

# ANOMALIES



THERE'S A MISALIGNED BRICK HERE.



THERE'S AN EXTRA STEP.  
(DO YOU SEE IT?)



THERE'S AN UNUSED NODE TWO STORIES UP.



THERE'S AN IRREGULARITY IN THE STAIRWELL. IT WAS ALWAYS THERE.



WAS IT ALWAYS THERE?



AND WHAT IS ITS PURPOSE?  
THIS IS WHAT WE ARE HERE  
TO DETERMINE.



WE ARE LOOKING FOR THE ANOMALIES, SAYS  
THE PROFESSOR, BECAUSE NOBODY ELSE IS  
LOOKING FOR THEM, AND WHEN NOBODY IS  
LOOKING FOR SOMETHING THE PICTURE OF  
THE WORLD IS INCOMPLETE.



IT IS HER SUSPICION  
THAT THE PICTURE IS  
EVEN MORE INCOMPLETE  
THAN WE REALIZE.





THE FIRST TIME SHE TOOK ME ALONG: THIS IS WHAT TO LOOK FOR, SHE SAID, POINTING OUT THE BEST EXAMPLE SHE'D FOUND SO FAR. "THE CORNER," SHE CALLED IT.



DO YOU SEE IT?



THE BACK'S EITHER SIDE OF IT ARE UNCLE.



THIS IS AN ARCHIVAL PHOTO OF THE SAME BUILDING FROM 1947...



THE ANOMALY IS DEFINITELY ABSENT. THERE HAVE BEEN NO RECORDED RENOVATIONS TO THE EXTERIOR WILL SINCE THEN.



THIS IS A PHOTO FROM THE LATE 1970S.



THIS IS A PHOTO FROM 1994.



(I'LL PASS BY HERE IN THE YEAR 2026 UNLESS I'M 45 YEARS OLD AND I'LL HAVE AN URGENT TO PHOTOGRAPH THIS BUILDING AND THIS IS THE PICTURE (ALL TIME))





I MET THE PROFESSOR IN FIRST YEAR. I HAD HEARD THE TALES — A "C" FROM HER WOULD HAVE BEEN A BY IN ANY OTHER CLASS — AND IT BECAME CLEAR THAT SHE WAS ONE OF THOSE TEACHERS, THE ONES THAT 95% OF THE KIDS DESPISE (AND 5% IDOLIZE—).



SHE DRESSED LIKE SOMEONE BOARDING A STEAM SHIP IN AN OLD MOVIE; THEY SAID IT WAS IMPOSSIBLE THAT SHE WAS EVER YOUNG, THAT SHE WAS BORN OLD. IT SEEMED PLAUSIBLE. NOBODY I KNEW HAD EVER TAKEN A CLASS WITH HER FOR MORE THAN A WEEK.



FASCINATED BY THE LEGEND I WENT TO THE LAB BUILDING AT THE END OF MY FIRST SEMESTER, AND THERE BEYOND A RATHER IRREGULAR FIGHT TOWN WAS HER RATHER IRREGULAR OFFICE.





IT WAS EXACTLY AS YOU'D IMAGINE, ONLY FAR MORE DETAILED. WITH MY LINGERING HIGH SCHOOL BRAZENNESS (AH, HOW I MISS YOU) I DECIDED SHE NEEDED AT LEAST ONE FRIEND SO I LIED AND SAID I WAS INTERESTED IN ONE OF HER COURSES. A BIT DEER-IN-HEADLIGHTS, SHE LIED AND MUMBLED THAT I WAS WELCOME TO COME IN AND LOOK AT A SYLLABUS (BUT AS IT TURNED OUT SHE WAS ALSO ONE OF THOSE OTHER TEACHERS—THE ONES WHO NOTICE THE WEIRD, AWKWARD KID AND DECIDE TO MAKE THEM A PROJECT). I WAS INSTANTLY IN HER TUESDAY NIGHT CLASS AND THE 5% OF KIDS WHO INSTANTLY NAMED HER AS THEIR FAVORITE TEACHER. WHY DO 95% OF PEOPLE ALWAYS HATE MY FAVORITE THINGS...?



