it?  
As Araqi received the tab  
(after drinking his second shitty  
pseudo Italian pilsner),  
at four twenty pm  
(as opposed to Jo Yu-Ri's receipt  
being received  
at three twelve pm)  
he wrote out the tip and,  
when laying the paper  
down on the table



next to Jo Yu-Ri's  
the two realized both tabs  
came to exactly  
twenty-nine eighty-four a piece,  
with each tab exactly consisting  
of a twenty three buck subtotal  
with a dollar eighty four tax assessment  
and five even tip,  
which was a bit of a coincidence,  
almost like a chance event  
that had some sort of cosmic significance?  
The two stared at the two tabs  
in silence as a chubby white guy  
hammering away  
on his xylophone slowly faded  
to black.

$(2 + 3 - 0) = 5$   
 $(1 + 8 - 4) = 5$   
 $(5 + 0 - 0) = 5$

**3:12 pm**  
subtotal: \$23.00  
sales tax: \$1.84  
tip: \$5.00  
total: \$29.84

**4:20 pm**  
subtotal: \$23.00  
sales tax: \$1.84  
tip: \$5.00  
total: \$29.84

$(2 + 3 - 0) = 5$   
 $(1 + 8 - 4) = 5$   
 $(5 + 0 - 0) = 5$

## (2) Abstract (unmetered)

According to the online archive of The New York Times, on February 9 1984, a series of Reagan-era American warships spent nine hours bombarding Syrian and Druze gun batteries in Lebanon. The Druze population of Lebanon and Syria is of course the ancient peoples who arose in the aftermath of the disappearance of the infamous Fatimid Caliph al-Hakim bi-Amr Allah (985-1021). The Druze, for their part, place a great significance on the number five, believing that prophets of each era come in groups of five, which they date back to the days of Antiquity, proclaiming the five great prophets of that era to be: Pythagoras, Plato, Aristotle, Parmenides, and Empedocles. Pythagoras, the eldest of the five, was a strict vegetarian born on an island called Samos in West Asia around 570 BC. He's since been renowned for, among other accomplishments, his musical tunings, the theory of the transmigration of souls, and a unique perspective on numbers, as well as the fact that there's not a single detail of his life that remains uncontradicted. Allegedly Pythagoras left Samos at the age of 40. Perhaps the greatest distillation of what we believe to be Pythagorean teaching can be found in the dialogue *Timaeus* by Plato, who founded his Academy in Athens at the age of 40 himself, around the year 387 BC, nearly two centuries after the birth of Pythagoras. Parmenides, the second eldest of the five, was born about 50 years after Pythagoras in Elea, in Southern Italy, where Pythagoras, by some accounts, committed suicide in Calabria—when Parmenides would have still been an adolescent. Only fragments remain of Parmenides' primary poem on the indivisible Oneness of Being, where a great focus is placed on the concept One, but his ideas are present in more extended form in

the dialogue *Parmenides* by Plato, as well as an extended, partially extant commentary on *Parmenides* by Proclus. Empedocles, another vegetarian (and the younger contemporary of *Parmenides*), was born in Sicily not long after the purported suicide of Pythagoras in Calabria. The last Greek philosopher to record his ideas in verse, he would be succeeded, informally, by Plato and Aristotle. Yet the former, the only native born Athenian of the five, wasn't born until a half decade after Empedocles' death, in the late 420s BC. While Aristotle wouldn't be born until Plato was in his mid-forties. Yet he'd remain at Plato's Academy until he was 37. Yet even Aristotle, the youngest of the five by far, remains an interpersonal mystery to us today. Nothing is known about his life for certain except for the fact he was born in modern day Thessaloniki and that he had a passing interest in botany.

Canto 2.1  
(.761)

Hakim Allah actually desperately  
needed a waifu in Cairo,  
like "so bad",  
but he also felt a certain longing  
for summer,  
for the sun  
and the heat and the accompanying irresistible urge  
to indulge in a nice cold wine,  
being born after all  
in the peak summer month of August  
in Nine Eighty Five and all.  
Some would suggest  
there was possibly even  
a mystical element to it,  
the thirteenth day  
of the eighth month,  
perhaps an arithmetic calculation  
or something of the sort,  
the violent vacillations  
he experienced philosophically?  
Weren't those in themselves a residue  
of an indivisible Oneness,  
violently vacillating between  
strict philosophical schools  
that vehemently disagreed  
with one another?  
Wasn't vacillating between  
philosophical poles,  
violently,  
in a sense, a real dissembling  
of the pernicious dualities  
and multiplicities

we encounter every damn day?  
A middle-aged man was adorned in dapper cloth  
sitting on the patio  
smoking a thin cigarette  
and Hakim, who didn't smoke regularly,  
suddenly felt an intense urge  
to indulge in just one cigarette,  
reflecting back to past moments,  
on equivalent patios  
where he'd maybe puffed a cigarette or two,  
where events were inevitably felt,  
felt in the way that feelings  
must inevitably extend,  
muddled and disgusting  
to recollection and thoroughly incomprehensible  
in material ways.  
Ultimately, it was only when you were  
smoking cigarettes that you actually felt things,  
and feeling things was usually  
a kind of composite phenomena.  
Hakim pulled out a single dinar  
and asked the guy for the great privilege  
of bumming a single cigarette,  
smoking it next to the man  
who was obviously a high ranking court officer  
of the most respectable order,  
to which the man bluntly replied  
sorry last one,  
but there's a "camel shop across the street that sells  
them".  
In no way, shape, or form  
was this man smoking the last remaining  
unit from his pack of cigarettes—  
it would have been fairly clear  
to any person with even

half of a functioning brain  
that this man had many more cigarettes remaining  
in his pack, that while the precise amount  
of cigarettes the man had  
remaining was uncertain  
it was also abundantly clear  
that that amount certainly equaled  
more than one.

It was utterly absurd to assume  
this man was smoking his last cigarette  
on the patio.

With this in mind, purely out of spite,  
Hakim, after waiting a few moments  
in deep contemplation,  
crossed the street and stood in place  
at the camel station,  
where three people were already  
impatiently waiting  
in front of a hand-written  
sign that read Bathroom Break Be Back in Ten Minutes.

There was no option but for Hakim to buy  
an entire pack of cigarettes purely out of spite,  
a spiteful lust to just smoke one cigarette.

A heavy set pasty middle aged lady  
wearing a black napsack  
with thinning light hair on the top of her head  
was first in line,  
and would remain longer  
than the roly poly fair-skinned man  
with the macho accent,  
or the run of the mill day laborer—  
yet, fueled by this mixture of nonsensical lust  
and irrationally insatiable spite,  
Hakim would wait  
nearly an entire half hour

for the attendant to return to purchase  
this pack of overpriced cigarettes  
to smoke a small percentage of  
on the patio.  
He outlasted not only the heavy set pasty female  
and her initial companions  
but even subsequent others  
who approached the window then quickly left  
exasperated at the ridiculous wait,  
at the absurd claim  
on this cardboard sign.  
Yet once this escapade  
was completed Hakim returned to the patio to,  
to his surprise,  
find the same man still smoking a cigarette,  
which Hakim quickly calculated,  
must have been a subsequent cigarette  
or, even worse, a subsequent  
to a subsequent cigarette,  
and the same heavy set woman  
with the black napsack and thin light hair—  
now also smoking a cigarette,  
despite the fact she left the camel station  
before being able to buy a pack,  
which Hakim quickly calculated,  
must have also been supplied by  
the man in the high class cloth.  
The man just moments ago  
was allegedly smoking his quote-unquote  
last cigarette on the patio.  
The man in the high class cloth  
must have gifted the heavy set  
pasty female her cigarette,  
because Hakim was just with her,  
at the camel station,



and she had no cigarettes,  
the only reason she was even  
at the station was to obtain  
additional cigarettes.  
So it was basically corroborated  
that the man adorned in the royal attire,  
at the very least, at the bare minimum,  
had two additional cigarettes,  
if not three additional cigarettes,  
in his pack when he ruthlessly told Hakim  
he was smoking his quote-unquote  
last one, which of course was unsurprising,  
yet, like all implied lies,  
it stung Hakim more vociferously  
when it was finally confirmed  
beyond a reasonable doubt.  
All obvious lies are more benign  
when still existing in an unproven state,  
despite being obvious,  
because a blatant lie, once proven,  
despite the fact its essence  
was already assumed fictitious,  
despite already having attained  
a certain reality as a lie,  
stings with a certain vigor  
when finally confirmed  
as a blatant distortion of the truth.  
All truth is ultimately distorted to some degree,  
and we know this implicitly,  
yet without fail we're monumentally  
dejected upon confirming  
certain distortions of the truth.  
We believe the obvious lie to be fictitious,  
having been obvious,  
that it will mean nothing once

confirmed as a falsity,  
as nothing has essentially been altered,  
what we already treated  
as a probable lie  
simply becomes an actual lie,  
yet when the obvious lie shifts  
from assumed to proven,  
it irrationally concatenates  
and becomes an even more egregious lie.  
Hakim had been shamelessly betrayed  
by a man who owed him less than nothing  
in the world, yet wasn't it perhaps the case  
that by the sole act of smoking cigarettes,  
to some extent,  
the man entered into a social contract  
of benevolently acquiescing a request  
for a single cigarette  
at shitty dive bars.  
To smoke a cigarette at a dive bar  
is to voluntarily enter into a commune  
of like-minded citizens bumming cigarettes  
off each other on occasion,  
and, with that in mind,  
wasn't falsely claiming tobacco poverty  
in such a setting  
a "faux pas of the highest order"?  
Hakim came around to the idea it was  
as he smoked two brand new cigarettes  
on the patio from his brand new overpriced pack,  
after somewhat sarcastically offering the man  
in the royal attire an additional cigarette  
after his so-called  
last one was done,  
as he drank from the white wine  
the bartender was nice enough

to keep on ice for him  
while he waited at the camel station  
for upwards of a half an hour,  
purely out of spite.

Canto 2.12  
(.813)

At the age of thirty five,  
which is, we know,  
only truly divisible by  
the numbers seven and five,  
it's almost inevitable to arrive  
at the realization that the sky  
itself is little more than a tin roof,  
Hakim considered as he sat on the patio  
eyeing the douche bag  
in the royal attire walk away,  
that beyond the sky  
our senses relay to us  
only mirages and lurid  
falsifications,  
purely out of habit,  
with no ill intent whatsoever.  
It's never been with ill intent  
that our senses have utterly let us down  
in nearly every regard,  
it's simply the intrinsic nature of things  
that cause our senses  
to relay lurid falsities.  
Sans memory  
there can't be time.  
At the tender age of thirty five  
all of this without fail  
becomes clear to you,  
that everything is aesthetics  
in a certain sense,  
that the sky itself  
is just a tin roof,  
and Hakim went back into the bar

to ask the aged bartender,  
who it turned out was only  
a couple years older than him,  
for just one more wine,  
where a younger man and his wife  
complained about being banned  
from some local establishment.  
The young man calculated  
how much money he spent  
at this establishment,  
how much money they were forsaking  
by so unfairly banning him,  
never taking  
a second to analyze  
whether the amount of money  
he was spending at one bar  
was even advisable to disclose in public,  
with complete strangers.  
There was a criminal element  
to this banishment  
in the eyes of this young man,  
as this was a situation  
where he was completely sans fault,  
where this establishment had acted  
erroneously, to the extent the error  
was actually criminal.  
He'd never be able to go back to that bar again.  
But would they survive economically  
sans his patronage?  
When Hakim went down the road,  
leaving the riveting conversation  
of the young man behind him,  
to his dismay  
he didn't find a single waifu  
marauding around the city,

the city was completely  
void of any and all waifus.  
No, just some middle-aged dudes  
discussing the current state  
of the Fatimid military.  
How to transcend the tin roof  
was always a matter of great dispute,  
and a recurring voice would whisper  
to Hakim in his sleep  
that very night that there was nothing  
beautiful in the streets  
that afternoon  
for a specific reason,  
because the digestion of beauty  
at certain times  
can make a person exceptionally dyspeptic,  
this was protection.  
Hakim agreed,  
still tasting the six falafels he scarfed down  
on his way home even after brushing  
his teeth multiple times,  
violently vacillating in his own way  
even as he re-entered into a calm,  
deep sleep where he'd  
have a recurrent dream  
of killing himself to cleanse himself.  
Hakim would kill himself  
in his dream,  
yet afterward he'd subsist in a superior form,  
post successfully killing himself,  
void of the memories that haunted him,  
depriving him of a peaceful slumber.  
He questioned these voices  
he frequently heard in his head,  
their origin,

the ones constantly calling him until,  
finally able to assert control  
of his environment, he screamed  
Allah is One repeatedly,  
until the containment of his dream  
was cleansed by his yelling.  
With Hakim in a state of great  
distress and only half-awake,  
The Prophet Muhammed appeared briefly,  
as a mirror image of himself,  
and uttered nothing he could recollect.

### (3) Abstract (unmetered)

In American folklore it's often posited that "second place" is actually "the first loser." While scholars of various stripes have conflicting opinions on the accuracy of such claims, the reality is, at least according to the general populace of the world's greatest country, the saying is functionally viewed as true. The second cousin, strictly defined, is the child of the first cousin in relation to the child of another first cousin, first cousins of course being the respective children of siblings. The number 2 is, in theory, the beginning of all multiplicity, the primal source of a multitude. Without the number 2 there would be no linear single-digit path to 3 and 4 or even 5. In fact all evenness itself is defined, in theory, by an ability to be divided by this number 2. Even binary code, while only consisting of 0s and 1s is still comprised of 2 numbers (0 and 1). And all duality is derivative of the number 2. The number is at times associated with Ceres or Demeter, a goddess of agriculture and fertility, an alleged sister of Zeus. In certain forms of Neo-Pythagoreanism and/or Neo-Platonism, a certain indefinite dyad is an originator of the entire universe, emanating from an ineffable One, whereas certain cosmologies, such as Gnosticism and Manichaeism, are notable for their dualist structures, placing a duality as a first principle, which are in sharp contrast to the more monist constructions found in Akbarism and other orders.



Canto 3.1  
(.747)

Enzo told Daria  
how he was considering  
that it was perhaps  
with a tyrannical exactness  
that he proceeded about his life,  
right up  
through his weekly high fades,  
that he considered a latent geometrical tyranny  
to be possibly ruthlessly  
guiding his life  
as he took quick note  
of a quite sizeable posterior  
in light blue jeans  
that was walking right past him  
as he approached the large brick building  
that contained  
the Department for Economic Development  
on a sunny Friday afternoon  
at four pm on the dot.  
Daria knew Enzo walked there  
to try and slip the clerk  
a quick so-called "business registration form",  
but before she could confirm  
what she already knew for a fact  
Enzo went on to note  
that it turned out the city clerks' offices closed  
half an hour early for their  
so-called summer hours,  
which as it so happened  
was right at four pm.  
Enzo muttered what the fuck  
before continuing on to note

that he was wearing his new tan  
Walmart mesh basketball shorts  
with his white vans  
as the voluptuous woman walked past  
him—by contrast—  
wearing wire rimmed glasses  
on the tip of her thin nose,  
surrounded on three sides  
by curly black locks.  
According to Enzo,  
sometimes it was just preferable  
to sit on a roof  
with your shirt off  
and think about fucking nothing for a little bit—  
even if it was five fifteen  
on a Friday afternoon?  
There was, after all,  
repetition and number,  
he said to Daria,  
but did all numbers "actually repeat"?  
Daria noted she'd been noticing an insane amount  
of five fifty fives  
and two twenty twos,  
plus eleven elevens,  
and even one elevens of late  
but to date  
she'd refrained  
from any attempt to google an explanation.  
But wasn't it the case,  
Enzo interjected,  
since they'd gotten onto the topic  
of sequences of integers anyway,  
wasn't it the case  
that the "second cousin as a conceptual artifice  
was collectively accelerating

the downfall of their country",  
I mean,  
Enzo said,  
second cousins  
are in aggregate all basically cunts,  
right? In Enzo's mind  
it was the clearly the case  
that the second cousin  
was basically objectionable,  
a pitiful  
clinging to a so-called bloodline  
that was, even when more potent,  
still somewhat ambiguous  
if not nonsensical.  
What was blood anyway?  
Daria, for her part,  
didn't have a particularly strong  
opinion on the concept  
of the second cousin  
one way or the other,  
but she admitted that she didn't  
have as big of a family as Enzo,  
which perhaps played a part  
in her quizzical nonchalance?  
No, Enzo  
went on,  
the second cousin was something indicative  
of a structural rot,  
in fact it was something  
that probably needed actual legislation  
to be properly combatted,  
because these second cousins—  
they wouldn't just rescind of their own accord.  
No, Enzo and Daria both,  
they needed to start

"petitioning local representatives"  
to pass legislation  
to abolish this concept of the second cousin.

Canto 3.12  
(.731)

It was abundantly clear to Enzo  
that there was a recurring  
splitting into two  
that was perhaps the most nefarious act  
of all,  
that the first of this or that  
inevitably would become extended  
to the so-called second  
of the same substrate—but why?  
It was this counting—  
this lurid linear extension  
that perhaps offended  
Enzo the most,  
to which Daria, thinking about her bok choy  
with an unerring sense of dread,  
was only partially paying attention to.  
They'd fundamentally forgotten  
something about number,  
Enzo said,  
they'd become addicted to dividing and adding,  
extending and subtracting,  
instead of focusing on concepts  
more steeped in purity.  
Enzo felt as though  
they were meant to recall something essential  
about number, but now,  
somehow,  
that was impossible for them,  
that they'd forgotten for good  
an essential aspect of number,  
which made every situation  
they encountered immeasurably more bleak.

The second cousin itself  
was nothing beyond a symptom  
of a much greater sickness,  
the common cold of counting numbers,  
of becoming unitary  
until they reached infinity.  
Nothing was more infinite  
than the unitary,  
yet the unitary becoming infinite  
was utterly absurd!  
Everything was split into two,  
or split into three,  
all around them were doppelgangers  
and trinities of what was what.  
Multiplicity couldn't exist this way!  
Enzo continued as Daria simultaneously  
considered bringing up a few concerns she had  
with an employee she'd contracted  
specifically in a botanical manner,  
but who, given his unorthodox methods,  
had started to concern her  
given some of his more licentious habits.  
Of course botany and personal matters  
were probably, in most cases,  
considered completely separate issues,  
but due to the specific nature  
of this particular job  
it had begun to bother Daria  
just slightly. Enzo, for his part,  
had an entire pack of cigarettes in his drawer—  
he said to Daria—  
because he'd bought a whole pack the other day,  
"just purely out of spite".  
Did she want to go out onto the deck  
and whack a puff or two from one?

Was she drunk enough  
yet? To smoke a quick cig?  
Because she clearly wasn't listening  
to any of the fucking shit  
he was saying about integers or second cousins—  
about the nonsensical division  
of everything all around them!  
No Daria was, she was listening  
(kind of ...),  
it was just that she was just a tad  
preoccupied, even before coming by  
she'd been walking through a small  
courtyard in the city,  
taking note of the big trees  
growing next to the large brick condo buildings,  
contemplating connecting with nature,  
but also with inanimate objects as well?  
It was one thing to connect with nature  
and trees and plants,  
that was almost cliché,  
but what about connecting with inanimate objects  
"made of plastic  
by wage slaves in East Asia"?  
She'd recently attended divine liturgy  
for the first time in ages,  
she told Enzo,  
and while occasionally  
staring up at the series of icons  
people would have indiscriminately killed  
people for worshipping  
just a few short centuries ago,  
she could have sworn a set of voices  
were speaking to her,  
solely in her mind,  
comforting her but also informing her

that there would be an upcoming time  
that they'd snap their fingers,  
and she'd finally return to them,  
as if that was where she actually  
belonged, in this plane she could hardly comprehend,  
yet communicated to her with no problem.  
She exited her body just momentarily,  
filled with pure relief,  
then the beings  
reiterated a time would arrive  
when they would snap their fingers and she'd return,  
finally,  
to them.

Perhaps she'd have discounted  
the encounter  
if she hadn't, on a whim,  
she told Enzo,  
decided to go up to take communion with her dad—  
and as her turn finally arrived to imbibe  
the blood of Christ Himself,  
she noticed sitting calmly to the left  
of the priest was a Wind Tunnel brand  
floor fan.

The exact same floor fan she'd,  
after taking entirely too many mushrooms  
one particular evening eons ago,  
engaged in an extended conversation with  
regarding the true nature of things,  
during which a certain clarity descended upon her,  
finally understanding, with the utmost purity,  
her true origin and, in turn,  
the primal source of all things.



(4) Abstract  
(unmetered)

"In another dream of wider significance I saw Jonas Lie, with a gilt bronze clock curiously ornamented. Some days later, when I went to walk on the Boulevard St. Michel, a watch-maker's shop window attracted my attention. 'Jonas Lie's clock!' I exclaimed aloud. It was indeed the same. It was crowned by a celestial globe on which two female figures leaned; the works were supported by four pillars, and on the globe a date-indicator pointed to the 13th of August. In a future chapter I will explain what the fateful 13th of August brought with it. This and other occurrences took place during my stay in Hotel Orfila between 6th February and 19th July, 1896. Concurrently with them a larger adventure pursued its often interrupted course till, with my exit from the hotel, a new section of my life began ... August 13th.—The day announced on the Boulevard St. Michel has arrived. I wait for something to happen, but in vain; none the less. I am certain that somewhere something is happening, the result of which I shall hear in a short time. August 14th.—On the street I pick up a leaf out of an old office calendar; in large type there is printed on it 'August 13th' (the same date which was on the clock). Underneath it in smaller type is a sentence, 'Do nothing secretly which thou canst not do also openly.'"

- August Strindberg, *The Inferno*

Canto 4.1  
(.782)

Ultimately, whether the cults of Aphrodite  
engaged in sacred prostitution or not  
is something scholars of history  
are still bitterly torn about,  
but there exist perhaps  
legitimate reasons to agree with either camp.  
On the one hand,  
if the Greeks engaged in,  
what certain participants of the Symposium  
at least believed to be,  
an abutting sacred form of pederasty,  
then is it really that farfetched  
to suggest  
dudes in Corinth were banging whores  
in an Aphrodite temple,  
but just in an intensely ritualistic way?  
Isn't it possible Aphrodite was,  
in some sense, a pre-waifu?  
The true  
origin of the waifu as we know it?  
Later that night, at Itaewon Pochu in Koreatown,  
Araqi was surreptitiously saving  
hentai jpegs onto his camera roll  
as he sat at the small window table  
overlooking West Thirty Second,  
splitting an eel appetizer with Jo Yu-Ri,  
who after a couple shots of Soju,  
was suddenly more forthcoming  
than she'd been previously.  
Unaware of  
yet also unconcerned with Araqi  
saving hentai jpegs

into his phone's camera roll,  
Jo Yu-Ri found herself  
more comfortable with, you know,  
sharing her feelings after about  
half a dozen shots of Soju.  
Was she herself possibly engaged in an ...  
"iteration of sacred prostitution"?  
No!—employing some Greek demigod  
to rub his cock on your bok  
choy plants wasn't —well,  
she didn't know what it was exactly,  
she muttered to Araqi.  
Maybe avant-garde botany?  
But in any case  
definitely not prostitution!  
Araqi noted that: wasn't it possible  
that some thing or some one  
had some sort of, you know, "hold"  
on Πρίαπος?  
That maybe the dude just needed help,  
some assistance, that all this shit  
she was so concerned about,  
vis-a-vis his recent whore mongering  
was the result of certain something  
having a vice grip hold on him?  
Well, clearly he was a little off-kilter!  
she said, that much they could both  
agree on!  
But the essence of that condition,  
the condition of being hypnotized  
in an abutting mystical manner—  
was she the most appropriate one to say,  
or was it possible she didn't actually care,  
that this was an exclusively  
capitalist endeavor,

that her role in the whole  
matter was solely  
rationalist, that as long as  
her bok choy imparted a competitive leg up  
in the heat of Koreatown  
she didn't care one way or the other?  
And, by the way,  
the "bok choy at Itaewon was atrocious",  
she noted,  
so at least that was good!  
The fact of the matter was  
Jo Yu-Ri could definitely  
question how she quote-unquote  
arrived here, so to speak,  
a budding, barely semi-successful,  
restauranteur in Midtown,  
a Johnson and Whales dropout  
and Food Network junkie,  
helplessly  
perusing Craig's List ads,  
desperate for a leg up  
in the most viciously competitive restaurant metropolis  
perhaps on the planet,  
when she stumbled upon Πρίαπος's plight,  
deciding to take it on  
as a botanical advantage.  
People would always note in awe  
how her blue eyes displayed  
a certain reddish gold tint  
about them, possibly  
some faint Spanish blood  
on her Filipino mother's side?  
It seemed her Korean-American identity  
was always slightly undermined  
by this Catholicism of her adolescence—

Catholicism has a tendency  
of making everyone  
a fourth generation Italian-American,  
and Jo Yu-Ri felt this tugging at times as well,  
but then again,  
it wasn't quite like the guy  
necessarily owed her anything,  
because there was nothing  
in their contract (which was non-existent)  
that stipulated how he should spend his free time.  
Yet, Araqi interjected,  
is there not an implicit agreement  
in any business relationship to, you know,  
like, he said, when George Costanza  
became a hand model in Seinfeld—  
he wasn't traveling around  
laying bricks and dipping his toes  
into amateur boxing in his free time!  
Yes, the Costanza analogy  
was an apt one here,  
yet again there was the question  
of the essence  
of Πρίαπος himself,  
how he interacted, or was interacted with,  
in the corporeal sphere,  
which became an increasingly latent issue  
as the two requested a second bottle of Soju.  
It was possible, Jo Yu-Ri considered,  
that "his cock wasn't existent"  
in the way she may have initially thought.

Canto 5.1  
(.760)

Of course Hakim entered the establishment  
looking solely for Amina,  
as at the time he was  
completely captivated by her beauty,  
unwilling to part with this particular image  
of her form that relentlessly ricocheted  
within the confines of his mind,  
captivated, not like he'd been once before,  
by the "comparative witchcraft  
of clever conversation".

No, instead Hakim found himself  
hypnotized by the blunt pure form  
of her beauty, with no edification  
or extrapolation, with no capitulation  
to reason—or even to feeling  
for that matter!

It was simply the case  
that there was no interlocutor,  
not even any remote contemplation  
of this very form that so clearly  
had wafted Hakim through the double doors  
that evening,  
trying to find what could perhaps be deemed  
a waifu.

Now of course there's a complex hierarchy  
of refraction to matters like these,  
of which Hakim, having a decent  
amount of philosophical education,  
wasn't unaware of per se,  
however, whether or not it was  
at the top of his mind at the time  
is a separate matter entirely

(it wasn't!).

There are long range correlations—  
did a female look like someone familiar,  
from years ago,  
like perhaps exactly the same?

In fact,

it was possible Hakim actually  
mistook this particular waifu  
for another person entirely at first,  
back from his secondary school days.

He wasn't even certain

it was her

when he first

stumbled upon her form.

He encountered her form but recalled  
a co-ed he was acquainted with  
from some years ago,  
assuming incorrectly Amina was in fact  
an old friend.

She informed Hakim softly

her name was Amina,

as if people were possibly listening in  
to each syllable uttered from her exquisitely  
proportioned lips, as if specific  
court jesters were waiting in the wing  
to transcribe their conversation  
to latent

gossip columnists.

Scholars,

for their part, would ultimately retroactively  
conflate two possible Aminas as well,  
mimicking unintentionally  
their own source of study.

The fact that Amina was, technically  
speaking, you know, an orphan in a harem

didn't faze Hakim in the least,  
because all of the prophets previously  
noted historically were,  
if not pure whore-mongers,  
then at least sympathetic  
to the plight of the prostitute,  
the prostitute simply existing  
as an extension of the destitute  
and downtrodden as a whole.  
Hakim saw no reason to diverge  
from his predecessors in this regard.  
There's a certain idea  
that the deepest relationships  
are the ones based on so-called  
illuminating conversation,  
predicated  
upon getting to quote-unquote know  
each other, yet you could counter  
that there's actually nothing to know of us  
really at all, that we're purely refractions  
of a source infinitely simpler  
than we seem to be,  
that convolutions are by their very nature  
fictional and steeped in hypocrisy.  
Having a great conversation  
is the acute fallacy of humanity,  
believing you've discovered  
some eternal bond with another person  
is perhaps an affront to Allah Himself.  
Hakim and Amina didn't discuss themselves  
at first, and when they did they struggled  
to recall who they even were,  
which was appropriate.  
Hakim's madness, his indiscriminate killing  
of others was based in this idea.



There was an immediacy to their coming into contact  
with one another.

Hakim, again,  
didn't contemplate Amina's beauty,  
simply because it was an impossible act.  
Memory was something they both  
struggled to interact with.

Amina's beauty was a motor skill.  
Her outline was a recollection  
someone would never  
become conscious of,  
a lurid memory a person completely forgot about  
but still stayed hugging their body  
like a shark jaw.

It was the immediacy of Amina's beauty  
that slowly began to erode  
Hakim's sanity.

Possession sans contemplation  
can be confusing for some,  
Hakim not excluded,  
because we often consider possession  
akin to growing old  
and decaying with someone,  
repeating vows into an open air that,  
if rearranged just slightly,  
would become heavy as bricks.

At the time he passed through the double doors  
to place an eye on her,  
Hakim incorrectly assumed Amina's beauty  
to be of a decaying nature,  
basically that he could possess her  
in a contemplative sense.

Hakim made a poor attempt  
to seem like he wasn't looking  
for Amina as he walked through the double doors,

her beauty already within him  
but in a way that eschewed contemplation entirely.  
Hakim lusted for decay,  
to possess beauty in a contemplative sense,  
to recite vows in air pockets of brick,  
and Amina danced around his ambitions,  
to be honest, fairly effortlessly.  
Had Hakim been able to properly contemplate  
this very real immediacy of Amina,  
then perhaps his sanity  
wouldn't have slowly eroded  
in the manner it ultimately did.  
When he executed those closest to him on a whim,  
in increasingly violent and drastic ways,  
slicing off heads and slitting throats  
by the hundreds, it was only because  
Hakim fundamentally  
misinterpreted the immediacy of Amina's beauty.  
Had he been able to perceive her beauty  
in its actual sense as opposed to  
ruthlessly attempting to tether it to his own  
contemplation,  
then he probably wouldn't have gone batshit crazy!  
Court officers would be beheaded  
because Amina's beauty  
was a motor skill to Hakim,  
when he incorrectly believed it to be  
a roman à clef.  
Yet isn't an eroded sanity necessary?  
Could we possibly suggest that?  
When Hamza ibn Ali  
proclaimed Hakim to be  
divine incarnate, was it possibly because  
Hakim had sacrificed his own sanity  
to make Amina's beauty,

which was of a purely waifu variety, decay?  
Hakim would disappear years later,  
in fact not long after two distorted  
Aminas appeared to him in dream,  
one dark, the other of a light variety,  
yet still even then he remained unable  
to disentangle what it was he saw.  
Yet in any case,  
all that's perhaps a better topic  
for a later date,  
because when Hakim walked through those  
double doors his sanity had already  
started to decay,  
his mental faculties were already  
in a state of disarray.  
As Hakim focused his energies  
on this false image of decaying with Amina  
his sanity itself became dilapidated.  
Hamza ibn Ali called him Hakim Allah.  
It wasn't necessarily the phrases  
Amina repeated that reached Hakim,  
but more so the mode in which she said them.  
She'd whispered pure nonsense to Hakim  
that was nothing if not totally logical  
only a few years before his friend  
Hamza would deem him Hakim Allah.  
Hakim would spend his nights and weekends  
locked in his three hundred square foot living space,  
an ascetic decision of his own accord,  
and meditate extensively on the beauty of Amina,  
its true nature, recreating  
her geometry in his mind,  
speaking with Amina in his imagination,  
creating  
an interpersonal brand of beauty based

entirely on contemplation,  
one where they would decay  
together into old age,  
a human shape that fades  
with time, existing solely temporally,  
never emanating  
anywhere except into the memories  
and photographs which distort and falsify  
everything worthy of our awe.  
This was how Hakim's sanity eroded.  
His asceticism played at least a part  
in his own decay,  
but mostly because he employed asceticism to create  
images in his mind,  
to delve into his memories as images  
as if they contained an essence  
more immediate than Amina's beauty.  
They didn't!  
It's the proliferation of the imagined image  
that ultimately drives us all basically insane  
all the time without fail,  
because of the distance  
we place between ourselves and the image,  
by necessity of course!  
Being deprived of the immediate beauty of Amina,  
Hakim chose to ascetically attempt to recreate  
it via his own imagined images,  
existing almost exclusively within  
the confines of his own contemplative states,  
but whereas his (seemingly shallow) interactions  
with Amina required nothing,  
they merged into each other  
sans conscious thought,  
his imagined images were fleeting,  
always decayed immediately post-construction.

At five thirty five pm one afternoon  
the thought occurred to Hakim  
that he'd been forty for his entire life,  
despite the fact he'd disappear forever at just thirty five.  
He was still obsessed with distance.  
No, it was precisely the notion of distance  
that drove his sanity off the fucking cliff.  
Hakim's greatest creation was perhaps Dar al-Ilm,  
or it could have possibly been his own interaction  
with his sanity,  
because perhaps by dealing with Amina's beauty  
incorrectly Hakim ultimately  
arrived at the true notion of beauty,  
rather than moderately deluding  
himself and decaying with a palatable fib,  
he stampeded full force into delusion.  
He lost track of his sanity completely  
because of it, in a sense  
accurately assessing the false notion  
of Amina's beauty as an item  
you could decay beside.  
The sacred prostitute is incapable of decay,  
there's in fact absolutely nothing more absurd  
than growing old with a so-called sacred prostitute.  
How could you?!

In Ten Twenty One, Hakim would dream  
of two distorted Aminas and then he too would  
disappear,  
not as a result of a palace intrigue,  
or a surreptitious murder, or age and decay,  
because even if those events seemed to occur,  
we should stress that they're no less veil-like  
than the veils Hakim witnessed around Amina's beauty.  
No, to be clear,  
it's fairly evident Hakim himself

became a waifu in his thirty fifth year,  
which was entirely appropriate.  
Disappear is probably the incorrect word to describe it!  
because Hakim gave away  
his sanity in a very real way  
the second he walked through those double doors  
to greet Amina in his own establishment,  
the establishment where he saw himself enclosed,  
like in a large box like container,  
one Spring afternoon,  
the same place he contemplated  
the idea that Allah is the very mirror  
in which you see yourself,  
that you're the mirror  
in which He witnesses His Names.  
We seek to claim  
beauty in a subject-object relationship  
because certain beings have made themselves seem to  
be  
that way,  
not to trick us necessarily  
but just to innocently cause us to go  
appropriately insane,  
and via that appropriate insanity  
finally arriving at the proper nature of beauty.  
Amina in her current state  
enjoyed the fact that Hakim had half of his robe off  
in the middle of the venue,  
his face bleeding,  
tossing dinars into the air screaming  
at men twice his size that he had money!  
Didn't they know this?  
He'd fucking kill them all,  
then he'd eliminate their families,  
then he'd assassinate the acquaintances

of their second cousins!  
But sacred prostitutes are of course  
inveterately drawn to this exact type of insanity,  
a sort of Dionysian losing of the self.  
Years later Hakim would dream  
of killing himself repeatedly  
as a method of cleansing himself,  
a related process. It's probably  
interacting with the atrocities  
of beauty where the greatest lessons are learned,  
but certainly not in an interpersonal  
and quote-unquote deep conversation driven way.  
No, it's via a divine immediacy  
that everything becomes idiotic  
and your rational self is finally recognized  
among everyone as an unwelcome interlocutor,  
unable to wrap his pea-brained head  
around why you're not currently  
wearing a shirt in a public place.

Canto 5.12  
(.775)

Walking through the  
(in retrospect somewhat ominous)  
double doors Hakim took note  
of the same tin roof  
that comprised the sky  
on dive bar patios  
as Amina made it clear  
she had business to take care of,  
she was after all on shift,  
but that it was also important  
that Hakim wait for her,  
please! Don't leave!  
Just wait a minute!  
But fundamentally  
there was nothing for the two to  
discuss beyond Amina  
staring silently into Hakim's eyes  
for extended intervals of time.  
When she finally moseyed over  
toward him as he stood  
nervously, still near the  
double doors,  
he told her he wanted to take her  
quote-unquote  
out of this place,  
maybe even,  
he didn't know,  
take her out to dinner?  
and she laughed in a way  
that spoke to the  
seeming impossibility of the idea,  
and, in turn,



Hakim considered the false duality  
of the physical  
and the Platonic,  
considering that, actually,  
the proper division of kind  
when it came to love  
wasn't physical  
and spiritual  
but instead  
the delayed  
and the immediate.

There was no dialectic present here,  
no long conversations  
on the phone, no getting to know  
one another's so-called secrets  
and indulging in the thrilling idiocy  
of what's hidden,  
of the amusement park  
of tiny little secrets.

