



RATS

NEST

MAT

LAPORTE

FIRST EDITION

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This is how we branch out into anamnesis and are shaken by underground subcutaneous shivers. For it is only above ground, in the light of day, that we are a trembling, articulate bundle of tunes; in the depths we disintegrate again into black murmurs, confused purring, a multitude of unfinished stories.

—Bruno Schulz

BOTTOMLESS PIT

The 3D-Printed Kid was made for this purpose: to travel deep within the bottomless pit, to claw at the layers of rocks and dirt, the decomposing remains of other planets, other worlds, to fill up its mouth, nose, ears and throat, the whole time self-replicating, so that the moment one copy dissolves, another copy will emerge to continue the previous one's descent. Its mission is simple: create a map of the pit's interior while maintaining a detailed report on its progress, in the form of audio-visual recordings: scratchy black and white magnetic flickers, indexed and recorded for future study by the scientists on the surface of the planet.

Thirteen hours after it began its descent, the 3D-Printed Kid sends up its first broadcast. The images it sends are hard to discern: layers of nonsense, brown, red, and black earth, rendered in grey-scale, interrupted by bands of static. As the sequence progresses, these dislocated fragments coalesce and begin revealing more details about what the Kid is seeing and hearing down below; an abstract flipbook-style narrative starts to form, accompanied by the Kid's hollow, tin-flecked voice.

After ten more hours of clawing through molten rock, ash, and dirt, the Kid finds an opening in the bottomless pit's honeycombed interior. It looks like a baseball field lit from above by green phosphorescent slime. The Kid observes its first living creature in this

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cavernous room: it looks like a potato-head with one eye and a crude mouth-hole, out of which a thin, wet tongue extends like a bean sprout. This creature also sports a host of tiny arachnid legs that teeter around on the floor of the cave like an inky, living donut, kicking up small plumes of dust as it scuttles backwards and forwards.

The scientists are pleased with the Kid's first discovery. They name this obscure creature Fed, because it was feeding off the walls of the cave when the Kid first found it. The scientists send down an electrical pulse as a reward. It stimulates the Kid's pleasure centres and sends a lovely humming sensation down the length of its plastic spine. This electrical pulse also sends a message to the Kid's emotion-to-plastic sense-processor that says, 'Good job Kid and keep up the good work.'

At a press conference, the scientists deliver a briefing on their discoveries that includes this description of their first impressions of the bottomless pit, as conveyed by their digital proximity device of choice, the 3D-Printed Kid:

To say there is no light in the bottomless pit is to be overly generous to the word light. Down there it's just black holes opening into other black holes and giant rocks that turn their impassive faces towards the void. In the bottomless pit there are only uncaring objects that persist in relation to one another through sheer presentations of scale. They make no sounds that we can discern. To say they stare,

well yes, they stare, but that would impose a will onto a place where there can be no such thing. Physical laws exist down there but that's the closest you'll get to language in the bottomless pit. The vocabulary of this language is finite and severely limited. The only terms it includes are turn, collide, explode, spin, burn, and freeze. You could say that, placed alongside one another, these terms represent a sort of grammar, and that this grammar adds up to a sort of sentence, but it is a sentence that reveals nothing because it comes from nowhere and goes nowhere. And besides, there is no one there to write it and there is no one there to read it.

The 3D-Printed Kid starts developing a disorienting side-effect as a result of its descent: it has these incredibly violent and sometimes prescient nightmares about the future that it broadcasts on the audio-visual feed. These broadcasts travel to the surface on reverse-direction microwaves that are then recorded on giant industrial-sized tape loops. The scientists don't know what to do as they watch and listen to the 3D-Printed Kid's hallucinations as they swarm onto their laboratory screens and fill their heads with intolerable screams.

The Kid's nightmare projections cannot be blocked out and infect everything within a certain radius of the pit with an electronic signal. These nightmare projections reveal to the general public the gory details

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of their own deaths in excruciating, sped-up detail—the lengthy tortures they will undergo in the lead up to their deaths—all compacted into quickly digestible nuggets of terror.

Fortunately, most of these easily-infected electronic devices and their unwanted predictions can be switched off, but after a certain amount of exposure to the Kid's nightmare signal, these images and sounds begin to bleed into everyone's dreams and what will come to be their waking nightmares that, once seen, can never be unseen.

After twenty more hours of digging through fire-blasted metal and ore, the 3D-Printed Kid sends up images of a vast stone floor covered in green gelatins. Each gelatin is set in an individual petri dish and placed at the exact same distance from the others.

“There must be billions of them,” a scientist on the surface guesses.

Then the scientists become immersed in studying the origins of these orderly germs and what purpose they might serve. The whole time the green gelatins just dilate and sparkle under the vaulted roof of the cave.

“Perhaps they are a new life form that the pit is growing, one cell at a time, in a controlled setting?” one group of scientists guesses.

Another group of scientists suggest that, “Perhaps the green gelatins serve no purpose at all?”

Their hypothesis is the least popular and never gets mentioned in any of the press participating in a round of

public speculation about what the discovery of the green gelatins means. However, their hypothesis garners a cult following and comes to be expressed, first in a secretly fetishized way, via subcutaneous tattoos, only visible with secret ocular technology built and distributed by a cult known as SubCon. SubCon expresses its system of belief in a precisely measured dictum called, unsurprisingly, The Dictum. The Dictum is said to be extremely long, so as to prevent anyone from memorizing it. However, a bootlegged fragment of The Dictum does get memorized, and escapes the intensely secretive grasp of the SubCon underground. This bootlegged fragment becomes known as The Catechism, and is eventually leaked to the public. It is transcribed in its entirety here:

Given an infinite arena (the bottomless pit) in which anything can potentially happen at any time (bottomlessness), surely it follows that some of the bottomless pit's endless vaults might contain finite objects (things), the purpose of which is to do absolutely nothing (silence), except be perfectly still, and eerily quiet?

The 3D-Printed Kid is having one of its nightmare's again. This time it dreams that it's a beautiful day on the surface of the planet and it's going to take a walk outside. But no sooner has the Kid taken a few steps in the sunlight than it finds itself at the edge of the bottomless pit, once again, looking down into its awesome, incalculable depths.