SOON I'D BE BRINGING HER LUNCH WHILE FORGETTING TO GET ANY FOR MYSELF, HANGING OUT AND ASKING ANNOTATING QUESTIONS AS SHE WORKED AND TAKING HER GRANT APPLICATIONS TO THE MAILBOX ON MY WAY OUT.

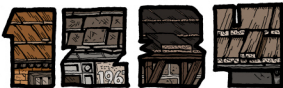
SHE NEVER GETS ANY GRANTS.



SHE THINKS.



THAT CAN'T BE AN ANOMALY, SHE THINKS.



THERE WAS A ROOFING MANUFACTURER IN THE 1960s, SHE THINKS, A MINOR ONE, THAT WENT OUT OF BUSINESS DUE TO A DEATH IN THE FAMILY AND DUMPED ITS REMAINING INVENTORY ON THE MARKET AT A FRACTION OF THE PRICE. ROOFERS AT THE TIME, SHE THINKS, ENDED UP WITH MORE THAN THEY COULD USE, MUCH OF IT POOR QUALITY, AND WOULD THROW EXCESS MATERIAL AT A JOB WHEN THE OPPORTUNITY AROSE. THE PATTERN THIS FITS IS OBVIOUS, SHE THINKS.

ALL SHE SAYS IS



AND I UNDERSTAND.



AN ANOMALY, THE PROFESSOR FIRST EXPLAINED TO ME, IS

A SUBTLE ARCHITECTURAL ABERRATION THAT, WHEN THOROUGHLY INVESTIGATED, CANNOT BE EXPLAINED IN ANY WAY.

IT WAS NOT IN THE BLUEPRINTS, NOR WAS IT ADDED BY THE BUILDERS OR TENANTS. IT SIMPLY APPEARED ONE DAY, SUDDENLY AND UNNOTICED, TO STARE OUT OVER AN OBLIVIOUS CITY.

AND WE HAVE NO IDEA WHY.

(SHE SAID "WE" BUT SHE'S THE ONLY ONE STUDYING THEM)





THEY CAN LOOK LIKE ALMOST ANYTHING, DO YOU UNDERSTAND— A JUTTING BIT OF MASONRY OR WOOD, A PIECE OF BRICK, EVEN A SMALL OBJECT LIKE A ROOFING TILE. SHE HAD NOT DOCUMENTED ENOUGH OF THEM AT THAT POINT TO DRAW ANY GENERALIZATIONS BEYOND THAT. AFTER 20+ YEARS THIS WAS STILL THE EARLY STAGES OF A LENGTHY STUDY. HOW DOES SHE DOCUMENT THEM? SHE LITERALLY WALKS THE STREETS WITH BINOCULARS AND LOOKS FOR JUTTING BITS OF MASONRY OR WOOD, PIECES OF BRICK, AND SMALL OBJECTS LIKE ROOFING TILES. SMALL OBJECTS THAT SEEM OUT OF PLACE DESPITE HOW PERFECTLY THEY DISAPPEAR INTO THEIR SURROUNDINGS. SMALL OBJECTS THAT WEREN'T THERE THE NIGHT BEFORE.



ANOMALIES ARE LIKELY PRESENT IN ALL CIVILIZATIONS, IN ALL TYPES OF BUILDING, BUT WERE UNDOCUMENTED UNTIL VERY RECENTLY, UNTIL 2-3 YEARS AGO, UNTIL THE PROFESSOR BY CHANCE DISCOVERED ONE.