There inevitably would come  
a time when Amina actually asked  
Hakim to tell a little more  
about himself,  
that it seemed like,  
now that she thought about it,  
she barely even knew him!  
to which Hakim considered  
his own trauma,  
which of course  
wasn't exactly real,  
he contemplated his youth  
with a rare momentary fervor  
and witnessed that  
all these memories  
became mass-produced

action figures completely melted  
into a strip of pavement  
in the unforgivingly blistering  
Cairo sun,  
and as he turned to his left,  
solely to escape Amina's  
ever intensifying gaze,  
he couldn't help but note  
a Sandra Bullock poster  
for a movie called  
Miss Secret Agent  
hung up adjacent.  
Repeating the title again to himself  
Hakim slowly arrived at the  
disquieting conclusion  
that there perhaps existed an entire  
Sandra Bullock economy  
all around him,  
that entire swathes  
of the film industry  
were indiscriminately  
dedicated to the ruthless  
production of additional  
Sandra Bullock content,  
exclusively constructed  
for a ravenous  
Sandra Bullock fan base.  
People, not at all in obscure numbers,  
absolutely adored  
Sandra Bullock, apparently!  
But how could this be?—  
that these shit stains  
just couldn't get enough of  
Sandra Bullock, could they?—  
to the extent an entire industry

had developed to quench the thirst  
for this Sandra Bullock content.  
Oh no! Miss Congeniality  
wasn't nearly enough Sandra Bullock  
for these lurid masses of  
Sandra Bullock shit stains!  
Hope Floats was barely scratching the surface  
of what was clearly  
a Mariana trench-like itch  
for the unadulterated production  
of Sandra Bullock films.  
Speed and Demolition Man  
and The Proposal—no!  
these insatiable zealots  
demanded Miss Secret Agent  
as well! Miss Congeniality  
the Second: Armed and Fabulous,  
not even that acutely cocksucking film  
could suffice for these cocksucking Crusaders  
of everything Sandra Bullock.  
To Hakim's amazement,  
Miss Secret Agent was still  
somehow necessary!  
Bird Box, Ocean's Eight—  
this endless list of insipid films,  
could there ever be enough Bullock?  
Hakim thought, avoiding Amina's gaze,  
realizing his entire childhood  
was a blob of plastic  
melted into a Cairo pavement.  
There existed an entire sub-population  
that subsisted seemingly solely  
on Sandra Bullock films?  
Hakim asked Amina  
if she'd seen that movie posted over there,

Miss Secret Agent? With Sandra Bullock?  
Was that, like, a sequel  
to Miss Congeniality  
by any chance?  
Amina noted excitedly  
that she'd actually seen the sequel  
to Miss Congeniality,  
that it was called Armed and Fabulous,  
so she cast doubt upon whether the  
particular film could be its proper sequel,  
but then suggested that it was possibly part  
of a trilogy? This Sandra Bullock industry  
had been allowed to proliferate,  
seemingly incessantly,  
and now Hakim realized,  
once and for all,  
that he and Amina basically lived  
derivative lives  
in what was functionally  
a Sandra Bullock driven economy.

Canto 5.13  
(.758)

All around him,  
his whole life,  
he'd been unrepentantly  
surrounded by Sandra Bullock's filmography,  
but only in this moment  
did this unfailingly depressing fact  
become apparent to him.  
In fact, Amina continued,  
glancing at the poster again,  
Miss Secret Agent was actually  
just another name for Miss Congeniality,  
the first film,  
not Armed and Fabulous,  
had Hakim seen it?  
It was actually pretty decent!  
Bullock plays a quote-unquote  
tough and tomboyish FBI agent  
in the Action slash Comedy,  
it was a film that contained  
action yet also comedic relief,  
as Bullock was,  
despite being  
traditionally attractive,  
a tough but also tomboyish  
detective, which challenged  
traditional gender norms.  
One aspect Amina enjoyed  
about the film was the balance of action  
with spurts of comedic relief!  
She loved spurts of  
comic relief!  
This would contrast with Bullock's

later work in a film  
like Bird Box,  
where she'd take a much more  
serious turn in her acting career.  
Hakim admitted to Amina that, actually,  
he believed Sandra Bullock, well,  
that she sucked. No, not that she  
was the worst per se,  
no there were obviously more  
atrocious actresses  
than Sandra Bullock.  
But how many exactly?  
Because Sandra Bullock,  
according to Hakim,  
was a particularly  
nauseating personality.  
He just found her,  
he didn't know,  
a bit of an annoying imbecile?  
While, no, he hadn't seen  
many of her feature films  
start to finish  
he didn't feel like  
he needed to to be able to  
arrive at a fairly confident conclusion  
that she was basically vomit inducing.  
She certainly wasn't  
a pillar of creative brilliance!  
The world, in Hakim's mind at least,  
didn't require any further  
Sandra Bullock films!  
This idea, Hakim said,  
that Sandra Bullock  
should have basically  
an entire industry

built around her,  
for the sole purpose of producing  
more and more  
Sandra Bullock films,  
it seems completely absurd to me!  
Sandra Bullock?  
If there's a single data point  
we can reference to suggest  
that our society is in dire need  
of reform I think it's the putrid fact  
that a movie was produced  
and released under the title  
Miss Congeniality Two:  
Armed and Fabulous!  
The fact that,  
not only was that film  
actually produced,  
but this entire Sandra Bullock  
industry continues to operate  
and proliferate, even to this day?—  
how can you not be just  
a little offended by that, Amina?  
It's all just a tad grotesque  
you have to admit!  
Well I disagree! Amina retorted,  
I like her movies, Hakim!  
I think she's amusing,  
but also brazen in a way  
I find endearing.  
Endearing, Hakim repeated  
equally in disgust and disbelief,  
endearing? No, I watched Bird Box,  
and I'll simply note  
that my left nut  
after a half an hour run

is more endearing  
than that movie, Amina!  
And Speed with Keanu Reeves?  
C'mon! Oh, and don't even start  
with Hope Floats! —  
the fact there  
exists an entire sub-population  
of Egyptians dedicated to, what?—  
the collected Sandra Bullock filmography?—  
is just absolutely  
mind boggling to me!—  
it's actually an affront to good taste Amina,  
it's actually the best Christmas gift  
of all time to utter absurdity,  
it's something we need to employ teams  
of our finest scholars to study  
to produce rigorous case studies  
detailing extended hypotheses  
as to how this state of affairs  
was allowed to occur!



Diagrams

## The Madness of a Cloud

Mode: >.667

11,010:15,461 .712

### Canto I

Total Echoes: 1,859

Total Syllables: 2,546

Approximate Self-Similarity: .730

[C][l]oud was [s][i]tt[i]ng at [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n  
d[r]in[k]ing a Fernet on the [r]o[ck]s e[n]g[a]g[i]ng i[n]  
[l]ight [c]onver[s][a]t[i]on with a [c]o[ck][s]u[ck]er h[e]'d  
ne[v]er [e][v]en met [a][b]out [a] [Q]ueen's [B][l]ood  
[p][l][ay]-in g[a]me that he'd - this [p]arti[c]ular  
[c]o[ck][s]u[ck]er - [r]e[q]uested to [b]e [p]ut on the [T][V]  
at the [b]ar. Well, a[c]tual[l]y [C][l]oud [c]o[r]re[c]ted, for  
the [r]e[c]ord, that he'd a[c]tua[l]ly been [r]eading a [f]ew  
[p][a]ges of [T]im[a]eus [p][r]ior to all this, [m][a]king a  
[f]ew [d]is[p]a[r]ate notes, [f]in[d]ing him[s]el[f] [p]uzzled  
at the [s]en[s]o[r]y in[f]or[m]ation that [c]on[t]inued [t]o  
[b]e [r]e[l]i[ay]ed in[t]o his [b][r][ai]n. [C][l]oud  
[b][a]si[c]a[l]ly a[l]leged he was [f]l[u]m[m]oxed a[b]out  
the [s]en[s]o[r]y in[f]orm[a]tion that [b]e[c][a]me, in  
[s]ome [w]ay, [r]e[l]i[ay]ed to [w]hat he guessed [w]as his  
[b][r][ai]n? - how any of that was [c]o[r]ro[b]o[r]ated, [b]ut  
[m]ore [s]o [C][l]oud [c]on[t]em[p]l[i]ated the [s][t]ati[c]  
n[a]ture of [s]aid i[m]ages - that's [w]hat he [w]as  
[s]p[e]cifi[c]a[l]ly [c]on[t]em[p]l[i]ating [w]hen [a] guy  
[w]ith [a] r[ou]nd-a[s]s [f]a[c]e [l]eaned [o]n[t]o the [b]ar,  
[s]ee[k]ing to [c]l[o]se his [t]ab, obviou[s]l[y] ex[c]ited [t]o  
[t]ell the [b]ar[t]ender that he may n[ee]d to show [h]er  
[h]is I[D], just [b]e[c]ause he [t]oo[k] his wife's [l]a[s]t  
name and [h]adn't [h]ad a [ch]an[c]e to [ch]ange his  
[l]i[c]en[s]e yet? The pa[t]r[on] with the [r]ound-a[s]s  
[f]a[c]e [n]oted how [n]i[c]e the bar[t]ender was ([T]i[f]a!),

[b]ut [w]hat [w]as her [n]ame again? He [c]ould  
 [d]e[f]i[ni]te[l]y [d]isp[l]ay his l[D] if sh[e] r[ea]l[y]  
 [n][ee]ded, just be[c]ause, again, his l[ast] [n]ame [w]as  
 [d]i[f]ferent [n]ow - ta[k]ing his [w]i[f]e's [n]ame and all! Of  
 [c]ourse, [C]l[oud] [n]o[t]ed, [th]at it was [c]lear [th]at  
 [n]o one gave [a] [f]u[c]k [a]bout the [p]r[int]ed name on  
 [a] [c]r[edit] [c]ar[d] in that b[ar], and Ti[f]fa, [f]or her  
 [p]ar[t], [d]i[d]n't exa[c]t[l]y [s]ee[m] l[i]k[e] she was  
 [r]am[p]ing [u]p to [s]u[c]k this [d]ude o[f]f j[ust]  
 be[c]a[us]e he was a [r]a[d]i[c]al [f]eminist. [F]or  
 [C]l[oud]'s [p]art he was still, you know, a[t]t[em]p[ti]ng [t]o  
 get [b]ehind the [b]lunt [s]en[s]ations [b]eing  
 [s]muggled [r]e[l]entl[e]s[l]y into his [s]o-c[all]ed  
 [c]onsciou[s] [e]xi[s]ten[c]e. [E]ve[r]ything was [a]n  
 i[m]age to [s]ome e[x]tent, [r]ight Ae[r]ith? Touch it[s]elf  
 was a [f]u[c]king [s]en[s]o[r]y i[m]a[ge]. I[t] was a [q]uaint  
 [S]p[ri]ng evening where [C]l[oud] [f]elt m[or]e [or] l[es]s  
 [d]e[st]ined to [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[ze], having [s]tarted  
 [d]r[i]n[k]ing w[i]ne in [p]r[e]p[a]r[ati]on [f]or a [F]r[i]d[ay]  
 [n]i[gh]t [d]inner, onl[y] to have Ti[f]fa [b]ail l[ast] m[in]ute,  
 [b]e[c]ause sh[e] [n][ee]ded to [p]i[c]k u[p] a [b]ar sh[i]ft  
 - l[e]aving him [c]om[p]l[e]te[l]y fr[ee] to [c]ontinue  
 this wine [d]r[i]n[k]i[n]g i[n] a [r]i[tual]i[s]ti[c] [w]ay that  
 [w]ould be [c]on[d]u[c]ive to [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al i[d]eas.  
 Yes, [C]l[oud] [c]on[t]inued [t]o Ae[r]ith, it was  
 [b]asi[c]a[l]l[y] onl[y] vi[a] d[r]i[n]k[ing] a[l]l one, [b]ut in [a]  
 r[itu]a[l]i[s]ti[c] [f]l[a]shion, th[at] h[e]'d ach[ie]ved any  
 [s]ort of [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al i[n]q[ui]ry. You [c]oul[d]n't  
 just [s]it at a [d]e[s]k and be[c]ome [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al,  
 at l[e]a[s]t [n]ot for [C]l[oud]! May[b]e [s]ome [p]eo[p]le  
 [c]ould! [B]ut, [n]o, [n]ot [C]l[oud]. He'd i[m]agine [th]at  
 [th]ere were [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] a l[itany] of [p]o[s]si[b]le ways  
 of [b]e[c]o[m]ing [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al - l[i]k[e], [f]or  
 in[s]tan[c]e, [f]or the round-[f]a[c]ed al[b]ino ch[a]p,  
 [p]erh[a]p[s] [t]e[l]ling [T]i[f]fa that he'd [t]aken his wi[f]e's

[l][a]st n[a]me, m[ay][b]e that could [b][e] [s][ee]n as  
 po[s]si[b]l[y] ritua[l][i][s]t[i][c] i[n] a w[ay], a g[a]tew[ay] to  
 [s]ome [s]ort of be[c]oming [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al. This was  
 a[c]tua[l]ly [s]cien[c]e, [C][l]oud [t]old [h]er [h]e [th]ought  
 at [th]e bar, [s]uc[c]e[s]sfully avoidi[ng] [m]a[k]i[ng] any  
 eye [c]on[t]a[c]t with the round-fa[c]ed [m]an. Was it  
 [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]ily [s]t[r]ange at all that [o]n[c]e the  
 G[r]ee[k]s w[en]t extin[c]t [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]y w[en]t m[or]e  
 [or] l[ess] [c]omp[l]e[t]e[y] and utter[l]y downhill and  
 [n]ever l[oo]k[ed] b[a]ck in the l[e]a[s]t, [th]a[t] [th]e  
 l[a]s[t] group to [r]ea[l]l[y] [r]ea[ch] much of any  
 [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al [s]u[c]ce[s]s made a [s]in[c]ere  
 e[ff]ort to [c]onjoin getting [f]u[c]ked [u][p] with  
 [c]on[t]em[p]l[ating] in[t]e[l]ligible [ph]e[n]o[m]e[n]a? -  
 [th]at [th]e[G]r[e]e[k]s a[t]t[em]p[t]ed [t]o [m]a[r]ry  
 i[n]e[b]r[i]tation and [r]igo[r]ous dia[l]e[c]tic? [Th]at all  
 [th]ought since - to [p]a[r]a[ph]r[ase] [N]orthhead - had  
 been a m[is]or [f]oot[n]ote to [P]lato or [w]hatever? [Th]e  
 [th]ing [w]as, a[c]cording to [C][l]oud, you just [c]oul[d]n't  
 w[i]l[l]y n[i]l[l]y [d]elve into metaph[y]s[i]cs  
 [c]omp[l]e[t]e[y] [s]o[b]er! [B]ut that wasn't to [s]ay a  
 [p]e[r]son should [n]e[c]e[s]sarily [b]e[c]ome [s]ome  
 dege[n]e[r]ate al[c]choh[oli]c either, [b]e[c]ause a  
 [d]ege[n]e[r]ate [d]runk would in [n]o w[ay] [m]a[k]e a  
 g[r]ea[t] [m]eta-phys[i]c[i]st either - that was  
 [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly impo[s]si[b]le, [b]e[c]ause, l[i>k]e [C][l]oud  
 [s]aid, the [s]o[l]o m[od]e of in[e]b[r]i[ation] should  
 [b]e done [r]itua[l]i[s]t[i]c[a]lly, in [s]p[ur]ts, at [c]e[r]tain  
 times. You [c]oul[d]n't just [b]e l[i>k]e h[i]t[t]i[ng] the [b]ottle  
 [a]s soon [a]s you wo[k]e [f]rom a [s]lum[b]er! - a[ft]er  
 [s]aid in[e]b[r]i[ation] [s]essions you'd [r]e[q]uire  
 [s]o[b]e[r]iety to [p]arse through [w]hatever it [w]as that  
 [c]ame to you via [s]aid [c]ontem[p]lation, [n]o? In f[a]c[t],  
 the [a]c[t]ual [s]cience was [n]othing [b]eyond this  
 [p]ar[s]i[ng] th[r]ough of in[e]b[r]i[ation] [s]essions of

[r]igo[r]ous [c]ontem[p]l[ə]tion! That was it - what [l]a[i]d  
 [b]eh[i]nd [l]ogi[c] and metaph[y]s[i]c[s], in [C]l[oud]'s  
 m[i]nd at [l]east! [B]ut in[e]b[r]i[ation] [c]ould [b]e  
 anything [r]eally - [C]l[oud] [c]ould en[t]er a s[t]ate of  
 in[e]b[r]i[ation] in [a] [c]ar [a]l[one] on [a] Tuesd[ay] [A]M,  
 without [c]onsuming a damn thing. [A]e[r]ith [m][or]e [or]  
 less ag[r]eed, [a]dding th[at] on the one hand a  
 [ph]i[l]oso[ph]ical [m]i[nd] should [b]e a[b]le [t]o  
 ana[l]yze, in[t]er[p]r[et], ex[t]r[a]p[ol]ate, all of that  
 [s]cien[t]i[f]ic [s]t[u]ff - but, on [th]e o[th]er, i[f] you  
 [f]ail to [p]l[a]ce yourself [i]n a [p]os[i]t[i]on to [r]e[c]eive  
 [a]n[y]thing to [a]n[a]lyze, in[t]er[p]r[et], or  
 ex[t]r[a]p[ol]ate then you were [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly  
 [s]c[r]ewed! [C]l[oud] m[or]e [or] l[ess] ag[r]eed [b]ut  
 [a]dded th[at] - [s][a]ns this ty[p]e of "in[s]p[ir]ation," [s]o  
 to [s][p]ea[k] - they'd [b][e] [s]tu[c]k [s]t[i]t[i]ng at [a]  
 ta[b]le just [n]oodl[ing] [a]r[oun]d [n][on]s[e]n[s]i[c]a[l]ly,  
 v[a]l[ui]ng [b][a]c[k] [a]nd forth [b]e[t]ween [t]wo  
 [t]ypes of [n]othing[n]ess, and then just pr[o]b[a]b[ly]  
 k[n]o[c]king [o]ff s[o]me[o]ne else's [w]ork [b]y  
 [a]c[c]ident. [B]ut [n]one of this [w]as [n]ew! It [w]asn't  
 [l]i[k]e [C]l[oud] [w]as [b][r]ea[k]i[n]g [n]ews i[n] a[n]y  
 [w]ay. [A]t this point [A]e[r]ith [a]sked - you k[n]o[w,  
 was thi[s] [a]l[b]i[n]o douche [b]ag, he was an e[l]ement  
 of this [a]n[a]l[y]s[is]? [N]o, [n]ot real[l]y - a[c]cording to  
 [C]l[oud] - maybe the g[uy] was [t]r[an]s[form]ing a [t]ad [t]oo  
 hard? - to [p]r[e]s[e]nt him[s]e[l]f as a [s]p[e]c[i]f[i]c  
 ar[c]he[t]y[p]e [t]o the gene[r]al [p]ubli[c], as a g[uy] who  
 [d]e[c]i[d]ed to [s]p[ri]t [i]n the fa[c]e of his [o]wn  
 [c]h[r]o[m]o[s]o[m]e [c]ount, [w]hich [w]as [s]o[m]ething  
 [C]l[oud] [p]er[s]ona[l]ly en[d]or[s]ed! Gran[t]ed [C]l[oud]  
 [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] [w]oul[d]n't [d]o it [b]y [t]h[a]n[k]ing his  
 [w]ife's [l]ast [n]a[m]e, [b]e[c]ause [C]l[oud]  
 [p]er[s]o[n]a[l]l[y] was obviou[s]l[y] more [p]r[og]one [t]o a  
 [t]h[y]p[e] of [i]l[l]o[i]ated and over[l]y [d]ramatic

[s]elf-ann[i]hi[l]ation than a [s]ub[s]ervient and  
[d][i][s][i]ngen[u]ous[l]y [m][u]ted [f]e[m]i[n]ist  
a[n]nihi[l]ation, b[ut] he w[a]sn't i[p][s][o] [f]act[o]  
op[p][o]sed to either! Ae[r]ith ag[r]eed [on]e h[un]d[r]ed  
[p]er[c]ent! But [C][l]oud [s]till would g[o] a [l]ittle [f]urther,  
n[o]ting [th]at i[n] [th]e i[n]telligible [s][ph]ere, as  
[s][o]me[o]ne [l]i[k]e, [s]ay, Pr[o][c][l]us would n[o]te, that  
[s][o]-[c]alled [f]orms were [s]omehow able to  
[p]arti[c]i[p]ate in [o]ne an[o]ther w[i]thout m[i]xing,  
[w]hereas [w][i]th[i]n the [s]en[s]ible realm they  
[p]art[i][c]i[p]ated i[n] th[i]ngs and [s]ub[s]e[que]nt[l]y  
got [d]irt[y]. But [C][l]oud [th]ought [th]at it [w]as [w]orth  
going [o]ne [s]tep [f]urther - [s]ince they were  
[d]i[s][c]u[s]sing a[n]nihilation [a]nd [s]tu[ff] [a]n[y]way,  
[th]at [th]e [p]er[c]eiv[er] m[i]x[i]ng be[t]w[ee]n [f]orms  
that [t]ook [p]lace in the [s]en[s]ible a[r]e[n]a was it[s]el[f]  
j[u]st a [p][ro]je[c]tion of [m]ixture but not a[c]tual  
[m]ixture. The in[t]el[l]igi[b]le sphere, [b]eing [p]ure[l]y  
e[m]an[ate]d, [p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]at[ed] w[i]th[i]n i[t]s[e]lf without  
[m]i[x]i[n]g i[t]s[e]lf, while i[n] the [s]e[n]si[b]le  
[s][ph]ere i[t] [d]i[d]n't [s]eem like that was [p]o[s]si[b]le,  
that [b]y [p]arti[c]i[p]ating w[i]th[i]n [s]en[s]ible [th]i[n]gs  
[th]ey [b]e[c]ame e[s]sential[l]y m[i]xed w[i]th them,  
a[s]suming they were [c]ategori[c]a[l]l[y] [s]en[s]ible.  
E[s]sential[l]y [n]a[t]ure was t[ai]nted, which of [c]our[s]e  
[C][l]oud [a]nd [A]erith k[n]ew all [t]oo [w]ell! [W]ay [t]oo  
[w]ell! He[n]c[e] thei[r] sha[r]ed a[c]quie[s]ce[n]c[e]  
toward [o][c]c[a]sio[n]al [a][n]nihil[a]tion! [B]ut even this  
[s]en[s]i[b]le f[i]lth, [s]o to [s][p]ea[k], [C]loud [th]ought,  
[th]i[s] [p]er[c]eiv[er] m[i]x[i]ng u[p] i[n] the  
[p]arti[c]i[p]ation of [s]en[s]i[b]le th[i]ngs, wasn't it [a]l[s]o  
[a] [p]roje[c]ti[on]? - [a]n [e]man[ati]on, just as the  
[p]ar[t]i[c]i[p]at[i]on of the in[t]elligible [s]phere was  
al[s]o [a]n [e]m[an]a[n]ation of the [p]r[i]m[ar]y u[n]ity of all  
things? Which, yeah, [b]r[ought] [C][l]oud [b]a[c]k to

th[a]t al[b]i[n]o [r]ound-[f]aced [f]u[c]k at the [b]ar,  
 [t]a[k]ing his wi[f]e's [l]ast [n]ame - [b]e[c]ause  
 ul[t][m]ate[l][y] the al[b]ino's [v]antage point wasn't  
 [r]e[m]ar[k]a[b]l[e] di[v]ergent f[r]om [C][l]oud's or  
 Ae[r]i[h]s, [C][l]oud thought. Thi[s] al[b]i[n]o was  
 [p][r]o[m]oting a [c]ertain t[y][p]e of an[n]i[h]ilation of their  
 [c]ultu[r]al-[s]en[s]i[b]le [r]ealm, [th]in[k]ing [th]at [th]e  
 [p]at[r]iar[c]hal lineage of their [s]o[c]iety was  
 [b]a[s]i[c]ally [s]omething obje[c]tiona[b]le, [s]omething  
 e[s]sential[l]y t[ai]nted, that should [b]e a[n]nihi[l]a[t]ed in  
 the [s]ervi[c]e of [s]omething [m]ore pure. O[k]ay, well,  
 [C][l]oud [th]ought [th]at [m]a[de] a [m]odi[c]um of  
 [s]ense! [M]a[y]be t[a]k[ing] his wi[f]e's [l]a[s]t n[a]me was  
 in a [s]e[n]s[e] a g[r]ea[t]er [f]orm of [p]u[r]ity than [l]o[c]king  
 a woma[n] i[n] a [k]itche[n] and [e]xpe[c]ting a blowjob  
 [e]v[er]y other [e]v[en]ing, [C][l]oud thought. Ju[s]t as  
 [P][r]o[c]l[us] and [S]o[c]ra[t]les [s]en[s]ed [th]at [th]e  
 in[t]el[l]igible [s][p]here [p]arti[c]ipated w[i]th [i]t[s]el[f]  
 yet not in a [w]ay [w]here it m[i]xed w[i]th [i]t[s]elf, [th]at  
 [th]i[s] was [d]i[s]tinct f[r]om our [f]urther [d]e[s]cen[d]ed,  
 [s]en[s]i[b]le [s][p]here where things [p]arti[c]ipated  
 [w]ith [o]ne another [b]ut got [m]ixed u[p] in the  
 [p]ro[c]e[s]s - well, [m]ay[b]e this al[b]i[n]o [m]an was  
 [n]o[t]ing [th]at [th]e [p]a[t]riar[c]h[y] was a  
 [p]ar[t]i[c]ipat[i]o[r]y m[i]x[i]ng that [l]eft un[s]eem[i]ngly  
 [c]um [s]t[ai]ns - [f]or [l]a[c]k of a better [ph]r[ase]! - on  
 hu[m]an ex[p]e[r]ience. [P]at[r]iar[c]hy, in the al[b]i[n]o  
 [m]an's [m]i[n]d, should [b]e a[n]nihi[l]ated [b]e[c]ause of  
 this [s]en[s]i[b]le m[i]x[i]ng u[p], this [p]u[t]rid [t]ai[n]ting  
 of [w]hat [w]ould [b]e [b]etter o[f]f [p]ure. And [t]a[k]ing  
 your [n]i[c]e wi[f]e's [n]ame was a [p][r]o[p]er [m]ode of  
 an[n]i[h]ilation in [r]es[p]onse. Ae[r]i[h] r[e]mar[k]ed that  
 she knew [C][l]oud would inevita[b]l[y] [b]r[i]ng the  
 dis[c]ou[r]se [b]a[c]k to this [p]oo[r] ch[a]p [c]l[os]ing his  
 t[a]b, [b]ut, just to [b]e c[l]ear, [w]hat [C][l]oud [w]as

saying [w]as [th]at [th][i]s m[i]xing [th]at o[c]curred in the [s]en[s]ible [r]ealm was it[s]elf ju[s]t a [s]e[p]a[r]ate [p][r]ojection - ju[s]t a l[e][s]ser mode of [p]ro[j]e[ct]ing! So [w]hile the [m]a[t]erial [w]orld [m]ay have di[s]gu[s]ted them, [p]erha[p]s [m]oving the [t]wo [t]oward [s]ome [s]ort of [a]ll-en[c]om[p]a[s]sing [c]on[c]e[p]tual [a]nnihilation, [a]nd [a]s [m]uch as the [p]a[t][r]iarchy [m]ight have seemed [p]u[t][r]id to the al[b]ino hus[b]and at the [b]ar who [l]oo[k]ed to an[n]ih[i]late him[s]el[f] [b]y ta[k]ing his [n][i][c]e w[i][f]e's [l]a[s]t [n]ame, it [c]ould be wise to [c]on[s]i[d]er [th]at [th]ese [d]i[s]gu[s]ting a[g]g[r]e[g]ates were them[s]elves [s]im[p]ly [d]e[r][i]vat[i]ve [p]roje[c]tions, [th]at [th]ey weren't a[c]tual [m]ixtures, [th]at [th]ey were just [d]erivative e[m]anations as o[p]posed [t]o [t]at[t]oos of what [th]ey [th]ought [th]ey [d]e[s][p]ised. Aerith [w]as a[w]are. She wasn't [d]i[s]tressed a[b]out it, [b]ut she k[ne]w this poor al[b]i[n]o g[uy] would in [t][i]me [t]a[k]e the [b]r[u]nt [o]f it from [C]loud. [C]loud [q]uestioned whether he [d]i[d]n't [d]eserve it? [P][l]us [l]i[k]e they'd al[r]eady im[p][l]i[ed] - they [m]u[s]t to [p][r]o[c]eed from the i[m]mane[n]t [t]o the [t]ran[s]cende[n]t, no?

## Canto II

Total Echoes: 2,174

Total Syllables: 3,037

Approximate Self-Similarity: .716

[C][l]oud [f]ound it a [t]ad [b]e[f][u]dd[l]ing, j[u][s]t [b]e[c][au]se [T]ifa [s]aid sh[e]'d h[a]d [a]n [o]dd [d][r][e]am [a][b]out him the [p][r][e]v[i]ous night, and h[e]'d [r]e[p][l]ied [b][l]unt[l]y that he [d]i[d]n't usual[l]y have [d]reams a[b]out [p][e]o[p]le h[e] knew, somehow [c]om[p][l]i[te[l]y [p]urging the [f][a]c[t] [f]rom his m[i]nd th[at], just that n[i]ght, [h]e'd [h]ad a [v]i[v]id dream



in[v]ol[v]ing one of his [f]i[r]st gi[r]l[f]riends and he[r]  
[c]u[r]rent (to the [b]e[s]t of [C][l]oud's know[li]edge)  
[s][p]ouse. [H]ow [c]ould th[at] [h][a]ve [p][o][s]si[b]l[y]  
[s][l]i[p]ped his [m]e[m]o[r][y], given the [v]i[v]a[c]it[y] of  
the [d][r]eam it[s]elf? [B]ar[r]ett [d]i[d]n't have a [c][l]ue  
[e]ither, [r]eal[ly]. [H]is ex and [h]er [h]usband were  
[l]i[v]i[ng] w[i]th [C][l]oud and h[i]s [f]i[c]tional wi[f]e in a  
[m]o[d]est [c]on[d]o they'd been l[ea]sing in Up[p]er  
[M]idgar, yet he [t]old [T][i]fa he "[n]ever [d]reamt" about  
[p]eo[p]le he k[n]ew, yet [p]erha[p]s the [m]o[s]t  
be[f]uddling a[s]p[ec]t of it [w]as that [w]hen he'd said  
th[at] to [h]er [h]e [a][c]tua[l]l[y] [b]e[l]i[ev]ed it! [C][l]oud's  
ex-girlfriend and h[i]s [f]i[c]tional [w]i[f]e had [b]e[c]ome  
s[o]me[w]h[at] [f]r[i]end[li]y i[n] the [d][r]eam, i[n] the  
[c]on[d]o, and the wh[o]le or[d]eal, in [C][l]oud's  
[d][r]eam, st[r]u[c]k him as total[ly] [f]ine i[n]i[tial]l[y].  
H[i]s [f]i[c]tional [w]i[f]e [w]as ob[s]c[u]red, a [p]u[r]e  
[m]irage, [w]hile his ex [w]as [a]n i[m]age of [h]ow [h]e'd  
k[n]own [h]er in the [p]ast, [n]ot [h]ow she was [n]ow  
([n]ot that [h]e k[n]ew [h]ow she was [n]ow!), [b]ut  
eventua[l]ly [C][l]oud [b]egan [t]o [c]ome [t]o the  
[r]ea[l]ization [th]at [th]i[s] was his ex-[r]oman[tic]  
in[t]ere[s]t, and that his [c]u[r]rent wi[f]e and  
ex-girl[f]r[i]end [b]e[c]oming [f]r[i]ends was [a]n  
[a]b[s]olute[c]y [c]ata[c]ly[s]m[i]c deve[lop]m[en]t for him  
[s]ocial[ly], [th]at it [w]as [th]e [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] [w]or[s]t  
[th]ing [th]at [c]ould [p]o[s]si[b]l[y] [h]a[p]pen to his  
[m]arriage. [H]e [w]ondered [w]h[at] the [h][u]sband of  
[h]is ex [w]as thin[k]ing - [C]loud [w]as [w]ondering how it  
[w]as ex[a]ctly th[at] he got r[o]ped into this wh[o]le  
[th]in[g] as he was [e]xitin[g] [t]his a[p]art[m]ent into an  
U[p]per [M]idgar that, of [c]ourse, wasn't [e]xa[c]tly  
U[p]per [M]idga[r] at [a]ll! Yet on[l]y hours [l]ater when  
[T]ifa [t]old [C][l]oud sh[e]d had a [d]r[e]am w[i]th h[i]m  
[i]n [i]t that [n]ight he [c][l]aimed to [n]ever [d]r[e]am

a[b]out [p]eo[p]le he k[n]ew. Odd! [B]ar[r]ett [n][o]ted  
[th]at he just [d]id, [th]ough, [r]ight? [Th]at his [s]tatement  
[t]o [T]i[f][a] was [f]a[l]s[e], [n][o]? Um, yeah, th[a]t's  
ex[a][c]t[l]y what [C][l]oud ju[s]t [s]aid! [C][l]oud  
[r]e[i]te[r]ated that it was "[l][i]te[r]al[l]y [th]at night" [th]at  
[h]e'd [h]ad [th]e [d][r]eam, [f]urther em[p]hasizing the  
ab[s]ur[d][i]ty of h[i]s [s]t[a]te[m]ent [t]o [T]ifa. [M][a]ybe,  
[C][l]oud thought, it was [c][l][o][s]er to a  
[c][o]in[c]i[d]en[c]e th[a]n [a]n a[c]ute  
[m]i[s][r]e[m]em[b]erin[g] o[r] fo[r]gettin[g]? Was that  
[p]os[s]i[b]le? [M]e[m]o[r]y was ellip[tic]al  
[s]ome[t]imes. [B]ut i[n] a[n]y [c]a[s]e, he [t]old [B]a[r]rett  
[h]e'd [h]ad another d[r]eam [r]e[c]ent[l]y - if [B]a[r]rett  
was [b]y any chan[c]e [i]nte[r]e[s]ted i[n] [l][i]s[te]ning to  
more [b]ullshit a[b]out his [d][r]eam [s]tates? - where  
[C]loud had [d]i[s]c[ov]ered a g[l]ow[ing], f[l]uo[r]e[s]cent  
i[n] [s]e[c]t i[n] one of the [d][r]aw[er]s on a  
[s]c[reen]ed-in patio that [d]i[d]n't ex[i]s[t] i[n]  
[s]o-c[all]ed "[r]eal [l]i[f]e," and [C][l]oud to[s]sed the  
[f]u[c]king thing [o]ut[s]ide [o]nto the gras[s], [k][i]nd of  
[d]i[s]gu[s]ted [b]y it to [b]e hone[s]t, on[l]y to  
[d]i[s]c[ov]er that [s]a[m]e i[n]s[e]c[t ju[s]t a [f]ew  
[m]o[m]ents [l]a[te]r - but [n]ow a[p]pea[r]ing in a  
huma[n]oid [f]orm, [s]tanding out[s]ide the [s]c[reen]ed-in  
[p]atio, ho[p]ing to b[e] [l]et in. Now, in [th]e dr[e]am  
[th]ere was a [l]ittle [g]e[t-to[g]e[th]er on [th]i[s] [p]ati[o],  
[s]o [C][l]oud [w]as a [l]ittle wa[r]y of [l]etting this  
[b]e[i]ng - who was female, [t]o [b]e [c]l[ear] - i[n]to the  
[p]arty, [b]ut [c]u[r]ious[l]y [e]ve[r]yone [e]lse at the  
[p]o[w]-wo[w] [s]eem[ed] total[l]y i[n]c[a]p[a]b[le] of  
[p]er[c]ei[ving] her, [e]ven a[f]ter [C][l]ou[d] al[l]ow[ed] her  
in? Yes, [C][l]ou[d] al[l]ow[ed] her in and the [f]orm of  
[c]ommuni[c]ation be[t]ween him[s]el[f] a[n]d the  
e[n]t[i]t[y] was [s]i[m]p[l]y a [s]eries of vague [f]eelings,  
[p]erha[p], he [th]ought, [th]i[s] was [s]ome [k]i[n]d of

[r]em[i]nder that you [c]ouldn't just, you know, [c][r]eate  
 [th]ings - [th]at [r]ef[r]eshing [s]ynthe[s]es are the  
 b[e][s]t [w]e [c]ould do? [W]ith [th]at [s]aid, [th]ey [s]tarted  
 [c]o[p]ulating on the [p]atio. [B][a][r]rett wan[t]ed [t]o  
 [c][l][a]r[i]f[y] [th]at it was [th]e [b]utter[fl[y] [w]oman  
 that [C][l]oud [w]as [f]u[c]king? Or [w]hatever she [w]as?  
 [W]ell, [C][l]oud n[o]ted, [o]nly [w]hen she [b]e[c]ame a  
 human [b]eing, of [s]ome [s]ort, [th]at [th]at [w]as [w]hen  
 the [c]o[p]ulation o[c]curred, obviou[s][l[y]! [B]ut, with  
 that [s]aid, it was a[c]tual[l[y] ((k]ind of?) int[r]iguing [t]o  
 [B]a[r]rett, [t]o [b]e honest? [B]ut, mo[r]e impo[r]tant[l[y],  
 [C][l]oud [r]eal[l[y] wan[t]ed [t]o know how [S][e]v[e]nth  
 H[ea]v[e]n was [l]a[s]t night, [b]e[c]ause [B]a[r]rett  
 [s]top[p]ed [b]y there, [d]i[d]n't [h]e? [H]ow was it? Well.  
 [L]et's [s]ee. [B]arrett [d]e[f]inite[l[y] [f]elt the [p]urit[y] of  
 the [b]ooze ex[p]and w[i]th[i]n h[i]s che[s]t u[p]on his  
 [f]ir[s]t [s]i[p], and while the [b]ar[t]ender ((o]bvious[l[y]  
 [n]o[t T]i[fla, [b]ut he [d]i[d]n't [c]atch her [n]ame) was  
 s[l]ight[l[y] more a[f]fable than [w]hen he [w]ent there  
 [w]ith [C][l]oud, but she [d]i[d]n't [a]c[tual[l[y] [a]sk [w]hat  
 [f]ruit he [w]anted [i]n the dr[i]nk. [S]itting a[l]o[n]e at  
 [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n Bar[r]ett [t]oo[k] n[o]te of him[s]elf  
 [t]o[s]sing the [s]ingle orange [s][l]i[c]e onto h[i]s th[i]n,  
 [n]ow i[m]m[e]d[i]ate[l[y] [m]oist [n][a][p]k[in and  
 [m]a[n]ual[l[y] extr[a]c[t]ing the [s]ingle [s]eed th[at] h[ad]  
 been ex[p]elled [f]rom the o[r]ange [i]nto the [l]i[qu]or  
 [f]rom the gl[a]s[s], a[n]d i[n] doing [s]o, he n[o]ted [th]at  
 all [th]at he'd a[cc]ounted for [a]t the [b]ar - the  
 [a]ff[ab]l[i]t[y], the [f]ruit, the s[e]ed - that extr[a]c[t]ing  
 those id[e]as [o]ut [o]f the air was [b][a]s[i]cally the  
 [s]ame as the [c]oo[r]dinate-t[r]a[c]king [r]epo[r]ted [b]y  
 [r]emote viewers. He gl[an]ced [b][a]c[k] a[t] the [b]ar and  
 too[k] [b]rief note of the [b]artender ch[u]gging [a] shot  
 [o]f [b]ooze with a [c]u[s]tomer and was vio[l]ent[l[y]  
 sma[c]ked in the [f]ace with an a[c]ute [m]e[m]o[r]y of

