



King of Nothing
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Part 1

Introduction

Info protects nothing.

Info protects anything.

Info protects what he knows not what,
keeps the knowledge from even the king.

Info has a canceled castle,
it's built of priceless air,
and vacuum and nothing, *et al*,
because Info's castle isn't even there at all.

Curiosity killed the cat.
And curiosity slew the spy.
But when all's been done
and all's been seen
the only treasure left
will belong to the King of Nothing.

Part 2
King of Nothing

Chapter 1

Anagram & Protocol

A light breeze swept through the city park, softening the crude May sun. Anagram shuffled through his folder of notes, luckily pinned down by brass brads to the cardstock.

Hmm, he thought, consulting his watch, and glancing about for Protocol, *just nearly time*. The good Protocol soon materialized around the corner of the deli, pausing for the street, and joining his dear co-conspirator, Anagram.

"Have they arrived yet? I was delayed by necessity."

"As I naturally assumed. Not just yet. But what held you?"

Protocol removed a small matte black case from his vest pocket and coyly conveyed it to Anagram's hands, "only this."

Unlatching the revelation, Anagram grinned widely, "slippery devil. How came you by this masterful device?"

Of course both men knew automatically the small appliance's purpose and function, yet Protocol felt a full introduction was needed upon the occasion. "The Ellipses Ringer, full-frequency, absurdly ranged, listening device, with the additional wiretapping circuit. Materialized before us, the lust object, the item previously only drooled over in its catalog form. Crystal clarity into a micro-cassette deck." Protocol reclined with a great sense of fulfillment on the bench.

"Yet, dear friend, this work of espionage beauty doesn't ship from its manufacturer for another quarter entirely."

"Ana', Ana', who would I be if not Protocol, if without the facility to lay hands on the unobtainable?"

Anagram chuckled, "well, have you tested the points to point? Lit the tubes? Drawn out the circuit with electric?"

"I thought this evening, this particular meeting, would be perfect, wouldn't you say? The chap is about to spill his guts, is he not?"

Anagram checked, once more, the file in his lap with its transcript of the two nights ago raving, recorded pacing, tender torture into true love.

“It certainly seems so. Will you not please do the honors?”

Protocol softly nodded to his companion and slipped the mint Ringer from its case. He placed the single ear-bud against his drum and poised a finger to hit *record*. After a moment, he did just that, as their two subjects approached the scene, mounted the grassy stage, and commenced their tryst in the park. Playfully, as the gunslinger marks a deadman, he trained the parabolic receiver in the couple's direction.

Chapter 2

Digit & Morse

"Now tell me something, Digit ... "

Morse was brushing off his hobo disguise as he righted himself, not without disdain, "tell me how those amateurs managed to procure an Ellipses Ringer prior to market date?"

Digit had dismounted his perch in the deli to join his accomplice, yet was even still masticating the salami snack the vantage point had allowed. He hesitated toward the index cards in his pocket, but recalled faster, "Well, Protocol's uncle is a solder-monkey."

"Not for Ellipses, and even they aren't naive enough to buy an ersatz Ringer."

Digit considered and did extract the bound cards from his jacket pocket. Thumbing through first unsuccessfully, he thumbed once more. "No reasonable leads ... "

Doesn't matter anyway, the damned thing'll be obsolete soon enough."

"Whaddya mean?"

"Micro-cassettes, they'll be phasing them out soon."

"But they're the industry standard," Digit coughed.

"Now, but it's always something new, has to be, diminishing returns and all."

"I 'spose, but even then it doesn't really replace the rush of experiencing truly unfiltered reality. That's what it's all about. Records are only future context."

"Very true, Digi-boy, but if you haven't noticed, by this evening's occurrence, those pure moments of brave and unadulterated life, beautiful unintentional reality, are becoming scarcer and scarcer."

"So recordings?"

Morse began to remove the rags that hung from him to expose a neatly cut suit below, "What was in the salami? Yes, though the natural method is preferred to records, we shall see the end of that purer way. Consumer

spies will demand greater capacities and our beloved media, the micro-cassette, will cease its reign. I see this all coming sooner than later."

"And where does that place us, Morse-boy?"

"Like any other reality junkie, we'll step in line. How well do you know the Dewey-decimal system?"

Digit screwed his face up, then reached deep into his pocket, where he kept his reference cards.

Chapter 3

Encode

Encode waited patiently, staring out the door of his small deli for the next customer to waltz in from an afternoon of park activities. But the spook never showed.