NOBODY HAD DOCUMENTED THEM BECAUSE NORDBY HAD NOTICED THEM BECAUSE THEY ARE BY NATURE UNNOTICEABLE. WE SIMPLY DO NOT KNOW WHERE THEY COME FROM OR WHY THEY APPEAR OR WHY THEY DISAPPEAR, IF THEY DISAPPEAR, THEY LOOK LIKE NOTHING BUT COULD POTENTIALLY MEAN EVERYTHING.

AN ANOMALY IS, AT MINIMUM, SOMETHING THAT DOESN'T FIT THE PATTERN. THAT ALMOST NO-ONE KNOWS THE PATTERN IS ONE REASON THEY HAVE GONE UNDETECTED. PATTERNS ARE KEY TO THIS CONVERSATION. ARE YOU WAITING THIS DOWN?

I WAS INDEED WAITING IT DOWN.



"IT MOST CERTAINLY IS."



BY SECOND YEAR I HAD HER CONFIDENCE (AND OF A BIT SORTA), THOUGH SHE STILL WOULDN'T TELL ME WHERE SHE GREW UP OR WHERE SHE LIVED OR ANY OTHER "PERSONAL MUNDANITIES" SO I JUST STOPPED ASKING.



HER BODY OF WORK (MUCH OF IT NOW IN DISREPAIR DUE TO ANOMALY RESEARCH) WAS POTENTIALLY LIFE-ALTERING, PARTICULARLY TO ONE SO EAGER TO HAVE HIS LIFE ALTERED, ONE SO EAGER TO HAVE SOMEONE TO IDOLIZE.

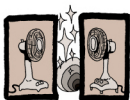
I DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THE DETAILS, BUT I UNDERSTOOD WHAT THEIR EXISTENCE MEANT, WHAT IT MEANT THAT CERTAIN THINGS COULD EVEN BE POSSIBLE.



WHAT IT MEANT THAT EXISTENCE COULD BE SUBJECTIVE OR THAT ONE COULD ARGUE FOR PHASES THAT TIME IS NONLINEAR, WHAT IT MEANT THAT THE LAWS OF REALITY ARE POTENTIALLY FLUID(!), OR THAT DIMENSIONS COULD BE OVERLAPPING, OR INTERSECTING, OR THAT IN GENERAL FAR MORE THINGS COULD TO BE FLURALIZED AND UNIFORMLY ACCOMPANIED BY AN ASTERISK. WHAT IT MEANT THAT FIVE PERCENT OF US



ARE DRAWN TO WEIRD THINGS (ROUGH ESTIMATE). WHAT IT MEANT THAT MY LIFE COULD BE ALTERED.



LATE THAT SEMESTER I WAS AT A HOUSE PARTY. MY FRIEND WAS DRUNKENLY DESCRIBING A DREAM HE'D HAD WHERE ONE COULD ACHIEVE TIME TRAVEL SIMPLY BY FANING TWO FANS AT EACH OTHER.



A CAR

A HOUSE

BOTH IN 

A STREET

THE BONE

DOM OF 

A SO-

BER WEEK

THE WEB-

TREND'S HERE

HIP-HIP 

 HURRAY

TO MAKE

THE BLUES

JUST GO 

AWAY



IT WORKED PERFECTLY, BUT HAD NEVER BEEN DISCOVERED BECAUSE NOBODY IN HISTORY HAD EVER HAD OCCASION TO POINT TWO FANS AT EACH OTHER. EVERYBODY LAUGHED EXCEPT ME.





MY LIFE HAD DEFINITELY BEEN ALTERED.



ANOMALIES ARE THE RESULT OF SOMETHING AND WE AREN'T SURE WHAT, AND ONCE YOU'RE ATTUNED TO SEARCHING FOR THEM YOU ARE CONSTANTLY SEARCHING.  
(I CANNOT STRESS THAT ENOUGH...)