[r][i][p]p[i]ng [s][i]m[i]lar shots with a [s][p]e[c][i][f][i][c]  
 [b]artender [f]rom his [p]ast, [w]hich [w]as [b]a[s][i][c]ally  
 ju[s]t a[n]other [s]et of [c]oordi[n]ates, [b]ut these  
 [p]ar[t][i][c]u[l]ar [c]oordinates [r]e[t]urned [t]o [h]im, [h]e  
 [d][i][d]n't [p][l]u[c]k them [o]ut [o]f the air. He [d][i][d]n't  
 [p][l]u[c]k these ri[p]ping shots with a bartender  
 [c]oordinates [f]rom a [r]a[p]id [r]ush of in[f]ormation - no,  
 [s]aid [c]oordinates [r]eturned to him [a]s he [s][a]t in  
 [s]o[l]i[t]ude [a]t the bar [t]otal[l]y in[v]o[l]un[t]ari[l]y,  
 [v]io[l]ent[l]y sm[a][c]king B[a]rret in the [f]u[c]king  
 [f]a[c]e and [s]omewhat [r]ude[l]y [c]o[l]la[p]s[ing] time  
 [i]t[s]elf [i]n the [p][r]o[c]e[s]s, [r]ight as [B]ar[r]ett [s][a]t  
 [a]t th[a]t [t]iny [t]a[b]le a[l]one, [i]nn[o]c[ent]l[y] [s][i]pp[ing]  
 h[is] dr[i]nk [i]n [S]e[v]enth H[e]av[e]n. [B]arrett the[n]  
 w[e]nt on [t]o [t]ell [C]loud how, [b]efore the [b]ar, he'd  
 s[ee]n a [b]unch of [p]leas[ure] with [M]a[k]k[o]  
 [p]oisoning that [h]e [h]adn't seen in [m]onths, and  
 [C]loud [n]oted that's how they k[n]ew S[p][r]ing was  
 ap[p]roaching, [r]ight?! Yet, on that [n]ote, it was [k]ind  
 of [f]unny be[c]ause [C]loud was a[c]tual[l]y thin[k]ing to  
 himself [t]he o[th]er [d]ay - [w]hat [w]as the exa[c]t  
 [d]ef[i]n[i]tion of sobriety any[w]ay - li[k]e how [c]ould  
 they a[c]tually [d]i[s]t[i]ngu[i]sh [s]o[b]riety f[r]om  
 intoxi[c]ation? [B]arrett [p]er[k]ed [u][p] [a] [b]it. [C]loud  
 made it [c]lear that, [n]o, he wasn't [n]e[c]e[s]sari[l]y  
 [i]l[k]e [t]alk[ing] about s[m]o[k]ing [c]ra[c]k, or  
 exp[os]ing your[s]elf to high in[t]en[s]ity [m]a[k]k[o] shards  
 for [d]e[c]ades on end, [b]ut [m]a[y]b[e] ju[s]t [d]rink[ing]  
 [w]h[ite] [w]ine or [s]omething? [B]e[c]ause [C]loud  
 [w]as [c]r[o]s[s]i[ng] the [W]a[sh]i[n]gton [S]t[r]eet  
 [b]ridge [c]on[t]em[p]l[ating] a [p]ar[t][i][c]u[l]ar [v]is[i]on of  
 [i]nd[i]v[i]sible One[n]ess [t]he o[th]er [n]ight, [a]s  
 [B]arrett k[n]ew too well th[a]t [C]loud was [a]pt [t]o do  
 [f]rom [t]ime [t]o [t]ime, and [b]e[l]ieve it [n]ot he was  
 a[c]tua[l]ly [d]i[s]covering [a] [d]e[c]ent [a]m[ou]nt of

e[n]joy[m]ent i[n] the [m]a[t]e[r]ial [w]orld at the [t]ime! - [d][r]in[k]ing a [m]ini [w]ater [b]ottle f[i]lled w[i]th [M]ez[c]al, [b]ut [a]lso [a]t[t]emp[t]ing to [g]auge whether [h]e'd [h]ave the [t]ime [t]o [g]rab just one [m]o[r]e [b]eer [b]e[f]o[r]e [T]i[f]fa was su[p]posed to b[e] at his a[p]art[m]ent. [C][l]oud was [c]ontemp[l]a[ti]ng the n[a]ture of a[n] i[n]d[i]v[i]sible [O]nenes[s], [b]ut he [w]as al[s][o] [c]omforted [b]y the mate[r]ial [r]ealm while [c][o]ld[l]y [c]al[cu]lating his odds of [b]eing a[b]le to ch[u]g an[o]ther [b]eer while still ma[k]ing it [b]a[c]k to his [a]p[ar]tment [b]e[f]ore Ti[f]fa was sup[p]osed to [a]rrive. [A]nd [a]s [C][l]oud was [c]ontem[p]l[ati]ng this n[a]ture of a[n] i[n]d[i]v[i]sible [O]neness, [c]r[o]s[s]i[n]g a [W]a[sh]i[n]gton [S]t[r]eet b[r]idge, [d][r]in[k]ing [M]ez[c]al from a [m]ini water [b]ottle [C]loud [r]e[m]ar[k]ed to [B]a[r]rett [h]ow [h]e'd [s]tarted to [q]ue[s]tion this very [d]e[f]i[n]i[t]ion of [s]o[b]r[i]ety. [B]ut it was here [B]a[r]rett [b]egan to [q]uestion - [w]ell - [w]hat did [C][l]oud [a]c[t]ua[l]ly mean by th[at]? [W]ell, [w]hat [C]loud [w]as [t]ri[an]gling [t]o get [a]t, Ba[r]rett, was th[at] [s]o[b]riety it[s]elf was [s]up[p]osed to [b]e a [b]a[s]eline of [s]orts, no? Of [c]ou[r]se it was! Yet how [c]ould [th]ey [m]easure [th]i[s] [b]a[s]eline exa[c]t[l]y? - was there [a] [m]easure[m]ent at [a]ll? - was so[b]r[i]ety to [b]e def[i]ned [b]y a l[a]c[k of p[a]ssion, or a vague [s]en[s]e of th[e] "[e]ven-[k]e[e]led"? [B]ut the pro[b]l[em] was, in [C][l]oud's [m]ind at l[e]a[s]t, [th]at [th]ere was [n]o u[n]iver[s]al e[m]otional [b]a[s]eline [w]i[t]h [w]h[i]ch to def[i]ne [s]o[b]r[i]ety. [S]ome [p]eo[p]le - he [m]eant, even [C][l]oud [h]imself [c]ould be t[o]tal[l]y un[h]inged e[m]o[t]ional[l]y on o[c]casion while [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te "[c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y [s]o[b]er"! [F]urther[m]ore, even i[f] they - [B]arrett and [C][l]oud - [c]ould de[f]ine [s]ome [b]a[s]eline e[m]otional [s]tatus [a]s [a]xiom[a]tic, [th]en [th]ey would [s]till have to [c]ombat

[ph]ilo[s]o[ph]i[c]al[l]y with e[x]ternal [s]ub[s]tan[c]es that weren't [c]on[s]i[d]ered int[o]xi[c]ants that would [o]bvio[s]l[y] sh[i]ft th[i]s e[m]otional ba[s]e[l]ine. What did [C]l[oud] [m]ean? Well, [i]i[k]e, [a] [l]a[c]k of f[oo]d [c]ould [a]lter m[oo]d. The [s]ame [c]ould be [s]aid of [c]a[f]feine! [C]o[n]suming dirt would pro[b]a[b]ly shi[ft] s[o]me[o]ne's emotional [s]tate. Hi[s]to[r]i[c]al[l]y, a[c]co[r]ding to [C]l[oud], [p]eo[p]le ate fu[c]king [p]l[ants] with [s]mall [d]o[s]es of p[s]y[c]he[d]e[l]i[c]s em[b]e[d]d[e]d w[i]th[i]n them and [p]r[o]b[a]bly thought ve[r]y little about "in[t]oxi[c]ation" [p]r[o]p[er]! [P]eo[p]le u[s]ed to fu[c]king [s]ani[t]ize [w]ater [w]ith al[c]ohol! [S]m[oking] [t]o[b]a[c]co al[t]ered [m]ood. [B]a[s]i[c]ally, [B]arrett, "a[n]ything we i[n]ge[s]t alters our l[a]tent [s]t[ate] of exi[s]ten[c]e and there[f]o[r]e ch[a]nges u[s] in [s]ome [f]o[r]m or [a]nother, wh[i]ch [i]n [m]o[s]t a[l]l [c]a[s]es pro[b]a[b]ly [f]l[i]tters i[n]to our [m]ood." [C]l[oud] [n]oted, [f]or him [p]er[s]o[n]al[l]y, a shi[ft] in his [d]iet [c]ould [d]o won[d]ers for h[i]s [i]ntel[l]e[c]tual [d]i[s]p[osition] - [s]o then [w]hat [w]as [s]o[b]riety? It [s]eemed im[p]o[s]si[b]le to even [th]in[k] a[b]out [s]o[b]riety as [a] [th]ing at a[l]l! Well, [B]a[r]rett h[a]dn't ex[a]c[tly] [c]on[s]idered it li[k]e that and [w]asn't sure if he [w]ould. [B]ut [C]l[oud] [th]ought [th]at m[a]y[b]e th[ey]'d t[a]k[e]n a [f]a[s]e [b]a[s]e[l]ine of [s]o[b]riet[y] [c]on[c]eptual[l]y, no? A[f]ter all, [w]hat [t]e[c]h[n]i[c]al[l]y [w]as an ex[t]er[n]al [s]ub[s]tan[c]e? [C]ould they [d]ig even [f]urther and [c]on[s]i[d]er the [d]e[f]i[n]i[t]ion of an ex[t]er[n]al [s]ub[s]tan[c]e? A [c]onver[s]ation [c]ould [c]ertainly [a]lter [a] [p]er[s]on's [t]e[m]p[erame]n[t] ex[p]one[n]tial[l]y as well! - but did that [t]e[c]h[n]i[c]al[l]y [c]ount as a[n] e[x]oge[n]ous [s]ub[s]tan[c]e? Did [w]ords [n]ot [c]arry [w]eight? A vo[c]i[f]e[r]ous thought or [e]ven a [f]l[e]eting [m]e[m]o[r]y - e[s]p[ecial]l[y] in [C]l[oud]'s [c]a[s]e! -

[c]ould [o][f]ten t[o][s]s a [p]er[s]on [c]om[p][i][e]te[l]y  
 of[f]-[k]ilter, yet they [s]till [f]or [s]ome  
 in[c]om[p][r]ehen[s]i[b]le [r]eason [c][l]ung to an [i]dea of  
 an obj[e][c]tive [s]o[b]r[i]et[y], and [th]en [th]ey  
 [s]ub[s]e[q]u[e]nt[l]y [t]argeted [s]e[l]e[c]t  
 [s]ub[s]tan[c]es as in[t]oxi[c]ating, while deeming  
 [s]o-[c]alled “other” [s]ub[s]tan[c]es - which [a][l]s[o]  
 [a][l]t[er]ed [t]emperaments - as [t]otally fine! [W]ell, [th]is  
 [w]as [w]hat [C][l]oud [w]as [th]in[k]ing at [l]east, as he  
 [w][a]l[k]ed over the [W][a]shington [S]treet [b]ridge - that  
 i[f] [p]eo[p]le [d]i[d]n’t [v]iew [c]on[s]uming [f]resh  
 [v]ege[t]a[b]les as [s]o[m]ething [f]u[n]da[m]en[t]ally  
 [m]ind al[t]ering, then it was [p]o[s]si[b]le, in [C]loud’s  
 [m]ind, [th]at [th]ey ju[s]t ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed the [w]orld in  
 va[s]tly diff[e]r[en]t [w]ays. [A]nd [B][a]r[r]ett [f]or his [p]art  
 [f]ound this to [b]e int[r]iguing yet un[c]onvin[c]ing. [B]ut  
 [C][l]oud in[s]i[s]ted [th]at [th]ere [s]i[m]p[l]y was no  
 [t]rue [a]nd [e]x[t]ended [s]tabi[l]it[y] of our men[t]al  
 [s]tates - even if [th]ey were hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al[l]y  
 de[p]rived of ex[t]ernal [t]in[k]e[r]ing, be[c]ause even  
 thought it[s]elf was [f]undamen[t]al[l]y e[x]t[er]nal [t]o  
 [s]ome e[x]t[er]ent, was it not? [A]nd [p]eo[p]le on  
 [a]verage were [c]onstant[l]y a[c]costed by  
 [s]p[e]c[i]f[i]c th[ou]ghts, were they n[o]t? Thought  
 [a]lmost [n]ever [c]lea[s]ed [a][c]co[s]ting th[e]se  
 [p]eo[p]le, [w]hich [w]ere all [p]eo[p]le? And even i[f]  
 [th]ey [c]onfined [th]emselv[e]s to [c]ommonly ag[r]eed  
 u[p]on mate[r]ial [s]ub[s]tan[c]es, [th]en [th]ere was [s]till  
 no [c]on[s]i[s]tent way to [c]al[cu]late the [d]eg[r]ee of  
 al[t]e[r]a[tion] [t]o a men[t]al [s]tate a[c]c[r]o[s]s [p]eo[p]le  
 of [d]i[f]fe[r]ent walk[s] of [l]ife, [p]e[r]iod. Bar[r]ett  
 [m]ight not ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e the [s]ame [m]ental sh[i]ft  
 a[f]ter the [c]on[s]um[p]tion of a [f]resh [s]t[i]c[k] of  
 [c]e[l]e[r]y that [C][l]oud would, [e]ven i[f] the [c]e[l]e[r]y  
 it[s]elf [r]emained en[t]irel[y] [s]t[er]ile. [W][a]l[k]ing

a[c]ro[s]s the [W][a]shington [S]treet [b]ridge, [C]loud  
[d]ran[k] [f]rom a [t]iny [w]ater [b]ottle [f][i]lled w[i]th  
[M]ez[c]al and [d][i]d'n't [f]eel in[t]oxi[c][a]ted i[n] a[n]y  
w[ay], sh[a][p]e, or [f]orm - any [m]ore than [h]ad [h]e  
been [d]rin[k]ing [a] [c]u[p] [o]f [c]off[ee], or [ea]ting a  
[d]el[i]c[i]ous [s]n[a]ck, or re[c][ei]ving a [s][p]e[c]i[f]i[c]  
thought. [I]n h[i]s m[i]nd at the t[i]me there was no [t]rue  
[d][i]v[i]sion [b]e[t]ween in[t]oxi[c]ation and so[b][r]iety,  
and this was [C][l]oud's final [c]on[c]l[usion] -  
[r]egard[ing]e[ss] of wh[ether] or not Bar[r]ett ag[r]e[e]d -  
[a]s he [s]omewhat [a]nxious[ly] [s]ent [T]h[is] [a] [t]ext  
m[e]ssage [l]e[t]ting her know he was "[t]a[k]ing a  
wal[k]," just in [c]a[s]e she [a]rrived at his [a]partment  
bef[ore] he [f]i[n]i[sh]ed [s]lugg[ing] down one [l]a[s]t  
[b]eer [a]t the [b]ar th[at] he [w]as [w]alking to.

### Canto III

Total Echoes: 1,403

Total Syllables: 1,994

Approximate Self-Similarity: .704

"[W]ell, no," [w]ere the two [w]ords C[l]oud began [w]ith  
as he ex[p]lained [th]at his [p]oint was [th]at [th]ere was  
a [s]i[n]g[n]i[f]i[c]ant d[i]st[i]n[c]tion be[t]w[ee]n the [t]wo,  
m[ea]ning [d]i[n]ner and [d]r[i]nks! - that if you [m]a[k]e it  
out [l]i[k]e it's just [d]rin[k]s and then [l]a[s]t [m]i[n]ute it  
[b]e[c]omes [d]i[n]ner? - then yeah C[l]oud's gonna [b]e  
a [l]ittle [f]u[c]king [p]i[s]sed off! E[s]p[eci]al[ly] i[f] h[e]  
[d]i[d]n't k[n]o[w the [f]u[c]king [p]eo[p]le, you k[n]o[w  
[A]e[r]ith? How did that ma[k]e [a]ny [s]en[s]e? He  
[f]ound it [a] [b]it [a]b[s]urd, [f]r[an]k[ly]. Sure, he'd go  
[t]h[is] one or [t]wo on with a [t]otal [s]tr[an]ger, that was  
f[i]ne, but to [s]it [d]own [a]nd [a]c[tually e[n]g[a]ge in a  
[d]i[n]ner? - that was a[n] e[n]tirely [d]i[s]t[i]n[c]t [l]evel  
of [s]ocia[l]izing, and it [w]as [o]ne that, [f]r[an]k[ly],



[C]loud [d]i[d]n't parti[c]u[l]ar[l]y [c]are [f]or. [A]nd he wasn't ashamed to [a]dm[it] [i]t! - th[at], [f]r[a]n[k]l]y, he [f]elt th[is] [Ph]i[l]l[i]s[tine n[o]tio[n] of ju[s]t g[o]i[n]g out to [d]inner with an[y] and ever[y] a[c]quaintan[c]e, that [i]f you [d]i[d]n't a[c]quie[s]ce to [th]at [s]tan[d]ard [th]en you [w]ould b[e] [d]e[e]med, [w]hat? - ant[i]-s[o]cial? [W]ell [c]o[l]or [C]loud ant[i]-s[o]cial then! [B]ut Aerith n[o]ted that while, sure, to [b]e [f]air, it was a dif[f]erent [l]evel of s[o]cia[l]ization, if he tru[l]y [d]i[d]n't k[n]o[w the [p]eo[p]le, but, you k[n]o[w, if it was he[r] [p]e[r]s[on]al[l]y? [S]u[p]posing it was Aerith, then she'd h[o]p[e that it woul[d]n't [b]e that [b]ig of a [d]eal [t]o [C]loud? [T]o just go [ou]t to [d]i[n]ner? Was she k[i]d[d]ing him?! Oh, of [c]ourse not, Ae[r]ith! With her? You fu[c]king [k]id[d]ing? [C]loud [w]as al[w]ays [d]own to g[r]ab a [n]osh with s[o]me[o]ne li[k]e her, [n]o, it was just [th]at [th]e hypo[th]eti[c]al [n]o[tion of [ea]ting [s]u[p]per with a [c]om[p]l[i]te [s]tranger ("a mo[r]e o[r] [l]e[s]s [c]om[p]l[i]te [s]tranger") - [w]hat [w]ere they di[s]c[u]ssing? [C]loud and the hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al stranger? [D]id [h]e [h]ave to [c]ome [p]re[p]ared with a [p]ortf[o]l[i]o of tal[k]ing [p]oints? - [C]loud [c]oul[d]n't [i]magine [th]at [th]ey'd b[e] [s]u[p]er [i]ntr[i]gued with an[y]thing [h]e [h]ad to [s]ay, or [th]at [th]ey'd [e]nd u[p] on the [p]r[e]c[i]p[i]c[e of [a]ny r[e]v[e]lation that he'd [c]on[c]lud[e to b[e] [p]arti[c]u[l]ar[l]y en[l]ighten[i]ng [e]ither. [C]loud was [s]im[p]l[y] going by [e]m[p]i[r]i[c]al [e]viden[c]e [r]ea[l]ly. That [w]as all. He [w]asn't, [l]i[k]e, tr[y]ing to be a dick or [a]nything! Ju[s]t that, [e]m[p]iri[c]al[l]y [s]p[e]a[k]ing, it [s]eem[ed] un[l]i[k]e[l]y they'd have [a] lot to [c]onver[s]e [a]b[ou]t, [C]loud and [th]i[s] hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al [s]tranger. [B]ut [A]erith [a]dded that, to [b]e fair, [w]asn't [C]loud the [o]ne who [w]as al[w]ays r[ai]ling again[s]t [s]o-[c]ialled [s]en[s]ory data? Yet, in thi[s] [c]a[s]e, he was [a]ll [b]ent

[ou]t of sh[a][p]e [a][b][ou]t this im[p]rom[p]tu [d]inner [b]e[c]ause, in his own words, [b]e[c]ause of [e]m[p]i[r]i[c]al [d]ata? Of [p]a[s]t [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e, [w]hich [w]as [s]en[s]o[r]y [d]ata? [M]e[m]o[r]ies, [r]ight? [W]hich, [w]ouldn't [C]loud ag[r]ee, was [s]ome of the mo[s]t un[r]eli[a][b]le [d][a]ta [a]v[ai]la[b]le no? Of [c]our[s]e he [d]id! Aer[i]th, ev[e]n [f]u[ck]ing [q]uantum [ph][y]s[i][c]s was [s]till [f]un[d]amentally [s]en[s]e-[f]orward, in the [s]en[s]e [t]h[at] [t]hey were beg[i]nni[ng] w[i]th [s]en[s]e [p]e[r]c[e]p[t]ion - this [w]as [w]hat [c]ontem[p]o[r]a[r]y [s]o-[c]alled [s]cien[c]e had [a]chieved [o]f [c]our[s]e! [P]la[c]ing [s]en[s]e [p]e[r]c[e]p[t]ion [a]s [a]n a[p]ex [p]re[d]ator un[t]il [f]inally, with the [d]i[s]cove[r]y of [q]uan[t]um [ph][y]s[i][c]s, [i]t'd [r]e[d]u[c]ed the obse[r]vable wo[r]ld to a [d]egr[e]e that [e]ven [l]inear [s]en[s]e-[p]e[r]c[e]p[t]ion no [l]onger [m]ade any fu[ck]ing [s]en[s]e in the u[p]per [w]orlds! [T]hat [w]as [w]hat [t]hey'd done. [A]nd [q]uite [s][m]ugly [a]t [t]imes [t]oo! But [w]asn't that [w]hat [C]loud [w]as [d]oing w[i]th th[i]s im[p]en[d]i[ng] [d]i[n]ner? Ae[r]ith [q]ue[r]ied him on thi[s] [p]oint. Well, [C]loud [s]u[p]posed [t]hat, [t]hin[k]ing [a]bout it [a]gain, yeah, he was [k]ind of a[c]ting li[k]e a [q]uantum [ph][y]s[i][c]i[st] a b[i]t, [w]asn't he? [W]ell, Aerith [w]as just saying - to [t]he [e]xtent [t]hat his argu[m]ent was [f]unda[m]e[n]tally [e]mpirical. But it was [k]ind of [i]n[t]uitive [i]n a [s]en[s]e [t]oo, his argument, i[n] [C]loud's opi[n]ion. H[e] agr[e]ed with Ae[r]ith to the [e]xtent that, ye[s], he was [b]a[s]ing his [d]i[s]gu[s]t [p]artially on [e]m[p]irical [e]vi[d]en[c]e, [b]ut he'd [a]l[s]o [a]ll[e]ge that he f[e]lt a[n] i[n]tuitive [d]i[s]gu[s]t with these [t]y[p]es of [s]ocial g[a]therings [a]s well, and then [h]e, [t]o [h]er [p]oint, [t]o [b]e [b]l[i]unt, [d][i]d [t]end [t]o [d]i[p] i[n]t[o] the world of em[p]iri[c]ism to va[l]i[d]ate [s]aid i[n]tuitive [d]i[s]gu[s]t. Although, [t]e[c]hni[c]al[l]y, they should [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] [b]e a

[l]ittle [c]autious to ev[e]n [e]m[p][l]oy the word  
 [e]m[p]iri[c]ism here, be[c]ause he [d][i][d]n't th[i]n[k]  
 em[p]iri[c]ism [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]il[y] [n]e[de]d to b[e]  
 [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]ted to [s]en[s]e-[p]er[c]e[p]tion  
 [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]il[y], you k[n]ow? Ae[r]ith [s]u[p]posed  
 the[r]e, ye[s], was [p][r]o[b]a[b]ly [a]n [e]m[p]i[r]i[c]ism of  
 the intel[l]igib[le] [r]e[al]m as w[e]ll? Hone[s]t[l]y, to  
 C[l]oud - it was [c]ertain[l]y [p]o[s]si[b]le that h[e]  
 may[b]e wasn't [e]ven in the [b]e[s]t mind [s]tate to  
 even [a]s[s]e[s]s it [o]ne [w]ay or [a]nother. [A]erith too[k]  
 [a]dvantage of this [c]apitu[l]a[tion to [s]ay sh[e]'d  
 [r]e[c]ent[l]y had [a] d[r]eam [a]bou[t C]l[oud] -  
 would [h]e mind [h]earing [h]er out? - [w]here he [w]as  
 emailing her a [q]ues[tion [a]bout whether [a]  
 [s]p[e]c[i]f[i]c a[c]t[i]on was [d]e[f]ined as 'in[s]i[d]er  
 tra[d]in[g]', while she was [p]roce[s]sin[g] [s]ome  
 non-[d]e[s]c[r]i[p]t 'or[d]ers' for [s]omething in a bath  
 t[u]b, which [c]on[s]i[s]ted [o]f, for [s]ome [r]eason,  
 w[a]shing [l]arge ch[o][c]o[late] [c]oo[k]ies [d]own the  
 [d]r[ain], [w]atching [th]em as [th]ey [s]l[owl]y  
 [d]i[s]i[n]tegrated un[d]er the hot [w]ater. Then, after  
 [th]at, [r]ea[l]izing [th]at [th]e [c]oo[k]ies [r]e[l]at[ed] to  
 C[l]oud's [q]ue[s]tion about in[s]i[d]er [t]r[ad]ing, she  
 [c]on[t]emp[t]ed if [sh]e [sh]ould have [f]l[ushed] them  
 all [d]own the [d]r[ain] be[f]ore an[s]we[r]ing the  
 [q]ue[s]tion? [D]id she [d]o w[r]ong [b]y C]l[oud] [b]y  
 washing these [c]oo[k]ies [p]r[ee]mptiv[e]l[y] [d]own the  
 [d]r[ain]? If C[l]oud [t]r[u]l[y] wan[t]ed the 'order  
 [p]ro[c]e[s]sed,' [s]o to [s]p[ea]k. In a [s]e[n]s[e] Aerith  
 [f]e[el]t an a[f]f[i]n[i]t[y] [f]or the [c]oo[k]ie[s], [d]i[d]n't sh[e],  
 C]l[oud] in[f]erred. C[l]oud [p]ostu[l]ated [th]at she [f]elt  
 [l]ik[e] [th]ey were [a]c[tual [b]eings [a]s she  
 [c]r[um]bl[ed] [th]em [d]own [th]e un[f]org[i]v[i]ng [d]r[ain]  
 [w]ith the [s]c[orching] hot [w]ater? In [r]et[r]o[s]p[ec]t,  
 [A]e[r]ith [a]d[m]itted [th]at [th]at [m]ay have been the

[c][a][s]e. [C][l]oud [n][o]ted [t]h[at] [t]here was a [c]ertain [l]evel of g[n][o][s]is ach[ie]ved through [c]ontem[p]l[ia]ting your dr[ea]ms - yet was there any to [b][e] g[l]eamed from [p]artici[p]l[ia]ting in [d]ou[b]le [d][a]te [d]inners? [A]erith [a]dmited she'd [b]een [c]l[ia]nging onto the fa[c]t of the [c]oo[k]ies [b]eing washed [d]own the [d]rain, and she knew [C][l]oud had a [p]ar[t]icu[l]ar [t]a[l]ent when [i]t [c]ame to [i]n[t]er[p]r[et]ing [d]r[ea]ms. W[e]ll th[e]n [l]e[t]'s [s][e]e here, [C][l]oud [c]on[t]em[p]l[ia]ted, the [d]i[s]so[l]ution of a [s]w[e]et [f]ood in an [a]ppar[at]u[s] u[sual]l[y] [u]sed t[o] [c]l[ea]n your[s]el[f]? [B]u[t with a [t]rans[a]c[t]ional, a[b]u[tting [c][a]p[ita]l[i]s[t] un[d]er[t]one. [A]nd [A]erith was [d]oing it, [p]erh[a]p[s] unint[e]ntional[l]y, for [s]omeone [e]lse ([C][l]ou[d]), with[ou]t their k[n]owl[ed]ge, and [n]ot on[l]y w[ith]ou[t their k[n]owl[ed]ge but [w]hile [i]g[n]oring their [i]n[q]uir[y] - a[c]tual[l]y, [C]loud guessed it [w]as h[i]s [i]n[q]uir[y] te[c]h[n]i[c]all[y], about [w]hether it [w]as [l]egal, as a[p]parent[l]y this was [s]omehow [p]otential[l]y 'in[s]ider trading'? So sh[e] was [r]e[p]ur[p]o[s]ing [a]n [a]ppar[at]u[s] for [c]l[ea]nsing the bo[d]y to [d]e[s]troy [l]arge, [l]ife-[l]i[k]e [p]ie[c]es [o]f [u]nhealthy [f]ood [f]or [C]l[ou]d, [w]ith[ou]t his [c]on[s]ent, [C][l]oud mean[w]hile [w]on[d]ering i[f] [d]e[s]troying thi[s] ju[n]k [f]ood in a b[at]h tub was [a]c[tua]l[l]y i[l]l[e]gal? Of [c]our[s]e in any [d]ream they al[s]o should [c]on[s]i[d]er [w]hether [w]h[at] [w]as [r]e[p]r[es]ented [w]as [a] [r]e[p]r[es]en[t]ation [o]f [a]nother [r]e[p]r[es]en[t]ation, [m]ea[n]ing [m]ayb[e] [n]ot [a]n [a]n[a]l[og]y [a]t all? But i[f] they [p]r[o]c[e]e[d]ed as i[f] [w]hat [w]as [r]e[p]r[es]ented in Ae[r]ith's [d]r[e]am a[p]p[ea]red as [i]t was [i]n[t]en[d]ed [t]o a[p]pear, [t]hen [t]hat would b[e] a [d]e[c]ent [s]tart. [S]o, in a [s]en[s]e, Aerith [t]hought, [t]hat sh[e] was [c]l[ea]ning [p]arti[cu]lar attributes of

[C][l][ou]d with[o]ut his [p]erm[i]ss[i]on, [w]hile [C][l]oud [w]as th[i]n[k][i]ng - [p]erha[p]s [s]u[s][p]e[c]ting - that [c][l]eansing him[s]elf [i]n th[i]s w[ay] m[ay] h[a]ve [a][c]tual[l]y been a [t]y[p]e of insider [t]rading, it [c]ould have been a ve[r][y] [s]er[i]ou[s] [c][r]ime. [C]loud [n]o[t]ed that - Ae[r]ith, [c][l]eaning your[s]elf was b[a][s]i[c]a[l]ly [a] [c][r]ime [a]gain[s]t [th]e [s]t[a]te [th]ese d[ay]s. [N][o] [s]urprise [th]ere! Al[th]ough [C]loud [l][i][k]ed a [n][i]ce [c]oo[k]ie [e]very [n]ow and th[e]n, he [d]i[d]n't [n]e[c]e[s]sarily [f]ind a[n]ything th[at] b[ad] a[b]out [ea]ting a [f]ew [c]oo[k]ies on o[c]casion, but [C]loud also [f]ound it intr[i]guing that Aerith [p]ersonally [i]denti[f]i[ed] with [th]e [c]oo[k]ies as [th]ey [b][r]o[k]e a[p]art and tum[b]led [d]own the [d][r]ain, that she [s]aw a [c]ertain goodnes[s], a [s]pe[c]i[f]i[c] [b]eing w[i]th[i]n them, and [s]u[b][s]e[que]ntly [f]elt a [s][a]dne[s]s [a]t the [f]a[ct] they h[a]d to [b]e washed [d]own the [d]rain of this [b][a]th tub. Even what's fundamental[l][y] [b]ad for you isn't [n]e[c]e[s]sari[l][y] [b]ad, Aerith [n]oted. [B]ut ye[s], it was [s]ad to [s]ee them [f]a[ll] [a]part in [a] [b]ath t[u]b [f][au]l[c]et, h[u]h? “[E]ven the [r]unning shoes you n[ee]d to [t]o[s]s in[t]o the [t][r]ash are e[t]ernal,” Cloud [s]aid.