So, he opted for the evenings security tapes in review. Flipping the timid switch, Encode smoothed his mustache, poising his other hand over the stop button. He saw two figures re-approach his shop's corner, then one departed, and the other sat through a passerby, then departed, or rather enter. Encode hit the stop, then the play button on the whirling machine. There had been a confusing blur somewhere along the timeline. A hobo, entering his view from the alley, bent to repose on Encode's corner. The hobo eyed but did not acknowledge a pedestrian, then spoke into his cuff.

"Shit," said Encode, slamming his fist down onto the filing cabinet next to his security terminal. As the playback continued, Encode saw one of his patrons approach the hobo, who then stripped down to a suit and they departed. "Only spies today, Snipe."

Encode powered down the monitor and switched the terminal back to record-mode. Tilting the bird's head caused an alcove to reveal itself to him. Out came the handled case. "Well, that's it, Snipe. Take care of the place. I'm going flying," said Encode to the stuffed falcon, and left.

He took the case and turned out the lights of the deli, locking the door. His greasy apron acting as a shield, Encode snaked his way around and down the corridors of street and side-alley ways. Finally, he reached the anonymous door and, removing a pocket kit, picked the lock in a few seconds.

A stairwell waited within, cold and silent, for the heavy soles of his non-slip shoes to carry his bulky frame up and up to the roof. Some small, squarish object rocketed past him, down the stairs, as he ascended and a hushed curse froze his movement, but only for a moment. Out the top door, the high-rise wind swept across Encode's face, spreading his

mustache out over the angles of his cheeks, pointing into the night. Moving to the edge, looking out across Espionage City and its revealing lights, he sat the case on the ledge and opened it.

On with the straps, first his chest and the camera, then Encode harness the wings around himself. The wings spread away from his body and a small prayer was said in the name of Snipe, his childhood pet.

“With your sharp eye, I see things as they are. With your wind, I travel as I may. And silently, I perceive clearly.”

Encode's soles left the empty case on the ledge, left the walking to mundane men. He began to see clearly and floated toward the shining, night horizon.

Chapter 4

Platen

Platen lifted her gaze quickly away from the curls on the paper before her, automatically blowing her bangs out from her eyes – blue, alert circles. While looking out across the sprawling metropolis outside her office window, her crooked hand slid the middle drawer of the desk into the floor. Platen had sensed someone in the night, someone inside her office building, someone that was not the last stenographer. From the drawer's cove, she extracted a small clear container, roughly the size of a ring box.

Exiting the only glass door in the city with the word *stenographer* on it, Platen moved down the long corridor toward the staircase. Her black heels clicked along and she emptied the micro video-cam from the small box into her free hand.

She hesitated, then winced as the discarded box shattered into several pieces behind her. Platen whipped about and pressed her pencil-skirt ass against the door's horizontal handle.

The unseen intruder's presence hastened her careful steps up and up the levels of stairs. Platen reached the top landing and paused in a slight panic. Turning about and about, her darkened eyes searched for a surface on which to plant her camera. The gadget then, somehow, freed itself from fingers as elegant as the smooth curves they produced and by which Platen made her trade.

The spy cam made a smooth arc down the shaft of flights, striking, and arcing again. Platen hung her head to her chest as the hardware jet-tisoned into the tiered abyss.

"Fuck," she grunted under her breath, and the curse vibrated away from Platen, into the high rise, and back to her. She blushed herself, being a somewhat timid of her own voice, only given to acts of secret observation, and scampered out of the stairwell.

Out of the elevator and Platen returned to her nest. Off to the left side, she scribbled on her personal stick of pulpy paper, while working with

her right hand, she translated old short-hand. From attorneys quoted to
inexpressible love for the unwelcomed guest.

Chapter 5

Crib

Nestled like a steel carapaced beetle down in the skyscraper grass, Crib's van hummed. He had dropped the *penny dreadful* he had lazily been scanning, and refreshed the frequency sweeper that plucked the digital waves, the communication run-off, right from the sky.

Instantaneously, a display lit overhead, producing the vision of a staircase rushing past the lens. The view met the ground, the soared, and met hard again. Nauseated by the haphazard motion, he terminated the live feed before it struck its eventual rest below the stairs.

Another monitor was triggered by the sweep. The video portrayed restless urban sprawl that wrapped around Crib as if from the eye of a bird. Initially entranced, the next moment he wrote the vision off as merely the undercarriage camera of a helicopter.

The flying object moved out of his equipment's range. The only other feed depicted a hand tracing twisted lines. Crib exhaled and moved to the driver's seat, starting the engine. He pulled a service cap over his greasy hair and headed across town in the opposite direction of the vision's movement. The feed of curls faded as he approached the downtown gas station.

The Ob-van wheeled in tight to the pump and the two attendants (Why two? For their casual conversation is a natural luxury to the consumers' ears.) waltzed from the register cave to motion down his window. Crib laughed his mistake off, and down with the glass partition.