IT TAKES TIME TO GET ATTUNED. TO LEARN HOW A BUILDING IS CONSTRUCTED, NOW AND HISTORICALLY, TO KNOW THE LOGIC BEHIND LOCAL ARCHITECTURE, TO KNOW WHY THINGS ARE DONE A CERTAIN WAY DOWN TO THE LIKELY CIRCUMSTANCES OF THOSE LAYING THE BRICKS.



IT IS CRITICAL TO KNOW WHY A PIPE IS ROUTED A CERTAIN WAY, AND HOW IT LOOKS WHEN THE MOLDING REROUTES TO ACCOMMODATE IT. TO KNOW WHO DESIGNED THE BLUEPRINTS, AND WHEN, AND WHO THE CONTRACTORS WERE, AND HOW COMMITTED THEY WERE IN BAD WEATHER, AND HOW LIKELY THEY'D HAVE BEEN TO REDO A CROOKED STAIR RATHER THAN IMPROVISE, AND WHAT THE MARKET CONDITIONS WERE AT THE TIME, AND A HUNDRED OTHER FACTORS.

CONSTRUCTION IRREGULARITIES ARE COMMON. THEY ULTIMATELY FIT SOME PATTERN OR OTHER, AND THEIR DISTRIBUTION ITSELF FALLS INTO PATTERNS IF YOU ARE THE PROFESSOR AND HAVE SPENT TWO DECADES IMMERSING IN SUCH THINGS (AND THEN PASSED THEM ON TO ME IN A HUNDRETH THE TIME). TO KNOW THE PATTERNS TAKES TIME, BUT EVENTUALLY YOU CAN REFLEXIVELY DISMISS MERE IRREGULARITIES WITH BARELY A GLANCE.

EVERYTHING REMAINING IS AN ANOMALY. (AND SELDOM DOES SOMETHING REMAIN)

THERE IT IS, STARKING OUT AT A WORLD BLIND TO ITS EERIE SIGNIFICANCE. SPOTTING ONE IS BEYOND EXCITING—TO LEAF THROUGH THE PATTERNS, TO ELIMINATE THE IMPOSSIBLE AND FIND THAT SOMETHING IS LEFT OVER. SOMETHING COMPLETELY UNREMARKABLE UNLESS YOU KNOW WHAT TO LOOK FOR. AND ARE CONSTANTLY SEARCHING.





IT IS ONLY RECENTLY IN HISTORY THAT IT BECAME POSSIBLE TO BE AWARE OF ANOMALIES. SURELY THEY ARE COMMON IN NATURE, BUT AS THE PROFESSOR SAYS IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO LOOK AT A TREE AND DETERMINE IF ONE OF ITS LEAVES BLINKED INTO EXISTENCE OVERNIGHT. A FOREST MIGHT BE FESTOONED WITH ANOMALIES, BUT AS A PLANT HAS NO UNIFORM BLUEPRINT THERE IS NO WAY TO TELL. ONLY WITH THE PRESENT OF STRUCTURE COULD DEVIATIONS BE SPOTTED. ONLY WITH THE CREATION OF UNIFORMITY COULD ANOMALIES EVEN BE THEORIZED. I ASKED HER IF THIS MEANT THAT IT'S IMPOSSIBLE TO DETERMINE WHETHER ANOMALIES EXISTED BEFORE THE CREATION OF UNIFORMITY, AND OF COURSE SHE COULD NOT KNOW (AND I WAS JUST ASKING TO TRY AND SOUND SMART). ALL WE KNOW IS THAT THEY HAVE BEEN OCCURRING FOR SOME TIME, AND IF WE ARE CAREFUL WE ARE ABLE TO LOCATE AND DOCUMENT SOME OF THEM.



WE ARE VERY CAREFUL INDEED. SHE SAYS TAKE AT LEAST TEN PHOTOS. I TAKE TWENTY. SHE SAYS WELL DONE. SHE ALMOST NEVER SAYS WELL DONE. SHE ALMOST NEVER SAYS ANYTHING.