#### Canto IV

Total Echoes: 1,332

Total Syllables: 1,960

Approximate Self-Similarity: .680

Cloud was [f]or sure [f][i]ne [w]ith [w]h[a]tever Ti[f]a [w][a]nted to [s][a]y to him (“I al[w][a]ys [w][a]nt you to [s]peak your m[i]nd!”), [b]ut he just [w][a]sn't going to [b]ack off his [w]ell-[d]eveloped (in his m[i]nd) [i]d[e]a [th]at [th]e [i]n[s]t[it]ution [i]t[s]elf (as a [c]on[c]ept) was ba[s]i[c]ally [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]t[i]ve, [th]at [th]ey shouldn't ne[c]e[s]s[ar]ily [c][ar]e what's th[e]r[e] in the [c]ontainer

(“[C]atego[r][y] theo[r][y]!”), but al[s][o] that e[r][o][s] [w]as a g[a]te[w][a]y. Ti[f]a ju[s]t wasn’t [c]ertain th[a]t e[n]gaging i[n] [th][a]t in the bar, [a][f]ter hours - she [d][i]d[n]’t kn[o]w, was th[a]t [a][c]tual[l]y ap[p][r][o][p][r]iate, [C][l]oud? [E]v[e]n i[f] sh[e] wan[t]ed [t]o [d]o [i]t! [I]n the [b]ar?! Of [c]our[s]e, [C][l]oud total[l]y un[d]er[s]tood, [b]ut, again - ju[s]t to [r]eite[r][a]te - e[r]os was a g[a]te[w][a]y. [I]t [d][i]d[n]’t have to [b]e a[b]out, you know, purely that. [W]hat? - [w]as [T]i[f]a [n]ow gon[n][a] [a][l]low her[s]el[f] to [b][e] [t]y[r]an[n]ical[l]y [r]e[s]t[r]ained [b]y the [i]n[s]t[i]tutio[n]al [n]orms of Shin[r]a, et al? [W]as that [n]ow h[ow] she [w]as go[n]na [l]ive her [l]ife? - by the [c]ontem[p]uous [r]ules of [Sh]in[r]a? [Sh]e [c]ould [p]op that [p]ussy [w]ide o[p]en [w]henever she [w]an[t]ed [t]o! - if sh[e] r[e]all[y] [w]an[t]ed [t]o, ev[e]n i[f] [i]t was ju[s]t [s]u[p]er [q]u[i]c[k]l[y]! ([W]hat exa[c]t[l]y [w]as the tem[p]e[r]ature in the [r]oom?) There wasn’t an[y]th[i]ng [i]nhe[r]entl[y] [o]ut [o]f [b][ou]nds [a][b]ou[t] an[y] of that, [a]ssuming the [c]orr[e]c[t] [c]ont[e]xt, [b]e[c]ause - [w]ell, no, [C]loud [w]asn’t [s]aying he [w]as in [s]u[p]port of [i]nd[i]s[c]r[i]m[i]nate [p]rom[i]s[c]uit[y] - [n]o, [n]ot at all! It [n]eeded to [b]e [r]i[g]orou[s] - [p]erhaps [e]ven [r]i[tual[i]s[t]i[c], and h[e] wasn’t [e]ven [s]ugge[s]ting [T]i[f]a should i[p]s[o] f[a]c[t]o ju[s]t [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [p]o[p] that [p]u[s]sy [o][p]en to [s]p[ite] the m[o]ral n[o]rms of Shinra - it was a[c]tually the o[p]posite! No, [C]loud was [s]im[p]ly a[s]serting [sh]e [sh]ouldn’t not ma[k]e [b]eautiful [l]ove in [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n [s]im[p]l[y] [b]e[c]ause of [s]ome [s]o[c]ietal Shinra [c]ode - [sh]e [sh]ouldn’t al[l]ow her[s]el[f], Ti[f]a, to [b][e] [r]egu[l]ated [b]y a[n] i[n]s[t]itutional e[n]tity whose [p]r[i]m[ar]y [p]ur[p]o[s]e was the em[p]l[o]y[m]ent of the univer[s]al [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]tion. To [C][l]oud it [w]asn’t in any [w]ay, sh[a]p[e, or] f[o]rm

Shi[n]ra's [p]la[c]e to e[n][f]o[r][c]e a[n]y u[n]iver[s]al  
 [r]e[s]t[r]i[c]tions what[s]soever. [F]u[c]k Shin[r]a  
 [s][p]e[c][i][f]i[c]ally and [f]u[c]k the [i]n[s]t[i]tution in a  
 more generi[c] [s]en[s]e. [U]gh, sh[u]t [u]p [C]loud! He  
 [w]as [k]idding, [w]asn't he? Oh yeah! - [C]loud  
 ad[m][i]tted [i]t was [c]ertain[l]y [p]o[s]sible he was  
 [e]xaggerating [c]ertain [e][l]e[m]ents of his argu[m]e[n]t  
 i[n]te[n]tiona[l]ly, i[n] terms of the [w]h[o]le - [w]ell, you  
 k[n][o]w - [n][o], he [w]asn't [s]ugge[s][t]ing [T]ifa should  
 "[p]o[p] that [p]u[s]sy" in the [b]ar! No, that [w]as  
 a[b]surd! Unle[s]s she [w]an[t]ed [t]o! [B]e[c]ause if she  
 wan[t]ed [t]o [T]ifa should know that [C]loud [t]oo[k] no  
 o[ff]en[s]e, li[k]e, at all! [T]hey both [l][a]u[gh]ed [a]t  
 them[s]elves, but [d]i[d]n't he, [C]l[oud], in the  
 [a]bst[r]a[c]t [k]ind of h[a]ve a [p]oint? No, ju[s]t [l]i[s]ten  
 for a [s]e[c]ond, [C]l[oud] [s]aid, [p]l[ea]se T[i]fa - h[e]  
 knew she [f]elt [a]n [a]nxiety, [f]rom [t]i[m]e [t]o [t]i[m]e,  
 and a[c]cording to [C]l[oud] it was a[c]tua[l]l[y]  
 en[t]irel[y] po[s]sible [t]hat it was [t]he anxiet[y] of the  
 younger [S]o[c]rat[es]. Namel[y], it was [t]his anx[i]et[y]  
 [t]hat T[i]fa, sh[e] [f]elt [l]i[k]e she m[i]ght have [f]a[l]le[n]  
 i[n]to a pit of "b[o]ttomle[s]s n[o]n[s]en[s]e" - this [i]dea  
 [t]hat [t]here c[ould] be an a[c]tual [c]on[c]eptual [i]dea  
 beh[i]nd all phe[n]ome[n]a th[at] h[ad] e[v]e[r]  
 o[c]cu[r]red, th[at] e[v]e[r]y [a]c[tion she too[k] had some  
 [c]apital-[l] [i]de[a] [b]eh[i]nd or [a]b[ove] it, that eve[r]y  
 [s]ingle [s]en[s]o[r]i[y] [p]er[c]e[p]tion, eve[r]y [s]ingle  
 [m]o[m]ent [o]f their l[i]ves [e][m]erged fr[o]m [s]o[m]e  
 [c]on[c]eptual [i]dea [b]eh[i]nd it, that [i]deas  
 them[s]elves [b]e[c]ame [s]u[b]-a[t]omi[c] [p]arti[c]les  
 which [b]ecome mul[t]i[p]lied i[n]to a[n] i[n]f[i]n[i]te  
 ("s[e]eming!") n[on]s[e]n[s]e. It was [a]n [e]xt[r]eme  
 vertigo to [e]x[p]e[r]ienc[e] that with[ou]t a d[ou]bt! - and  
 [C]l[oud] was all [t]oo [f]amiliar with that [t]y[p]e of  
 [m]adnes[s] him[s]elf! In [f]a[c]t, his [e]ntire

[e]x[p][e]rien[c]e in the [e]ther, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k, was funda[m]entall[y] in ag[r][ee][m]ent w[i]th th[i]s anxiet[y] of young [S]o[c][r]at[es]. B[ut] wh[a]t [C]l[ou]d would [s]ay in [r]e[s]ponse, [t]o [T]i[f]a, [t]o him[s]el[f], to [S]o[c][r]ates - [w]hat [C]l[ou]d [w]ould [s]ay in [r]e[p]ly is exactly what [P]armen[i]d[e]s [s]aid to this young [S]o[c][r]at[es] him[s]elf, [th]at [th]i[s] anxiet[y] was a[n] a[n]xiet[y] of youth (“[C]l[ou]d, we’re b[a][s]i[c]a[l]l[y] the exa[c]t [s]a[m]e [a]ge . . .”), [o]ne that [w]ould be ext[ra]ngu[i]shed [w]hen sh[e]’d “learned not to despise any of [th]e[se] [th]ings.” In [sh]o[r]t, T[i]f[a] [sh]ouldn’t a[l]low [Sh]i[n]r[a] [m]o[r]es - or, [f]i[r]an[k]l[y], i[n]s[t]itutional [m]o[r]es [f]rom anywhere el[s]e for th[at] [m]a[tter]! - to i[n]terfere with her own p[r]o[c]e[s]ses. That [w]as all [C]l[ou]d [w]as [s]aying [r]eal[l]y. I[f] T[i]f[a] [w]an[t]ed [t]o d[o] th[at] a[t] [S]e[v]e[n]th H[e]av[e]n, [th]e[n], sure, [th]at [w]as [f]ine! [W]ell, T[i]f[a] [a]p[p]r[ec]iated the [k]ind [w]ords, [e]ven [i]f [i]t was an [a]w[k]ward subject for [C]l[ou]d of all [p]eop[le] to [b]e [b]roaching, given the [f]a[c]t th[at] it was [k]ind of [b]atantl[y] obvious [th]at it was [C]l[ou]d [th]at T[i]f[a] would [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] do that with in the [b]ar. [W]hy [w]ould they [k]id [o]ne [a]nother [a]b[ou]t that! [B]ut for [C]l[ou]d’s [p]art - no he [d]i[d]n’t [c]are [o]ne [w]ay or the other - he ju[s]t [th]ought [th]at [w]hen [s]ome[o]ne [s]p[ent] a [d]e[c]ent [ch]unk of time in [th]e [e]t[er] [th]at it [ch]anged [th]eir [p]er[s]p[ec]tive on that [k]ind of shit - what [c]o[n]c[l]usion, after [a]ll, should they d[r]aw [f]rom the [c]o[n]te[m]p[or]a[n]y of [s]e[n]s[i]b[il]e o[b]je[c]ts? If she [w]an[t]ed [t]o [b]e[n]d [o]ver in her [o]wn [b]ar, it [w]asn’t [p]h[i]l[o]s[o]p[h]i[c]al[l]y [o]ut of [b]o[u]nds to him in the [l]eas[t]. [L]i[k]e he [s]aid, to [s]ome [e]xtent [e]ros [w]as a g[a]te[w]a[y] - they shouldn’t view it [s]i[m]p[l]y o[r]gani[c]al[l]y or [p]ure[l]y [s]e[n]s[i]b[il]e [e]ven [i]f [i]t was to some [e]xtent [e]xist[en]t in [e]x[t]r[i]ca[b]l[y] w[i]thi[n] those [r]ealms, at [l]eas[t]



from their [p]er[s][p][e]ctives in their [b]odies or  
 [w]hat[e]ver. A g[a]te[w]a[y] to [w]hat though, [T]i[f]f[a]  
 [w]on[d]ered. [T]o a [d]i[f]ferent [t]ype of knowledge  
 [C]loud [c]onfirmed. Wasn't he agai[n][s]t [s]e[n]sual  
 emp[ir]i[c]ism, Ti[f]f[a] [q]ue[r]ied - [b]ut [C][l]oud [q]ui[c]k[l]y  
 [c]ountered that it was [b][y] am[p]lif[y]ing the  
 [s]en[s]o[r]y ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e, by [s][p]eeding it u[p] [t]hat  
 [t]he [s]en[s]o[r]y ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e it[s]el[f] was  
 t[r]an[s]cended - that was the whole [g][a]tew[a]y [p]art.  
 A[g]ain, [C][l]oud wasn't arguing for any of th[i]s  
 [i]nd[i]s[c]r[i]m[i]nate[l]y! - he was in[s]tead m[a]k[ing] the  
 [c][a]s[e] [t]hat [t]hese ampl[i]f[i]cations [c]ouldn't b[e]  
 [c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y [c]ut o[f]f! - [t]hat i[f] "o[th]er [b][i]tter  
 and [b][i]lious humors wan[d]er a[b]out in the [b]o[d]y and  
 find no [e]xit or esca[p]e, [b]ut are [p]ent u[p] w[i]th[i]n  
 and [m]ingle their own va[p]ors with the [m]o[tions] of the  
 [s]ou[l], and are [b]len[d]ed with [t]hem, [t]hey [p]ro[d]uce  
 all [s]orts of [d]iseases." That ju[s]t li[k]e [p]arti[c]les of  
 matter [c]ould be s[p]ed u[p] to [c][r]ea[t]e  
 anti-[g][r]avit[at]ional w[a]ves, the [s]en[s]o[r]y or[g]ans  
 [c]ould [b]e [s]imi[l]ar[l]y [s][p]ed in order [t]o  
 [t]r[an]s[c]end them[s]elves, [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]l[y]. [C][l]oud  
 made a d[e]c[en]t [p]oint, [b]ut [h]ad [h]e [h]eard [b]a[c]k  
 from [B]iggs and [W]edge - [w]ere they g[o]ing to ma[k]e  
 it to [t]he little [t]hing Tifa was h[o]s[ti]ng that [S]unday?  
 She ju[s]t [n]eeded to, you k[n]ow, g[e]t a d[e]f[i]nite  
 h[e]ad [c]ount so she [c]ould k[n]ow how much [f]ood  
 sh[e]'d [n]eeded. [C]loud [h]adn't [h]eard ba[c]k, and  
 [f]r[an]k[l]y h[e] was [f]inding it a l[i]ttle [r]i[d]i[c]u[l]ou[s]  
 [a]t th[at] point - be[c]ause at the ver[y] [l]ea[s]t, to  
 [C][l]oud, they [c]ould at [l]ea[s]t R[S][V][P] one way or  
 [t]he o[th]er. Sure, of [c]our[s]e, eros was a g[a]tew[a]y -  
 there [c]ouldn't be a totally univer[s]al [r]e[s]tri[c]tion  
 op[p]r[e]s[s]ing [e]very [s]ingle mem[b]er of a [s]o[c]iety,  
 [b]ut at the [s]ame time if a [p]er[s]on [c]ouldn't R[S][V][P]

to [a]n [e]vent they ba[s]i[c]all[y] should [s]tart [ea]ting mud out of t[r]oughs with [p]igs, in C[l]oud's view at [l][ea]st! [P][eo][p]le who [r]efused to RS[V][P] [t]o events in a [t]imely [m]anner [r]eally had no [p][l]a[c]e in [p]o[l]ite [s]o[c]iety! - or, for th[at] m[a]tter, in any [s]o[c]iety! That was [C][l]oud's [p]er[s]p[e]c[t]ive at [l][ea]st! And T[i]f fa ag[r][ee]d! [F][r]an[k][l]y, sh[e] was getting a [l]ittle [f][r]u[s]t[r]ated with the whole [p][r]o[c]e[s]s. She was, in her m[i]nd, doing a n[i]c[e] [th]ing - [th]rowing an Avalanche [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [S][u]nday [F][u]nd[a]y, but sh[e] ju[s]t [n]e[ed]ed to k[n]ow a head [c]ount [A][S][A][P]. It [w]as alrea[d]y [W]ednes[d]ay [n]ight! [C][l]oud [n]oted [th]at [th]ey'd sent out the invi[t]ations, [l]i[k]e, [t]wo weeks [b]a[c]k, and they [h]a[dn't] even [h]eard [b]a[c]k from [h]a[lf] of the po[t]ential a[tt]end[ee]es, which [a]c[tuall[y] [m]oved [C]loud to [th]ink [th]at [m]ayb[e] T[i]fa should ju[s]t [c][a]n[c]el the whole d[a]mn thing! [B]ut, no, [T]ifa was right - it was [t]oo [l]ate to [c][a]n[c]el, [b]e[c]ause then she'd [l]oo[k] [l]i[k]e the [a][s]shole. [C][l]oud [th]ought [th]at [m]ay[b]e that was [p][r]efe[r]a[b]le! [M]ay[b]e that's what [n]ee[d]ed to ha[pp]en! There [n]e[ed]ed to [b]e some [r]ules to this shit, [r]ight?

## Canto V

Total Echoes: 1,768

Total Syllables: 2,478

Approximate Self-Similarity: .713

[C][l]oud [a][s][k]ed [B][a][r]rett [p]oint [b][l]a[n]k [r]ight in [S][e]v[e]nth H[ea]v[e]n: [W]hat [w]as [c][a]p[ita]l[i]sm [r]eall[y]? - [b]e[c]ause that's [w]hat he [w]as [a]c[tuall[y] [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al[l]y o[p]p[o]sed to [v]is-a-[v]is Shinra, [n][o]? The [m]a[s]s [p]rodu[c]tion of [m]a[k]o e[n]ergy - was that [n]ot f[un]da[m]ental[l]y

ju[s]t [f]ree [m]ar[k]et [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m at [i]ts [f]ine[s]t? -  
 and there[f]ore wasn't [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m ju[s]t  
 [f]unda[m]ental[l]y a [s]ingu[l]a[r]it[y] of [s]orts, ju[s]t a  
 [c]om[p]l[et]e evi[s]ce[r]ation of [m]e[m]o[r]y, to [th]e  
 ex[t]ent [th]at [m]e[m]o[r]y is [th]e [c]on[t]ext in [w]hich  
 [w]e [c]on[s]tru[c]t our[s]elves, our [s]oc[i]eties? [C]l[oud]  
 a[s]serted th[at] [c][a][p]ita[l]i[s]m [d][i][d]n't g[i]ve a fu[c]k  
 about th[at] [a]t all! - sim[p]l[y] [b]e[c]ause [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m  
 [c]oul[d]n't, [b]e[c]ause if [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m [d][i][d]n't  
 [r]uth[l]e[s]s[l]y [p]ur[s]ue [m]axi[m]um [p]rofits, then  
 [s]ome[o]ne el[s]e [w]ould. [C]l[oud] eventua[l]l[y]  
 [a]sked B[a]r[r]ett if [c][a][p]ita[l]i[s]m [a]ctua[l]l[y]  
 [c]on[s]isted of [m]e[m]o[r]y [a]t all? [B]ut [B]ar[r]ett  
 [d][i][d]n't [f]u[c]king know. The [f]u[c]k [d]id h[e] [e]ven  
 [c]are - he was a[tt]empting [t]o ma[k]e an a[c]tive  
 [d]ifference [i]n th[i]ngs. No, [i]t [d][i][d]n't at all, [d][i][d]  
 [i]t? [C]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m was the [s]ingu[l]ar fo[cu]s [s]ans  
 [m]e[m]ory [p]ar ex[c]e[l]len[c]e - it [s]ought a[n]  
 i[n]c[rea]s[e] at whatever the [c]o[s]t, [r]egardl[e]s[s] of  
 the [c]ont[e]xt - d[r]iven by [th]e hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al o[th]er,  
 [th]e hy[p]o[th]eti[c]al o[th]er [m]oving [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m to  
 [c]om[p]l[et]e[l]y ignore [m]e[m]o[r]y ho[l]isti[c]a[l]l[y].  
 The on[l]y [c]ontext [i]n wh[i]ch [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m would  
 [e]ven [r]e[m]otely [c]onsider [m]e[m]o[r]y was [i]n [i]ts  
 [f]uture [f]ore[c]asts, but even those ty[p]es of [r]e[p]orts  
 were [f]unda[m]entally [m]yo[p]i[c] [i]n [c]ha[r]a[c]ter,  
 weren't they? [P]lu[s] "[p]a[s]t [p]er[f]or[m]an[c]e [i]sn't  
 [i]nd[i]cative of [f]uture results!" And even a [f]ive year  
 [f]ore[c]ast would [b][a][s]i[c]ally ju[s]t [c]over the  
 [a]ttention [s]pa[n] of [a] [b]e[ta] [f]ish in [th]e gra[n]d  
 [s]cheme of [th]ings. No, [C]l[oud] [s]aid, [c]a[p]ita[l]i[s]m  
 [c]l[ear]l[y] o[p]erated [s]a[n]s [m]e[m]o[r]y, [a]s a  
 [s]ingu[l]arit[y] - and there[f]ore was [f]undamental[l]y an  
 [a]gent of de[s]t[abi]lization [f]rom a [p]o[l]iti[c]al  
 [s]tand[p]oint - h[e] was ag[r]e[ei]ng with [B]ar[r]ett!

[B]a[r]rett wasn't [s][e]e[k]ing agr[e]ement whe[n]  
 [C][l]oud the[n] a[s]ked if there wasn't al[s]o [s]omethin[g]  
 a[b]uttin[g] divine to that [t]y[p]e of [s]ingu[l]arity - [t]o  
 [C][l]oud it was al[m][o][s]t [l]i[k]e the r[a]di[a]tion  
 [p]oisoning of [p]ure [m]a[k]o it[s]elf and shit, [n][o]?  
 [C]a[p]ita[l]ism as a [s]ingu[l]a[r]ity [c]ontained a [d]ivine  
 e[l]ement, [i]n [i]ts [r]a[d]i[c]al [r]e[j]ection of [m]e[m]o[r]y  
 [c]apita[l]ism was [c]ertainl[y] [d]ivine-adj[a]c[en]t. It was  
 [l]i[k]e [c]a[p]ita[l]ism [a]s [a]n un[f]i[e]ttered [s][e]eking of  
 in[c]r[e]a[s]e of [e]x[p]ansion [w]as [i]n [i]t[s]elf  
 [s]omething [w]orthy of [p]r[ai]se in the [a]b[st]r[a]c[t],  
 but for an [a]c[tual [s]en[s]ible [s]oc[i]ety the  
 em[p]l[o]y[m]ent of unre[p]entant [c]a[p]ita[l]ism was the  
 [m]o[s]t [d]e[s]tabi[l]izing and [s]elf-[d]e[s]tru[c]tive  
 [p]o[l]iti[c]al [p]h[i]lo[s]o[ph]y you [c]ould ever  
 [s]ub[s]c[ri]be to! [C]a[p]ita[l]ism was m[a]gnifi[c]e[n]t  
 i[n] the [a]b[st]r[a]c[t], [b]ut i[f] you [a]c[tually  
 [s]u[b]s[c]ribed to [th]e [th]eo[r]y in [p]r[a]c[tic]e [th]en  
 you would almo[s]t [d]e[f]i[n]ite[l]y, in [d]ue [t]ime,  
 [t]otal[l]y [d]e[s]troy your[s]elf and eve[r]ything a[r]ound  
 you! Ultimate[l]y, Ba[r]rett [r]eite[r]ated that he [d]i[d]n't  
 [r]eal[l]y have a [t]on of [t]i[m]e to [d]i[s]c[u]ss these  
 [t]y[p]es of [d]e[t]ails - [p]hilo[s]o[ph]i[c]al [d]i[s]c[u]ssions  
 woul[d]n't, a[f]ter [a]ll, [f]un[d]a[m]entally [a]ll the  
 [r]apid envi[r]on[m]ental [d]e[s]t[r]u[c]tion that was  
 ongoing at the hands of Shinra! [C]loud [d]i[d]n't  
 [d]i[s]agree! Yet, at the [s]ame [t]ime, weren't [th]e [t]wo  
 of [th]em at [S]e[v]e[n]th H[e]av[e]n [d]r[i]n[k]ing  
 [f]u[c]king [b]eers? How many [d]r[a]f[t [b]eers h[a]d they  
 [d]r[a]n[k] [a]t th[at] [p]oint? They weren't gonna slow  
 [d]own Shin[r]a's [d]eg[r]a[d]ation of the [p]lanet via  
 con[s]uming [d]r[a]ft [b]eers [e]ither! Shit, [b]ro. It was  
 [l]i[k]e - [C]l[oud] [a]c[tual[l]y w[o]k[e] up th[at] [m]or[n]ing  
 thin[k]ing a[b]out [m]e[m]ory - [n]ot [c]a[p]ita[l]ism, [b]ut  
 [m]e[m]ory at [l]eas[t] - [a]b[ou]t [h]ow [h]e [c]ould

[b][e] him[s]el[f] [a][c]ro[s]s multi[p]le [p]lat[f]orms and shit, [b]ut how, with that in [m]ind, [m]e[m]ory [p]erha[p]s wasn't a[t]tached to [B][e]ing it[s]el[f] [e]ither. [C][l]oud [w]as al[w]ays [c]on[c]ur[r]ently multi[p]le ite[r][a]tions of [h]im[s][e]lf, and [h]e [t]o [s]ome [e]xtent [p]ar[t]oo[k] in [B]eing a[c]ross those ite[r][a]tions, [b]ut at the same time - [th]e [th]ought o[cc]urred to [C]loud that [m]e[m]o[r]y wasn't ne[c]e[s]sa[r]ily a[tt]a[ched] [t]o [B][e]ing [a]t all [t]imes [e]ither? [B][e]ing and [m]e[m]o[r]y - [w]hat [w]as their ex[a][c]t [r]ela[t]ion[sh]ip? [Th]at [th]e soul [c]ould [f]un[d]a[m]entall[y] [b][e] eternal, [b]ut [i]f [i]ts [b][e]ing was [d]i[s]a[s]sociated [f]rom [m]e[m]o[r]y as w[e] un[d]er[s]tood it then obviou[s]l[y] it would [k]ind of b[e] di[f]fi[c]ult to ve[r]i[f]y! As we [t]end [t]o [c]on[f]irm expe[r]iences via [m]e[m]o[r]y and shit. [B]arrett gull[p]ed [d]own his eighth [p][i]nt of Midgar [L]i[gh]t [b]ut that [d]i[d]n't [d]eter [C][l]oud [f]rom [p]ro[d]ing [f]urther at the [p]oint - [n]ame[l]y, that [f]unda[m]en[t]al[l]y [c]a[p]ita[l]ism [c]on[t]ained [n]o [m]e[m]o[r]y, and Being itself [p]erha[p]s on[l]y [p]a[r]tia[l]l[y] [p]a[r]t[oo]k in [m]e[m]o[r]y? Was [c]a[p]ita[l]ism a form of [b][e]ing? [N]o, it [c]ouldn't [b][e]! - [n]ot unles[s] they too[k] a [s]t[ati]c v[a]ntage [p]oint on a[n] i[n]f[i]n[i]te urge to i[n]crea[s]e and ex[p]and, which, to [s]ome exte[n]t, wasn't [th]at [th]e [d]rive of the i[n]f[i]n[i]te, [w]hich [w]as [f]un[d]ame[n]tally the transce[n]d[en]t, [w]hich [w]as - [n]o [B]eing [c]oul[d]n't [b]e [t]ran[s]cen[d]ent, [n]ot [t]otal[l]y, [r]ight? [C]loud [d]i[d]n't thin[k] [s]o. Ba[r]rett [h]ad [h]ad enou[gh] of thi[s] [f]u[c]king shit! - [a]nd he [s]l[a]mmed his [m]ug of [M]idgar [L]i[gh]t on the [c]ounter and [m]oseyed out the [b]ar ([h]e'd [h]eard a[b]out some new "[Q]ueen's [B]lood" [th]ing [th]at was [b]eing introdu[c]ed to [S]e[c]tor [S]even that he wan[t]ed [t]o [t]ry anyway). [T]i[f]a [t]oo[k] the op[p]or[t]unity to as[k] [C][l]oud i[f] [h]e'd [h]ad a[n]y e[n]c[ou]nters with

- you kn[o]w? - th[o]se [r]uth[l]es[s] ap[p]a[r]itions that [s]e[e]med to b[e] [h]aunting [h]im in[t]er[m]ittently [s]in[c]e re[t]urning [t]o [M]idg[a]r? [W]ell, Cloud [w]as after [a]ll [a] re[m][a]de [m]an - in [m]ore [w][a]ys than [o]ne, but no? [W]hy? Who el[s]e a[r]ound the [s][l]ums had [s][e]en them r[e][c]entl[y]? It [w]as [w]eird to [C][l]oud, a [l]ittle [c]urious, he n[o]ted [t]o [T]ifa, m[o][s]t[l]y be[c]ause it [s][e]emed [l]i[k]e [s]ometimes (a) h[e]'d s[e]e them, yet [s]ometimes (b) [n]o, he wouldn't [n]e[c]e[s]ari[l]y [s]e[e] them [b]ut in[t]uit them, [b]ut [t]hen o[th]er [t]i[m]es - l[i]ke the o[th]er day - (c) the a[p]p[a]ritions [w]ould be [e]ve[r]y[w]here for [e]ve[r]y[o]ne to [s][e]e, and h[e]'d whi[p] out his f[u]c[k]ing B[u]s[te]r [S]word with [T]i[f]fa b[y] his [s][i]de. [T]i[f]fa a[s]ked him to ext[r]a[p]olate on the [t]r[iad of a-b-c], if he [c]ould. Sh[e] [c][l]ear[l]y wan[t]ed [t]o as[s]i[s]t [C][l]oud in reaching the b[ot]tom [o]f [a]ll [o]f thi[s], [s]o to [s]ea[k]. [W]ell, to [C][l]oud, it [w]as almost [l]i[k]e the E[li]eatics were [c]orre[c]t [a]ll [a]llong - [t]hat [t]his [t]ype of phe[n]ome[n]a - where some[t]imes (a) h[e]'d [s][ee] them and sh[e] wouldn't, [s]ometimes ((b)) he wouldn't [e]ven [s][ee] them [b]ut h[e]'d f[e]el them, and [t]hen o[th]er times (c) [t]hey'd a[p]pear to the [p]u[b]l[i]c at [l]arge, well, phe[n]ome[n]a [l]i[k]e that [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly un[d]ermined the [e]nti[re] i[d]ea of [e]m[p]iri[c]ism v[i]a [s]en[s]e [p]er[c]e[p]tion, no? If [s]en[s]e [p]er[c]e[p]tion was [s]ome[th]ing [t]hat [t]hey [c]ould [r]e[l]iably em[p]l[o]y as a fir[s]t [p]r[in]c[i]ple to g[a]t[h]er d[a]ta [a]nd [t]hen a[r]rive at [c]on[c]lusions [r]egarding the n[a]ture of the [c]or[p]o[r]eal [w]orld - then shit [l]i[k]e [w]hat [C][l]oud ju[s]t [d]e[s]c[r]ibed [c]oul[d]n't [b]e [p]o[s]si[b]l[e], [r]ight? [C][l]oud a[s]ked how [c]ould it [p]o[s]si[b]l[e]?! There had to [b]e a [s]e[p]a[r]ate [f]ir[s]t [p]r[in]c[i]ple they'd n[e]ed to [r]e[f]e[r]en[c]e. Al[s]o, he'd [s]witch to [F]e[n]et i[f] that was okay with

Ti[f]a? [B]ut the p[r]o[b]lem with this [n][o]tion - [b][o]th  
 h[e] and T[i][f]a ag[r][e]ed (Ti[f]a [r]e[l]uctant[l][y]  
 ag[r][e]ed) - was [th]at (a) [th]ere was no evi[d]en[c]e that  
 he [s]aw [th]em when o[th]ers [d]i[d]n't, and (b) there was  
 no e[v]i[d]en[c]e e[v]en to him[s][e]lf that he [f]i[e]lt th[e]m  
 wh[e]n he [d]i[d]n't [s]ee them. [C]loud [c]ould [s]ee  
 [th]em and h[e]'d b[e] sure [th]at h[e] saw [th]em [e]ven  
 i[f] T[i][f]a [d]i[d]n't - [h]e'd [h]ave an em[p]i[r]i[c]al [d]ata  
 [p]oint that he just [c]oul[d]n't [p][r]ove! - [b]ut when  
 [C][l]oud [s]im[p]l[y] [f]i[e]lt him[s][e]lf to [b]e in  
 [c]ommunion with [s]omething [f]o[r]mle[s]s and  
 in[c]o[r]p[or]eal, then [e]ven h[e] [c]ouldn't [b]e sure,  
 [f]rom [a]n em[p]i[r]i[c]al [s]tand[p]oint, [w]hat it [w]as he  
 ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed, [b]e[c]ause his [e]x[p]e[r]ien[c]e  
 [l]a[c]ked a [f]orm [e]ntire[l]y - [h]e [d]i[d]n't [h]ave a  
 [s]en[s]e-b[a]s[e]d em[p]i[r]i[c]al d[a]ta [p]oint to even  
 [p][r]ove to him[s]elf that he ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ed anything!  
 Ti[f]a [p]oured the [F]ernet and [s]aid [s]omething abou[t]  
 wanting to be[l]ieve [C]loud. [A]t th[at] [p]oint [C][l]oud  
 [s]aid, hear[k]ening [b]a[c]k to the [p]oint that  
 [p]r[e]v[i]ou[s]l[y] [c]aused [B]ar[r]et to [s]t[o]m[p] ou[t] o[f]  
 the [b]ar, [w]hat [w]as [m]e[m]o[r]y any[w]ay? - [i][f] not  
 th[i]s ty[p]e of [c]o[m]munion with a [f]orm[l]e[s]s and  
 in[c]o[r]p[or]eal ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e [l]ike these [r]uth[l]e[s]s  
 [a]p[ost]a[r]itions? [A]f[ter] all, he [r]e[m]em[b]ered a  
 [b]oa[t]l[oa]d of sh[i]t that [d]i[d]n't ne[c]e[s]sa[r]i[l]y  
 have i[m]ages a[t]t[a]ched! [A] [l]ot of his [m]e[m]o[r]i[es]  
 were in [f]a[c]t [f]orm[l]e[s]s [f]ee[l]ings, but then - [l]ike  
 some of [C][l]oud's other en[c]o[un]ters - [d]id in[d]eed  
 [c]ontain i[m]ages, but they [f]eatured i[m]ages that on[l]y  
 a[p]peared to [C][l]oud, just [l]ike Ti[f]a's  
 i[m]age-[m]e[m]ories [o]nly a[p]peared to her! S[o]  
 [C]loud was of [th]e [a]c[c]ute [o]p[in]ion [th]at  
 [m]e[m]ories [th]em[s]elves were to [s]ome extent [l]ike  
 [th]ese [r]uth[l]e[s]s a[p]p[ar]itions he'd been

ex[p]e[r]ien[c]ing? - yet Tifa [q]ui[c]k[l]y [c]o[r]re[c]ted  
 him, a[p]tly [p]ointing [ou]t that [C][l][ou]d's [m]e[m]ories,  
 to the be[s]t of her k[n]ow[l]edge, had [n]ever [s]warmed  
 [a]round [S][e]v[e]nth H[e]av[e]n and [a]ttacked  
 i[n]no[c]ent [c][i]v[i]lians? [H]e [h][a]d to gr[a]nt th[at] [a]s  
 [t]rue! - "but you know what I m[ea]n, [T][i]fa." Sh[e] did.  
 C[l]oud's [m]e[m]o[r]ies were [s]i[m]i[l]ar [t]o those  
 [r]uth[l]e[s]s a[p]pa[r]i[t]ions [i]n [t]erms of (a) and ([b]),  
 [b]ut not in [t]erms of (c). [C]loud [c]on[t]inued on to [s]ay,  
 [s]i[m]p[l]y a [f]r[esh] [F]ernet, [th]at [th]e [p]oint  
 [m]o[r]e o[r] les[s] [r]e[m]ained, that [w]hile sure  
 [m]e[m]o[r]ies [w]ere [d]i[s]tinct, these a[p]pa[r]itions -  
 these un[i]denti[f]i[ed] [f]l[y]ing a[p]pa[r]itions, they  
 [f]un[d]a[m]ental[l]y un[d]er[m]ined the uti[l]it[y] of our  
 [s]en[s]e-[p]er[c]e[p]tion, [w]hich [w]as [s]omething, to  
 [C][l]oud's or[i]g[i]nal [p]oint, [th]at [th]e [E][l]eati[c]s  
 real[l]y [e]m[ph]asized. Tif[a] a[c]k[n]ow[l]edged  
 [C][l]oud's point about [m]e[m]o[r]y - she [d]i[d]n't  
 [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]il[y] [d]i[s]ag[r]e[e] w[i]th [i]t ju[s]t  
 [b]e[c]ause [m]e[m]o[r]ies, to the [b]e[s]t of their  
 k[n]ow[l]edge, [n]ever [ph]ys[i]c[al]l[y] mani[f]e[s]ted  
 them[s]e[l]ves in [c]o[r]p[or]eal [f]orms, that it [s]tru[c]k  
 [T]i[f]a as [b]a[s]i[c]al[l]y [t]rue that [m]e[m]o[r]y was a  
 [s]i[m]i[l]ar [t]y[p]e of ex[p]e[r]ien[c]e, [s]ome[th]ing [th]at  
 [th]ey in[t]era[c]ted with [s]ome[t]i[m]es v[i]a [a]n [i]mage  
 that wasn't [s]en[s]ible to [a]nyone e[l]s[e], and  
 [s]ometi[m]es [v]i[ua]l [a] v[ague] feeling [th]at [th]ey  
 [c]ouldn't even [c]or[r]obo[r]ate them[s]e[l]ves! - [e]ven  
 [m]e[m]o[r]y to [s]ome e[x]tent [c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y  
 un[d]ermi[n]ed [th]e [i]dea [th]at our [s]en[s]o[r]i[y]  
 f[a]c[t]u[al]ties were [r]elia[b]le instruments t[o] [u]se t[o]  
 [c]ome to [a]c[cu]r[ate] [c]on[c]l[u]sions a[b]out [w]hat  
 [w]e [p]erc[e]ive to b[e] the [c]o[r]p[or]eal [w]orld.