Both jaws moved in unison, chewing, but their placement separated them, along with their name tags that read *Graph* and *Antennae*.

Antennae: 'Ow much?

"Fill it up, thanks," said Crib.

Antennae: All the way.

Graph: 'Kay.

Antennae: What ya reading (pointing to the paperback in the van's floor)?

Crib hesitated, but explained, "It's a pulp collection that unanimously calls for the progress of mind training over the advancement of spy technologies. It preaches awareness over artificial enhancement as the key to observing all of reality."

Antennae stared blankly at Crib, chewing his gum in unison with, Crib now noticed, with the buzzers and lights flashing in the darkness of the van, the other attendant, Graph, he remembered.

Chapter 6

Antennae & Graph

"You know, I dread a certain respect for manatees."

"Not the laws of blubber, again."

"Sour shit, hone yourself, a black and dims pulling in, hows that heightener of sense squashin', gum-like, in your mouth."

"Quit off." Graph tucked in the gasoline hose nozzle-quick, "it's on the shelves."

"True enough, quasi-legal-status-how are you tonight officers?"

"Premium," spoke an electric horn, making the stringers to wince under the concrete columns of the station, but the petrol flowed freely, putting all at ease.

"Good and well to hear, but what thinks you fine gentlemen of sense-enhancing chemicals?"

"Define."

"You know, or you must, a certain number of market items, even ones sold at your convenience here, that promise the user supreme deployment of the perceptive faculties. Most sure to creep upon privacy, but could they not be used, also, to maintain an acute awareness of observing presences?"

The electric diaphragm vibrated, "you suppose a grey marketing of anti-privacy chemicals?"

"In short, yes, perhaps." Antennae grinned at Graph, who began to sweat through his work cotton.

"Inquiry request accepted."

"No, no, wait, now."

The pump *chunked* off. "Station account credited," the vocoder squawked and pulled away with the squad car.

Graph shoved Antennae, "that was quite numb of you."

"Numb, how?"

"Numb to the savings account of this establishment, which employs us, and makes a silver dime off this gum."

"Tart, *we* employ this station as the stage for *our* performance. Folks only spend the fuel to spy on the world, else they'd stay home. We save 'em a spot of fluid."

"Our performance?"

"Our little witty back and forths." Antennae explained, "don't you think our banter is like some petifor to the vultures? Don't they love it when we question the legality of this, and gossip about such?"

Graph stomped about, "I suppose, but I like this gum."

"Fear not, Graph. We and our words are insignificant wind to the cops of Espionage. You can be sure they'll forget it before they return to the sty."

Chapter 7

Coil & Plug

Coil and Plug shot hairs with wiretapping bullets and back-flipped to fire on targets strung down the concrete range, below the justice center.

Coil: I don't know. I mean, kid was a smart ass, but I still see his point. That is (he squeezed off a shot) if the stuff stimulates like it advertises.

Plug: (reloading) Even though, if such a thing were outlawed, so would be your common scent suppressants.

(Coil shrugged.) (Plug aimed and shot.)

Plug: This would, logically, eventually, outlaw deodorants.

Coil: *Reductio ad absurdum* is a valid conclusion, but I smell an authority on the subject, just now.

The far door of the firing range swung open for detective Bios.

Coil: What says you, Bios, on the legality of sense enhancing gum?

As Bios stroked his chin and released a deep *hmm*, he raised his sidearm and spliced the tapped wires, shorting the practice taps, and pecked out all his targets – then exhaled, “our job is to stomp out the Pro-privacy Front. To keep everything, everything free and open. Though the opposition could utilize such chemicals, I'd say the overall function stays with the spies' intentions, and the deodorant slides to simple social practicality.”

Plug: Then what are we warriors of justice supposed to inflict ourselves upon?

Coil: Yes, we must have a mundane function in the game, else the paycheck would arrive blank.

“Fellows,” Bios slipped in another clipfull, “our job is to seek out privacy and record its existence, just as the everyman. But we gotta be super-spies to do our duty correctly.” And hit their targets for 'em.

Chapter 8

Bios & Clandestine

As the brilliant evening sun took on a returning glow, the whole of the city's park adopted a grease-lens softness. Four eyes with an electronic ear watched two lovers unite over a grass yard.

Male: The minutes.

Female: The seconds, Bios.

(They embraced.)

Bios: Sing me your sweet graces, Clandestine. Have you been to the secret palace?

Clandestine: I have, my lovely.

Bios: And the body-bugs adorning your tender frame? Did they record all?

Clandestine: If their soft chirping is any worth.

Bios: Of course it is, blessed angel. Now sleep, beauty.

(His flowing trench-coat brushed her, but all that struck her was the hilt, sans blade.)