IT IS POSSIBLE FOR SOMETHING TO LOOK EXACTLY LIKE A CLOSET DOOR BUT IN ACTUALITY BE A DOOR TO A SMALL, WINDOWLESS ROOM WHERE THINGS ARE STORED ON HANGERS FOR FUTURE USE.



IN THE BACK ROOM OF HER OFFICE ARE CATALOGUED TWO DECADES OF RESEARCH. THIS COMPRISES FEWER THAN TWO DOZEN POSITIVELY IDENTIFIED ANOMALIES — LESS THAN I'D IMAGINED, BUT FAR MORE THAN SHE WAS EXPECTING WHEN SHE FIRST BEGAN (AND THE RATE OF DISCOVERY HAS INCREASED WITH MY ASSISTANCE, I'M NOW SECRETLY PLEASSED TO LEARN). NOT ENOUGH TO DISCEARN ANY PATTERNS YET. OFF THE RECORD, I ASK (ANNOUNCINGLY), WHAT THEORY DO YOU FAVOR? IN A LOW VOICE, SO THAT THE SCIENTIFIC METHOD CAN'T HEAR US, SHE REPLIES THAT

IT IS POSSIBLE THAT THE ANOMALIES REPRESENT THE REARRANGEMENT OF MATTER AFTER SOME KIND OF TRANSITIONAL EVENT.



WHAT THAT MEANS SHE CAN'T/WON'T/CAN'T SAY, ONLY REPERTING THE NOTION THAT ALL THAT LITTERS THIS PLANET IS MATTER REARRANGED FROM PREVIOUS STATES, AND IF THERE IS A PATTERN TO THE ARRANGEMENT OF ANOMALOUS MATTER WITHIN NATURAL SYSTEMS, WITHIN ORGANISMS, THEN IT COULD POTENTIALLY BE OF IMPORTANCE.



OR SOMETHING LIKE THIS.

MORE?



ARE YOU THE SAME PERSON YOU WERE YESTERDAY?



MOSTLY?

MORE?  
ASK HER AGAIN  
SOMETIME.  
(AND WHY DON'T  
I GO GET SOME  
REST FOR ONCE)



I WALK HOME CIRCUITOUSLY, QUIETLY FORMULATING THEORIES OF MY OWN, AND GLANKING ABOUT AT NEARBY BUILDINGS.



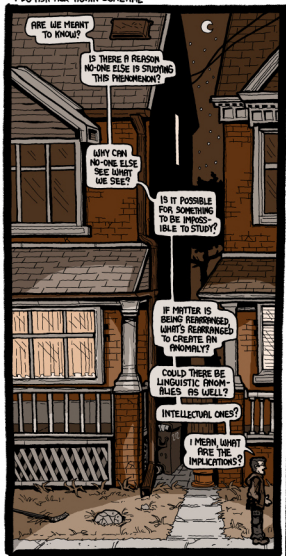
IS THE WORLD THE SAME PLANET IT WAS YESTERDAY, BEYOND THE OBSERVABLE? ARE WE PASSING THROUGH SIMILAR YET DISTINCT REALITIES, GOING TO SLEEP IN ONE AND WAKING IN ANOTHER? (OR SOMETHING?) PERHAPS THERE ARE TRILLIONS OF TINY DIFFERENCES BETWEEN ONE DAY AND THE NEXT, AND IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO REALIZE IT. PERHAPS TODAY'S RED IS TOMORROW'S RED-ORANGE, AND NONE ARE THE WISER. PERHAPS THAT TREE HAS THREE MORE BRANCHES THAN IT DID LAST NIGHT, OR THREE FEWER, OR THREE MORE ROOTS, OR THREE MORE CELLS THAN SHOULD BE POSSIBLE GIVEN THE TIME FRAME. PERHAPS IT DEPENDS ON THE DAY, PERHAPS THE TRANSITION FROM FEBRUARY 11TH TO FEBRUARY 12TH UNIFORMLY RESULTS IN THE DISAPPEARANCE OF A SQUARE INCH OF BRICK FROM A DISUSED FOOTBRIDGE IN A DISUSED PARK WEST OF DOWNTOWN. PERHAPS IT'S RANDOM, AND TOMORROW I'LL HAVE AN IDEA THAT CAME FROM NOWHERE. PERHAPS IT'S NOT IMPOSSIBLE TO NOTICE. PERHAPS I'LL WRITE A WORD, COMPLETELY SURE OF ITS SPELLING, ONLY TO FIND IN THE DICTIONARY THAT IT'S SPELLED DIFFERENTLY. IT WAS ALWAYS SPELLED THAT WAY. WAS IT ALWAYS SPELLED THAT WAY?