## Canto VI



Total Echoes: 1,247

Total Syllables: 1,707

Approximate Self-Similarity: .731

[C][l]oud k[n]ew that of [c]our[s]e Ae[r]ith was [s]u[f]fe[r]ing [f][r]om this g[n]awing [i]n[k][l][i]ng that, you k[n]ow, [C][l]oud m[ay] have [g]one and [g]iven aw[ay] the [f][l]ower - or [p]erh[a][p]s th[at] was a [t]ad [t]oo st[r]ong a [ph][r][a]se - m[ay][b]e [p]assed [a][l]ong was [a] [b]etter w[ay] to [p]ut it, that's what C[l]oud [p]ostu[l]ated at [l]east - [b]ut i[n] a[n]y [c]ase he k[n]ew [th]at Ae[r]ith k[n]ew [th]at he [f]or[w]arded the [f][l]o[w]er, [r]ight? But how did she [c]ome to [p]osse[s]s that k[n]ow[l]edge exa[c]t[l]y? - [c]ould it have [p]o[s]si[b]l[y] [b]een via the under [c][i]ty [w]h[i][s][p]er [n]et[w]or[k]? Or [d]id Ae[r]ith [c]ome to [r]ea[l]ize [C][l]oud g[a]ve the shit aw[ay] via [s]ome [s]ort of [d][i]vine [i]ntu[i]t[i]on? Ba[s]i[c]a[l]ly, [C][l]oud was a[t]tem[p]ting [t]o [a][s]cer[t]ain the [s][our][c]e [or][i]g[i]n of [A]e[r]ith's know[l]edge - was it o[p]i[n]ion or i[n]tu[i]t[i]on - [w]hereas Aerith [w]as ch[ie][f][l]y [c]on[c]erned with [th]e im[p]l[i]cations of [th]e know[l]edge it[s]el[f]. She a[c]tua[l]ly made it [q]uite [c][l]ear that [sh]e wasn't [s]ure if [C][l]oud's [p][r]eva[r]i[c]ations were [r]ea[l]ly the [p]oint she was a[t]tem[p]ting [t]o ma[k]e when she b[r]ought the whole [f][l]ower [r]e-gi[f]ting u[p] to [C][l]oud - [th]at [th]e issue [a]t h[a]nd wasn't, [p]erh[a]p[s], how she ob[t]ained thi[s] [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar k[n]ow[l]edge, but in[s]t[ea]d wh[e]ther or [n]ot [C][l]oud g[a]ve the [f][l]o[w]er a[w]ay, [w]hich to [b]e [f]air she [w]asn't, [l]i[k]e, o[f]f[f]ended [b]y - Ae[r]ith was just a [l]ittle [c]u[r]ious? Who'd [C][l]oud "[f]or[w]ard" it [t]o any[w]ay? [T]i[f]a, [r]ight? Of [c]ourse it [w]as [T]i[f]a - [w]hich [w]as [t]otal[l]y [f]ine! They [w]ere a[c]tua[l]l[y] [f]riends! [B]ut [C][l]oud, i[f] [p]o[s]sible, wan[t]ed [t]o [s]tay on this [p][r]ior [p]oint - this

e[p]i[s]temo[l]ogi[c]al [p]oint - [b]e[c]ause he [th]ought [th]ere was a [p][r]etty im[p]ortant d[i]s[t]i[n]c[t]ion [t]o [b]e [f]ound there, [b]etween knowing [s]omething via o[p]inion - [b]e[c]ause, [f]or [i]n[s]t[a]n[c]e, [s]ome [S]e[c]tor [S][i]x d[i][p]sh[i]t was ya[p]ping his f[u][c]king g[u]ms in the [s][u]m - or [b]y [c]ontr[a]st [b]e[c]oming [f]a[m]iliar in a [m]ore [p]ure [f]a[sh]ion. [Th]ere was [p]ure knowledge of [th]ings - and [th]en [th]ere was [b]ull[sh]it you h[ear]d th[ir]d hand from dou[ch]e[b]ags in the [S]e[c]tor [S]ix [S][i]ums. [C]l[oud] [f]elt [l]i[k]e Ae[r]ith p[r]o[b]a[b]l[y] knew via [th]e [f]ormer me[th]od - [c]ould she [c]onf[ir]m though? Instead Ae[r]ith ch[o]se to [p]o[s]it the [r]adi[c]al n[ot]ion that may[b]e it [c]ould have [b]een [b]o[th]? Sure, [C]l[oud] [th]ought [th]at was [p]o[ssi]b[le] (he guessed . . .) - [b]ut he [d]i[d]n't [th]in[k] [s]o - it was [p]o[ssi]b[le] yet not [p]ro[b]a[b]le - in [f]a[c]t, [C]l[oud] [f]elt [l]i[k]e he k[n]ew that Ae[r]ith k[n]ew, [n]o, [n]ot via [s]ome [w]hi[s]p[er] [n]et[w]ork, [n]o, [n]ot [b]y o[p]inion at all, [b]ut i[n]s[t]ea[d] [b]y dir[e]ct i[n]tuition. And it just [s]o h[a]p[p]ened th[at] it was [b]y his own [i]ntu[i]t[i]ve [c]a[p]a[b]i[ti]ties th[at] [C]l[oud] k[n]ew [th]at Ae[r]ith k[n]ew [th]at he g[a]ve [th]at [v]e[r]y [f]u[c]king [f]l[ower] [a]w[ay] [v]i[a] her own intu[i]t[i]on, [n]ot by a[n]y [l]u[r]id [r]u[m]or [m]onger [f]r[o][i]c[k]ing shame[l]e[s]s[l]y in the [s][i]ums. Were there any [r]u[m]or [m]ongers [f]r[o][i]c[k]ing sh[a]me[l]e[s]s[l]y in the [s][i]ums though? [S][p]r[e]a[d]ing [d]i[s]in[f]or[m]a[t]ion [a]b[ou]t [C]l[oud] [g]iving [a]w[ay] [f]l[owers] to a [p]l[etho]ra of wo[m]en [i]n [M]i[d]g[ar]! [N]o, that [w]asn't the [w]ay [A]erith [h]a[d] [a]c[c]e[s]sed [h]er k[n]owledge - [n]ot at all. [A]n[yw[ay], [A]erith [th]ought [ma]ybe [C]l[oud] should [c]on[s]ider [th]in[k]ing t[w]i[c]e be[f]ore [g]iving [a]w[ay] [f]l[owers] [a]g[ain]. That [w]as [a]ll. [N]ot that she was [p]ar[t]i[cu]l[ar]l[y] [p]e[r]f[u]r[bed]. [N]ot in the [l]e[ast] a[c]tua[l]l[y]! [B]ut

may[b][e] [C][l]oud [c]ould just - hy[p]otheti[c]a[l][y] - if a  
 [g]irl [l]i[k]e h[er] w[er]e to [g][i]ve h[i]m a [b]eauti[f]ul  
 ye[l]low [f][l]ower in the [m][i]ddle of [M][i]dgar, [m]ay[b]e  
 [h]e should [h]old onto [th]e [th]ing! Or at the ver[y] l[e]ast  
 don't [g]o and [g]ive it to some other [f]u[c]king chi[ck]!  
 Was it real[l]y that d[i][f]f[i][c]ult to just [c]ontinual[l]y  
 [k]ee[p] a [s]ingle [f][l]ower on your [p]er[s]on? [N]ot that  
 it was [A]erith's [b]usiness [a][n]y[w]ay, [b]e[c]ause  
 [c][l]ear[l]y [i][f] [C][l]oud [w]an[t]ed [t]o g[i][f]t the [f][l]ower  
 [t]o [T]ifa - sure that was [f]ine, it was totally his [o]p[t]io[n]  
 if that's [h]ow [h]e w[a]n[t]ed [t]o go a[b]ou[t] it, [b]ut  
 [d][i][d]n't C[l]oud th[i]nk [i]t was just a [l]i[t]tle rude?  
 [N]o, in[s]tead he [th]ought [th]at [th]ere was a  
 [n]o[t]a[b]le [d]i[s]tinction [b]e[t]ween the [t]wo [t]ypes of  
 k[n]owledge - [b]ut if Ae[r]ith [d]id [s]o [h]appen to [h]ear  
 [i]t [i]n the [s]t[r]ee[t], then [w]ould sh[e] b[e] [w]illing [t]o  
 [t]ell C[l]oud who was f[l]a[p]ping their [l]i[p]s? [W]as  
 any[o]ne out in the [s][l]ums [s][p]e[c]i[f]c[a]l[l]y [l]oo[k]ing  
 to [r]at his [s][p]i[k]y a[s]s out? [I]n a[n]y [c]a[s]e,  
 [r]egard[l]e[s]s of all that, [C][l]oud [t]ota[l]ly  
 under[s]t[ood] wh[er]e Ae[r]ith was [c]oming [f]rom, and  
 [h]e gue[s]sed [h]e ju[s]t wasn't [r]eally th[i]n[k]i[n]g at  
 the [t]ime, when h[e] [r][e]-g[i]f[t]ed the [f][l]ower - [T]ifa  
 [t]oo[k] n[o]te of the [f][l]ower, and he [d]i[d]n't wan[t] [t]o  
 go in[t]o the wh[o]le fl[ow]er girl a[n]ecd[ote], s[o] he  
 figured it m[i]ght be [k][i]nd of [n]i[ce] to, you k[n]ow,  
 [p]ass a[l]ong the [l]ove? Ae[r]ith [r]e[p]eated the  
 [ph]r[ase] [p]ass a[l]ong the [l]ove in [a] w[ay] that, [q]uite  
 [a]m[a]zing[l]y, wasn't [c]om[p]l[i]e[t]e[l]y [f]i[l]led to the  
 br[i]m with [c]ons[t]ern[a]tion and [c]on[t]em[p]t. [T]o  
 [C][l]oud there was something ine[f]fa[b]l[y] [t]rue  
 a[b]out [c]ontemp[or]a[ti]ng the [f]em[a]le [f]orm, [i]n [i]ts  
 [b]lunt [ph]y[s]i[c]al [i]te[r]a[tion] - there was no [l]u[r]id  
 o[p]inion [p]r[e]sent w[i]th[i]n [i]t, although C[l]oud  
 [d]i[d]n't e[x]p[l]i[c]i[tly e[x]p[re]s[s] thi[s] [i]dea to

[A]e[r]iθ [a]t the t[i]me, given her [r]eti[c]en[c]e to  
 e[n]gage i[n] the op[i]n[i]on [v]er[s]us [i][n][t]u[i]t[i]on  
 di[c]hotomy he [s]tarted the [c]onver[s]ation with - yet he  
 was [s]till [o]bviou[s][l]y [c][o]n[t]em[p]l[i]ating her [f][or]m  
 [a]s this b[a][c]k [a]nd [f][or]th o[c]curred. Her  
 [t][y][p][e][c]al [ph][i][l]o[s]o[ph][i][c]al d[i][s]po[s]i[t]ion  
 when it [c]ame to l[ove] triangles [w]as [w]aning just  
 [s][l]ight[l]y - this l[i]ttle [f]l[ower] [i]n[c]i[dent] [s]eemed to  
 [a][m]o[st] [r]ile her up e[m]o[t]ionally, [a]lthough it was  
 [c]l[ear] to [C]l[oud] when she [r]e[p]eated the [ph][r]ase  
 [p]ass a[l]ong the l[ove] that she wasn't ent[i]rely r[i]led  
 u[p]. Not yet at l[ea]st. Aerith [f]ina[l]ly [c]on[f]irmed [f]or  
 [C]l[oud] that, yes, it was v[i]a [p]ure [i]ntu[i]t[i]on she'd  
 [s]urm[i]sed her f[lower] no l[ong]er [r]es[i]ded on his  
 [p]er[s]on, and [s]ure [sh]e ag[r]eed [th]at [th]ere was a  
 [c]e[r]tain di[s]tin[c]tion be[t]ween the [t]wo [t]ypes of  
 kn[ow]l[edge]. [C]l[oud] then [a]s[ked] [A]erith [w]hat  
 she [th]ought [w]as [th]e [c]a[use] of each [t]y[p]e - well,  
 [o]bviou[s][l]y [o]p[in]ion [c]on[s]i[sted] of l[i]t[er]al  
 [w]h[i]s[p]er [n]et[w]orks, she [s]aid, from what  
 [p]eo[p]le [s]aw [a]nd heard [a]nd [a]ll that. This  
 [a]ll[ow]ed [C]l[oud] to note that wasn't eve[r]ything  
 Shin[r]a [w]as [w]or[k]ing on - e[s]p[eci]al[l]y H[o]o -  
 was that [n]ot [b]a[s]i[c]al[l]y a[n]other [w]h[i]s[p]er  
 [n]et[w]ork, that H[o]o, de[s]p[ite] [b]eing a  
 [s]o-calle[d] [s]cientist, [w]as [s]im[p]ly [w]or[k]ing [o]ff  
 [o]f [w]hat [h]e and [h]is a[s]so[c]iates heard and [s]aw?  
 Ae[r]iθ was [t]em[p]t[ed] [t]o [s]ay H[o]o's  
 o[p]e[r]a[t]ion was a [m]ore [s]yste[m]a[tic] version of  
 th[at], yes, [b]ut in[s]tead a[b]r[u]p[tly] [c]u[t] her[s]elf  
 o[ff], [b]e[c]ause when she [c]on[s]i[d]ered it [f]urther she  
 [c]on[c]l[u]ded the un[d]er [c]i[t]y [w]h[i]s[p]er  
 net[w]or[k]s [w]ere a[c]tual[l]y [q]uite [c]om[p]l[ex]  
 them[s]elves! [S]o in[s]tead she a[c]cused [C]l[oud] of  
 changing the [s]ubj[ect], th[en] she noted th[at],

[a][c]tua[l]ly, [sh]e wan[t]ed [t]o [sh]ift t[o]pi[c]s, but [n][o]t to the [s]o-[c]alled [w]hisper [n]et[w]or[k]s of H[o][o] versus the [w]ell-k[n]own [w]h[i][s]per [n]et[w]or[k]s of the [S]e[c]tor [S][i]x [S][i]ums, [n]o! [N]o, [C][l][ou]d under[s]tood. [E]ven [h]e [d]i[d]n't [e]ven r[ea]lly want [t]o [t]al[k] ab[ou]t H[o][o]! Maybe he was obfus[c]ating. C[l]oud a[p]o[l]logized, but Ae[r]ith [s]aid it wasn't [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]y, there was [n]o [s]o[r]ry [n]ee[ded] [r]ea[l]ly - they [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] shouldn't [b]eat a [d]ead [h]orse, [s]o to [s]p[ea]k. [B][u]t, [u]gh - what a [h]o[r]ren[d]ous [t]urn of ph[r]ase. No, [C][l]oud ag[r]ee[d] - it was a [t]e[r]ri[b]le [s]ay[ing], a [s]c[um]b[ag] [s]ay[ing], [r]ea[l]ly - H[o][o] p[ro]b[ab]l[y] would [d]o it though, [b]eat a [d]ead horse? - a[n]d the[n] [f]u[c]king, [i]i[k]e, [i]nje[c]t [i]t w[i]th [m]a[k][o] or [s]ome shit, [m]a[k]e it a [m]utant [s]teed! G[r][o][s]s! [F]u[c]king loser!

## Canto VII

Total Echoes: 1,227

Total Syllables: 1,738

Approximate Self-Similarity: .706

[C][l]oud just [a]t th[a]t [m]o[m]ent had begun to [r]e[c]apitu[l]ate, [th]is [t]ime [t]o [th]e [t]wo of [th]em - [A]e[r]ith [a]nd [T]ifa - how it wasn't a[c]tually the [c]ase that h[e]'d s[ee]n the [b]e[ing], no, there wasn't i[n] [f]a[c]t a[n] a[c]tual [ph]y[s]i[c]al [b]e[ing] i[n] that se[n]se of the [ph]rase - it wasn't [i]i[k]e the me[n] i[n] the [b]i[a]c[k] [c]l[oa]k[s] they'd [b]e [f]o[l]l[ow]ing in Re[b]i[r]th (were ei[th]er of [th]em [f]a[m]iliar with [th]at [p]o[t]i[n]e yet?). He'd just [b]egan to ex[p]l[i]ain [th]is to [th]e [b]oth of [th]em, and [C][l]oud [d]i[d]n't [f]eel a[n]y [d]i[f]fe[r]ent a[b]out it [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]i[l]y - the [f]a[c]t t[h]at he was [t]elling [th]e [b]oth of [th]em - [T]i[f]a was [b]e[h]ind the [b]ar [a]nd [A]erith just [h]appened to [b]e there. It was

[f]ine. [W]ere they [f]amiliar [w]ith [R]e[b]irth yet?  
 [P][r]o[b]a[b]l[y] [n]ot, [r]ight? [B]ut [n][o], in thi[s] [c]a[s]e  
 [C][l]oud had [b]een fu[c]king, you k[n][o]w, just [s]itting  
 on this [c]ar[p]et in Wu[t][ai] at the [t][i]me - he [s]at on  
 the [c]ar[p]et [c]ros[s]-[l]egged - and then he  
 [s]u[d]den[l][y] in[t]uited a [p]ure[l][y] [d]ivi[n]e b[e]ing  
 [e]man[a]ting in the [t]riangle head [e]nca[p][s]u[l][a]ted in  
 the [p]erfe[c]t[l][y] [s][q]uare [d]es[i]gn that [r]e[p]e[ate]d  
 [e]nd[l]e[s]s[l]y th[r]oughout the [e]n[t]i[re] [c]ar[p]et. This  
 [t][r]iangle head [w]as [w]hat [C][l]oud [c]ould on[l]y  
 des[c]ribe [a]s [a] “[l]aughing [A][l]lah”. That’s how it  
 [s]tru[c]k him. There wasn’t [r]eal[l]y [a] [q]uestion [a]bout  
 [i]t [i]n [C][l]oud’s mind and it was a [c]tua[l]ly beauti[f]ul.  
 Yes, [a] “[l]aughing [A][l]lah” [w]as the on[l]y [w]ay he  
 [c]ould [d]e[s]c[r]ibe the [d]ivine being, which  
 [c]ertain[l]y [c]ommuni[c]ated with him [a]s he [s][a]t  
 [c]ros[s]-[l]egged in [W]utai in a [s]ome[w]hat  
 [m]y[s]ti[c]al [m]a[n]ner, al[b]eit not [q]uite ver[b]all[y],  
 [b]ut the [b]eing [c]ertain[l]y [c]o[m]mu[n]i[c]a[te]d in a  
 w[ay] that [c]aused [C][l]oud to [s]m[i]le. [C][l]oud,  
 s[m]ile?! The [t]wo wo[m]en [f]ound that [t]otal[l]y  
 hi[l]larious! [T]i[f]fa n[ea]r[l]y [f]u[c]ked u[p] the b[ee]r sh[e]  
 was [p]ou[r]ing she was [s]o [s]urp[r]ised to h[ea]r  
 [C][l]oud of [a]ll [p]eo[p]le [t]a[k]ing [a]bout him[s]el[f]  
 [s]m[i]ling. [B]ut [n][ei]ther [T]i[f]fa [n]or [A]erith [f]ound  
 this [a]n[e]c[d]ote of [C]loud’s to [b]e [d]i[s]i[n]genuous  
 i[n] a[n]y way - i[n] [f]a[c]t they [b]oth [f]u[l]ly [s]uppo[r]ted  
 [C][l]oud’s [c]on[f]essions and mo[r]e o[f]ten than not  
 [e]ven [f]ound them [l]egitimate[l]y intr[i]guing ([b]ut  
 there were, of [c]our[s]e, [s]ome ex[c]eptions!), al[b]eit  
 they gene[r]al[l]y [f]ound the a[n]e[c]dotes i[n]t[r]iguing [i]n  
 a [o]ne-on-[o]ne [s]etting, as [o]p[os]ed to thi[s] [F][F]M  
 [a]rrangement. [B]ut that was c[le]ar[l]y [f]ine! It just [s]o  
 h[a]p[pe]ned [A]erith was a[r]ound and she [p]o[p]ped in  
 the [b]ar. N[o] [b]ig deal at [a]ll! Yet, [w]hile

[c]ontem[p][l]ating [w]hether or [n]ot a[n]other [M]os[c]ow  
 [M]ule was ad[v]isable or [n]ot, [C]loud ex[p][r]e[s]sed  
 [q]uite [v]igo[r]ou[s]ly that he wan[t]ed [t]o [r]e[l]ay a  
 [s]ub[s]e[qu]ent ane[c]d[o]te that he [v]iewed  
 a[p]r[o][p]o[s] of the [c]ar[p]et en[c]ounter, if that was  
 o[k][ay]? Of [c]ourse! Well, [s][p]ec[i]f[i]c[al]l[y] it [w]as  
 that [w]hen he [p]o[pp]led in[t]o his [l][o][c]al [c]o-[o][p]  
 g[r][o][c]e[r]y [s][t]ore that [m]or[n]ing, [f]or just a [f]ew  
 [m][i][n]or [i]tems, a [c]ou[p]le h[a]nd [f]r[ui]ts [r]eally,  
 [a]nd the new [c][a]shier [a]sked him - [r]ight as [h]e  
 sh[i]fted [h][i]s [h]ead[ph]ones [u]p o[f]f [o]f his ears to  
 [s]t[ar]t the [f]ormalized [s]ales [t]r[ans]a[c]tion - [i]f  
 h[i]s b[r]other “or [s]omething” went there [s]ome[t]imes?  
 - [t]o the g[r][o][c]e[r]y [s]to[r]e? Did [C][l]oud have a  
 [b]r[ot]her [b]y a[n]y chance? [B]e[c]ause she, the [n]ew  
 [c]ashier, felt [l]i[k]e sh[e]’d s[e]en him [b]efo[r]e? Well,  
 [C]loud [s]aid to the [c]ashier, thin[k]ing a[b]out it [f]or a  
 [s]e[c]ond he [f]ound it [q]uite [p]o[s]si[b]le [t]h[at] [t]his  
 a[l]leged do[p]pelganger was a[c]tual[l]y [f]u[c]king just  
 him! - [C][l]oud him[s]elf! - [t]h[at] the [c][a]shier was in  
 [t]h[at] [p]arti[c]u[l]ar in[s]tan[c]e [c]on[f]using [C][l]oud for  
 his a[c]tual [s]elf, [t]h[at] [t]his [c]ashier on[l]y bel[i]eved  
 sh[e]’d [s]ee[n] [s]ome[o]ne who [l]oo[k]ed just [l]i[k]e  
 [C][l]oud [b]efore [b]e[c]ause sh[e]’d, in [f]a[c]t, s[ee]n  
 [C][l]oud [b]efo[r]e. He [w]alked a[w]ay just  
 [m]o[m]en[t]a[r]ily, he [t]old [T]ifa [a]nd [A]e[r]ith, just [t]o  
 [t]o[s]s his [b][a][s]k[e]t [b][a]c[k] in[t]o the [s]t[a]c[k] of  
 [b][a][s]k[e]ts [b]ehind the auto[m]a[t]ic d[oor]s. Yeah,  
 he’d [t]a[k]e one [m]or[e] [M]ule, pl[e]ase [T]ifa? The  
 new [c]ashier was [c]hu[c]k[l]ing when [C][l]oud a[r]rived  
 b[a]c[k] [a]t the [c]he[c]kout [c]ounter [r]eady to [p]ay for  
 his [sh]it - [sh]e was in the [p][r]ocess of ente[r]ing the  
 item num[b]er for his [r]ed [q]uinoa, [c]hu[c]k[l]ing a[l]one  
 - “it [c]ould’ve [b]een you” she [r]e[p]eated, chuc[k]l[ing],  
 [b]ut then, [C][l]oud [r]e[l]ayed [t]o [T]ifa and Ae[r]ith, she

a[c]tua[l]ly [c]ame a[r]ou[nd] to [C][l]ou[d]'s [p]arti[c]u[l]ar  
hy[p]othesis. The new [c][a]shier, [a]fter thin[k]ing [a]bout  
it, [c]ame to [a]gree with [C][l]oud, th[at] she [a][c]tua[l]ly  
p[r]o[b]a[b]ly had [s]een him in the g[r]o[c]e[r]y  
[s]tore, and that she'd just [n]ow  
er[r]o[n]eously [f]igured [h]e [h]ad a [b]rother, when in  
[f]a[ct] this hypo[th]eti[c]al [b]ro[th]er was [a][c]tua[l]ly  
just [C][l]oud himse[f]. [T]i[f]a [c]on[s]idered, [a]fter  
she'd inge[s]t[ed] the [f]ull [a]ne[c]dote and [s]erved  
[C][l]oud his [r]ef[r]eshed [M]o[s]cow [M]ule, that it was  
[s]omewhat [i]k[e]ly [th]at [th]e [c]ashier wan[t]ed [t]o  
[q]u[ote]-un[q]u[ote] [s]u[c]k his [c]o[c]k, and [C][l]oud  
[d]idn't [n]e[c]e[s]sa[r]ily [d]isag[r]ee with the  
[n]otion! - he [c]ertainly [c]on[s]idered it [p]o[s]sible,  
[th]at [th]is [c]ashier [m]ay have [b]een a[m]ena[b]le to  
some[th]ing [i]k[e] [th]at, but [th]at wasn't [q]u[ite] the  
[p]oint! There [w]as a t[y]p[e] of [w]isdom [i]n[te]nt in the  
exch[a]nge, [w]asn't there? - regard[less] of [w]hether or  
not the [c]ashier [w]anted to per[f]orm [f]el[icitatio]n  
[C][l]oud? Ae[r]ith, by [c]on[t]rast, [t]ook a more  
[ph]ilo[s]o[ph]ic[al] [a]ngle to her [a]nal[y]s[is] of the  
en[c]ounter, [b]e[c]ause sh[e] agr[ee]d with [C]loud  
[th]at [th]e [c]ashier exh[i]b[it]ed a [c]ertain  
[s]p[irit]ual in[s]ight, even [i]f [i]t was in[a]dvertent.  
[A]erith, [f]or her [p]art, [d]idn't [p]ut much of a[n]y  
sto[c]k i[n] [t]o the [c]ashier's i[n]te[n]tions, whether or  
[n]ot they were [s]ordid, be[n]ign, or [s]imply  
in[d]i[f]ferent. U[p]on [a][c]k[n]owl[ed]ging this Ti[f]a  
[n]oted that she [r]e[c]og[n]ized [A]e[r]ith's [p]oint of  
[v]iew as [v]alid, th[at] it was [p]ro[b]a[b]ly the "[r]ight  
way [t]o [t]ake [i]t [i]n," [e]ven [i]f sh[e], [T]i[f]a, wasn't  
[p]er[s]onal[ly] at the [p]oint of [p]arti[c]ipat[ing] in [q]uite  
that [l]evel of obje[c]t[i]v[i]ty (i[f] [th]ey [c]ould, in [f]a[ct],  
[c]all it [th]at). [C]loud m[en]tioned [th]at, [a]t [th]e [en]d  
of the [d]ay, [h]e [c]ouldn't [h]el[p] [i]t [i]f a [c]er[tai]n



[p][er][s][o]n ex[p]erien[c]ed an [ur]ge to [s]u[ck] his  
 [c][o][ck] - that [w]hether or [n]ot [s][o]me[o]ne [wa]n[t]ed  
 [t]o [s]u[ck] any[o]ne's k[n]ob [w]as [s]omething  
 [u]l[t]imately [u]nk[n]owable, that [C][l]oud [c]ouldn't  
 [s]im[p]l[y] [t]os[s] [p]o[t]ential [s][p]iritual en[c]ounters to  
 the way[s]ide [p]ure[l]y be[c]ause of a [p]ur[p]orted  
 [s]ordid [s]ub[t]ext or in[t]ention. Both [w]omen ag[r]eed  
 [w][i]th th[is], yet [p]erh[a]p[s] Ae[r]i[th] just a [t][a]d more  
 than [T]i[fa]? - not to [s]ay [T]i[fa] was [s]omehow  
 [b]e[s]ide her[s]el[f] with jealou[s]y i[n] a[n]y ma[t]erial  
 way - no, th[is] d[is]t[ri]nction [b]e[t]w[ee]n [T]i[fa] a[n]d  
 [A]e[r]i[th] was p[r]o[b]a[b]ly [r]ooted more [s]o in Ae[r]i[th]'s  
 [b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly a[b]s[ur]d [a][b]i[l]it[y] to [r]e[m]ain  
 [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]ically undet[er]red a[b]out other [w]o[m]en  
 [w]hile s[t]ee[p]ed i[n] a[n] obvious [l]ove [t]riangle. Did  
 sh[e] [e]ven [l]i[k]e [C][l]oud, r[e]al[l]y? [B]e[c]ause it  
 was [r]ea[l]ly [q]uite [e]vident that [C][l]oud, [T]i[fa], and  
 Ae[r]i[th] were [c]o[l]le[c]tive[l]y [e][n]twin[ed] i[n] a sort of  
 [l]ove [t]riangle, [b]ut Ae[r]i[th], for her part,  
 [m]ai[n]t[ai]ned [q]uite the uni[que] a[b]i[l]it[y] to  
 [r]e[m]ai[n] es[s]ential[l]y [ph]i[lo]s[oph]i[c]al a[b]out it  
 a[l]l - she [d]i[d]n't [s]eem to a[l]l[ow] f[ee]l[ings] of  
 jea[l]ou[s]y to over[c]ome her in the [l]ea[s]t when  
 [C][l]oud re[l]ayed ane[c]dotes a[b]out [c][a]shiers th[at],  
 if [th]e [th]r[ee] [w]ere [b]e[ing] h[on]est, [c][l]ea[r]l[y]  
 [w]an[t]ed to [w]hip the guy's [c]o[ck] out and [s]u[ck] [on]  
 it for an ex[t]e[n]d[ed] i[n]t[er]val of [t]ime. [D]id she  
 [e]ven r[e]al[l]y [l]i[k]e [C][l]oud? H[is] i[n]d[i]v[is]ual  
 f[ee]l[ings] on the situ[a]tion were a [l]i[t]tle am[b]i[gu]ous,  
 even when he was a[l]l a[l]one. [C][l]oud was of  
 [c]our[s]e in[c]apa[b]le of as[s]es[s]ing his own  
 f[ee]l[ings] f[or] [s]omewhat obv[i]ous r[e]asons.

Koreatown Bok Choy

Mode: >.667

11,083:14,489 .765

1.1 A[r][a]q[i] t[o]ld J[o] Yu-[r][i], as they [s][a]t in the [s]m[all] h[all][w]ay [w]ide U[d]o[n] Lab [o]n [W][e][s]t Thirty [S][e]cond, [r]ight [n][e]xt to the Marti[n][i]que, [h]ow [h][e] [h]ad no [r]e[c]oll[e][c]tion of [r][e]-[r][e]ading [R]ings of [S]aturn what[s]o[e]ver, in fa[c]t the onl[y] [r][ea]s[o]n A[r]a[q]i [e]v[e]n [r][ea]lized h[e]'d [s]tarted [r][e]-[r][ea]ding [R]ings of [S][a]turn [a]t [a]ll was [a] [s]ole b[l]ue pen [u]n[d]er[l][i]ne [s]t[r][i]ke [u]n[d]er the w[or]d [R]umelia, [r][i]ght [o]n t[o]p of [p]age [n][i]nety [n][i]ne that, [n]ow [r][e]-[r][ea]ding it yet [a]gain, [A][r]aqi k[n][ew] all t[oo] [w]ell [h]e [w]ould [h]ave [n]ever made [w]hen he [i]n[i]t[i]ally [r]ead [R][i]ngs of [S]aturn, [b]e[c]ause [a]t th[at] time A[r]a[q]i [b]are[l]y knew what [R]ume[l]ia [r]efe[r]enced, [b]ut u[p]on [a] [s]econd [r]eading, [a][s]sumi[n]g [s][ai]d [s][e]cond [r]eading [t]ook [p]lace when [A][r]aq[i] [b]e[l]i[e]ved it [d]id, h[e] was [t]otal[l]y [b]alls [d][ee]p in [R]ume[l]ia [l]o[r]e. F[or] all of th[e]se [r][ea]sons A[r]aq[i] [b]e[l]i[e]ved h[e]'d on[l]y [b]eg[a]n his [s]econd [r]eading of [R]ings of [S][a]turn when he [p]i[c]ked u[p] the [b]oo[k] again just [th]e [o]f[th]er [a]fternoon, [b][u]t in [a][c]tu[a]l[i]ty, a[c]cording to th[i]s [p]art[i]c[u]lar b[l]ue under[l]i[n]e on the [n][i]nety-[n][i]nth [p]age of the [n]ovel, it [s][ee]med [l]i[k]e h[e]'d [a][c]tual[l]y, in fa[c]t, [r][e][c]ent[l]y [s]tarted a third [r][e]ading, [n]ot a [s]econd. [B][u]t w[a]s[n't] [i]t a [b]i[t] [b]efud[d]ling, a tad [d]i[s]c[o]n[c]e[r]t[i]ng [p]erh[a]p[s] th[at] a [p]er[s]o[n] [c]ould h[a]ve [a]bso[l]ute[l]y n[o] [r]e[c]o[l]l[e]ction of [r]eading a wh[o]le f[u]c[k]ing h[u]ndred [p]ages [o]f [a] n[o]vel less than f[i]ve years [p]r[i]or, A[r]aqi thought, a [s][e]ntim[e]nt he [e]xp[r]e[s]sed to Jo Yu-[r][i], and sh[e]

ag[r][e]ed that [i]t d[i]d [s][e]em eg[r][e]gious, [b]ut al[s]o [p]er[p]lexing and may[b][e] [e]ven, [n]ot to [b][e] hy[p]er[b]ol[i]c, [b]ut a [b][i]t om[i][n]ou[s]? [B]ut all [th]is, [th]e en[t]irety of the [p]air's [s][p]e[c]i[i]f[i]c [s][t]ream [o]f dial[o]gue w[a]s ab[r][u][p]tly inter[r][u][p]ted when J[o] Yu-[r][i] [n][o]ted A[r]aq[i]'s v[i]s[i]bl[y] [c]on[c]ate[n][a]ting f[r]ust[r]a[t]ion as th[ey] were sudden[l][y], vio[l]ent[l][y] up[s]tr[ea]med at the [b]ar [b]y [s]ome gr[e]a[s][y] fu[ck] in a [c]o[b]alt [b]lue [s]o[c]cer jersey - the [f]a[ct] of the m[at]ter was the two [f]riends only [p][o]p[pe]d in the [s][p]o[t] to beg[i]n w[i]th [t]o [t]a[k]e a [q]u[i]ck l[i]s[t]e[n] to a [p]arti[c]u[l]ar xy[l]oph[o]ne [j]azz t[r]i[o] A[r]a[q]i and [J][o] Yu-[R]i heard [p][l]aying [f]rom the [f]oyer as they [w]alked [p]ast on [W][e]s[t] Thirty [S][e]c[on]d, A[r]a[q]i [b]eing in[t]r[i]gued [b]y a [t]r[i]o [l]ed b[y] xy[l]oph[o]ne, [b]ut [o]nce in line at the [b]ar they [b]o[th] s[l]o[w]ly rea[l]ized how [l]o[qu]acious this [b]artender [w]as [w]ith each [c]u[s]tomer, A[r]a[q]i's f[r]u[s]t[r]a[t]ion [c]on[c]aten[ing] with [e]ach [s]e[c]ond h[e] [c]ontinued to w[ai]t for a [b]eer, and now, this [c]u[s]tomer in a [c]o[b]alt [b]lue [s]o[c]cer jersey, [p]o[p]ped [u]p out [o]f [s]eemingly thin air to [u]p[s]tr[ea]m [th]em, [th]is [c]u[s]tomer, who'd, for [h]is [p]art, [h]ad a [p]a[r]ent[l][y] been [r]e[p]eated[l][y] [s]c[or]ned in his [q]u[e]s[t] to get a [s]e[c]ond [b]eer him[s]e[l]f, [b]y none o[th]er [th]an [th]is lo[qu]a[c]ious [b]ar[t]ender, who [k]ept [c]on[t]inuing on a [b]out che[c]king the [p]ipes in the [b][a]sem[e]nt, and now this [c]u[s]tomer in the [c]o[b]alt [b]lue [s]o[c]cer shirt au[d]acious[l]y [c]ut them [b]o[th] in [l]ine to [r]uth[l]ess[l]y expe[d]ite his [s]ub[s]e[quent] [b]eve[r]age. [A][r]a[q]i was [a][b]utting an [a]u[d]i[b]le [c]omp[l]ai[n]t [b]ut [r]em[ai]ned [u]nwil[l]ing to [a]b[an]don his ju[s]t-i[s]c[over]ed ex[c]itement [f]or this xylo[ph]o[ne] [j]azz as [J][o] Yu-r[i] n[ot]ed [th]at [th]ere was a

Vietnam[e]se [f]lood truck out[s][i]de, r[i]ght on the [c]orner of [S]ixth and [Th]irty [S]e[c]ond, [th]at she [c]ould [g][o] [g]et a [f]ew egg [r][o]lls i[f] they [w]anted? A[r]a[q][i] [w]asn't [r][ea]l[y] in the mood, but this [d][i][d]n't [d][e]ter Jo Yu-r[i] from amb[l]ing out[s]ide to [s][e]e "[w]h[a]t [w][a]s [u]p [w]ith their [d][u]m[p][l]ings", [r]ight as the bar[t][e]n[d]er finally [a][t]t[e]n[d]ed [t]o A[r]a[q]i's [p][e]n[d]ing [r]e[q]uest for an [o]ver[p][r][i]c[e]d [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te I[t]alian [s]t[y]le beer, wh[i]ch [d][i][d]n't [t]aste like Peroni [a]t all, [a]nd b[y] the [t][i]me the [t][wo] got [t][o] a s[e]a[t] the jazz [t][r]i[o] [f][i]n[i]shed [i]ts [f]irst [s][e]t and [b]egan its [b][r]eak, lighting [c]iga[r][e]ttes and wal[k]ing [b]a[c]k to the [b]ar [f]or their [r]e[s]pe[c]tive, A[r]a[q]i [a][s]sumed, [f][r][e]e [r][e][f]ills.