Bios: Tell me of Info's plot.

Clandestine: (examined her side and his eyes) I shall recount my recon as a yellow journalist, as agent provocateur.

Chapter 9

Clandestine & Info

Clandestine paused at the looming door. Looming because it was so minuscule in comparison to the large building facility to which the door gave singular entry. It haunted one for being mundane and produced terror by its exception to such a massive, uninterrupted surface.

Clandestine smashed in the buzzer button with a quick index finger. She glanced back at the multiple check-points behind her, dynamic with guards, as the buzzer's diaphragm twitched, saying, "Sorry for the thorough personal search." This was said matter-of-factly, with the emotion of the sea.

"No you're not," she snapped and smoothed her blouse.

"No, we're not."

"It's still locked."

"Yes, you'll need to close your eyes."

"They're already closed, trigger the flash and let me in."

"Well versed," the static voice transmitted as a ring of concealed arrays raised from the buildings enclosed lawn. There was the whine of large capacitors somewhere below and the arrays popped in rapid succession, disrupting any long range surveillance that might have been aimed at the entrance. Clandestine exposed and entered the building's vulnerable inside.

"It's relatively easy to accept a reality handed to you when you have had no personal concept of it in the first place," spoke Info.

"But motivation?"

"The numbers made sense is all. Space was getting tagged so quickly, things were being documented at such a speed that a void in the data had market value or positive information. Just located a lot that was mathematically benign. Even if some wayward camper had tread the ground unannounced, he probably couldn't mark it opposite any other photo of the region. This was before they did the satellite smiling

bathroom-angle, portraits from above of the forested surface. Radio waves had certainly struck the plot, but since no one was counting the ripples, we sent in DDB bots with prefab walls.”

“DDBeebots?”

“Deaf, dumb, and blind.”

“Oh.”

“And blind-folded masons tacked a shell around the sealed cube.”

“Dramatic.”

“No, the media did that writing crime into it. It was a simple business move.”

“A deal that denies the public admittance to a chunk of the world.”

“And so's a house or any of that. Shit, it's not like we know what's in there and we're not telling anyone.”

“It is, however, filled brim-wise with curiosity.”

“And thus, market value from nothing.”

“So it's a profit game?”

“Pish, deary, the whole scheme of humanity is the game of primal manhood – having more – and here's a piece they can't touch. Drives the power hungry to fever blisters.”

“Can I touch the wall?”

“There are dampening agents, smart ones made of cellular automata bots, crystallizing and such. So, yes, but, I ask you not to think of influencing it. Though alone's a powerfully influential force.”

Chapter 10

Clandestine & Bios

“Wait,” the spring finally shook loose and sliced air, “you shimmied, all cozy, up to the biggest cat and mouse game in eternity?”

“Loosely, I didn't feel it as such, prim-primal boy. It was more like when you feel a spook before the bastard knows you do. And you don't care who the hell it is, 'cause you act for those lenses and mics every time. It's addictive, can't help it.”

“If you thought anything, anything at all, Info loses.”

“I thought about this,” her voice cut whisper short on the blade, now successfully deployed into her side.

But it was a double-play.

Two blade to two.

And as they fell, two on a bench not far away, felt, in high-definition, the drops of tranquil, cooling liquid on stone before the thud of love.

Part 3

Afterword

With the widespread popularity of reality TV (indeed, with enough mass appeal propelling it to fill the man power needed to scrutinize the whole nation of *Oceania*) and the incestuous tendencies of social networking, it is a wonder we still have any sense of privacy in the states. If all the sad producers of television perished and citizens still felt a gravity toward *reality*, where would the public turn for such stimulation?

I know it illogical, but I dreamed a world where privacy was outlawed. A world where observation had defeated entertainment as the national recreation would definitely suffer the consequences. Rather than pantomime the drama that such a shift would obviously generate, I was amused by the extinction of genuine life, undisturbed. If all were observing, or knew they were being observed, all of the authenticity that we take for granted in our everyday activities would become utterly negated.

A desperate enuui would sweep the planet, and spies would be left to spy on spies. And, perhaps, the ignored would become prized as gold.

From the same author on Feedbooks

bury We below the Weeds (2008)

One of the five novelettes that compose the arching story of Pattern of the Wolf or the Guts of a Cop.

A re-birthed romance brings biological chaos to the world, in the form of a plant-based networking system.

See LastJunto.com for a link to buy Pattern of the Wolf and download a free machete-western comic book.

Future Primitive, Part 1 (2009)

Part 1: Porn on the Bacab

Set against the backdrop of punk philosophy, three jesters devise a plot to ensnare a pious beauty. Their actions may have culminated in the re-birthing of a Mayan god. All told appropriately by the drunk.



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