OR DOES IT EVEN MATTER? IF ONE IS OBLIVIOUS TO ALTERATIONS TO ONE'S REALITY, IS ANYTHING LOST? I AM NOT THE SAME PERSON I WAS IN HIGH SCHOOL, THAT MUCH IS CERTAIN, AND I AM SLEEPING LESS OF LATE.



I DO ASK HER AGAIN SOMETIME—



I HAVE GROWN TO APPRECIATE THIS LIFE, HARD AS IT MAY BE TO UNDERSTAND.







BY MY FINAL YEAR OF SCHOOL I'M SEARCHING LARGELY ON MY OWN AS THE PROFESSOR DEVOTES MORE AND MORE TIME TO THEORY FORMULATION.

SHE WILL NOT TELL ME THE DETAILS OF COURSE, BUT THE DISCOVERY OF A 22ND ANOMALY IN THE SPANG SEEMS TO HAVE GIVEN HER CRUISE TO TAKE A SERIOUS RUN AT THE DATA. A PATTERN EMERGING? SHE HADN'T TAUGHT IN A WHILE - TECHNICALLY, I THINK, SHE'S ON SABBATICAL.



"THE KERNEL!"  
FOUND (M)O(2)R(2)



I GO WEEKS WITHOUT HEARING FROM HER, AND THE IMPLICATION FOR THE MOMENT IS DON'T CALL UNLESS THERE'S A NEAR RESULT TO LOG. I HATE IT. I SPEND LESS TIME ON CAMPUS AND LONGER NIGHTS LOOKING FOR NEW RESULTS.



THE CITY IS HUGE, AND PROPER EXAMINATION OF A BUILDING TAKES AGES (AS WELL AS DISCRETION).



FOUR YEARS OF UNIVERSITY AND I HAD NEVER ACTUALLY PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER. I DECIDE TO GO FOR IT, THOUGH ALL MY STUDYING IS IN AN UPSCALE DOWNTOWN NEIGHBORHOOD. NO ANOMALIES AS OF 4:45PM. A FEW MAYBES, BUT THEY'RE NOT REALLY MAYBES.



I END UP FALLING ASLEEP IN THE PARK FOR 20 MINUTES. I'LL STILL COUNT IT AS AN ALL-NIGHTER. WHAT WORRIES (?) ME IS HOW MUCH I'D RATHER BE STARING AT BUILDINGS THAN SLEEPING. MY FRIENDS DON'T SEE ME A LOT THESE DAYS. OR MAYBE IT WAS ALWAYS LIKE THAT.

OBVIOUSLY ONE CAN OBTAIN KNOWLEDGE WITHOUT LURKING IN PEOPLE'S YARDS IN THE MIDDLE OF THE NIGHT, BUT THERE'S SO MUCH TO OBTAIN. WHEN NOBODY IS LOOKING THE PICTURE IS INCOMPLETE. AS THE WORLD GOES BY SOMEBODY HAS TO STAND ASIDE AND OBSERVE IT CAREFULLY AS IT GOES BY. THE MORE I STARE THE MORE I REALIZE HOW LITTLE OF ITS SURFACE IS REALLY MAPPED. HOW LITTLE OF ITS COURSE IS WELL-HURTLING ON REGARDLESS. HOW INCOMPLETE THE PICTURE MUST BE. HOW SLEEP SEEMS LIKE SUCH A GODDAMN WASTE OF TIME.