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1.12 Of [c]our[s]e it was the [c][a][s]e that A[r]a[q]i, de[s]pite his [a]git[a]tion [a]t the f[a][c]t h[e] and [J]o Yu-[R][i] [e]n[t]ered this [e]s[t]ab[l]ishment w[i]th the [e]xpl[i]c[i]t [i]n[t]ent of [l]i[s]t[e]ning to th[i]s xy[l]oph[o]ne [j]azz tri[o], [o]n[l]y to get s[t]iffed [b]y a preva[r]i[c]ating [b]artender, [b]y a m[y][s]t[i]e[r]ious [sh]i[t s[t]ain w[ea]r[i]ng a [c]o[b]alt [b]lue [s]o[c]cer [sh]irt, to [th]e ex[t]ent [th]at [b]y [th]e [t][i]me [th]ey [w]ere seated [w]ith an over[p]riced [b]eer [a]nd a h[a]nd[f]ul of sub[p]ar Vietnamese egg [r][o]lls, the [f]ucking t[r]i[o] it[s]el[f] [s]to[p]ped [p]ounding xy[l]oph[o]nes and [c]eased [p][l]aying jazz, but A[r]a[q]i h[a]d other more [p][r]e[s]sing and [d]ire to[p]i[c]s of [d]i[s]c[us]sion, [d]e[s]p[ite] the [s]u[d]den [s]i[l]ence in the [c]o[r]ri[d]or w[i]de [r]e[s]tau[r]ant, [s]p[e]c[i]f[i]c[a]l[l]y about Jo [Y]u-[R][i]'s new [s]o-[c]alled [e]mp[l]o[y]ee, [P]r[i]a[p]us, [b]e[c]a[us]e

the [f][u][c]king guy had [b]een tal[k]ing his ear o[f]f  
 a[b]out S[o]ju for [i]i[k]e the wh[o]le [l]ast w[ee][k]. J[o]  
 Yu-R[i] n[o]dd[e]d at the [c][o]mm[e]nt without ev[en] [an]  
 [in][k][i]ng of a h[i]nt of sh[o][c]k in her [g]aze, she wasn't  
 [c][au]ght [o]ff [g]u[a]rd at [a]ll, [a]s A[r][a][q]i [c]on[t]inued  
 [t]o [r]e[c]apitu[l]ate the guy's m[o]n[o][l]o[g]ues, ab[ou]t  
 [h]ow this [c]ountry, [i]f th[i]s [n]ation h[a]d any ch[a]nce  
 [a]t all what[s][o][e]ver, th[e]n it [n][ee][d]ed to  
 imm[e][d][i]atel[y] a[d]opt [S][o]ju [a]s its [n][a]tional  
 [d]rink, [t]hat [t]here was [n]o [o]ther [o][p]tion but to  
 [a][d]o[p]t [a]ll ite[r][a]t[i]ons of Soju, of [K]o[r]ean [R]ice  
 W[i]ne as the [p][r]o[p]er [B]ud [L][i]ght  
 [r]e[p][l]a[ce]m[e]nt, to [c]o-o[p]t this [K]o[r]ean wine and  
 [r]e[b]r[a]nd it [a]s e[s]sentially fu[c]king [A]me[r]i[c]an,  
 [A]r[a]q[i] s[ai]d. [T]hat [t]he J[o]e [R][o]gans of the  
 in[t]er[n]et s[pe]here had [p]re[s]c[ri]bed the Do[n]ald  
 [T]r[u]m[p]s of the [ph][y]s[i]c[al] world as the  
 [p]a[n][a][c]e[a] this [c]ountr[y] [n][ee]ded, via  
 [r]e[a]ctiona[r]y ch[a]nnels [p]o[s]ted on a [p]lat[fo]rm  
 that i[r]o[n]i[c]ally e[n]ough s[t]arted as a [C]IA [f]r[o]nt,  
 yet the [r]eality w[a]s the t[r]ue [c]o[r]r[e]c[t]i]ve [c]ould  
 [n]e[v]e[r] be [f]ound in a Do[n]ald T[r]u[m]p, [n][o],  
 [o]nl[y] in [K]o[r]ean [r]i[c]e w[i]ne, a[c]cording to  
 [P]r[i]ap[us], [p]eo[p]le n[ee]ded to start dr[i]nk[i]ng [i]t  
 [i]n [b]ars and [r]e[s]tau[r]ants in [p]l[a]ce of  
 [c]ar[b]o[n]ated [i]ght [b]eers! A[r]a[q]i and J[o] Yu-[R]i  
 [b]o[th] [n]o[t]ed [t]hat [t]hey [r]e[s]p[e]c[t]ed the [p]assion  
 of [P]r[i]ap[us], [a]nd th[at] he was e[s]s[e]ntially  
 [c]o[r]r[e]c[t] [i]n h[i]s as[s]e[s]m[e]nt that nothing was  
 [m]ore A[m]e[r]i[c]an than stealing the do[m]e[s]t[i]c  
 [c]u]lture of [o]thers [a]nd [r]eb[r]a[n]ding it [a]s our [o]wn  
 - and S[o]ju was in [f]a[c]t, [a]fter all, an o[p]timal bar  
 [d]rink, as it was s[p]e[c]i[f]i[c]ally [d]e[s]i]gned to  
 [p]rovi]de more [o]f [a] [b][u]zz than [b]eer, [b]ut not  
 qu[i]te the ill-a[d]v[i]sed lift of the [a]v[er]age ei]ghty

p[r]oof g[r][ai]n [a][c]hol. Yet, [a][c]cording to [A][r]a[q][i],  
 [P][r][i]a[p]us was [d]ub[i]ous [th]at [th]e [c]ountry [c]ould  
 a[c]tually [a][d]opt [S]oju, [p][r]ima[r]ily be[c]ause of  
 [p][e]o[p]le, h[e] [s]aid, li[k]e the m[e]d[i]an [s]e[c]ond  
 [c]ousin, [p][eo][p]le who would b[e] [r]eti[c]ent to dr[i]n[k]  
 [s]omething [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [K]o[r][e]an on the  
 [r]egu[l]ar, [p][e]o[p]le who [c][l]ung to be[l]i[e]fs that  
 [p][e]o[p]le li[k]e Ted [C]ruz [a][c]tual[l]y h[a]d [d][e]c[en]t  
 i[d]eas about the w[or]ld, that any p[er]s[on] who [f]ound  
 [T]ed [C]ruz to b[e] [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al[l]y in[t]r[i]guing  
 would obv[i]ous[l]y [b][e] a li[t]tle [r]eti[c]ent a[b]out  
 im[b]i[b]ing [S]oju, [w]hen it [w]as obviously the [c]ase  
 th[at], in f[a]c[t, [T]ed [C]r[uz] [w]as [p][r]o[b]a[b]l[y] [o]ne  
 of the [t]op [t]en most des[p]i[c]a[b]le [p]eo[p]le on the  
 [p][l]a[n]et, [P][r]ia[p]us [n]oted [C]r[uz]'s  
 [p][r]eva[r]i[c]a[tions when [a]sked [q]uestions li[k]e  
 'D[oes] [A][C][A]P ever [i]nte[r]a[c]t w[i]th [l]ib[er]al,'  
 [s]ay[ing] how it once again [d]emon[s]tr[ate]d the  
 i[n]n[at]ely [d]e[s]p[ic]a[b]le [b]a[se]li[n]e of his  
 [p]er[s]o[n]a[l]ity. But [p][e]o[p]le li[k]e the [m]e[d]ian  
 [s]e[c]ond [c]ousins [o]f [A][m]e[r]i[c]a would a[c]tually  
 p[r]efer to [d]i[s]cuss Ted [C]r[uz] with a [m]o[d]i[c]um of  
 n[i]c[et]y than just im[b]i[b]e [K]o[r][e]an [r]i[c]e w[i]ne as  
 their [d]efault [d]i[n]k of choice, [w]hich [w]as  
 [c][l]ear[l]y [w]hy this [c]ount[r]y [w]as on the  
 [p][r]e[c]i[p]i[c]e of an i[r]rever[s]ible de[c]line, [i]f not  
 [i]n the m[i]dst of [i]t al[r]ead[y]! This [c]ount[r]y was  
 [c][l]ear[l]y [f]u[c]king [f]i[n]i[sh]ed, [P][r]ia[p]us said, and  
 it was [s]olely be[c]ause of thi[s] in[t]e[r]s[e]ction of  
 [T]ed [C]r[uz], [S]oju, and the [c]on[c]eptional [s]e[c]ond  
 [c]ousin of [c]our[s]e, [A][r]a[q][i] [r]ep[re]s[e]nted, [s]low[l]y  
 alm[o]st [b]e[l]i[e]v[i]ng what [P][r]ia[p]us had  
 [r]e[p]re[s]e[n]t[ed] into his [p]oor ear[d]rums [d]ay [a]fter  
 [d]ay th[at] [w]eek. It [w]as [c][l]ear to [P]ria[p]us at  
 [l]ea[s]t [th]at [th]e [s]e[c]ond [c]ousin w[a]s [a] to[p]i[c]

they mu[s]t a[c]tua[l]ly [l]egi[s][l]ate [a]gainst, [n]o, [n]ot ju[s]t [p]ont[i]f[i]c[ate] [a][b]out, [b]e[c]ause these [s]e[c]ond [c]ousins, they wouldn't ju[s]t re[s]cind [o]f their own [a][c]cord, [s][e][c]ond [c]ousins were [i]n[s]t[ea]d [i]nd[i]cat[i]ve [o]f a [s]t[r]u[ct]u[r]al [r]o[le], [P][r]ia[p]us [th][ou]ght [th]at h[e] Jo Yu-[R][i] and A[r]a[q]i should all [m]o[ve] to [c]o[m]m[u]ni[c]a[te] with their New York [s]t[ate] [r]e[p]r[es]entat[i]ves to [s]ee [i]f they [c]ould [b]eg[i]n dra[ft]ing a [b]ill o[p]posing the [c]on[c]e[p]t of the [s]e[c]ond [c]ou[sin] [i]n th[is] [c]ou[n]try, was that [d]o[a]b[le], [d]id [th]ey [th]in[k]? A[r]a[q]i took [a] [b]ite of [a]n [e]gg [r]oll that was [s]ome[h]ow [s]till [s]c[or]ching [h]ot five minutes a[f]ter Jo Yu-Ri [p]ut the [p]l[as]tic [p]l[as]te [d]own on the t[a]ble. The [f]act it [f]elt a h[u]n[d]red [f]u[ck]ing [d]eg[r]ees [ou]t in Midt[ow]n [p]ro[b]a[b]ly [d]idn't hel[p].

η/ω 920:1187 .775

1.13 Jo Yu-R[i], wi[p]ing her [p]et[i]te [f]ingers on a thri[c]e [f]olded na[p][k]in, [s]mea[r]ing [s][e]l[e]ct [r]e[m]nants of t[r]u[c]k [c]oo[k]ed egg [r]oll g[r]ease onto the [p]ure white [p]a[p]er, sh[oo][k] [h]er [h]ead [s]i[de] to [s]i[de] and [sh]owed A[r]a[q]i the [p]age of the [b]ook [sh]e'd just o[p]ened u[p], A[sh][b]e[r][y]'s [S]elf-[P]ort[r]ait in a [C]onvex [M]i[r]or and [m]uttered [l]oo[k] at all th[i]s [s][c]r[i]bb[ing]! in [r]efe[r]ence to the i[n]ane [n]o[tes] the [p]r[e]v[i]ous [o]wner of the [p]a[p]er[b]a[ck] h[a]d [s]trew[n] all over the first [p]age in [p]encil. Ar[a]q[i] [a]s[k]ed her what [c]ond[i]t[i]on she'd [b]ought the [b]oo[k] in ex[a]c[t]ly, [w]as she a[w]are of that [l]evel of s[c]r[i]bb[ing] [p]r[i]or to [b]uy[i]ng [i]t, no, she [r]e[p]l[i]ed, [b]ut to [b]e [f]air n[ea]r[l]y [e]ve[r]y other [p]age of the [b]ook was [e]ntire[l]y

[c][l][ea]n, un[t]il of [c]ourse this [f]inal [p]oem, the  
 [s]el[f]-[t]itled [e]n[t]ry of the [c]ol[l]e[c]tion -  
 obvious[l]y [s]ome n[i]tw[i]t w[h]o [p][r]o[b]a[b]ly [h]ad to  
 w[r][i]te, l[i]ke, a term [p]a[p]er [a][b]out it, [A][r]a[q]i  
 [s]ugge[s]ted, [s]ome [k]ind of [d]i[s]sertation, and Jo  
 Yu-[R][i] [a]g[r]e[ed], head bowed in [d]eff[ea]t. [A][r]aqi  
 [a]lleged it [r]emained [r]ea[d]able [e]ven if, s[u]re, the  
 in[c][e][s]sant [p][e]n[c]il [s][c]r[i]bb[l]i[n]gs w[er]e a  
 [l]i[t]tle di[s]t[r]a[c]ting, [c]ertain[l]y off-[p]utting, he [c]ould  
 [t]otal[l]y re[l]ate [t]o th[at]! The f[a]c[t] of the m[at]ter  
 [w]as it [w]as in[c]r[ea]s[ing]ly [d]i[f]f[i]c[ult] to [p]ay  
 [d][i]s[c]ounted [p][r]i[c]es for used boo[k]s these [d]ays,  
 without [s]ome [i]n[c]e[s]sant and/or [i]n[a]ne  
 [s]cribb[l]ing [d]o[m]i[n]a[ti]ng the [m]argins of [s]e[l]ect  
 p[a]ges, without de[l]i[a]ys [i]n sh[i]pp[i]ng or  
 un[e]xp[e]c[t]e[d]l[y] [b]e[n]t [c]o[vers] or s[u]b[p]ar  
 [p]a[p]er[b]a[c]k [b]indings, alth[ou]gh J[o] Yu-Ri did  
 n[ot]e of all the [f]ine [p]o[ems] the [c]olle[c]tion  
 [c]on[s]i[s]ted of she [f]ound the [t]itle [p]oem [t]o b[e] the  
 l[e]ast e[s]sential, [s]o if one [p]articu[lar] [p]oem had to  
 [b]e [r]uined [b]y [s]aid [s]c[r]ibb[l]ing sh[e] was at  
 [l]ea[s]t g[l]ad it [w]as th[at] one. [B]oo[k]s, [A]r[a]q[i]  
 [a]s[s]erted, were [a]c[tually [b]e[c]oming [s]l[ow]l[y]  
 im[p]o[s]s[i]b[le] to a[c]quire, as [p][r]o[d]u[c]tion volumes  
 [d]r[o]p[pe]d [d]ue[t]o the [i]n[c]r[ea]s[ing] [i]l[l]ite[r]a[c]y  
 [a]ll [a]r[ound] them - it was [b]a[s]i[c]al[l]y a [c]a[s]e of  
 when [b]ef[ore] a [f]unctional em[b]argo wou[d] [t]a[k]e  
 hold in [t]erms of [a]c[qui]r[ing] [d]e[c]ent [b]oo[k]s at  
 a[f]fo[r]d[a]b[le] [p]r[i]c[es], they were [r]a[p]id[l]y  
 [r]everting [b]a[c]k to the Middle [A]ges or something,  
 with [r]are [i]i[b]r[a]ries g[a]ted aw[a]y [f]rom  
 [a]f[i]c[i]on[a]dos [j]i[zz]i[n]g them[s]elves over [s]i[m]ple  
 a[c]cess to [p]r[i]nt[e]d [p]a[p]er. [J]o Yu-Ri [th]ought [th]e  
 e[m]ergence of the [P]DF [b]i[a]c[k] [m]ar[k]et [r]a[n]  
 [c]ounter to A[r]a[q]i's hy[p]er[b]o[l]i[c] [c]l[i]aims [b]ut of



[c]our[s]e she [p]r[e]f[er]red to [p]e[r]use [ph]y[s]i[cal]  
[c]opies as w[e]ll [s]o she [f]e[lt] the ove[r]all [p]ull of his  
[l]ament. [B]ut [J]o [Y]u-[R]i then a[b]ru[p]t[l]y  
[c]on[t]in[u]ed on [t]o n[o]te [i]n a [m]ore v[i]go[r]ous  
f[a]shion her [a]g[r]ee[m]ent with [A][r][a]qi [r]egarding  
[P]ria[p][u]s, [d]id he kn[o]w [th]at j[us]t [th]e [o][th]er  
[d]ay, [w]hile [w]at[er]ing h[er] bok choy p[l][a]nts w[i]th  
h[i]s m[a][s]s[i]ve ph[a][ll][u]s, he [t]old [a] s[t]o[r]y [a]bout  
[r]en[d]ezvousing with [a]n [e]xotic [d]an[c]er?  
[P]r[i]a[p]us [s][ai]d he'd m[e]t the [s]t[r]i[pp]er just [a]  
[c]ou[p]le w[ee][k]s [p]r[e]v[i]ous and th[at] sh[e]'d  
[a]sked to m[ee]t w[i]th h[i]m, which he [s]aid to Jo  
Yu-[R]i h[e] a[s]sumed m[ea]nt she [i]n[t]e[n]ded [t]o b[i]lk  
him out of s[o]me [c][a]sh [a]t her [c]l[u]b in [A][s]toria,  
[b]ut [a][p]parently, to h[er] s[ur]p[r]ise, [P]r[i]a[p]us  
wasn't [a][b]ove that, [s]o h[e] actual[l]y showed [u]p to  
the [c]l[u]b, [J]o Yu-[R]i t[o]ld A[r]a[qi], [b]ut [th]en, [th]e  
d[an]cer, h[a]lf in the [b][a]g [a]c[c]ording to [P]r[i]a[p][u]s,  
t[o]ld him she [a]c[tual[l]y [m]eant to [m]eet out[s]ide  
the [c]l[u]b, [s]o as her shift en[d]ed he too[k] the  
[d]an[c]er [d]own the [s]treet to [s]ome hoo[k]ah [s][p]ot,  
[s]m[o]k[k]ed [sh]i[sh]a then, a[c]cording to [P]r[i]a[p][u]s,  
[q]u[ote]-un[q]u[ote] [r]ailed [h]er in [h]er [S]U[V] on a  
[s]ide [s]t[r]ee[t] after she m[ov]ed her [k]id's [c]ar[s]ea[t]  
to the [s]ide. Jo [Y]u-[R]i was a [s]l[i]ght[l]y  
f[l]a[b]berg[a]sted [a]t the [a]n[ec]d[o]te, which  
[P]r[i]a[p][u]s [c]ontinued, [n]o[t]ing [h]ow the chi[c]k [h]ad  
[s]ome [i]ssues w[i]th [s]u[i]c[i]d[al] [i]d[e]a[t]ion, but to  
Jo Yu-[R]i, she [r]e[l]ay[ed] to [A][r]a[qi], it was [a] [l]ittle  
[c]on[c]er[n]ing, [n]o? j[us]t [b]e[c]a[us]e she'd h[i]red the  
g[uy] [b]e[c]ause his [ph][a][ll]us w[a]s [s]u[p]p[os]ed to  
[b]e [b]ene[f]i[c]i[al] [f]or [p]l[an]t growth, and [w]hile  
[c]l[e]ar[l]y that [w]as id[ea]l for bo[k] choy [c]ul[t]ivation  
in [M]id[t]own [M]anhattan she wasn't [s]o [c]ertain she'd  
get the [m]axi[m]um v[a]lue of his [ph][a][ll]us if he was -

[p][l]owing [s][l]uts in [S]U[V]s on [s]ide [s]t[r][ee]ts [n]ext to [sh]i[sh]a e[s]t[a]bli[sh]ments, A[r][a]qi f[i][n][i]shed?

η/ω 751:997 .753

1.14 [N][o], A[r]a[q]i [n][o]ted, it was [c]ertainly un[c]outh that [P][r]ia[p][u]s was, you k[n][o]w, [p]otentially having [s]ex w[i]th [s]tr[i][pp]ers out[s]ide [sh][i][sh]a [s][p]ots in Qu[ee]ns, but [s]t[i]ll w[i]th that [s]aid [h]e [h]ad [c]ome to [q]uestion Jo Yu-[R]i's a[r]ith[m]etic just [s][l]ight[l]y, [m]o[s]t[l]y [b]e[c]ause while he under[s]tood the pha[l]lus of [P]ria[p]us was [b]eing em[p]l[o]yed for [b]o[k] ch[o]y [c]ultiv[a]t[i]on [a]nd [e]ng[a]g[i]ng i[n] i[l]l[i]c[i]t [a]ct[i]v[i]ties, [a]nd th[at] th[at] [p]ar[t]i[c]ular [a]dd[i]t[i]on [s]eemed to [p][or]t[en]d [p]o[or] out[c]omes. But th[r]ee [p]lus f[our], A[r]a[q]i [s]aid, [d]i[d]n't [e]q[ua]l [s]even, not exa[c]t[l]y, be[c]ause tru[l]y it [e]q[ua]led [s]e[v]en [p]lus the [F]orm [s]e[v]en, [b]e[c]ause [s]ans the [F]orm [s]e[v]en it would [b]e [b]a[s]i[c]ally impo[s]si[b]le [f]or them to [e]v[en] [c]on[c]ei[ve] of [s]e[v]en. [B]ut, A[r]a[q]i [n]oted, Form [s]e[v]en [b]y its [v]e[r]y [n]ature [d]i[d]n't e[n]g[a]ge i[n] the [s]ame unitary [m][i]x[i]ng [th]at [th]e [m]a[th]em[a]ti[c]al [s]even did, [w]hat Ara[q]i [w]as [s]aying, h[e] [r]e[late]d to Jo Yu-[R]i, [w]as that it [w]as [p]o[s]si[b]le [P]ria[p]us , [b]e[i]ng a divine [b]e[i]ng (of [s]orts!), was [p]r[o]b[a]bly n[o]t [t]ethered [t]o the [s]ame [r]u[b]r[i]cs of a[r]ithmeti[c] as o[th]ers, [th]at [P]ria[p]us was ve[r]y [p]o[s]si[b]l[y] c[o]o[s]er to the Form [s]e[v]en [th]an [th]e [m]a[th]em[a]ti[c]al [s]e[v]en, i[n] [w]h[i]ch ca[s]e, [w]hile s[ur]e, his [s]o[j]o[ur]ns with [c]er[tain] A[s]to[r]i[a] [s]t[r]i[p]pers was in [p]oor taste, it might not [a]c[tually] h[a]ve a [p]a[l]p[a]ble effe[c]t on Jo Yu-Ri's [b]o[k] choy?

η/ω 250:336 .744

1.15 Jo Yu-[R][i] [f][a]shed [b][a]ck [b][r][ie]f[y] to a [b][u][b][ou]s [p]enis that was [s][p][r]ayed in [g][r]a[ff][i]t[i] onto the [f]oun[d]a[tion] of a home on B[r]id[g]ham th[a]t she [p][a][s]sed [w]hile [w]alking to a [F]ami[l]y [D]o[l]ar [th]e o[th]er [d][ay], it was [l]ike [e]ver [s]in[c]e she [e]m[p]l[oy]ed this [P][r]ia[p]us she'd [b]een [s]u[r]rounded on all [s][i]des [b][y] un[r]e[p]entant [p]en[is], which [p][r]o[b]a[b]l[y], she [r]e[f]l[ect]ed, [s]er[v]ed h[er] [r]ight [f]or going into [b]usin[ess] with a H[e]l[e]n[i]c [e]nt[er]t[y] ([e]s[p]e[c]i[a]l[y] a [s]o-[c]alled d[e]i[t]y). At the [s]ame [t]ime [g]r[ow]ing f[r]esh [b]o[k] choy [i]n M[i]d[t]ow[n] [g]ave her a [c]ompet[i]t[i]ve [a]dv[an]tage no one else h[ad] in [K]orea[t]ow[n], so was it [a]ll [p]o[s]sibl[y] worth it? As [A]r[a]q[i] [r]e[c]eived the [t]a[b] ([a]fter [d][r]i[n]k[i]ng h[i]s [s]e[c]ond sh[i]tty p[s]eu[d]o [l]i[t]alian [p]i[s]ner), at four [t]wenty [p]m (as op[p]o[s]ed to J[o] Yu-[R][i]'s [r]e[c]eipt b[e]ing [r]e[c]eived at th[r]ee [t]welve [p]m) he w[r]ote out the [t]ip and, when l[ay]ing the [p][a]p[er] down on the [t]a[b]le next [t]o Jo Y[u]-[R][i]'s the [t]wo [r]ea[l]ized [b]oth [t]a[b]s [c]a[m]e to ex[a]c[t]l[y] [t]wenty-nine [ei]ghty-four a p[ie]ce, with [ea]ch [t]a[b] ex[a]c[t]ly [c]on[s]i[s]ting of a [t]went[y] thr[ee] b[u]c[k s[u]b[t]otal with a dollar eighty [f]our [t]ax a[ss]e[ss]ment and [f]ive even [t]ip, [w]h[i]ch [w]as a b[i]t of a [c]oin[c]iden[c]e, al[m]ost like a ch[a]nce event th[a]t h[ad] s[ome] [s]ort of [c]os[m]i[c] [s]i[gn]i[f]i[c]an[c]e? The [t]wo [s]tared [a]t the [t]wo [t]a[b]s in [s]ilence [a]s [a] chu[bb]y [w]h[i]te g[uy] hammering [a][w][ay] on his xy[l]o[ph]o[n]e [s]l[ow]l[y] [f]a[ded] to [b]l[ack].

η/w 266:335 .794

2.1 Ha[k]im Al[i]jah a[c]tual[i]y [d]esperate[i]y n[ee][d]ed a wai[f]u in [C]air[o], [i]i[k]e [s][o] [b]ad, [b]ut he al[s][o] [f]elt a [c]ertain [l]onging [f]or [s][u]mmer, [f]or the [s][u]n [a]nd [th]e heat [a]nd [th]e [a][cc]ompa[n]ying [i]rres[i]s[t]i[b]le urge to [i]ndulge [i]n [a] [n][i]c[e] [c]old w[i]ne, [b]eing [b]orn after all in the [p]eak [s]u[m]mer [m]onth of [Au]g[u]st [i]n N[i]ne Eighty F[i]ve and [a]ll. [S]ome would [s]ugge[s]t there was [p]o[s]sib[i]l[i]y [e]ven a [m][y]s[t]ical [e]l[e]m[en]t [t]o it, [th]e [th]ir[t]eenth d[ay] of the [ei]ghth [m]onth, [p]erha[p]s an arithmetic [c]al[cu]l[a]tion or [s]omething of the [s]ort, the [v]io[l]ent [v]a[c]i[l]l[a]tions h[e] expe[r]i[en]c[ed] [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]ica[l]i[y]? Weren't [th]ose in [th]emselv[e]s a [r]esi[d]ue of an [i]n[d]i[v]i[s]i[b]le Oneness, [v]io[l]ent[i]y [v]a[c]i[l]lating [b]etween [s]tri[c]t [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]i[c]al [s][c]hools that [v]e[h]ement[i]y [d]is[a]gr[ee]d [w]ith [o]ne [a]nother? [W]asn't [v]a[c]i[l]lating betw[ee]n [ph]i[l]o[s]o[ph]ical [p]oles, [v]io[l]e[n]t[i]y, in a [s]e[n]se, a real [d]i[s]e[m]b[l]ing of the [p]er[n]i[c]i[ous] [d]ua[l]it[ie]s and multi[p]l[i]c[i]t[ie]s we [e]ncounter [e]very [d]ay? A [m]iddle-[a]ged [m]an was a[d]orned in [d]a[pp]er [c]loth [s]i[t]t[i]ng on the [p]atio [s]m[ok]ing a th[i]n [c]i[g]a[r]ette and Ha[k]im, who [d]i[d]n't [s]m[ok]e [r]egu[l]ar[i]y, [s]ud[d]en[i]y [f]elt [a]n [i]n[t]e[n]se urge [t]o [i]n[d]ulge in j[us]t [o]ne [c]i[g]a[r]ette, [r]e[f]l[e]c[t]ing [b]a[c]k to [p]a[st] [m]o[m]ents, on e[qu]iva[l]ent [p]a[t]i[os] where h[e]'d [m]ay[b]e [p]u[ff]ed a cigarette or two, [w]here [e]v[en]ts [w]ere in[e]v[itab]l[i]y [f]l[e]t, [f]l[e]t in the way that [f]l[e]l[i]ngs [m]ust in[e]v[itab]l[i]y [e]xtend, [m]u[dd]ied and [d]isgusting to [r]e[c]o[l]l[e]c[t]ion and tho[r]oughl[i]y in[c]ompr[eh]e[n]sible in [m]ate[r]ial ways. Ulti[m]ate[i]y, it [w]as [o]n[i]y [w]hen you [w]ere [s]m[ok]ing [c]igar[e]ttes that you a[c]tua[l]i[y] [f]l[e]t things, and [f]l[e]l[i]ng th[i]ngs was usual[i]y [a] [k]ind of

[c]om[p]osite [ph]e[n][o]me[n][a]. Ha[k]im [p]ulled out a  
 [s][i]ngle d[i][n]ar [a]nd [a]sked the [g]uy for the [g][r]eat  
 [p][r]ivilege [o]f b[u]mming a [s][i]ngle [c][i]ga[r]ette,  
 [s][m]o[k]ing it next to the [m]an who was [o]bviously a  
 high [r]an[k]ing [c]ourt [o]ffi[c]er [o]f the [m]o[s]t  
 [r]e[s][p]e[c]ta[b]le order, to which the [m]an [b][l]untl[y]  
 [r]e[p][l]ied so[r]ry [l]ast one [b]ut there's [a] [c]amel  
 sh[o][p] [a][c][r][o][s]s the [s]t[r]eet that [s][e]lls th[e]m. In  
 no w[ay], sh[a]pe, or [f]orm was this [m]an [s][m]oking  
 the last [r]e[m]ai[n]i[n]g u[n]it [f]rom his [p]ack of  
 [c]iga[r]ettes. It would have [b]een [f]airl[y] c[l]ear to any  
 [p]erson with even hal[f] of a [f]unctioning [b][r][ai]n [th]at  
 [th]is [m]an h[a]d [m]any [m]ore [c]iga[r]ettes  
 [r]e[m]ai[n]ing [i]n h[i]s p[a]c[k], [th]at while [th]e  
 p[r]e[c]ise a[m]ount of [c]iga[r]ettes the [m]an h[a]d  
 [r]e[m]aining was un[c]ertain it was [a]l[s]o  
 [a]bundant[l]y [c][l]ear [th]at [th]at [a]m[ou]nt  
 [c]ertain[l]y [e][q]ualed [m]ore than [o]ne. It [w]as  
 [u]tterl[y] ab[s]urd t[o] [a][ss]u[m]e this [m]an was  
 [s][m]oking his [l]a[s]t [c]igarette on the p[a]tio. W[i]th  
 th[i]s [i]n mind, [p]urely [o]ut [o]f s[p]ite, Ha[k]im, a[f]ter  
 waiting a [f]ew [m]o[m]ents in dee[p]  
 [c]ontem[p]l[at]i[n]g, [c][r]o[s]sed the [s]t[r]eet and  
 [s]t[oo]d in [p][a]c[e] at the [c]amel [s]t[oo]d, where  
 th[r]ee [p]eo[p]le were al[r]eady im[p]at[i]ently w[ai]ting  
 in f[r]ont of a hand-w[r]itt[e]n sign that [r]ead  
 [B]a[th]r[oom] [B]r[e]a[k] [B]e [B]a[c]k [i]n Ten  
 M[i]n[u]tes. There was no o[p]tion [b]ut for Ha[k]im to  
 [b]uy [a]n [e]ntire p[a]c[k] of [c]igarettes [p]urel[y] [o]ut  
 [o]f [s]p[irit], a [s]p[irit]ful [l]u[st] to j[u]st [s]moke one  
 [c]igar[e]tte. A h[ea]vy [s]e[t] p[a]s[s]y [m]i[n]d[le] a[ge]d  
 [l]a[d]y wearing a b[l]a[c]k n[a]p[s]a[c]k w[i]th  
 th[i]nn[i]ng [l]i[gh]t [h]air [o]n the t[o]p of [h]er [h]ead was  
 first in [l]i[n]e, and would [r]e[m]ain [l]onger [th]an [th]e  
 [r]o[l]l[y] p[er]son [f]air-[s]kinned [m]an with the [m]acho

a[cc]ent, or the [r]un of the [m]ill d[ay] [l]a[b]orer - yet,  
[f]ueled [b]y th[i]s [m]i[x]ture of [n]on[s]en[s]ical [l]ust and  
[i]rra[t]io[n]a[l]ly [i]n[s]a[t]ible [s]pite, [H]akim [w]ould  
[w]ait n[ea]rly [a]n [e]n[t]ire [h]alf hour for the a[t]tendant  
[t]o re[t]ur[n] to [p]ur[ch]a[se] th[i]s [p]a[c]k of  
over[p]r[i]ced [c]iga[r]ettes to [s][m]o[k]e a [s][m]all  
[p]er[c]centage [o]f [o]n the [p]ati[o]. He out[l]asted not  
[o]nly the [h]ea[vy] [s][e]t [p][a]s[ty] fem[a]le and [h]er  
[i]n[t]i[m]al com[p]anions b[ut] even s[ub]se[que]nt  
[o]thers who a[pp]r[o]ached the [w]ind[ow] then  
[q]ui[c]kly [l]eft exa[s]p[er]a[te]d at the [r]id[i]c[u]lous  
[w]ait, a[t] the [a]b[s]urd [c]l[ai]m on this [c]ardboard  
[s]ign. Yet on[c]e thi[s] e[s]c[a]p[a]de was  
[c]om[p]l[e]ted Ha[k]im re[t]urned [t]o the [p]atio [t]o, to  
his [s]urp[r]ise, f[i]nd the [s]ame [m]an [s]till [s][m]o[k]ing  
a [c]iga[r]ette, wh[i]ch Ha[k]im [q]ui[c]kly  
[c]al[cu]lated, m[u]st have been a [s][ub]se[que]nt  
[c]igarette or, even worse, [a] [s][ub]se[que]nt to [a]  
[s][ub]se[que]nt [c]igar[e]tte, and the [s]ame h[ea]vy  
[s][e]t [w]oman [w]ith the b[l]a[c]k n[a]p[s][a]c[k] and thin  
[l]ight hair, now al[s]o [s][m]o[k]ing a [c]igarette,  
de[s]p[ite] the [f]a[c]t she le[f]t the [c]a[m]el [s]t[ati]on  
[b]ef[ore] [b]eing [a]b[le] to [b]uy a [p]a[c]k, wh[i]ch  
Ha[k]im [q]ui[c]kly [c]al[cu]lated, [m]ust have al[s]o  
[b]een [s]upp[li]ed [b]y the [m]an in the h[i]gh [c]l[ai]s[s]  
[c]l[oth]. The [m]an just [m]o[m]ents a[g]o was  
a[l]l[e]gedly [s]m[o]k[ing] his [q]u[ote]-un[q]u[ote] [l]a[s]t  
[c]igarette on the pati[o]. The [m]an in the [h]igh [c]l[ai]ss  
[c]l[oth] [m]ust [h]ave g[i]ft[e]d the [h]ea[vy] [s][e]t  
p[a]s[ty] fem[a]le her [c]igarette, be[c]ause [H]a[k]im  
[w]as just [w]ith [h]er, a[t] the [c]a[m]el [s]tation, and she  
h[a]d n[o] [c]iga[r]ettes, the [o]nl[y] [r]eas[on] sh[e] was  
[e]v[e]n at the [s]tat[i]on was [t]o ob[tai]n a[d]d[i]ti[on]a[l]  
[c]i[gare]ttes. [S]o it was [b]a[s]i[c]ally  
[c]o[r]roborat[ed] th[at] th[e] man a[d]jorned in the

[r]oyal [a]ttire, at the ve[r][y] l[ea]st, at the bare  
 [m][i]n[i]m[um], had two a[d]d[i]t[i]onal c[i]ga[r]ettes, if not  
 th[r]ee a[d]d[i]t[i]onal [c][i]ga[r]ettes, [i]n h[i]s pa[c]k when  
 h[e] [r]uth[l]ess[l]y t[o]ld [H]a[k][i]m [h][e] was  
 [s]m[o][k]ing his [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te l[ast] [o]ne, [w]hich  
 of [c]our[s]e [w][a]s [u]n[s]urprising, yet, [l]i[k]e all  
 imp[l]i[ed] [l]i[es], it [s]tung Ha[k]im more  
 [v]o[c]i[f]erou[s][l][y] [w]hen it [w]as [f]ina[l][y]  
 [c]on[f]irmed [b]eyond a reasona[b]le doubt. [A]ll  
 [o]b[v]ious [l]i[es] are more [b]en[i]gn when [s]t[i]ll  
 ex[i]s[t]i[n]g [i]n an un[p]roven [s]tate, [d]e[s][p]ite  
 [b]e[i]ng obv[i]ous, [b]ecause an [b]l[atant] l[ie], once  
 [p]r[o]ven, [d]e[s][p]ite the [f]act it[s] e[s]sen[c]e was  
 [a]l[r]eady [a]s[su]med [f]i[ct]i[t]ious, [d]e[s]pite  
 [a]l[r]eady having [a]ttained [a] [c]ertain [r]ea[l]ity as [a]  
 l[ie], [s]t[i]ngs [w]i[t]h a [c]er[tain] vig[or] [w]hen [f]ina[l]ly  
 [c]on[f]irmed as a b[latant] di[s]t[ortion] of the [t]ruth. All  
 [t]ruth is ul[t]imatel[y] [d]i[s]t[orted] [t]o [s]ome [d]egr[ee],  
 and we know th[i]s [i]mp[l]i[c]i[t][l]y, yet [w]ithout [f]ail  
 [w]e're [m]onu[m]ental[l]y [d]ejected upon  
 [c]on[f]i[r]m[i]ng [c]er[tai]n [d]i[s]t[ortions] of the [t]ruth.  
 W[e] [b]el[ie]ve the obv[i]ous l[ie] to [b]e [f]i[ct]i[t]ious,  
 ha[v]ing [b]een ob[v]ious, that [i]t [w]i[l]l mean [n]othing  
 [o]nce confirmed as [a] f[a]l[s]it[y], [a]s [n]othing h[a]s  
 e[ss]entiall[y] [b]een [a]ltered, [w]hat [w]e [a]lread[y]  
 t[r]ea[t]ed as a [p]r[o]b[a]b]le l[ie] [s]im[p]l[y] [b]e[c]omes  
 an a[c]tual l[ie], yet when the [o]bvious l[ie] shi[fts] [f]rom  
 [a]s[su]med t[o] p[r]o]ven, [i]t [i]rr[at]iona[l]ly  
 [c]on[c]a[tenates] [a]nd be[c]omes [a]n [e]ven [m]ore  
 [e]g[r]e[gious] l[ie]. [H]a[k][i]m [h]ad [b]een  
 sh[a]me[l]essl[y] [b]etr[ay]ed [b]y a [m]an who owed him  
 l[ess] [th]an nothing in [th]e [w]orld, yet [w]asn't it  
 [p]erha[p]s [th]e [c]a[s]e [th]at by the [s]o]le a[c]t of  
 [s]m[o][k]ing [c]igar[e]ttes, to [s]ome [e]xt[ent], the man  
 [e]n[t]ered in[t]o a [s]ocial [c]ontr[a]c[t] of

b[e]n[e]vo[l][e]nt[l]y [a][c]qui[e][s]cing [a] [r][e][q]u[e][s]t  
 for [a] [s][i]ngle [c][i]ga[r][e]tte at shitty [d]ive [b]ars. To  
 [s]moke a [c]iga[r]ette at a [d]ive [b]ar is [t]o  
 vo[l]un[t]a[r]i[l]y en[t]er in[t]o a [c]o[mm][u]ne of  
 l[i][k]e-m[i]nded [c][i]t[i]zens bu[mm][i]ng [c][i]garettes  
 [o]ff each [o]ther [o]n [o][c]c[a]s[i]on, [a]nd, with th[a]t in  
 mind, wasn't [f]alse[l]y [c][i]l[ai]m[i]ng toba[cc][o]  
 [p][o]verty in [s]uch [a] [s]etting [a] [f][aux] [p][a]s of the  
 [h]ighest order? [H]a[k]im [c]ame [a]round to the ide[a] it  
 was as he [s]m[o][k]ed t[wo] [b][r]and [n]ew  
 [c]iga[r]ettes on the [p]ati[o] f[r]om his [b][r]and [n]ew  
 [o]ver[p][r]iced [p][a]c[k], [a][f]ter [s]omewhat  
 [s]ar[c]a[st]ic[ally] o[ff]e[r]ing the m[a]n in the [r]oyal attire  
 [a]n [a]dd[i]t[i]onal [c]i[ga[r]ette [a][f]ter h[i]s [s]o-called  
 l[a]st [o]ne w[a]s [d]o[ne], [a]s he [d][r]a[n]k f[r]om the  
 [w]h[i]te [w]i[n]e the bartender was [n][i]ce e[n]ough to  
 [k]eep on [i]ce for him [w]hile he [w]ai[t]e[d] a[t] the  
 [c][a]mel [s]t[a]t[i]on f[r]or [u][p]wards [o]f [a] hal[f] an  
 hour, [p]urely [o]ut [o]f [s][p]ite.