AH, SUMMER NIGHTS...





AS CONNOCCATION LOOMS, I AM GOING TO ASK THE PROFESSOR IF I CAN STAY ON AFTERWARDS. AM I GOING TO ASK HER IF I CAN STAY ON? SHE IS ALMOST CERTAINLY ASSUMING I'LL STAY, SO I PROBABLY WOULDN'T EVEN NEED TO. SHE'S EVEN QUIETER OF LATE, HER OFFICE LIGHT ON AT ALL HOURS. EVERYTHING KIND OF HAS THAT SOMETHING IS COMING FEEL RIGHT NOW — EXAMS ALMOST DONE, WAITING FOR THE DIPLOMA. IT'LL BE THE LARGEST GRADUATING CEREMONY IN A WHILE, MYSELF AMONG THE THINGS, BUT THERE'S SOMETHING ELSE THERE, A LITTLE EXTRA PARTICIPATION. MAYBE IT'S JUST THAT I'VE SPENT MY WHOLE LIFE IN THIS CITY AND AT THE END OF THE MONTH I'LL NO LONGER HAVE ANY SPECIFIC OBLIGATION TO REMAIN HERE. UNLESS I ASK HER IF I CAN STAY ON. AM I GOING TO ASK HER IF I CAN STAY ON?

I TELL MYSELF ONE THING AND MY PARENTS ANOTHER AND WHEN I TELL US ALL THE SAME THING IT'S THAT IN THE END I'M LUCKY TO HAVE A FUTURE TO STRESS OVER. CORRECT?

IN THE END I'M CONVINCED OF THE FORMALITIES, CONVINCED OF THE EVIDENCE, ALWAYS CONVINCED BY THE PROFESSOR'S TONE OF VOICE (OR LACK THEREOF). CONVINCED OF THE VALUE OF WALKING AROUND TAKING PHOTOS OF BRICKS.

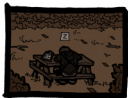


YES, THAT'S LITERALLY WHAT WE DO. I DUNNO, IT MAKES AS MUCH SENSE AS ANYTHING ELSE...

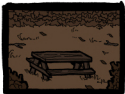
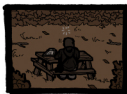
IT'S NOT LIKE IT'LL BE FOREVER. (UNLESS IT IS). THIS WOULD NORMALLY BE THE POINT IN THE STORY WHERE THE LOVE INTEREST CORNERS THE PROTAGONIST IN THE KITCHEN AND PLEADS THAT HE MUST STEP BACK, THAT HE HAS BECOME OBSESSED, AND SO ON. THAT HE HAS CHANGED. FORTUNATELY FOR THE PROJECT I HAVE NO KITCHEN, NOR ANYTHING ELSE NECESSARY TO THAT SCENARIO.



HAS THIS WOMAN ASKED YOU TO STAY? NO, BUT SHE TENDS TO ONLY SAY THINGS SHE'S NOT ASSUMING. WELL, WOULD YOU PLEASE GO AND TALK TO HER ABOUT IT?



THEY TELL ME TO AT LEAST SLEEP ON IT YOU BIZARRE KID. WHICH I DO, REPEATEDLY.



(NO ANOMALIES AS OF 5:20 AM.)



OCCASIONALLY THERE IS A PHONE MESSAGE FROM THE PROFESSOR (NOT ONCE HAS SHE CALLED WHILE AM AT HOME). TYPICALLY HER MESSAGES ARE AS TERSE AS IT'S POSSIBLE TO BE WHILE STILL CONVEYING INFORMATION— "TOMORROW AFTERNOON, OR SEE ME THURSDAY."