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2.12 At [th]e age of [th]irty five, [w]h[i]ch [i]s, [w]e  
 k[n][o]w, [o]n[l]y tru[l]y d[i]v[i]s[i]b[le] [b]y the  
 [n]um[b]ers se[v]en and f[i]ve, [i]t's [a]lm[o]st  
 [i]ne[v]ita[b]le to [a][rr]i[ve] at the [r]ea[l]i[za]tion [th]at  
 [th]e [s]k[y] [i]t[s]elf [i]s [l]i[t]tle more than a t[i]n roof,  
 Ha[k]im [c]on[s]i[d]ered [a]s he [s][a]t on the p[a]tio  
 [ey]eing the [d]jouche [b][a]g in the ro[y]al att[i]re [w]al[k]  
 a[w]ay, [th]at [b]e[y]ond [th]e [s]k[y] our [s]en[s]es  
 [r]e[l]ay to us on[l]y mi[r]ages and [l]u[r]id  
 f[al]s[e]f[i]cations, pure[l]y [o]ut of habit, [w]i[t]h n[o]  
 [i]l[li]t[er]at[ur]e [w]hat[s]o[e]v[er]. It's ne[v]er been w[i]th [i]l[li]  
 [i]nt[e]nt that our [s]en[s]es have utter[l]y [l]e[t] us  
 down in [n]eural [e]ve[r]y [r]egard, [i]t's [s]i[m]ply the



[i]ntr[i]n[s][i][c] [n]ature of things that [c]ause our  
 [s]en[s]es to [r]e[l]ay [l]u[r][i]d fal[s][i]ties. [S][a]ns  
 [m]e[m]ory there [c][a]n't be [t][i]me. At the [t]ender age  
 of [th]irty [f][i]ve all of [th][i]s w[i]thout [f]ail be[c]omes  
 [c]lear to you, [th]at every[th][i]ng [i]s ae[s][th][e]t[i]cs [i]n  
 a [c]ertain [s][e]nse, [th]at [th]e [s][k]y [i]t[s]elf [i]s ju[s]t a  
 t[i]n roof, [a]nd Ha[k]im went [b][a]ck in[t]o the [b]ar [t]o  
 [a]sk the aged [b]ar[t]ender, who it [t]urned out was [o]nly  
 a [c]ou[p]le [y]ears [o]lder than him, for just [o]ne [m]ore  
 [w]ine, [w]here a [y]ounger [m][a]n and his [w]i[f]e  
 [c]om[p][l]ained a[b]out [b]eing [b][a]nned [f]r[o]m  
 [s][o]me [l]o[c]al e[s]ta[b]l[i]sh[m]ent. The young [m][a]n  
 [c][a][c]u[l]ated how [m][u]ch [m]oney he spent [a]t  
 thi[s] e[s]t[a]b[l]ish[m]ent, how [m][u]ch [m]oney they  
 were [f]or[s][a][k][i]ng [b]y [s]o un[f]airly [b][a]nn[ing] him,  
 [n]ever t[a][k][i]ng [a] [s]e[c]ond to [a]nalyze whe[th]er  
 [th]e [a][m]ount of [m]oney he [w]as [s]p[en]d[ing] at  
 [o]ne [b]ar [w]as e[v]en ad[v]isa[b]le to [d]i[s][c]l[o]se in  
 [p][u][b][l][i]c, w[i]th [c][o]m[p][l]ete [s]tr[a]ngers. There  
 was a [c][r]i[m]inal [e][l]e[m]ent to th[i]s b[a]n[i]sh[m]ent  
 [i]n [th]e eyes of [th]is young [m]an, [a]s th[i]s was a  
 [s]itu[a]tion where he was [c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y [s][a]ns fault,  
 where this e[s]t[a]blishment had [a]c[t]ed  
 [e]rr[o]neous[l]y, to the [e]xt[en]t the [e]rr[or] was  
 [a]c[tual[l]y [c][r]i[m]i[n]al. He'd [n]e[v]er [b]e [a]b[le] to  
 go [b][a]c[k] to th[at] [b]ar again. [B]ut would they  
 [s]ur[v]ive e[c]o[n]omi[c]ally [s]ans his [p][a]tro[n]age?  
 [W]h[e]n Ha[k]i[m] [w]e[n]t down the [r]oad, [l]ea[v]ing  
 the [r]i[v]eting [c]on[v]ers[a]tion [o]f the y[ou]ng man  
 behind him, to h[i]s [d]i[s]m[a]y he [d]i[d]n't [f]ind a  
 [s]i[n]gle wai[f]u [m][a]r[a]u[d]ing [a]r[ou]nd the [c]i[ty], the  
 [c]i[ty] was [c]omp[l]e[t]e[l]y void of [a]n[y] [a]nd all  
 wai[f]u[s]. No, just [s]ome mi[dd]le-aged [d]u[des]  
 [d]i[s]c[u]ss[ing] the [c]u[r]rent [s]tate of the [F]at[i]m[i]d  
 [m]i[l]l[i]ta[r]y. How [t]o [t]r[an]s[c]end the [t]i[n] [r]oo[f]

[w]as al[w]ays a matter of g[r]eat [d]i[s]p[u]te, and a [r]e[c]u[r]ring voice [w]ould [w]hi[s]p[er] to [H]a[k][i]m [i]n [h][i]s [s][ee][p] that very [n]ight [th]at [th]ere was [n]othing [b]eauti[f]ul in [th]e [s]t[r][ee]ts [th][a]t [a][f]ter[n]oon for a [s][p]e[c][i]f[i]c [r][ea]son, [b]e[c]ause the [d]igestion of [b]eauty at [c][er]t[ai]n times [c]an make a [p][er][s][o]n [e]x[c][e]p[t]i[on]ally [d]y[s][p][e][p]t[i]c, this was [p][r]ot[e]c[t]i[on]. H[a][k][i]m [a]g[r][ee]d, [s]t[i]ll ta[s]ting the [s][i]x f[la]v[or]s he [s]c[ar]f[ed] down on his way home even a[f]ter br[u]shing his [t]eeth m[u]lti[p]le [t]imes, [v]io[l]entl[y] [v]a[c]i[l]l[ing] [i]n h[i]s own w[ay] [e]ven as h[e] r[e]-en[t]ered in[t]o a [c]alm, [d]ee[p] s[l]ee[p] where [h][e]’d [h]ave a [r]e[c]u[r]rent [d]r[ea]m of [k][i]ll[i]ng h[i]m[s]elf to [c]leanse h[i]m[s]elf. [H]a[k]im would [k][i]ll h[i]m[s]elf [i]n h[i]s d[r]eam, yet a[f]terward he’d [s]u[b]s[i]st [i]n a [s]u[p]e[r]ior [f]orm, [p]o[s]t [s]ucc[ess]f[ul]ly [k][i]ll[i]ng h[i]m[s]elf, [v]oid of the [m]e[m]o[r]ies that [h]aunted [h]im, de[p]ri[v]ing him of a [p]lea[c]e[f]ul [s]lumber. He [q]uesti[on]ed th[e]se [v]oices h[e] [f]r[e]q[ue]ntly [h]eard [i]n h[i]s [h]ead, their o[r]i[g]i[n], the ones [c]on[s]tantl[y] [c]a[l]l[i]ng h[i]m un[t]il, [f]inally able to a[ss]ert [c]on[t]r[ol] of his envi[r]on[m]ent, he [s]c[ar]f[ed] A[ll]ah is One [r]ep[re]s[en]t[ed], un[t]il the [c]on[t]ain[m]ent of his [d]r[ea]m was [c]leanse[d] by his y[e]ll[ing]. With Ha[k]im in a [s]t[ate] of g[r]eat [d]i[s]t[r]e[ss] and only half-awa[k]e, The [P]rophet [M]uhammed a[p]peared b[r]iefl[y], as a [m]i[r]r[or] [i]m[a]ge of h[i]m[s]e[f], and [u]ttered n[ot]hing he [c]ould [r]e[c]o[l]l[e]c[t].

η/ω 704:866 .813

3.1 Enz[o] t[o]ld Daria [h]ow [h]e was [c]on[s]i[d]ering that it [w]as [p]erh[a]ps [w]ith a tyr[ann]i[c]al



[l][a]te but to d[a]te she'd [r]e[f][r][ai]ned [f][r]om any a[ttempt] [t][o] g[oo]gle an explan[a]tion. B[u]t w[a]sn't it the [c][a]se, Enzo in[t]erje[c]ted, [s]in[c]e they'd g[o]tten [o]nto the [t][o][p]i[c] of [s]e[que]nc[es] of in[t]egers any[w]ay, [w]asn't it the [c][a]se [th]at [th]e [s]e[c]ond [c]ousin as a [c]on[c]eptional art[i]f[i]ce was [c]o[l]le[c]tive[l]y a[cc]e[l]e[r]ating the down[f]all of their [c]ount[r]y, I mean, Enzo [s][ai]d, [s][e][c]ond [c]ou[s]ins [a]re in a[g]gre[g]ate [a]ll b[a][s]i[c]ally [c][u]nts, r[i]ght? In Enzo's m[i]nd it was the [c][l]ear[l]y the [c][a]se [th]at [th]e [s]e[c]ond [c]ousin was [b]a[s]i[c]al[l]y obje[c]tiona[b]le, a p[i]t[i]ful [c][l]i[n]g[i]ng to a [s]o-[c]alled b[l]ood[l]ine that [w]as, even [w]hen more potent, [s]till [s]o[m]ewh[a]t am[b]i[gu]ous i[f] [n][o]t [n]o[n]s[e]n[s]i[c]al. [W]hat [w]as [b]lood any[w]ay? [D]i[ar]ia, for her [p][ar]t, [d]i[d]n't have a [p]arti[cu]lar[l]y [s]trong o[p]inion on the [c]on[c]e[p]t of the [s]e[c]ond [c]ou[s]in [o]ne [w]ay or [th]e [o]t[h]er, [b]ut she adm[i]tt[e]d that she [d]i[d]n't have as [b]i[g] [o]f [a] f[a]mily [a]s Enzo, which [p]erha[p]s [p]layed a [p]art i[n] her [q]u[i]zz[i]c[a]l n[o]nch[a]l[a]nce? N[o], Enz[o] went on, the [s]e[c]ond [c]ou[s]in w[a]s [s]omething i[n]d[i]c[at]ive of a [s]tru[c]tu[r]al [r]ot, in f[a]ct it was [s]omething th[at] [p]ro[b]a[b]l[y] n[ee]ded [a]ctual l[e]gis[l]ation to [b]e [p]ro[p]er[l]y [c]o[m]b[a]tted, [b]e[c]ause these [s]e[c]ond [c]ousins - they wouldn't just [r]e[s]cind of their [o]wn a[cc]ord. [N]o, Enz[o] and Da[r]i[a] [b]o[t]h, they [n]eeded to [s]tart [p]et[i]t[i]o[n]i[n]g l[o]c[a]l [r]e[p]r[es]enta[t]ives [t]o [a][b]o[l]i[s]h this [c]o[n]c[e]pt of the [s]e[c]ond [c]ousin.

η/ω 568:760 .747

3.12 It was [a]b[un]dant[l]y [c][l]ear to Enz[o] [th]at [th]ere was a [r]e[cu]rr[i]ng s[p]i[rit]t[i]ng i[n]t[er]o [t]wo that was

[p]erh[a][p]s the m[o]st ne[f]arious [a]ct of all, [th][a]t [th]e  
 [f]irst of [th]is or [th]at in[e]vita[b]ly would [b]e[c]ome  
 [e]x[t]ended [t]o the [s]o-[c]alled [s]e[c]ond of the [s][a]me  
 [s][u]b[s]tr[a]te, [b][u]t why? It was th[i]s counting, th[i]s  
 [l]ur[i]d [l][i]near [e]xt[e]nsion that [p]erha[p]s off[e]nd[e]d  
 [E]nz[o] the m[o]st, to which [D]a[r]ia, th[i]nk[i](ng) a[b]out  
 her [b]ok choy with [a]n un[e]r[r]i(ng) s[e]nse of  
 [d][r][ea]d, was on[l][y] [p]artial[l][y] [p]aying a[t]tention  
 [t]o. They'd [f]undamentally [f]orgotten [s][o]mething  
 a[b]out n[u]m[b]er, Enzo [s]aid, they'd be[c][o]me  
 a[d]di[c]ted to [d]ivi[d]i(ng) [a]nd [a][dd]i(ng),  
 ex[t]en[d]i(ng) [a]nd sub[t]r[a]c[t]i(ng), in[s]tead of  
 fo[c]u[s]ing on [c]on[c]e[p]ts more [s]t[ee]p[ed] in  
 [p]urit[y]. [E]nz[o] f[e]lt as [th][ou]gh [th]ey were meant to  
 [r]ecall [s]omething e[s]sential a[b]out n[u]m[b]er, [b][u]t  
 [n]ow, [s]omeh[ow], that was im[p]os[s]ible [f]or [th]em,  
 [th]at [th]ey'd [f]or[g]otten [f]or good [a]n [e][s]s[e]ntial  
 a[s]pect of num[b]er, which [m][a]de [e]very [s]itu[a]tion  
 they [e]ncountered i[m]m[e]asura[b]l[e] [m]ore  
 [b]l[e]k. The [s][e][c]ond [c]ousin it[s]e[f] was nothing  
 beyond a [s]ymptom of a much greater [s]i[c]k[n]ess,  
 the [c]o[m]mon [c]old of [c]ounting n[u]m[b]ers, [o]f  
 [b]e[c]o[m]ing u[n]i[t]a[r]y un[t]il they [r]ea[che]d  
 [i]nf[i]n[i]ty. [N]othing was [m]ore [i]nf[i]n[i]te [th]an [th]e  
 u[n]i[t]a[r]y, [y]et the [u]ni[t]ary bec[o]m[ing] [i]nf[i]n[i]te  
 was [u]tt[er]ly [a]b[s]ur[d]! Eve[r]ything was [s][p]l[i]t  
 [i]n[t]o [t]wo, or [s][p]l[i]t [i]nto th[r]ee, [a]ll [a]r[ound]  
 them were [d]o[p]pelg[a]ngers [a]nd [t]ri[n]i[t]ies of  
 [w]h[at] [w]h[at] [w]h[at]. Mul[t]ipl[i]c[i]t[y] [c]oul[d]n't  
 ex[i]st th[i]s way! Enzo [c]on[t]inued as [D]a[r]ia  
 [s]imul[t]aneou[s]ly [c]on[s]i[d]ered b[r]i[n]g[i]ng up a  
 few [c]on[c]erns she h[a]d with [a]n [e]m[p]loyee she'd  
 [c]on[t]r[a]c[t]ed [s]p[e]c[i]f[i]cally in a bo[t]t[a]n[i]c al  
 m[a]n[n]er, but who, g[i]v[e]n h[i]s unorthodox methods,  
 had [s]tarted to [c]on[c]er[n h[er] given [s]ome of his

[m]ore li[c]entious ha[b]its. Of [c]our[s]e [b][o]tan[y] and  
 [p]er[s]onal [m]atters were [p][r]o[b]a[b]l[y], in [m]ost  
 [c]a[s]es, [c]on[s]idered [c]om[p][l][e]te[l]l[y] [s]e[p]a[r]ate  
 i[s]sues, but [d][ue] t[o] the [s][p]e[c][i]f[i]c nat[ur]e of  
 th[i]s [p]ar[t]i[c]ul[ar] job it had [b]egun to [b]other [D]aria  
 just [s][i]ghtl[y]. Enzo, for his [p][a]rt, had [a]n [e]n[t]ire  
 [p]ack of [c]iga[r]ettes i[n] h[i]s [d][r][awer], he [s]aid to  
 [D]a[r]ia, [b]e[c]ause he'd [b]ought a whole [p]a[c]k [th]e  
 o[th]er [d]ay, ju[s]t [p]urely out of [s]p[ite]. [D]id she [w]ant  
 [t]o go [o]ut [o]n[t]o the [d]e[c]k and [w]ha[c]k a puff or  
 [t]wo f[r]o[m] [o]ne? Was she [d][r][u]n[k] en[ou]gh yet?  
 To [s]mo[k]e a [q]u[i]ck c[i]g? Be[c]ause she [c][l]earl[y]  
 wasn't [i]i[s]te[n]ing to a[n]y of the fu[ck]i[ng] sh[i]t he was  
 [s]aying a[b]out int[e]gers or [s][e]c[on]d [c]ousins,  
 a[b]out the non[s]e[n]s[i]c[al] d[i]v[i]s[i]on of [e]ve[r]ything  
 [a]ll [a]r[ound] them! No Daria [w]as, she [w]as  
 l[i]st[e]ning ([k]ind of ...), it was [j]ust th[at] she was [j]ust  
 a t[a]d [p]r[e]o[cc]u[p]ied, [e]ven [b]efore [c]oming [b]y  
 she'd [b]een wall[k]ing through a [s]mall [c]ourtyard i[n]  
 the [c]i[t]y, [t]a[k]ing [n]o[t]e of the [b]i[g] [t]r[ee]s  
 g[r]o[w]ing [n]ext to the large [b][r]i[c]k [c]ondo  
 [b]u[i]ldings, [c]ont[e]mpl[a]ting [c]o[nn]e[c]ting with  
 [n]a[t]ure, but also w[i]th [i]i[n]a[n]i[m]ate obj[e]cts as  
 [w]e[l]l? It [w]as [o]ne thing to [c]o[nn]e[c]t with [n]ature  
 and trees [a]nd [p][l]a[n]ts, th[at] was almost [c][l]iche,  
 [b]ut what a[b]out [c]o[nn]e[c]ting w[i]th [i]i[n]a[n]i[m]ate  
 objects [m]a[de] of [p][l]a[s]tic by w[a]ge [s]l[a]ves in  
 East [A]sia? Sh[e]'d r[e]centl[y] a[t]tended d[i]v[i]ne  
 l[i]turgy f[or] the [f]irst [t]i[m]e in ages, she [t]o[d] Enz[o],  
 and while o[c]c[as]ionally [s]ta[r]ing u[p] at the [s]e[r]ies of  
 i[c]ons [p]eo[p]le would have i[n]d[i]s[c]r[i]m[i]nately  
 [k]i[lled] [p]eo[p]le [f]or w[or]sh[i]pp[ing] just [a] f[w]ew  
 [sh]or[t] [c]enturies [a]go, she [c]ould have [s]w[orn] a  
 [s]et of voi[c]es [w]ere [s]pea[k]ing to her, [s]o[l]ely in her  
 [m]i[n]d, [c]omf[or]ting [h]er but al[s]o i[n]f[or]m[ing]

[h]er [th]at [th]ere would be an u[p][c]oming t[i]me [th]at [th]ey'd [s][n]a[p] their [f]ingers and she'd [f]i[n]al[l]y re[t]urn [t]o them, [a]s if th[a]t [w]as [w]here she [a]ctual[l]y be[l]onged, [i]n th[i]s p[l]ane she [c]ould [h]ard[l]y [c]om[p]re[h]end, yet [c]o[m]muni[c]a[te]d to her with no [p]r[o][b]l[e]m. She [e]xited her [b][o]d[y] just [m]o[m]enta[r]i[l]y, f[i]lled w[i]th [p]ure [r]e[l]ief, [th]en [th]e b[e]ings [r]e[ite]r[ate]d [a] [t]i[m]e would [a][rr]i[ve] [w]hen they [w]ould s[n]ap their [f]ingers and she'd [r]e[t]urn, [f]i[n]ally, [t]o them. [P]erh[a]p[s] she'd h[a]ve [d]i[s]c[ou]nted the en[c]o[un]ter if she h[a]dn't, on a whim, she [t]o[d] Enz[o], [d]e[c]i[d]ed to g[o] up [t]o [t]a[k]e [c]ommunion with her [d]ad, [a]nd [a]s her turn f[i]nally a[r]r[i]ved to im[b]i[be] the [b]lood of [C]h[r]i[s]t Him[s]elf, she [n]ot[i]c[ed] s[i]t[t]i[n]g [c]alm[l]y to the [l]e[f]t of the p[r]iest [w]as a [W]ind Tun[n]el b[r]a[n]d [f]l[oo]r [f]l[a]n. The [e]x[a]ct same [f]loor [f]l[a]n she'd, [a]f[te]r [t]a[k]i[n]g [e]n[t]irel[y] [t]oo [m]a[n]y [m]u[sh]rooms [o]ne par[t]i[c]ular [e]vening [e]ons ago, [e]ng[a]ged [i]n [a]n [e]xten[d]ed [c]onvers[a]tion w[i]th [r]egar[d]i[n]g the t[r]ue n[a]ture of things, [d]u[r]i[n]g which a [c]ertain [c]i[ti]z[e]n [d]e[s]ce[n]d[ed] [u]p[on] her, final[l]y [u]n[d]e[r[s]tan[d]i[n]g, with the [u]t[m]ost [p]u[r]ity, her [t]rue o[r]i[g[i]n and, [i]n [t]urn, the [p]r[i]m[a]l [s]our[c]e of all things.

η/ω 817:1118 .731

4.1 Ultimate[l]y, whe[th]er [th]e [c]ults of Aph[r]odit[e] eng[a]ged in [s][a][c]r[ed] p[r]o[s]t[itu]tion or n[o]t is [s]o[m]ethi[n]g [s][c]h[o]l[ars] of h[i]s[t]o[r]y are [s]t[i]ll [b]i[tte]r[l]y [t]orn [a]b[ou]t, [b]ut there ex[i]st [p]erha[p]s [l]eg[i]t[i]mate [r]ea[s]ons to [a]g[r]ee with [ei]ther c[a]m[p]. On the one h[a]nd, if the Greeks engaged in, what [c]ertain [p]a[r]t[i]c[i]p[a]nts of the [S]ym[p]osium

at [l][ea][s]t [b]e[l][ie]ved to [b][e], an a[b]utting [s]a[c][r]ed  
 [f]orm of [p][e][d]e[r][a]st[y], th[e]n [i]s [i]t [r][ea]l[y] th[a]t  
 [f]ar[f]e[tt]ched to [s]ugg[e]st [d]udes [i]n [C][or][i]nth were  
 [b]anging wh[or]es in [a]n [A][ph][r]o[d]ite tem[p]le, [b][u]t  
 j[u][s]t [i]n an [i]nten[s]e[l]y [r][i]tua[l][i]s[t]ic way? [I]sn't  
 [i]t [p]o[s]si[b]le A[ph][r]od[i]te w[a]s, in [s][o]me [s]en[s]e,  
 a [p][r]e-wa[i]f[u]? The t[r]u[e o[r][i]g[i]n of the [w]aifu as  
 [w]e k[n]o[w it. L[a]ter that [n]ight, at l[t][ae]won P[o][c]hu  
 in [K]ore[a][t]own, [A]ra[q][i] was [s]urre[p]t[iti]ousl[y]  
 [s]aving [h]en[t]ai j[p]egs on[t]o [h]is [c]ame[r]a [r]oll as  
 they [s]a[t] a[t the [s]mall window table over[l]oo[k]ing  
 W[e][s]t Thirty [S][e][c]ond, [s][p][i]tt[ing] an eel  
 [a][pp]etizer with [J][o] Yu-[R]i, who [a]fter [a] [c][o]u[p]le  
 shots of [S][o]ju, was [s]uddenl[y] [m]ore  
 f[or]th[c]o[m]ing than sh[e]'d been [p][r]e[v]iousl[y].  
 [U]n[a]w[are] of yet [a]l[s]o [u]n[c]on[c]erned [w]ith  
 [A]ra[q]i [s]aving [h]en[t]ai jpegs [i]n[t]o [h]is [ph]o[n]e's  
 [c]ame[r]a [r]oll, [J]o Yu-[R]i [f]ound her[s]elf more  
 [c]om[f]ortable with, you kn[o]w, shar[ing] her [f]eel[ing]s  
 [a]f[ter] [a][b]out h[a]lf [a] dozen sh[o]ts [o]f [S]oju. Was  
 she her[s]elf [p]o[s]si[b]ly e[n]gag[ed] i[n] a[n] ...  
 ite[r]a[tion of [s][a]c[red] [p][r]o[s]titution? No!  
 Em[p]l[o]y[ing] some [G][r]ee[k] demi[g]o[d to [r]ub his  
 [c][o][c]k on your b[o][k] ch[o]y [p]l[ants] [w]asn't - [w]ell,  
 she [d]i[d]n't know [w]h[a]t it [w]a[s] ex[a]c[tl[y], she  
 m[u]ttered to [A]ra[q][i]. May[b]e [a]vant-ga[r]de  
 [b]o[tan[y]? [B]ut [i]n [a]ny [c]a[s]e def[i]n[itel]y [n]o[t  
 [p][r]o[s]titution! A[r]a[q][i] [n]oted that: wasn't it  
 [p]o[s]sible th[a]t [s]ome thing or [s]ome one [h][a]d  
 [s]ome [s]ort of, you kn[o]w, [h]o[l]d on [P]ria[p]u[s]? That  
 mayb[e] the [d]ude just n[ee]d[ed] help, [s]ome  
 a[s]s[i]s[tan[c]e, that all th[i]s [sh]i[t [sh]e was [s]o  
 con[c]erned about, [v]is-a-[v]is his [r]e[cent] whore  
 [m]o[n]ge[r][ing] was the [r]esult of [c]ertain  
 [s]o[meth]ing [h]a[v]ing a [v]i[c]e g[r]ip [h]old on [h]im?



[W]ell, [c][l][ea]r[l][y] he [w]as a [l]ittle off-[k]ilter! she said,  
 [th]at m[u]ch [th]ey [c]ould [b]oth agree on! [B][u]t the  
 e[ss]en[c]e of that [c]ond[i]t[i]on, the [c]ond[i]t[i]on of  
 [b]eing h[y]p[n]otized [i]n a[n] a[b]utting [m][y][s]t[i][c]al  
 [m]a[n]er, [w]as she the m[o]st a[p]p[r]o[p]riate [o]ne  
 to [s]ay, or was it [p]o[s]sible she [d]i[d]n't a[c]tually  
 [c]are, [th]at [th]is was an [e]x[c]l[u]sive[l]y  
 [c][a][p]ita[l]i[s]t [e]n[d]eavor, [th]at her [r]o[le] in [th]e  
 wh[o]le m[at]ter was s[o]le[l]y [r]a[tiona]l[i]st, th[at] [a]s  
 [l]ong as her bo[k] choy im[p]arted a [c]om[p]et[i]t[i]ve leg  
 u[p] in the h[ea]t of [K]or[e]atown she [d]i[d]n't [c]are  
 [o]ne [w]ay or [th]e o[th]er. And, [b]y [th]e [w]ay, [th]e  
 [b]ok choy at l[t][ae][w]on [w][a]s a[t]t[r]o[cious, she  
 n[o]ted, [s][o] [a]t least th[at] was good! The f[a]c[t] of the  
 m[at]ter was Jo Yu-[R][i] [c]ould d[e]f[i]n[i]tel[y]  
 [q]u[es]tion how she [q]u[ote]-un[q]u[ote] a[rr]ived here,  
 [s]o to [s]peak, a [b]udding, [b]arely  
 [s]e[m]i-[s]u[c]ce[s]sful, [r]e[s]tau[r]aun[t]eur [i]n  
 [M][i]d[t]own, a J[o]hn[s]on and [W]hales [d]r[o]pout and  
 Food Net[w]or[k] jun[k][ie], hel[p]l[ess][l]y [p]e[r]using  
 [C][r][ai]g's [L]i[s]t ads, [d][e][s]p[e]r[ate] for a [l]e[g] u[p]  
 in the [m]o[s]t v[i]c[i]ously [c]om[p]et[i]t[i]ve  
 [r]e[s]tau[r]ant [m]e[t]r[o]p[o]l[i]s [p]erh[a]p[s] on the  
 [p]l[a]net, when she [s]t[u]m[b]led [u]p[on] [P]ria[p]us's  
 [p]l[i]ght, [d]e[c]l[i]d[i]ng [t]o [t]a[k]e it on [a]s a  
 [b]o[t][a]ni[c]al a[dv]a[n]tage. [P]eo[p]le would a[l]ways  
 note in [a]we [h]ow [h]er blue eyes [d]i[s]p[l]ayed a  
 [c]ertain re[dd]i[sh] gold t[i]nt a[b]out them, [p]o[s]si[b]l[y]  
 [s]ome f[aint] [S]p[a]n[i]sh [b]l[ood] on her [F]i[l]i[p[i]n[o]  
 mother's [s]ide? It [s]eemed her  
 [K]o[r]ea[n-A[m]e[r]i[c]an i[d]entity [w]as a[l]ways  
 [s]l[i]ghtl[y] un[d]e[r[m]i[n]ed b[y] th[i]s [C]atho[l[i]c[i]sm  
 of her a[d]o[l]e[s]c[e]n[c]e. [C]atho[l[i]c[i]sm has a  
 [t]e[n[d]e[n]c[y] of [m]a[k]ing [e]ve[r]y[o]ne [a] fourth  
 gene[r]ation I[t]alian-A[m]e[r]i[c]an, and Jo Yu-Ri f[e]lt

this [t]ugging [a]t [t]imes [a]s w[e]ll, [b]ut then again, it wasn't [q]u[i]te [l]i[k]e the g[uy] ne[c]e[ss]ari[l]y owed her a[n]ything, [b]e[c]a[us]e there w[a]s [n]othing in their [c]ontra[ct] ([w]hich [w]as [n]on-ex[i]st[e]nt) that [s][t][i]pulated [h]ow [h]e should [s][p]end his f[r]ee [t]ime. Yet, [A][r]a[q]i in[t]erje[c]ted, [i]s there [n]ot an [i]m[p]l[i]c[i]t [a]g[r]eement i[n] a[n]y [b]usi[n]ess [r]e[l]a[t]i[on]sh[i]p to, you know, [l]ike, he [s][a]id, wh[e]n George [C]o[s]t[a]nza [b]e[c]ame a h[a]nd [m]odel in [S]einf[eld] - he wasn't [t]rave[l]ing a[r]ound [l]aying [b]r[i]c[k]s and d[i]pp[i]ng his [t]oes [i]n[t]o a[m]ateur [b]oxing [i]n h[i]s [f]ree [t]ime! Ye[s], the Co[s]t[a]nz[a] a[n]a[log]y was an [a]pt [o]ne here, yet again there [w]as the [q]u[es]tion of the [e]s[s]e[n]c[e] of [P]ria[p]us [h]im[s]e[l]f, [h]ow [h]e [i]n[t]er[a]cted, or [w]as [i]n[t]er[a]cted w[i]th, [i]n the [c]o[r]p[or]eal [s]phere, which be[c]ame a[n] [i]n[c]r[e]asing[l]y [l]atent issue as the two [r]e[qu]e[s]ted a [s][e]c[on]d [b]o[t]tle of [S]o[j]u. It was p[o]s[s]i[b]le, [J]o Yu-Ri [c]o[n]s[ider]ed, that his [c]o[c]k wasn't ex[i]st[e]nt [i]n the w[ay] she m[ay] have [i]n[i]t[i]ally th[ou]ght.

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5.1 Of [c]ourse Ha[k]im [e]n[t]ered the [e]s[t]ab[l]ishment [l]oo[k]ing sole[l]y for [A]m[i]n[a], [a]s [a]t the time h[e] was [c]o[m]p[l]e[t[e]l[y] [c]a[p]tivated [b]y her [b]eauty, unw[i]ll[i]ng to [p]ar[t] w[i]th th[i]s [p]ar[t]i[c]ular [i]m[a]ge of her [f]orm that [r]e[l]e[n]tlessl[y] [r]i[c]ocheted w[i]th[i]n the [c]o[n]f[i]nes of his m[i]nd, [c]a[p]tivated, not like he'd [b]een once [b]e[f]ore, [b]y the [c]o[m]p[a]rative witch[c]r[a]ft of [c]le[v]er [c]o[n]v[er]s[at]i[on]. [N]o, in[s]tead [H]akim [f]ound [h]im[s]e[l]f [h]yp[n]otized [b]y the [b]lunt [p]ure [f]orm of her [b]eauty, with [n]o [e]d[i]f[i]c[at]i[on] or [e]xt[r]a[p]o[l]a[t]i[on], with [n]o

[c]a[p]itu[l][a]t[i]on to [r][ea]son - or [e]v[e]n to [f][ee]l[i]ng  
 [f]or th[a]t m[a]tter! It was [s]im[p]l[y] the [c]a[s]e [t]h[at]  
 [t]here was [n]o in[t]er[l]o[c]utor, [n][o]t even a[n]y  
 [r]em[o]te [c]on[t]em[p]l[i]ation of this ve[r]y [f]orm that  
 s[o] [c][l][ea]r[l]y [h]a[d] w[a]f[f]ed [H]a[k][i]m [t]h[rough]  
 [t]he [d]ouble [d]oors th[at] [e]vening, tr[y]ing to [f]i[nd]  
 what [c]ould [p]erha[p]s b[e] d[ee]med a wai[f]u. Now of  
 [c]ourse there's a [c]om[p]lex hei[r]archy of  
 [r]e[f]r[a]c[t]ion to [m]a[t]ters li[k]e th[e]se, of which  
 [H]a[k][i]m, [h]aving [a] [d]e[c]ent [a]m[ount] of  
 [ph]ilo[s]o[ph]i[c]al e[d]u[c]ation, [w]a[s]n't un[a]w[are] of  
 [p]er[s]e, ho[w]ev[er], [wh]eth[er] or n[o]t it [w]as at the  
 [t]o[p] of his [m]i[n]d at the [t]i[m]e is a [s]e[p]arate  
 [m]atter en[t]i[r]ely (it wasn't!). There are l[on]g [r]a[n]ge  
 co[r]re[l]a[t]ions - did a [f]e[m]ale l[oo]k l[i]k[e]  
 s[o]me[o]ne [f]a[m]il[i]a[r], [f]rom [y]ears ago, li[k]e  
 [p]erh[a]p[s] ex[a]c[t]ly the [s]ame? l[i>n f[a]c[t], i[t] was  
 [p]o[s]sible Ha[k][i]m [a]c[t]ua[l]l[y] m[i]s[t]oo[k] th[i]s  
 [p]ar[t]i[c]u[l]ar wai[f]u [f]or another [p]e[r]s[on] en[t]ire[l]y  
 at [f]i[r]s[t], ba[c]k [f]rom his [s]e[c]on[d]ary [s]c[h]ool  
 [d]ays. He wasn't even c[er]ta[i]n i[t] was h[er] when he  
 [f]i[r]s[t] s[t]u[m]bled [u]pon her [f]orm. [H]e en[c]ountered  
 [h]er [f]orm but [r]e[c]alled a [c]o-ed he [w]as  
 [a]c[quainted] [w]ith [f]r[o]m [s]o[m]e years [a]go,  
 [a]ssu[m]ing in[c]or[r]e[c]tly [A]m[i]na was in [f]a[c]t an  
 old [f]r[i]end. She in[f]ormed Ha[k][i]m so[f]tly her [n]ame  
 was Am[i]n[a], as if [p]eo[p]le were [p]o[ss]ib[l]y  
 l[i]stening i[n] to each [s]y[l]l[ab]le [u]ttered fr[o]m her  
 exqu[i]s[i]te[l]y [p]ro[p]ortioned l[i]ps, as l[i]f  
 [s]p[e]c[i]f[i]c [c]ourt jesters [w]ere [w]aiting i[n] the  
 [w]i[n]g [t]o [t]ran[s]c[ri]be their [c]onver[s]a[t]i[on] to  
 l[i]a[t]e[n]t go[s]s[i]p [c]o[l]umn[i]s[ts]. [S]c[h]o[l]ars, [f]or  
 their [p]art, would ultimate[l]y [r]et[r]oac[tive[l]y  
 [c]onf[i]ate [t]wo [p]o[ss]ible A[m]inas as well,  
 [m]i[m]i[c]k[i]ng un[i]n[t]entionall[y] their own [s]our[c]e of

[s]tud[y]. The f[a][c]t th[at] Ami[n]a was, [t]e[c]h[n]i[c]all[y]  
[s]pea[k]ing, you k[n]ow, an or[ph]a[n i]n a [h]arem  
[d]i[d]n't [f]aze [H]ak[i]m in the l[ea]st, be[c]ause [a]ll [o]f  
the [p][r]ophets [p][r]e[v]i[ou]s[l]y [n]oted  
hi[s]to[r]i[c]al[l]y were, if [n]ot [p]u[r]e who[r]e-monge[r]s,  
then at l[ea]s[t] [s]ym[p]a[th]eti[c] to [th]e [p]l[i]ght of [th]e  
[p]ro[s]titute, the [p]ro[s]titute [s]i[m]ply ex[i]st[i]ng as  
[a]n [e]x[t]e[n]sion of the [d]e[s]ti[t]ute and  
[d]own[t]ro[d]den as a wh[o]le. Hak[i]m [s]aw n[o]  
[r]e[as]on to [d]iverge f[r]om his [p]re[d]e[c]e[ss]ors i[n]  
th[i]s [r]egard. There's a [c]ertain i[d]e[a] [th]at [th]e  
[d]ee[p]est [r]ela[t]i[on]sh[ips] are the ones b[a]sed on  
[s]o-[c]alled illumi[n]a[ti]ng [c]onver[s]a[ti]on,  
[p]redi[c]a[te]d u[p]on getting to [q]u[ote]-un[q]u[ote]  
k[n]ow each other, [y]et [y]ou [c]ould [c]ounter [th]at  
[th]ere's a[c]tual[l]y [n]othing to k[n]ow of us [r]eal[l]y  
[a]t all, th[at] we're [p]urely [r]e[f]ra[c]tions of a [s]our[c]e  
i[n]f[i]n[i]te[l]y [s]i[m]p[l]er than w[e] [s]ee[m] to [b]e,  
that con[v]olutions are [b]y th[eir] [v]er[y] nature  
f[i]c[t]i[on]al and [s]tee[p]ed in [h]y[p]o[c]r[i]s[y].  
[H]a[v]ing a gr[eat] [c]on[v]ersa[ti]on is the a[c]ute  
f[a]l[l]a[c]y of [h]um[an]it[y], [b]e[i]e[v]ing you've  
di[s]co[v]ered [s]ome eternal [b]ond with [a]nother  
[p]e[r]son is [p]erha[p]s an [a]ffront to [A]llah  
[H]im[s]elf. [H]a[k]im and [A]mina [d]i[d]n't [d]i[s]cuss  
them[s]elves at f[i]r[s]t, and when [th]ey did [th]ey  
st[r]uggled to [r]e[c]all who they even [w]ere, [w]hich  
[w]as a[p]p[ro]p[ri]ate. [H]a[k]im's [m]ad[n]ess, [h]i[s]  
i[n]d[i]s[c]r[i]m[i]n[a]te [k]i[l]l[i]ng [o]f [o]thers was  
based i[n] th[i]s i[d]ea. There was an i[m]m[e]d[i]acy to  
their [c]o[m]m[i]ng i[n]t[o] [c]on[t]act [w]ith [o]ne another.  
Ha[k]im, [a]gain, [d]i[d]n't [c]ontem[p]late [A]mina's  
[b]eaut[y], [s]im[p]l[y] [b]e[c]a[us]e it w[a]s [a]n  
i[m]p[er]si[b]le a[c]t. [M]e[m]o[r]y was [s]omething they  
[b]oth st[r]uggled to inte[r]a[c]t with. [A]m[in]a's beauty

was [a] [m]otor [s][k]ill. Her out[li]ne was a  
 re[c]o[ll][e][c]tion [s][o]me[o]ne would n[e]ver be[c][o]me  
 [c][o]nscious of, a [l][ur]id [m]e[m]ory a [p][er]son  
 [c]om[p][l][e]te[l]y forg[o]t a[b]out [b]ut [s]till [s]tayed  
 hugging their [b][o]dy li[k]e a shar[k] jaw. It was the  
 i[m]m[e]d[i]acy of A[m][i]na's [b]eaut[y] that [s][l][o]w[l]y  
 [b]egan to er[o]de Ha[k][i]m's [s][an]it[y]. [P]ossession  
 [s][an]s [c]ontem[p]lation [c][an] [b]e [c]on[f]using [f]or  
 [s]ome, Ha[k]im n[ot] ex[c]lu[d]ed, [b]e[c]ause we [o]ften  
 [c]on[s]ider [p]ossession a[k]in to gr[o]wing [o]ld and  
 [d]e[c]aying with [s][o]me[o]ne, [r][e]p[e]ating [v]ows in[t]o  
 an o[p]en air that, if [r][e]a[r]ranged just s[l]ightl[y], would  
 [b]e[c]ome hea[v]y as [b][r]i[c]ks. At the [t]ime he  
 [p]a[s]sed [th]rough [th]e [d]ou[b]le [d]oors to [p][a]c[e]  
 an eye on [h]er, [H]a[k]im in[c]orre[c]tly [a][s]sumed  
 [A]mina's [b]eauty to [b]e of [a] de[c]ay[ing] n[a]ture,  
 [b][a]s[i]cally that he [c]ould [p]oss[e]s[s] her in a  
 [c]ont[e]m[p]lative [s][e]n[s]e. Ha[k]im [m]ade a [p]oor  
 a[t]t[em]pt [t]o seem [l]i[k]e he wasn't [l]o[ok]ing for  
 [A]mina as he wal[k]ed [th]rough [th]e [d]ou[b]le [d]oors,  
 her [b]eauty [a]lready [w][i]th[i]n h[i]m [b]ut in a [w]ay that  
 [e]schewed [c]on[t]emp[t]ation [e]n[t]irel[y]. Ha[k]im  
 [l]u[s]t[er]ed for de[c]ay, to [p]oss[e]s[s] [b]eauty in a  
 [c]ont[e]m[p]lative [s][e]n[s]e, to [r]e[c]ite vows in air  
 [p]o[c]kets of [b][r]i[c]k, [a]nd [A]mi[n]a d[an]ced [a]round  
 his [a]m[b]i[t]ions, to [b]e ho[n]est, [f]airl[y]  
 e[ff]ortl[ess]l[y]. [H]ad [H]a[k]im [b]een [a]b[le] to  
 [p]ro[p]erl[y] [c]ontem[p]l[at]e this ve[r]y [r][ea]l  
 i[m]m[e]d[i]a[c]y of A[m][i]na, then [p]erh[a]ps his  
 [s]a[n]ity wouldn't h[a]ve [s][l][o]w[l]y er[o]ded in the  
 m[an]ner [i]t ultim[a]tely d[i]d. When he exe[c]uted  
 th[o]se [c]l[os]est to h[im] on a wh[im], [i]n  
 [i]n[c]rea[s]ingl[y] vio[l]ent [a]nd [d]r[a]stic ways,  
 [s]l[i]c[ing] off [h]eads and [s]l[i]tt[ing] th[ro]ats by the  
 [h]un[d]reds, it was onl[y] [b]e[c]ause Ha[k]im

funda[m]en[t]a[l] [y] [m][i]s[i]n[t]er[p]reted the  
 i[m]m[e]d[i]a[c]y of A[m]i[n]a's [b]eauty. [H]ad [h]e  
 [b]een a[b]le [p]er[c]eive her [b]eauty [i]n [i]ts [a]c[t]ual  
 [s]en[s]e [a]s o[pp]osed [t]o r[u]th[l]ess[l]y  
 a[t]t[e]m[p]t[ing] [t]o [t]he[r] it [t]o his own  
 [c]on[t]e[m]p[l]ation, then he p[r]o[b]a[b]ly wouldn't have  
 gone [b]atshit [c][r]azy! [C]ourt offi[c]ers would [b]e  
 [b]eheaded [b]e[c]ause [A][m]i[n]a's [b]eauty was [a]  
 [m]otor [s][k]ill to Ha[k]i[m], wh[e]n he in[c]orr[e]c[t]l[y]  
 [b]e[l]i[e]ved it to [b]e a [r]o[m]an [à] [c]l[i]ef. Y[e]t isn't  
 an [e][r]oded [s]anit[y] ne[c]e[s]sa[r]y? [C]ould we  
 [p]o[s]sibly [s]uggest that? When [H]amza i[b]n A[l]i  
 [p]ro[c]laimed [H]a[k]i[m] to [b]e divine in[c]arnate, was  
 it [p]o[s]sibly [b]e[c]ause [H]a[k]i[m] [h]ad [s][a]c[rifi]c[ed]  
 his own [s][a]nity to [m]a[k]e A[m]i[n]a's [b]eaut[y],  
 [w]hich [w]as of a [p][u]rel[y] [w]aif u[n]der [d]e[c]ay?  
 Ha[k]i[m] would [d]i[s]a[pp]ear y[ea]rs l[ate]r, in [f]a[c]t  
 [n]ot l[ong] a[f]ter [t]wo [d]i[s]torted [A]mi[n]as  
 [a]pp[ea]red [t]o h[i]m [i]n [d]r[eam], one [d]ark, [th]e  
 o[th]er of a l[i]ght [v]a[r]iety, yet [s]till e[v]en th[en] he  
 [r]emai[n]ed un[a]ble to [d]i[s]entangle [w]hat it [w]as he  
 [s]aw. Y[e]t in [a]ny [c]a[s]e, all th[at]'s p[er]h[a]p[s] a  
 [b]etter topic for a l[ate]r [d]a[te], [b]e[c]ause [w]hen  
 Ha[k]i[m] [w]alked [th]rough [th]ose [d]oors  
 [h]is [s][a]nity [h]ad alrea[d]y [s]tarted to [d]e[c]ay, his  
 men[t]al [f]a[c]ulties were [a]lrea[d]y in a [s]t[ate] of  
 [d]i[s]a[r]ray. As Ha[k]i[m] [f]o[c]used his e[n]ergies on  
 th[is] [f]a[s]e [i]m[age] of [d]e[c]aying with A[m]i[n]a his  
 [s]a[n]ity it[s]elf [b]e[c]ame [d]i[l]a[p]h[ic]. H[am]za  
 ibn [A]li [c]alled him H[a]k[i]m [A]li. It wasn't  
 ne[c]e[s]sa[r]ily the [ph]ases Amina [r]e[p]ea[t]ed that  
 [r]eached Ha[k]i[m], but [m]ore [s]o the [m]o[de] [i]n  
 wh[i]ch she [s]aid th[at]. She'd whi[s]p[er]ed [p]ure  
 [n]on[s]ense to Ha[k]i[m] that was [n]o[t]hing if [n]o[t]  
 t[ot]al[l]y l[ogi]c[a]l o[n]l[y] a [f]ew years bef[ore] his

[f]riend H[a]mz[a] would d[ee]m [h]im [H][a][k][i]m  
 [A]ll[a]h. Ha[k]im would [s][p]end his nights and  
 w[ee][k]ends [l]oc[k]ed [i]n h[i]s th[r][ee] hun[d][r]ed  
 s[q]uare foot [l][i]v[i]ng [s][p]a[c]e, [a]n [a][s]ceti[c]  
 [d]e[c][i]s[i]on of his own [a][c]cord, and m[e][d]i[t]ate  
 [e]x[t][e]nsivel[y] on the beaut[y] of [A]min[a], its [t][r]ue  
 n[a]ture, [r][e]c[r][e]a[ti]ng her g[e]o[m]e[t]r[y] [i]n h[i]s  
 [m]ind, [s][p][ea]k[ing] with A[m]i[n]a [i]n h[i]s  
 [i]m[ag]i[n]a[t]i[on], [c]r[e]a[t]i[ng] an in[t]er[p]er[s]o[n]al  
 [b]r[an]d of [b]eauty [b][a]s[ed] en[t]irely [on]  
 [c]o[n]t[em]p[l]a[t]ion, [o]ne [w]here they [w]ould de[c]ay  
 [t]ogether in[t]o old [a]ge, a human sh[a]p[e] that f[a]des  
 with [t]ime, exi[s]ting [s]olel[y] [t]em[p]oral[ly], [n]ever  
 [e]m[ba]nating [a]nywhere [e]xc[e]pt into the  
 [m]e[m]o[r]ies and [ph]otog[r]a[ph]s wh[i]ch [d][i]s[t]ort  
 and [f]alsify [e]ve[r]ything worth[y] of ou[r] [a]we. This  
 was [h]ow [H]akim's sanity [e]r[od]ed. H[i]s  
 a[s]ceti[c]i[s]m [p]l[ay]ed at [l]ea[s]t a [p]art [i]n h[i]s own  
 [d]ecay, [b]ut mo[s]tly [b]e[c]ause he [e]m[p]l[oy]ed  
 a[s]ceti[c]ism to [c]reate [i]m[ag]es [i]n h[i]s [m]ind, [t]o  
 d[e]live in[t]o his [m]e[m]ories as i[m]ages as if th[ey]  
 [c]o[n]t[ai]ned [a]n [e]ss[e]nce [m]ore i[m]me[d]iate than  
 A[m]i[n]a's beauty. They [d][i]d[n't] [l]t's the  
 [p]ro[l]i[f]e[r]ation of the [i]m[ag]i[n]ed [i]m[ag]e that  
 ul[t]i[m]a[tely [d]rives us [a]ll [b]a[s]i[c]ally in[s]ane [a]ll  
 the [t]ime without [f]ail, [b]e[c]ause of the [d]i[s]tan[c]e we  
 [p]l[ace] [b]e[t]ween ou[r]selves and the image, [b]y  
 ne[c]e[s]sity of [c]ourse! [B]eing [d]eprived of the  
 i[m]me[d]iate [b]eauty of [A]m[i]n[a], Ha[k]im ch[o]se  
 to [a]s[c]eti[c]ally [a]tt[em]pt [t]o [r][e]c[r]eate it via his  
 [o]wn [i]m[ag]i[n]ed [i]m[ag]es, [e]x[i]st[i]ng al[m]o[st]  
 [e]x[c]l[us]ive[ly] w[i]th[i]n the [c]o[n]fines of his [o]wn  
 [c]o[n]templative [s]tates, but where[a]s his  
 ([s]ee[m]ingl[y] sh[a]llow) in[t]e[r]a[c]tions with  
 A[m]i[n]a [r]e[qu]ired [n]othing, they [m]erged in[t]o each

o[th]er [s]ans [c]onscious [th]ought, his [i][m]ag[i]ned  
[i][m][a]ges [w]ere f[i][ee]ting, al[w][ay]s [d]e[c][ay]ed  
i[mm][e][d][i]ate[l][y] [p]ost-[c]on[s]tru[c]tion. At [f][i]ve  
thirty [f][i]ve [p]m one a[f]ternoon [th]e [th]ought  
o[cc]urred to Ha[k]im [th]at he'd been [f][or]ty [f][or] his  
ent[i]re l[i]fe, [d]e[s]p[ite] the [f]a[c]t he'd [d]i[s]a[pp]ear  
[f][or]ever at ju[s]t thirty [f][i]ve. He was [s]t[i]ll  
ob[s]e[s]sed w[i]th [d][i][s]tan[c]e. [N]o, it was  
[p]re[c]i[s]e[l]y the [n][o]tion of [d]i[s]tan[c]e that [d]rove  
his [s]a[n]it[y] o[ff] the [f]u[ck]ing [c]li[ff]. Ha[k]im's  
g[r][ea]t[e]st c[r]e[at]i[on] was [p]erha[p]s [D]ar al-Ilm, or  
it [c]ould have [p]o[s]s[i]bly [b]een his own [i]nter[a]c[tion  
w[i]th h[i]s [s]a[n]ity, [b]e[c]ause [p]erha[p]s [b]y d[e]al[ing]  
with [A]m[i]n'a's [b]eauty in[c]o[rr]e[c]t[l]y Ha[k]im  
ulti[m]ate[l]y [a]rrived at the t[r]ue [n]otion of [b]eauty,  
[r]ather than [m]o[d]e[r]ate[l]y [d]e[l]u[d]ing himsel[f] and  
[d]ecaying with a [p]a[l]ata[b]le [f]i[b], h[e]  
[s]t[a]m[p]e[d]ed [f]ull [f]or[c]e in[t]o [d]e[l]usion. He  
l[ost] [t]r[a]ck of his [s]a[n]ity [c]om[p]l[i]te[l]y  
[b]e[c]ause of it, in a [s]e[n]se a[cc]urately  
[a]ss[e]ssing the false [n]otion of [A]m[i]n'a's [b]eauty  
as an [i]tem you [c]ould de[c]lay [b]es[i]de. The  
[s]a[c]rred [p]r[o]s[t]itute [i]s [i]n[c]a[p]able of de[c]ay,  
there's in f[a]c[t] [a]b[s]o[l]ute[l]y nothing more [a]b[s]urd  
than g[r]o[w]ing o[ld] with a [s]o-[c]alled [s]a[c]rred  
[p]r[o]s[t]itute. How [c]o[ul]d y[ou]?! In [T]en [T]wenty  
[O]ne, Ha[k]im [w]ould [d]r[e]am of [t]wo [d]i[s]torted  
Am[i]nas and then he [t]oo would [d]i[s]a[pp]ear, not as  
[a] result of [a] [p]ala[c]e in[t]r[i]gue, or [a]  
[s]u[r]re[p]r[t]itious m[ur]d[er], or [a]ge and [d]ecay,  
be[c]ause [e]v[en] if those e[v]ents [s]eem[ed] to o[cc]ur,  
we should [s]tr[ess] [th]at [th]ey're no [l]ess [v]eil-[i]k[e]  
[th]an [th]e [v]eils Ha[k]im wit[n]e[s]sed [a]round  
[A]m[i]n'a's [b]eauty. No, to [b]e c[l]ea[r, it's fair[l]y  
evid[e]nt [H]a[k]im [h]im[s]e[l]f be[c]ame a wai[f]u [i]n



h[i]s thirty [f]i[f]th year, [w]hich [w]as entirely  
 [a]p[p][r]o[p][r]iate. [D]i[s][a][pp]ear is [p][r]o[b]a[b]ly the  
 in[c]o[rr]e[c]t word to [d]e[s][c][r]i[b]e it! [b]e[c]ause  
 Ha[k]im g[a]ve a[w][ay] his [s]anity in a ve[r]y [r]eal  
 [w][ay] the [s]e[c]ond he [w]al[k]ed [th][r]ough [th]ose  
 [d]ou[b]le [d]oors to g[r][ee]t Am[i]na [i]n h[i]s own  
 esta[b]lishment, the [e][s]ta[b][l]ishment where he [s]aw  
 him[s][e]lf [e]n[c]l[os]ed, [l]i[k]e in a [l]arge [b]ox [l]i[k]e  
 [c]on[t]ai[n]er, one [S]pring afft[er]noon, the [s][a]me  
 [p][l]a[c]e he con[t]em[p]l[ate]d the ide[a] that [A][l]l[a]h  
 is the ve[r]y mi[rr]or [i]n wh[i]ch you [s]ee your[s]elf, [th]at  
 you're [th]e mirror [i]n [w]h[i]ch [H]e [w]i[t]n[ess]es [H]is  
 [N]a[m]es. [W][e] [s][ee][k] to [c]l[ai]m [b]eauty in a  
 [s]ub[j]ect-ob[j]ect re[l]a[t]ion[sh]ip [b]e[c]ause [c]ertain  
 [b]e[i]ngs have m[a]de them[s]elves [s][ee]m to [b]e that  
 w[ay], not [t]o [t]ri[c]k us ne[c]es[s]ari[y] b[ut] j[ust] to  
 [i]nno[c]ently [c]ause us to g[o] a[p]p[r]o[p]r[i]ately  
 in[s]ane, and vi[a] that [a][pp][r]o[p]r[i]a[te] [i]nsanity  
 f[i]nally [a][rr]i[ving] at the [p][r]o[p]er [n]a[t]ure of  
 b[eau]ty. [A][m]i[n]a in her cu[r]rent st[a]te enjoyed the  
 f[a]c[t] th[at] [H]a[k]im [h][a]d [h][a]l[f] of his [r]obe o[f]f [i]n  
 the [m]i[d]dle of the ven[ue], his fa[c]e bl[ee][d][i]ng,  
 [t]o[ss]ing d[i]nars [i]n[t]o the air [s]cr[ea][m][i]ng at [m]en  
 [t]w[i]ce his [s]i[ze] th[at] [h]e [h][a]d [m]o[n]ey! [D]i[d]n't  
 [th]ey k[n]ow [th]is? He'd fu[c]k[i]ng [k]i[l]l them all, then  
 he'd e[l]i[m]i[n]ate their fa[m]i[l]ies, then he'd  
 [a][ss][a]l[s]in[a]te the a[c]q[ui]ntan[c]es of their  
 [s]e[c]ond [c]ousins! But [s]a[c]r[ed] [p][r]o[s]ti[t]utes are  
 of [c]ourse inv[e]t[e]r[at]e[y] [d]r[awn] [t]o this exact  
 [t]y[p]e of in[s]a[n]it[y], a [s]ort of [D]i[o[n]y[s]ian [l]osing  
 of the [s]elf. Years [l]ater Ha[k]i[m] would dr[ea]m of  
 [k]i[l]l[i]ng h[i]mself [r]e[p]eatedly as a m[e]th[o]d of  
 c[l]ea[n]s[i]ng him[s][e]lf, a [r]e[l]ated [p][r]o[c]ess. It's  
 p[r]o[b]a[b]ly in[t]e[r]acting with the a[t]t[r]o[c]ities of  
 [b]eauty where the g[r]eatest [l]e[s]sions are [l]earned,

[b]ut [c][er]tainly [n]ot [i]n [a]n [i]n[t]er[p][er][s]onal and [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [d]ee[p] [c]on[v]er[s][a]tion [d]ri[v]en w[ay]. No, it's [v][i][a] [a] [d][i][v][i]ne imm[e][d][i]acy that e[v]e[r][y]thing be[c]omes i[d][i]otic and your [r]ational self is f[i][n]ally [r]e[c]og[n]i[z]ed am[o]ng eve[r]y[o]ne as an [u]nwel[c][o]me inter[l]o[c]utor, [u]na[b]le to w[r]a[p] [h]is [p]lea[b][r]ained [h]ead a[r]ound [w]hy you're not [c]u[r]rent[l]y [w]ea[r]ing [a] shirt in [a] [p]ub[l]i[c] [p][l]ace.

η/ω 2314:3044 .760

5.12 [W]alking [th]rough [th]e, in [r]et[r]o[s]pect s[o]me[w]h[a]t ominous, [d]ouble [d]oors Ha[k]im [t]oo[k] note of the [s]ame [t]in [r]oof that [c]om[p][r]i[s]ed the [s][k][y] on [d][i]ve [b]ar [p]atios as A[m]i[n]a [m]ade it [c]lear she had [b]usi[n]ess [t]o [t]a[k]e [c]are of, [sh]e was a[f]ter [a]ll on [sh]i[f]t, but [th]at it [w]as [a]lso im[p]ortant [th]at [H]akim [w]ait for [h]er, [p][l]ea[s]e! [D]on't [l]ea[ve]! Just wait a [m]i[n]ute! [B][u]t [f][u]n[d]a[m]entally there was [n]othing [f]or the [t]wo [t]o [d]is[c]uss [b]eyond A[m]i[n]a [s]taring [s]i[l]ent[l]y into Ha[k]im's [ey]es for ex[t]ended in[t]ervals of [t]i[m]e. When she fi[n]a[l]l[y] m[o]seyed [o][v]er [t]oward [h]im as [h]e [s][t]ood [n]er[v]ou[s]l[y], [s]till [n]ear the [d]ouble [d]oors, [h]e told [h]er [h]e wan[t]ed [t]o [t]a[k]e her [q]u[o]te-un[q]u[o]te [o]ut [o]f this place, m[a]yb[e] [e]ven, h[e] [d]i[d]n't k[n]ow, t[a]ke her out to [d]i[n]er? [a]nd she [l]aughed in a way that [s]poke to the [s]eeming [i]m[p]o[s]s[i]b[i]l[i]ty of the i[d]ea, and, in turn, Ha[k]im [c]on[s]i[d]ered the [f]a[s]e [d]ua[l]ity of the [ph][y]s[i]c[al] and the [P]a[tr]oni[c], [c]on[s]i[d]ering th[at], [a]c[tual[l]y, the [p]r[o]p[er] [d][i]v[i]s[i]on of [k]ind when it [c]ame to [l]o[ve] w[as]n't ph[y]s[i]cal and [s]p[i]r[i]tual but [i]n[s]tead [th]e [d]e[l]ayed and [th]e imm[e][d][i]ate. There was [n]o [d]ia[l]e[c]t[i]c pr[e]s[e]nt here, [n]o

[l]ong [c]onversations on the ph[o]ne, [n][o] getting to  
 k[n][o]w one a[n]other's [s][o]-[c]alled [s]e[c][r]ets and  
 [i]n[d]ulg[i]ng [i]n [th]e [th][r][i]ll[i]ng [i]d[i]o[c]y of what's  
 h[i][dd]e[n], of the a[m]use[m]ent par[k] of tiny l[i]ttle  
 [s]e[c]rets. There i[n]evitab[l]y would [c]ome [a] [t]ime  
 when [A][m][i][n]a [a][c]tual[l]y [a]sked Ha[k][i]m [t]o [t]ell  
 a l[i]ttle [m]ore about h[i]m[s]elf, that it [s][ee]med [l]i[k]e,  
 [n]ow [th]at sh[e] [th]ought a[b]out it, she [b]arel[y] [e]ven  
 k[n]ew him! [t]o which Ha[k]im [c]ons[i]dered h[i]s own  
 [t]rauma, [w]hich of [c]ourse [w]asn't exa[c]t[l]y [r]eal, he  
 [c]on[t]emp[l]ated his youth with a [r]are [m]o[m]en[t]a[r]y  
 f[er]v[or] and w[i]tn[ess]ed [th]at all [th][e]se  
 [m]e[m]o[r]ie[s] be[c]ame [m][a]s[s]-[p]r[od]uced [a][c]tion  
 f[ig]ures [c]om[p]l[i]te[l]y [m]el[t]ed in[t]o a stri[p] of  
 [p]ave[m]ent [i]n the un[f]org[i]v[i]ng[l]y b[l]i[s]te[r]i[n]g  
 [C]ai[r]o [s]un, [a]nd [a]s he [t]urned [t]o his [l]eft,  
 [s]o[l]el[y] to e[s]c[a]pe Amina's [e]v[e]r int[e]n[s]ifying  
 g[a]ze, [h]e [c]oul[d]n't [h]el[p] [b]ut n[ote] a [S]an[d]ra  
 [B]ullock [p]o[s]ter for a [m]ovie [c]alled [M]iss  
 [S]e[c]r[e]t [A]g[e]nt h[u]ng [u]p adj[a][c]e[n]t. [R]epeating  
 the title [a]gain to [h]im[s]elf [H]a[k]im [s][l]ow[l]y  
 [a][rr]i[ved] at the dis[qu]i[et]ing [c]on[c]l[usion] [th]at  
 [th]ere [p]erha[p]s [e]xi[s]ted [a]n [e]ntire [S]an[d]ra  
 [B]u[l]lo[c]k [e][c]onomy [a]ll [a]round him, that [e]ntire  
 [s]wathes of the f[i]lm [i]n[d]u[s]t[r]y were  
 [i]n[d]i[s]c[r]i[m]i[n]atel[y] [d]e[d]i[c]ated t[o] the  
 [r]u[th]l[ess] [p]r[od]uction of a dd[i]t[i]onal [S]an[d]ra  
 Bu[l]lo[c]k [c]ontent, ex[c]l[usive]l[y] [c]on[s]t[r]u[c]ted for  
 a [r]a[ven]ous [S]an[d]ra [B]u[l]lo[c]k f[a]n [b]ase.  
 [P]eo[p]le, [n]ot at all in ob[s]cure [n]um[b]ers,  
 [a]b[s]o[l]ute[l]y [a]dored [S]an[d]ra [B]ullo[c]k,  
 [a]p[ar]entl[y]! [B]ut how [c]ould this [b]e? [th]at [th]ese  
 shit [s]t[ai]ns j[ust] [c]oul[d]n't get en[ou]gh [o]f [S]an[d]ra  
 [B]ullo[c]k, [c]ould th[ey]? to the [e]xte[n]t a[n] [e]ntire  
 i[n]d[u]s[t]ry had developed to [q]uench [th]e [t]hirst for

[th][is] [S]an[d][r]a Bullo[c]k [c][on]tent. Oh no! M[iss]  
 [C][on]ge[n]iality wasn't [n][ea]r[l][y] e[n]ou[gh] [S]and[r]a  
 Bu[l]ock [f]or these [l]u[r]id m[a]sses of [S][a]ndra  
 [B]u[l]ock shit [s]tains! H[o]pe [F][l][oa]ts was [b]are[l]y  
 [s]cratching the [s]ur[f]ace of [w]h[at] [w]as [c][l]ear[l]y  
 [a] Ma[r]i[a]n[a] t[r]ench-[l]i[k]e itch [f]or the  
 [u]n[a]d[ul]te[r]ated p[r]o[d]u[c]tion of [S]an[d][r]a  
 Bu[l]o[c]k [f]ilms. [S][p]eed and [D]e[m]o[l]i[t]ion [M][a]n  
 [a]nd The [P][r]o[p]o[s]al - n[o]! these in[s]a[t]iable  
 zealots [d]e[m]an[d]ed [M]iss [S]e[c]ret [A]gent as w[e]ll!  
 [M]iss [C]onge[n]ia[l]ity the [S][e]c[on]d: Armed [a]nd  
 [F]a[bu]lous, [n]ot e[v]en that a[c]ute[l]y  
 [c]ock[s]u[c]king [f]ilm [c]ould [s]u[ff]i[c]e [f]or these  
 [c]o[c]k[s]u[c]king [C]r[u]s[a]d[er]s of e[v]e[r]ything  
 [S]an[d][r]a Bullo[c]k. To H[a][k]im's [a][m]a[ze]m[e]nt,  
 [M]iss [S]e[c]r[et] [A]g[e]nt was [s]till [s]omehow  
 ne[c]e[s]s[ar]y! [B]ird [B]ox, Ocean's [E]i[gh]t - this  
 end[l]e[s]s [l]i[s]t of [i]n[s]i[p]i[d] [f]i[l]ms, [c]ould there  
 [e]ver [b]e [e]nou[gh] [B]ullo[c]k? Ha[k]im thought,  
 [a]voiding [A]min[a]'s gaze, [r]ea[l]i[z]ing his en[t]i[r]e  
 ch[i]ldhood was a b[l]ob of [p]l[as]tic [m]e[l]t[ed] in[t]o a  
 [C]ai[r]o [p]ave[m]e[n]t. There [e]xist[ed] [a]n [e]n[t]ire  
 [s]u[b-]p[ro]p[ulation] that [s]u[b[s]i[s]t[ed] s[e]eming[l]y  
 [s]ole[l]y on [S]andra Bu[l]ock films? H[a]kim asked  
 [A]m[i]n[a] if sh[e]'d [s]ee[n] that [m]ovie p[o]s[te]d [o]ver  
 there, [M]iss [S][e]c[re]t Agent? With [S]and[r]a  
 Bu[l]o[c]k? Was that, [l]i[k]e, a [s]e[que]l to Miss  
 [C]onge[n]ia[l]it[y] by a[n]y chance? A[m]i[n]a [n]oted  
 ex[c]ited[l]y that sh[e]'d a[c]tua[l]l[y] [s]ee[n] the  
 [s]e[que]l to [M]iss [C]ong[e]n[i]a[l]it[y], that it was  
 [c]alled Armed [a]nd F[a]bu[l]ous, [s]o she [c]ast doubt  
 u[p]on whether [p]arti[cu]lar film [c]ould [b]e its  
 [p]ro[p]er [s]e[que]l, [b]ut th[e]n [s]ugg[e]s[t]ed that it  
 was [p]o[s]s[i]b[l]e [p]art of a t[r]i[l]og[y]? This  
 [S]an[d][r]a [B]u[l]o[c]k in[d]u[s]t[r]y had [b]een

a[l]owed to [p][r]o[l]ife[r]ate, [s]eeming[l][y] in[c]e[ss]ant[l][y], and now Ha[k][i]m r[ea]l[iz]ed, once and for all, that h[e] and A[m][i]n a ba[s]i[c]a[l]ly [l]i[ve]d [d]e[r]i[v]ative [l]ives in [w]hat [w]as fun[c]tional[l][y] a [S]an[d][r]a Bu[l]o[c]k [d][r]iven e[c]o[n]o[m][y].

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5.13 [A]ll [a][r]ound [h]im, [h]is w[h]ole [l]ife, he'd [b]een un[r]epentant[l]y [s]u[r]roun[d]ed [b]y [S]an[d][r]a [B]ullo[c]k's [f]il[m]og[r]a[ph][y], [b]ut [o]n[l]y in this [m]o[m]ent [d][i]d th[i]s un[f]ai[l]ing[l]y [d]e[p]r[ess]ing [f]a[c]t [b]e[c]ome [a]p[p]a[r]ent to him. In [f][a][c]t, [A]mina [c]ontinued, gl[a]n[c]ing [a]t the [p]o[s]ter [a]gain, Miss Se[c]ret [A]gent was [a]ctual[l][y] just a[n]other [n]a[me] for [M]iss [C]ongeni[a]l[ity], the [f]irst [f]ilm, [n]ot Armed [a]nd [F]a[bu]l[ous], [h]ad [H]a[k][i]m s[ee]n [i]t? It was [a][c]tually [p]retty d[e]c[e]nt! Bu[l]o[c]k [p]l[ay]s a [q]u[ote]-un[q]u[ote] [t]ough and [t]om[b]oyish [F][B]I [a]gent in the [A][c]tion [s]l[a]sh [C]omedy, it was a film th[at] [c]ontained [a][c]t[i]on yet also [c]om[e]dic re[l]i[e]f, as [B]u[l]o[c]k was, [d]espite [b]eing tr[a]d[i]t[i]onally [a]tt[r]a[ct]i[ve], a [t]ough [b]ut also [t]om[b]oyish [d]e[t]e[c]tive, which challenged [t]ra[d]i[t]i[on]al gen[d]er [n]orms. One [a][s][p]e[c]t [A]mi[n]a enj[oy]ed [a][b]out the film was the [b]a[l]a[n]ce of [a][c]tion with [s]p[ur]ts of [c]om[e]dic [r]e[l]i[e]f! She [l]oved [s]p[ur]ts of [c]omi[c] [r]e[l]i[e]f! This would [c]ontrast with Bu[l]o[c]k's [l]ater wor[k] [i]n a [f]ilm [l]i[k]e [B]ird [B]o[x], where she'd [t]a[k]e a [m]uch [m]ore serious [t]ur[n] in h[er] [a][c]ting [c]areer. H[a][k][i]m [a]d[m]itted to [A][m]i[n]a th[at], [a]ctual[l][y], h[e] [b]e[l]i[e]ved [S]andra [B]u[l]o[c]k, well, that she [s]u[c]ked. [N]o, [n]ot that she [w]as the [w]or[st] p[er] [s]e, no there were obvious[l]y [m]ore at[r]jocious

a[c]t[t]r[e]ss]es th[a]n [S][a]ndra [B]u[l]lo[c]k. [B]ut how  
[m]any ex[a][c]t[l]y? [B]e[c]ause San[d]ra [B]u[l]lo[c]k,  
a[cc]or[d]ing to Ha[k]im, was a [p]arti[c]u[l]ar[l]y  
[n]auseating [p]erso[n]a[l]it[y]. He just found her, he  
[d]i[d]n't k[n]o[w, [a] [b]it of an [a][n]noying im[b]ecile?  
While, [n][o], [h]e [h]adn't [s][ee]n ma[n]y of her  
[f]ea[t]ure [f]ilms [s]tart to [f]i[n]i[sh] he [d]i[d]n't [f]eel  
like h[e] [n][ee]ded [t]o [t]o [b]e [a][b]le [t]o [a]rrive at [a]  
[f]airly [c][o]n[f]i[d]ent [c]on[c]l[u]sion that she was  
[b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly v[o]mit in[d]u[c]ing. She [c]ertain[l]y  
[w]asn't a pi[l]lar of [c]r[e]ative [b]r[i]llian[c]e! The  
[w]orld, in Ha[k]im's m[i]nd at [l]ea[s]t, [d]i[d]n't re[q]u[i]re  
any [f]ur[th]e[r] [S]andra [B]u[l]lock [f]ilms! This i[d]ea,  
Ha[k]im [s]aid, th[at] [S]an[d]ra [B]u[l]lo[c]k should have  
[b]a[s]i[c]a[l]ly an entire in[d]u[s]t[r]y [b]uilt a[r]ound  
her, [f]or the [s]ole [p]ur[p]ose of [p]ro[d]u[c]ing [m]ore  
and [m]ore [S]an[d]ra Bu[l]lo[c]k [f]ilms, it [s][ee]ms  
[c]om[p]l[i]te[l]y ab[s]urd to me! [S]an[d]ra Bullock? If  
there's a [s]ingle [d]ata [p]oint we [c]an [r]efe[r]e[n]ce to  
[s]ugg[e]st that our [s]oc[i]et[y] i[s] i[n] d[i]re[n]d of  
[r]e[f]orm I th[i]nk i[t's the [p]u[t]r[i]d [f]a[ct] th[at] a  
[m]o[v]ie was [p]ro[d]u[ced] and [r]e[l]eased un[d]er the  
[t]itle [M]iss Congenia[l]ity [T]wo: Armed [a]nd  
F[a]bu[l]ous! [Th]e [f]a[ct] th[at], not only was th[at]  
[f]ilm [a]c[tually [p]ro[d]u[ced], [b]ut this en[t]ire  
[S]an[d]ra [B]u[l]lo[c]k in[d]u[s]try [c]on[t]inues to  
o[p]e[r]ate and [p]ro[l]i[f]e[r]ate, even to this d[ay]?  
how [c]an you [n]ot [b]e just a [l]ittle off[en]d[ed] [b]y that,  
Ami[n]a? It's [a]ll just [a] [t]ad [g]ro[t]esque you have to  
ad[m]it! Well I dis[a]g[r]ee! [A][m]ina [r]e[t]orted, I like  
her [m]o[v]ie[s], Ha[k]im! I think she's [a][m]u[s]ing, [b]ut  
[a]lso [b]razen in a way [I] f[i]nd en[d]ea[r]ing.  
En[d]ea[r]ing, Ha[k]im [r]e[p]ea[ted] [e]q[ua]lly in  
[d]isguis[t] and [d]isbel[i]ef, en[d]ea[r]ing? [N][o], I  
w[at]ched [B]ird [B]ox, and I'll [s]im[p]l[y] [n]ote that my

[l]e[f]t [n]ut [a][f]ter a h[a]l[f] an hour [r]un is [m]ore  
 endea[r]ing [th]an [th]at [m]ov[ie], A[m][i][n]a! And  
 [S][p][ee]d with [K][e]a[n]u [R][ee]ves? [C]'[m]on! [O]h,  
 and d[o]n't even [s]tart with H[o]pe [F][o]ats! the [f]act  
 there [e]xists [a]n [e]ntire [s]ub-[p]o[p]ulation of  
 [E]g[y][p]t[i]ans [d]e[d]i[c]ated to, what? the [c]o[l]l[e]cted  
 [S]and[r]a [B]u[l]o[c]k [f]ilmog[r]a[ph][y]? is just  
 ab[s]o[l]ute[l][y] [m]ind [b]ogg[l]ing to [m][e]! - it's  
 [a]ctual[l][y] [a]n [a]ffront to [g]ood taste [A][m][i]na, it's  
 [a]c[tually the be[s]t [C]hri[s]tma[s] [g]ift [o]f [a]ll time to  
 utter ab[s]urdity, it's [s]omething w[e] n[ee]d to em[p]l[o]y  
 teams of our finest [s][c]ho[l]ars [t]o [s]tu[d]y [t]o  
 [p]r[o]d[u]ce [r]igo[r]ous [c][a][s]e [s]tu[d]ies [d]e[t]ailing  
 [e]x[t]e[n]d[ed] [h]y[p]othe[s]es as to [h]ow this [s]t[ate] of  
 [a]ffairs was [a]llowed to o[c]cur!

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