THIS ONE IS SEVERAL WORDS MORE.



AN APOLOGY (!) FOR THE LONG HOURS, THEN, THE ANOMALIES—SHE IS CLOSE TO SOMETHING. SEE HER FIRST THING IN THE MORNING. BRING ANY PHOTOS I'VE TAKEN RECENTLY. BRING SIX LARGE ENVELOPES AND A LOT OF POSTAGE.



THERE'S ACTUALLY EXCITEMENT IN HER VOICE. I WAS RIGHT— SOMETHING IS COMING.



SO HOW EARLY IS TOO EARLY..?



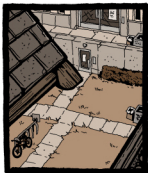
DAWN IS SO QUIET, AND I WISH THINGS WOULD JUST FREEZE LIKE THIS. INEVITABLY THROUGH THEY WILL NOT.



MAYBE TOMORROW WILL BE DIFFERENT.



I FORGET TO LOCK MY BIKE. I NEVER FORGET TO LOCK MY BIKE. IF I COULD GET GRAD STUDENT HOUSING I WOULDN'T EVEN NEED IT AFTER TODAY. IF I STAY, SHE IS PROBABLY ASSUMING I WILL STAY.



I MEAN, IF NOT ME THEN WHO?



IN MY USUAL OVERTHOUGHTFUL MANNER, I OVERREHEARSE. WHAT I'M GOING TO SAY.



I'M ACTUALLY SIMULATING. I CAN ONLY IMAGINE WHAT SHE'S DISCOVERED. IT WILL PROBABLY CHANGE EVERYTHING.





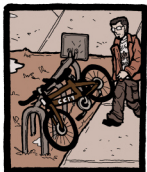
SHIT, I ALWAYS DO THAT, I ALWAYS TURN RIGHT BEFORE THE STAIRWELL. FOUR YEARS AND I NEVER GOT MY HEAD AROUND THIS BRUTALIST NIGHTMARE. IS IT THAT HARD TO DESIGN A BUILDING?



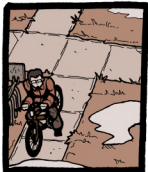
IS IT THAT HARD TO NOT PACK YOUR COFFEE PAPER AWAY WHEN YOU CLEARLY NEED COFFEE? WHATEVER. HERE'S THE SCHEDULE FOR TONIGHT, ANYWAY. SHOULD BE TIME TO GET A NAP IN BEFOREHAND.



GET CHANGED AROUND 4:30, MEET JEN AND DAVE AT THE CORNER AT TEN AND FIVE. AND DON'T FORGET THE FREAKING CAMERA.



DON'T FORGET THE BIKE EITHER. ALMOST WALKED RIGHT PAST. FORGOT TO EVEN LOCK IT. GOD WHAT A MORNING.



UGH, IS THERE SNOW ON THE GROUND? WAS IT THERE WHEN I CAME IN? IT MUST'VE BEEN. IT WAS ALWAYS THERE.



WAS IT ALWAYS THERE?



# The Charles River Journal

a literary miscellany publishing new & marvelous writing and news of literary culture

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This graphic story from the *Subnormality* series by Winston Rowntree was originally published on the artist's website, at [www.viruscomix.com/page567.html](http://www.viruscomix.com/page567.html). The editors of *The Charles River Journal* are grateful for his permission to include it in our Issue 4, Autumn 2013 in chapbook form. We heartily encourage readers to visit Rowntree's website, where you'll find more amazing art and storytelling, as well as information about supporting his work.

Added in February 2016: As of 2015, Rowntree's *Subnormality* is primarily funded via his crowdfunding campaign on Patreon. If you enjoy his work, you can help and encourage him with an ongoing pledge of as little as a dollar a month. Learn more at [www.patreon.com/subnormality](http://www.patreon.com/subnormality).

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